

TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY

**Rebellious Consciousness of the Subalterns in Jane Smiley's
*A Thousand Acres***

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Letter of Recommendation

The thesis entitled "Rebellious Consciousness of the Subalterns in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*" by Mr. Ghana Shyam Gaire has been completed under my supervision. He carried out this research from November 2009 to June 2010. I hereby recommend this thesis be submitted for viva voce.

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Letter of Approval

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Abstract

Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* attempts to explore the rebellious consciousness of subaltern people. Ginny, the central character of this novel is the representative of subaltern people. From the beginning of this novel she is dominated and exploited in a very inhuman manner from her own father and her own husband as well. But when she became conscious about the sense of domination, she starts to explore her rebellious nature. Larry Cook, who is the father of Ginny represents the bourgeois power holder and tries to dominate over the rest of the members of that family. Ginny, Rose and Caroline (based on Shakespeare's Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia from *King Lear*) are the three daughters of Larry, who are physically and mentally exploited by her own father. It is because of that exploitation, the daughters are compelled to raise their voice against their own father. The unbearable and inhuman nature of Larry leads his own daughters to resist to their own dominating father. The cooking and eating habits of Mid-westerner also shows the subaltern nature. Larry represents the role of oppressor, whereas Ginny represents the role of oppressed. The power holder always dominates the subaltern but the subaltern people resist against them.

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1. General Introduction to Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*

The objective of the present research paper is to analyze rebellious consciousness of subaltern people in Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres*. While analyzing this novel Smiley raises the voice of suppressed people to resist against the dominant power. Larry Cook, who is the leading member of the family, abuses his own daughters physically and psychologically. At the beginning of the novel they do not raise the question against him. But as the novel proceeds towards the climax, the daughters choose to resist against him and thus break the long history of silence and tolerance. Here, Larry Cook represents the power holder of that Midwest farming family. Ginny, the eldest daughter and the most oppressed member of the family, is the epitome of subaltern character. Not only Ginny but also Rose, Caroline, Ty, and Pete are the subaltern characters in this novel. Larry treats Ginny and Rose as his own personal property. Caroline remains unaware of her father's abusive behavior, having been protected throughout her childhood by Ginny and Rose. In this way, marginalized characters at the latter part of the novel produce their sounds and go against the dominating power. Thus, this novel depicts the bitter and tragic reality of an American Midwestern family

Smiley was born in Los Angeles, California on September 26, 1949. She was raised by her mother, Frances, who was a journalist. Her parents divorced when she was one year old, after which she rarely saw her father, James, a soldier who suffered from mental illness after serving in the World War II. Smiley has been married thrice. Her first marriage occurred while she was very young and it lasted only for two years. Her second marriage produced two daughters but ended badly prompting her to write the short fiction collection *The Age of Grief* (1987). The title novella examines the dissolution of a relationship and the grief that follows. Smiley is currently married to a script writer with whom she has a son. Smiley obtained her Bachelor of Arts degree from Vassar in 1971. She also received an M.A. in 1975, an M.F.A.

in 1976, and a Ph.D. in 1978, all from the University of Iowa. She now teaches at Iowa state university. Smiley won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Critics Circle Award for *A Thousand Acres* (1991).

Smiley's fiction explores complex relationship among the family members, friends, and lovers, while providing detailed character studies of her protagonists. She basically deals with the problem of marginalized people and speaks in favor of them. Critics have commented Smiley's keen observations of daily routine and her use of sharp, revealing dialogue as effective tools that enable her to explicitly define her characters and their emotions. Her fiction also deals with larger, underlying themes such as loss and recovery.

In her early novels, *Barn Blind* (1980) and *At Paradise Gate* (1981), Smiley examines the powerful bonds that dominate the lives of two families. In *Barn Blind*, the Karl son children strive to match the unrealistic expectations of their demanding mother. *At Paradise Gate* centers on the tense relationships between the Robinson daughters, who have gathered at the deathbed of their father as their mother prepares for her life alone.

The Age of Grief is a collection of short fictions in which marriage and family emerge as central issues. The title novella examines a husband's self-doubt and his decision to avoid confrontation following the discovery of his wife's infidelity. In her historical novel *The Greenlanders* (1988), Smiley employs the intricacies of the medieval Nordic Folk-tale to chronicle the spiritual and physical demise of the Norse settlements in Greenland during the tenth century. Smiley conveys her theme by gathering thoughts and experiences of different settlers and combining them into the unifying narrative voice of one Greenlander, Gunner Asgeirsson .

Moo (1995) is a satire of life at a typical Midwestern University during 1989-90 academic years, which included such events as the fall of communism in Russia and the U.S. government's campaign of slashing funds for public education. The novel includes multiple

characters and subplots pulled together through the main character, named Earl Butz. *All True Travels and Adventures of Lidie Newton* (1998) tell the story of Lidie Harkness, a tom boy in Quincy Illinois, who marries Thomas Newton, a Utilitarian abolitionist on his way to the Kansas Territory in 1856. The novel focuses on the personal story of Newton's budding love as well as the political struggle of the era, i.e. the issue of slavery had polarized the territory at the time.

A Thousand Acres is Smiley's retelling of Shakespeare's *King Lear*, set in the farmlands of Iowa. Lawrence Cook, who rules his family with an iron hand, has decided to divide the family farm among his three daughters. Ginny and Rose happily accept what they see as their rightful share, but Caroline, a Des Moines attorney, refuses and is cast out. Cook soon becomes mentally unstable, changes his mind and sues Ginny and Rose, with Caroline eventually joining him. Smiley relates the story from the perspective of Ginny, the Goneril figure and includes the added dimension of past sexual abuse to explain the daughters' attitudes toward their father.

Critics often note the variety of settings in Smiley's work, which range from ancient Greenland to Iowa farmland to the Kansas Territory in the 1800s. However, despite her varied locales, Smiley's work is often labeled as domestic fiction because of its familial settings and its focus on relationships. Suzanne Maclachlan describes Smiley's style, saying, "Smiley writes as if she were sitting at the kitchen table telling a story to a friend. Her style is simple, yet she never misses a detail" (7). Though her fiction may be concerned with the domestic aspects of life, many critics note a definite political agenda behind it.

A Thousand Acres is Smiley's best known and most acclaimed novel although she has been the subject of much critical praise throughout her career. In addition to its favorable critical reception, the book received both the National Book Critics Circle Award and the Pulitzer Prize. Like Smiley's earlier work, the novel places families and their interactions at

the heart of its story and uses them as a means of exploring the universal aspects of the human experience. Its richness and literary position can be recognized through criticisms.

Susan Strehle takes the novel as a real articulation of patriarchal values where the daughters are physically and mentally exploited by their own father. In this context she comments:

A Thousand Acres seems as a novel in which loyal daughters and sons are bound to honored fathers with unbreakable chains of affiliation. Two confident patriarchs, Larry Cook and his neighbor Harold Clark, feel securely in possession of their children and their acreage, trusting in the permanence of both those holdings, the two farmers compete to extend their ownership of tractors, furniture, and other durable goods. (4)

Larry Cook and Harold Clark both are the representative members of patriarchal society. Larry Cook exploits his daughters and takes them as his own property. For him, daughters should do what he orders because they are just the objects for him. On the other hand, Harold Clark also uses his son as his own personal property. In this way, these two neighbors are competing with each other using their daughters and sons as their personal objects.

Kessel Tyler has read the novel from the perspective of power relation. According to him, the innocent people are always dominated by the power holders. So, Kessel's thesis explains the nature and manipulation of power through this novel. Tyler further remarks:

Larry Cook, the principal antagonist of Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*, remained invisible to his daughter Ginny because she had blocked out the memory of Larry's rape and beating for many years. Unable to identify him as the source of her misery, Ginny could not resist her father. Ultimately, however, Ginny is able to resist her father and carve out a livable-existence

because she comes to see Larry as the center of the power exerted over her.

(242)

Ginny's repression of these painful memories destroys her identity. In the beginning Ginny sees herself only in terms of her father: "The biggest farm farmed by the biggest farmer. That fit, or may be formed, my (Ginny's) own sense of the right order of things" (20). But her realization and the knowledge of being dominated help her to go against the oppressor.

Catherine Cowen Olson views the novel as a story of cooking and eating varieties of foods. This novel is about farming land and eating of what they harvest in their land:

Anyone who read *A Thousand Acres* cannot help asking this same question about the eating habits of the farmers who inhabit this Midwestern novel.

Smiley's aptly named Cook family is always cooking or eating and much of the food sounds heavy and unappetizing. Most of us cringe to think of Midwest mex-garbazo bean enchiladas or pork liver sausages canned with sauerkraut (to say nothing of tuna noodle casserole), yet these are foods that her characters prepare and expect their family and friends to eat never mind enjoy. (21)

Smiley uses different food imagery in this novel. In the Midwestern novel, the habits of cooking and eating are common. Here, the imagery of food is related with power. The daughters of the Cook family take up much of their time to prepare food for their father. Fearing his disapproval, Ginny and Rose Cook exactly what he wants and serve his meals with military punctuality of six, twelve and five on their appointed days of each week.

Slightly in a different line Amano Kyoko relates this novel with the Alger myth:

Ginny's knowledge of the rape is crucial to her rejection of the family legacy. The dark side of the Cooks success story narrated from Ginny's point of view reveals a dark side of the Alger myth of Success - the myths that have never

been told from the female point of view. While John and Larry Cook stand in the spotlight like the Alger heroes, Edith and Ginny's mother remain silent, like female characters in the Alger Myth. (34)

Alger myth of success has been presented from the male point of view, where the position of female has not been recognized but Smiley's novel clearly reflects how the Alger myth of male success depends on the suppression of women.

Sharon O' Dair's interpretation of *A Thousand Acres* proves the tricks of appearance.

He further remarks:

[...] Ginny, who never went to college, is engaged in a lifelong course of study about the tricks of appearance, about the lure of appearances, about the seemingly irrefutable logic of appearances' [. . .] which is to say that for these farmers, what is beyond the surface of the visible shall remain beyond, and invisible. (264)

Many things in the novel are hidden, i.e. they are not revealed. What we see in the surface cannot be the real one. In this way, Ginny has always been put under the false conception.

When Susan Strehle views the novel as a real articulation of patriarchal values, Kessel Tyler reads it from the perspective of power relation. Catherine Cowen Olson interprets the novel as a story of cooking and eating varieties of foods. Similarly, Amano Kyoko shows the relation of this novel with the Alger myth of success, whereas Sharon O' Dair shows the tricks of appearance. None of the critics is however, concerned with the articulation of the rebellious consciousness of subaltern people. Therefore, the present research analyses the literary representation of the subalterns in *A Thousand Acres*.

Subaltern studies will be the methodological tool, which will help to prove the hypothesis of this research paper. Although the term subaltern conventionally denotes to junior ranking officer in the British Army (OED), the most significant intellectual sources for

Spivak's definition of the subaltern are the early twentieth century Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) and the work of the mainly India-based subaltern studies collective. In the *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci used the term subaltern interchangeably with subordinate" [. . .] or sometimes "instrumental" to denote "on hegemonic groups or classes" (Gramsci 1978: xiv). Gramsci's account of the subaltern has been further developed by a group of historians known as the subaltern studies collective. These historians define subaltern as 'the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way' (Guha 35).

Despite these above subaltern theorists there are others subalternists whose ideas will help to develop this research paper. They are Gyan Pandey, Benita Parry, Dipesh Chakravarty and so on. While developing this paper, the main focus will be on subalternity and resistance.

This research is divided into four chapters. The first chapter introduces the novel *A Thousand Acres* briefly. The second chapter deals with the theoretical modality that is to be applied in the novel. It briefly defines and explains subalternity, its origin and development, and its resistance against oppression. In chapter third theory will be applied analytically with textual evidences. In that sense, this part is the heart of the thesis. Entire thesis will be concluded and summarized in chapter four.

II. Subalternity and Resistance

The term 'subaltern' refers to the people of inferior rank, under-represented, under-taught, marginalized, repressed and the subordinated group, whether in term of race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. Initially, it was used by Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci to refer to those groups of people in society who were subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. Subaltern studies now deals with the issues like subaltern consciousness and effects of colonization on subaltern people. It tries to deconstruct colonial historiography to establish subaltern historiography. As a result, many post-colonial writers are raising the issue of resistance to the use of European language.

The origin of the term 'subaltern' has a long history. In the late medieval era, it was applied to vassals and peasants. Later in the 1700s it came to denote lower ranks in military suggesting peasants. Antonio Gramsci adopted it to refer to those groups in society, who are subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes. The subaltern classes may include rural illiterate peasants, workers, lower strata laborers, lower ranks in military, rural tribes and other groups who are denied access to authority of social classes. As a Marxist, Gramsci was concerned with the laborers, workers, proletarians in Marx's words, whose voice remained unheard in this history of the society. Gramsci was very much interested in the historiography of the subaltern class. Due to the inconsistency, indigenous dominance caused the peasants' revolt which had emerged in Italy in the 1930s.

Before looking at Spivak and other critic's views on subalternity in more detail, it is important to situate the historical and cultural meanings of the term subaltern. Antonio Gramsci's account of the subalternity provides a key theoretical resource for understanding the conditions of the poor, the lower class and peasantry in India partly because of the parallels he draws between the division of labor in Mussolini's Italy and the colonial division

of labor in India. Gramsci opines that the oppression of the rural peasantry in southern Italy could be subverted through an alliance with the urban working class, or through the development of class consciousness among the peasants. To this extent Gramsci's account of the subaltern resembles Karl Mark's earlier proclamation in the nineteenth century that the industrial working class in Europe carried the future potential for collective social and political change.

Unlike Marx's model of social and political change, however, Gramsci stresses that the social and political practices of the rural peasantry were not systematic or coherent in their apposition to the state. It is this lack of coherence that distinguishes Gramsci's notion of the subaltern from the traditional Marxist perception of the individual working class as unified and coherent. Furthermore, this lack of a coherent political identity in Gramsci's description of the subaltern is also crucial to Spivak's discussion of the subaltern in the postcolonial world.

For Spivak the term 'subaltern' is useful because it is flexible. It can accommodate social identities such as women and the colonized that do not fall under the reductive terms of 'strict class -analysis'. As she asserts in an interview published in the US journal *Polygraph*:

I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason. It is truly situational. 'Subaltern' began as a description of a certain rank in the military. The word was used under censorship by Gramsci: he called Marxism 'monism', and was obliged to call the proletariat 'subaltern'. That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that does not fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor. (Spivak 141)

Spivak's concept of subaltern is situational; it has to be understood in a broader sense.

According to her, Gramsci used this term in a very narrow sense, i.e. only in Marxist term.

For her to see it only from single point of view means to put it under duress.

In the social context of India's rigid class and caste system, the location of the subaltern is further effaced by the layered histories of European colonialism and national independence. In response to these changing historical conditions, Spivak has, from the beginning, sought to find an appropriate methodology for articulating the histories and struggles of disempowered groups.

If Antonio Gramsci's account of the rural peasantry in Italian history provides a key theoretical resource for Spivak's ongoing discussions of subalternity, one of the most important historical resources comes from the discussion of peasant insurgency and resistance movements in India by the subaltern studies historians, including Shahid Amin (1950-), David Arnold (1946-), Partha Chatterjee (1947-) David Hardiman (1947-), Ranajit Guha (1923-), and Gyanendra Pandey (1950-). In a multi-volume series of collected essays entitled *Subaltern Studies* these historians have consistently attempted to recover a history of subaltern agency and resistance from the perspective of the marginalized people, rather than that of the state, i.e. 'history from below'.

Traditionally, the histories of the rural peasantry and the urban working class had been recorded by elite social groups. At first, these subaltern histories were documented in the archives of British colonial administrators; they were later rewritten in the historical reports of the educated Indian, middle class elite, during and after the struggle for national independence as Ranajit Guha asserts in *On Some Aspects of the Historiography of Colonial India*:

The historiography of Indian nationalism has for a long time been dominated by elitism and bourgeois nationalist elitism. Both originated as the ideological product of British rule in India, but have survived the transfer of power and have been assimilated to neocolonialist and neo-nationalist forms of discourse in Britain and India respectively. (Guha 37)

The historical representation of the various lower class subaltern groups was thus framed according to the interest of the ruling power, or dominant social class. In the historical archives of the British Empire, the lives and political agencies of the rural peasantry in India were subordinated to the larger project of imperial governance and social control, in the elite narratives of bourgeois national independence, the localized resistance movements of the peasants were subordinated to the larger nationalist project of decolonization. In both cases, the complex social and political histories of particular subaltern groups were not recognized or represented.

The founders of subaltern studies first met in England at the end of 1970s; they were surrounded by decades of research on 'history from below' on insurgency in colonial India. In 1982, Gramsci's ideas were in wide circulation. It formally appeared in 1982 under the banner *Subaltern Studies: Writing South Asian History and Society*. Due to the fragmentation, a new kind of nationalism had emerged at the local, regional and national levels. Subaltern studies group aims to promote a systematic discussion of oppressed groups of society through a new historiography that rewrites history from below. They describe their project as follows:

The general attribute of subaltern in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, age, gender and office or in any other way. [...]

Subaltern studies group sketched out its wide ranging concern both with visible history, politics, economic, and sociology of subaltern and with the occluded attitude, ideologies and belief system in short, the culture informing that condition. (Guha viii)

Here, Guha shows the contrast between 'politics of the downtrodden people' with 'elite politics' and he privileges the former over the latter. It, in spite of the end of colonialism, continues in different forms, the development of nationalist consciousness, in accordance with elitist historiography, has been an achievement either of colonialist administrators policy

and culture of Indian personalities or ideas. We can trace questions: What is the role of culture in nationalism? And what is the relationship between states and popular politics? Elite culture plays major role to form nationalism as highlighting themselves and whose cultural ethos becomes dominant. Instead of highlighting subaltern, due to the power and knowledge of dominant class, they are always oppressive and subaltern people are oppressed. David Ludden argues that "theories of peasant's struggle against global capitalism supported the idea that popular insurgency in British India emerged from emerged indigenous moral sensibilities" (7).

Some of the critics argue on those lines to show that autonomous popular movements shaped Indian nationalism by provoking dialogue and tension with national leaders that produced various contingent outcomes. Due to competition for power among the institutions, classes and other groups fought for power under the banner of nationalism at every level of colonial system. Separation of opposing theoretical schools brings the separation in society and culture from state institutions and political economy. This separation emerges subaltern studies. Critics comment upon the formation of national history which has two kinds of national history: one is people's history filled with native culture and popular insurgency, and the other is the official history. Guha says that bourgeois nationalism parallels to colonialism, in his seminal essay "Dominance without Hegemony and Historiography" (*Subaltern Studies* VI). R. Radhakishnan in this book *Diasporic Mediation* says:

The work of subaltern studies group of historians and theorists in situating the 'critique' has been outstanding in its capacity and willingness to submit theory to historical interrogation. These theorists work in the mode that combines modes of highly nuanced self reflectivity with the pressures of historical existences. Thus, in speaking for the subaltern subject, these historian theorists

come up with complete diagnosis of coloniality, post coloniality and bourgeois nationalism. (24)

Subaltern studies as a cultural theory goes against the existing coloniality and bourgeois nationalism. Therefore, the job of subaltern studies group of historians and theorists is to resist the voice against dominant group.

Subaltern consciousness has always been the focus point of subaltern studies. Gayatri Spivak's *Introduction to Selected Subaltern Studies* IV views about subaltern consciousness and "the colonial subject" as the basis of theorization, perceives their task as making "a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specifically a theory of change"(4). Postcolonial cultural criticism and literary theory has embraced subaltern studies' endeavor in deconstructing historiography:

[...] Subaltern consciousness is subject to the elite, that it is never fully recoverable, that it is always asked from its received signifiers, indeed that it is effaced even as it is disclosed, that it is irreducibly discursive. 'Negative consciousness' is conceived of having historical stage peculiar to the subaltern rather than the grounding positive view of consciousness, should not be generalized as the group's methodological presupposition. (339)

Negative consciousness, for instance, sees it as the consciousness not of the being 'Subaltern' but of that of the oppressors. Subaltern Studies provide the model for a general theory of consciousness. Subaltern consciousness' is emergent as collective subaltern consciousness which is unavoidably a post-phenomenological and post-psychoanalytic issue. Some elitists objectify to the subaltern and are caught in the game of knowledge as power.

So, Subaltern Studies seems to suggest that its own subalternity, in claiming a positive subject position for the subaltern, might be described

as a strategy for our times. Dipesh Chakrabarty points out about subaltern consciousness as the 'peasant consciousness' in his seminal essay "Invitation to a Dialogue":

The religious consciousness of the peasantry is not subjected to any determination and is made supra-historical. It is assumed that the peasantry has an ideal for at paradigmatically pure peasant consciousness marked by religiosity existed in a pure state especially in the nineteenth century. (365)

Guha is not proposing to study 'peasant consciousness' and its entirety, but only the consciousness of the insurgent peasants. Dipesh Chakrabarty, further, views about two opposing totalities--the elite and the subaltern, the feudal mode of power and the peasant communal mode of power. In simplistic two fold division 'elites' and 'subalterns' in *Subaltern Studies* tends to determine and supplant the Marxian method of class analysis. If it ignores class-analysis and one-sidedly emphasizes 'subaltern' action alone, Subaltern Studies is also supposed to be ill equipped to analyze the role and effect of colonialism.

Spivak, in her most controversial and celebrated essay "Can the subaltern speak?" asserts that the subaltern classes cannot represent themselves. For they have no adequate means and strategies to do so. The elite intellectuals tend to undertake the responsibility of representing the subaltern classes. In such a case, elite intellectual as a subject of investigation tends to overshadow the subaltern class, the object of investigation. In other words, when any elite intellectual class represents any subaltern class, his/her representation tends to be filtered through his/her (elite intellectual) perspective. Consequently, there cannot be a representation free of bias of the elite intellectuals. There can be no unproblematic representation of subaltern class. Furthermore, the elite representative emerges as the master to the subaltern people whom s/he represents.

Spivak asserts that women form a subaltern class, and the problem of representation is rather noticeable in the representation of the women in various texts of the elite writers.

Spivak consistently draws our attention to the problem of representation, as it is the privileged position of elite intellectual scholars that let them serve as the spokesperson of the marginalized women. In other words, the representation of the subaltern is a kind of representation mediated through the perspective of the elite. Therefore, the representation fails to become the true voice of the oppressed women, which means that the marginalized women cannot speak.

The woman as subaltern, Spivak argues in "Can the subaltern speak?" cannot be heard or read: "Even if her subalternity is sought to be transcended at the mythical level" (104). So, they are necessarily misrepresented. Many writers, with a help of dramatization of myth and exaggeration, have attempted to depict the women as subaltern class that can speak on its own. A feminist historian of the subaltern must raise the question of women as a structural rather than marginal issue in each of the many different types and cultures that Partha Chatterjee invokes in "More on Modes of Power and the Peasantry." This kind of representation is not rooted in the socio-cultural reality.

Moreover, Spivak claims that subaltern studies conspicuously reflects European Enlightenment project because the latter, too, aspires to recover consciousness. For consciousness is considered to be very ground that makes the disclosure of truth or firm ground possible. In a way, the collective's approach seems to be plagued with as much idealism as the Enlightenment project is. Spivak, however, thinks that "consciousness here is not consciousness in general but a historicized political species, subaltern consciousness" (338). She, therefore, regards their efforts to recover peasant consciousness as a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest. She suggest "that is own subalternity in claiming a positive subject position for the subaltern might be rein-scribed as strategy for our times" (345). This would allow them to use critical force of anti humanism. However, this consciousness must be used in narrow sense, as self consciousness, if they

really want it to be a fruitful strategy. She again reinforces their strategic use of peasant consciousness by saying "they (SSG) should be concerned not with consciousness in general but in this crucial sense" (342).

Spivak later on rewrites about the concept of subaltern that they can resist. In her earlier essay she said that Subaltern cannot speak. But in her another essay "Can the Subaltern speak?" She has clearly written that Subaltern people can resist silently. She further says:

For the “true” Subaltern group, whose identity is its difference, there is no unrepresentable Subaltern subject that can know and speak itself; the intellectual's solution is not to abstain from representation. The problem is that the subject's itinerary has not been left traced so as to offer an object of seduction to the representing intellectual. In the slightly dated language of the Indian group, the question becomes, how can we touch the consciousness of the people, even as we investigate their politics? With what voice-consciousness can the subaltern speak? (168-16)

Their project, after all, is to rewrite the development of the consciousness of the Indian nation. The planned discontinuity of imperialism rigorously distinguishes this project, however old fashioned its articulation, from rendering visible the medical and juridical mechanisms that surrounded the story [of Pierre Riviere]. Foucault is correct in suggesting that to make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which had hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been recognized as having any moral, aesthetic or historical value "Subaltern consciousness can be taken as representative of a moment of the production process that includes the Subaltern" (169).

Guha, in his essay "Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency", depicts tribal revolts as the subaltern rebellion, which is completely different from nationalism. "Subaltern Studies", in David Ludden's words, "entered that academic scene by asserting the complete autonomy of lower class insurgency" (10). It is equally remarkable that the scholars from inside and outside subaltern studies have established subaltern people's everyday resistance against dominant classes as the basic feature of life.

Nonetheless, the common motto of subaltern groups is to resist the existing domination. It emerges as an invariant feature about subaltern groups. Obviously, it somehow

makes the discussion on the subaltern mentality fruitful. Subaltern has got to appropriate and re-appropriate the language and theoretical strategies of the dominant group to speak on behalf of the subaltern.

The notion of the subaltern, as the people of 'inferior rank,' was adopted by Antonio Gramsci as a concept referring to groups in society subjected to the hegemony of the dominant ruling classes. More concretely, Gramsci first used the term as a euphemism or original convert usage for the proletariat in his "Notes on Italian History", a six point project that appears in his *Prison Notebooks* (1973). He also claimed that the subaltern classes had just as complex a history as the dominant classes. However, this unofficial history was necessarily fragmented and episodic since even when they rebel, the subalterns are always subject to the activity of the ruling classes. In Gramsci's theory, the term subaltern linked up with the subordinated consciousness of non-elite groups.

The concept of hegemony is one of the principal and most productive categories of Gramsci's inheritance today, not only because of the central position it has assumed within the current phase of capitalist development, but also because of the new types of strategy and composition recent global resistance movements have displaced and continue to display. Thus, on the one hand, the category of hegemony becomes an interpretative tool in the social field of postfordism, its determining trait being the reabsorption of the differences between pure intellectual activity, political action and work. On the other hand, the intermittent network structure of the movements that began to scuttle the irreducibility of their components to the membership of any specific social class, the role assumed by new means of communication within them and the way they claim autonomous spaces for action necessarily invokes the concept of hegemony in the Gramscian sense. But above all it is the current identification of political struggle and cultural output that cannot do without Gramsci's theoretical arsenal, which in contrast to the traditions of Marxism locates politics

as a super structural dimension in such a way that it has its own full and specific autonomy: How then should 'hegemony' be defined? What examples of power does it refer to? For which social classes is the term synonymous with supremacy? What are the paradigms required in order to discuss hegemony?

It is Gramsci who takes the concept of hegemony to an extreme degree of theoretically mature expression, and he extends it as much to the ruling class as to those who are ruled, without limiting it to any specific membership class. Gramsci's point of departure however, is Lenin's definition of 'proletarian hegemony' as a plan for the ideological and political direction of Bolshevism, and the same term is used by Bucharin, Zinover, Stalin and so on in many documents from the second international. However, the systematic use of the concept and the central position it assumes in *Prison Notebooks* is anticipated in *Notes on the Southern Question (1926)* by Gramsci. Although Lenin is still the direct reference here, the historical-political function of intellectuals and culture assumes considerable prominence within the hegemonic, bourgeois system and the class struggle. From this point on, Gramsci's theory of hegemony has considerable autonomy compared with Lenin's strategic conception, and for Gramsci, the problem of the cultural affirmation of the workers movement acquires a greater importance than for any other Marxist thinker.

Gramsci's concept is rooted in the analysis of the historical bloc as the relationship between economic forces and ideology, in which the reciprocal relation between base structure and superstructure is manifested. There can be no dominance without consensus, and consensus can only be gained from ideological and cultural struggle. Gramsci's radical change of direction, even compared with Lenin, is exactly that of gaining consensus before the actual conquest of power. It is not by chance-as has been said - that for Gramsci, a social class "does not take state power, it becomes state" (E. Laclau and C. Mouffe, "Hegemony and Socialist Strategy":1985). A social group can, and indeed has to be the directive one before

seizing governmental power (indeed this is one of the primary conditions for the takeover of power). "Afterwards, when exercising power, even if it holds it tightly in its fist, it becomes dominant, but it also has to continue to be directive (*dirigente*)" (*Prison Notebooks*, 210-11).

With regard to this objective, intellectuals, as the organizers of hegemony, must commit themselves to a long-term task that is firmly bound to prevailing historical conditions.

Gramsci calls this "the war of position" in the sense that it is "the unprecedented concentration of hegemony in contrast with the war of movement" (57).

The concept of subalternity is, however, not solely conceptual counterpoint to either hegemony or the ruling class. In fact, this category, inherited today from the subaltern studies project, is characterized by its focus on the territorial, spatial, and geographic basis of social life. If Gramsci originally coined the term 'subaltern' as a substitute for 'proletariat', the concept has since come to assume the wider Gramscian meaning of a revolutionary construct that transcends the urban working class, the sole subject of orthodox Marxism.

Spivak's deconstructive reading of the Subaltern Studies historians 'against the grain' of their avowedly Marxist methodology has generated much controversy. The main reason for this is that Spivak is seen to impose yet another elite western academic language on to the history of subaltern insurgency. Rosalind O'Hanlon, for instance, argues that 'those who set out to restore' the 'presence' of the subaltern 'end only by borrowing the tools of that discourse, tools which serve only to reduplicate the first subjection which they effect, in the realms of critical theory' (O'Hanlon 218).

Yet Spivak is not simply opposing deconstruction and Marxism. What Spivak crucially objects to in the early research of the Subaltern Studies historians is the idea that the subaltern is a sovereign political subject in control of her own destiny. Spivak vehemently opposes this idea on the grounds that the sovereign subaltern subject is an effect of the dominant discourse of the elite. As Spivak asserts, "The texts of counter-insurgency locate

[...] a will as a sovereign cause when it is no more than an effect of the subaltern subject effect" (Spivak 204). In Spivak's view, the political will of the subaltern is constructed by the dominant discourse as an after effect of elite nationalism. This discourse contains the subaltern within the grand narrative of bourgeois national liberation, and totally ignores the different, local struggles of particular subaltern groups, such as the role of Muslim weavers in Northern India during 1857 Indian mutiny; the industrial action of Jute workers in early twentieth-century Calcutta; or the Awadh peasant rebellion of 1920.

Spivak's careful deconstructive reading of subaltern insurgency often frustrates readers seeking a clear political solution to the plight of oppressed groups. Neil Lazarus, for example, bemoans the fact that an investigation of the history of "Third World Women" is typically deferred in [Spivak's] writing' (Lazarus 1999: 113). At times Spivak's deconstructive strategies of reading the histories of subaltern insurgency may certainly appear to suspend the elaboration of a concrete example of political resistance.

Yet this is not to say that considerations of subaltern insurgency and resistance are entirely absent from Spivak's thought. Indeed, Spivak's clearest investigations of 'Third World', subaltern women's resistance are often seen in her engagements with literary texts. In 'A Literary Representation of the Subaltern', Spivak suggests that literary texts can provide an alternative rhetorical site for articulating the histories of subaltern women. Invoking the fiction of Mahasweta Devi, Spivak emphasizes that Devi frequently bases her stories on events in twentieth-century Indian history. In 'Draupadi', for example, Devi charts the struggle, eventual capture and brutal rape of a female revolutionary, Dopdi Mejhien, who is wanted by the military for her involvement in the Naxalite rebellion against the bourgeois, nationalist government and the landowners in the 1960s and 1970s. For Spivak, Dopdi's final moment of resistance, when she stands naked and defiant against the military commander,

Senanayak, provides an 'allegory of the woman's struggle within the revolution in a shifting historical moment' (Spivak 184).

The political significance of Devi's fiction and its impact on Spivak's thought is examined more closely in Chapter 6. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that Spivak's readings of Devi's female subaltern characters provide an important counterpoint to the silencing and erasure of women in the British colonial archives and elite nationalist historical writing in India. Since official historical discourse tends to privilege men as the main actors of revolutionary politics in India, Spivak suggests that literature can provide a different space to articulate subaltern women's insurgency and resistance in the social text of postcolonial India. More specifically, the historical fiction of Mahasw a Devi provides Spivak with a concrete articulation of subaltern women's agency and resistance in the postcolonial world. On the whole the argument about resistance theory is regrettably shaped from a limited ideological perspective that leaves little room for smaller narratives of resistance. Throughout, Benita Parry praises British Marxists involvement in the liberation movements and passionately claims that Britain was the place where most of the anti colonial programs were devised and where the majority of the native anti-colonialists had been trained. She thus overlooks the contribution of other parts of Europe and America, which gives the books glossing over the transnational dimension of anti colonial resistance a parochial resonance. .

While developing the concept of resistance Benita Parry further explains in her essay:

Post Colonial Studies: A Materialist Critique

This of course means affirming the power of the reverse-discourses by arguing that anti-colonialist writings did challenge, subvert and undermine the ruling ideologies, and nowhere more so than in overthrowing the hierarchy of colonizer/colonized, the speech and stance of the colonized refusing a position

of subjugation and dispensing with the terms of the colonizer's definitions.

(40)

Post-Colonial Studies is also the study of subaltern. It goes against the colonial studies. So, it is the study of resistance. Post colonial writings is subversive; it does not follow the colonial way of writing. In this sense, such a kind of writing is based on resistance theory.

As Spivak objected one of the main themes in subaltern theory: she does not passively accept a condition of permanent subordination. It also accepts "subaltern consciousness as emergent collective consciousness" (15); and this also requires "the strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political project" (13). Therefore, inhabiting the condition of subalternity also means consciously reclaiming the political in order to bring about the conditions to step out from subalternity.

According to Guha, subaltern refers to "the general attribute of subordination [...] expressed especially in terms of [...] gender" (qtd. in Gandhi 1). Therefore, the present research focuses on the 'subalternity' created by the oppressive gender norms of patriarchy and the term 'subaltern' denotes to "the entire people who are subordinated in terms of gender" (Sen 202). The gender inequality existing in the society, be it post-colonial or not, obstructs the articulation of woman's consciousness and the agency. Here, attempt has been made to analyze the factors that annihilate the women's agency and subalternize them.

'Can the Subaltern Speak?' has been read as an illustrating Spivak's own position as a postcolonial intellectual, who is concerned to excavate the disempowered and silenced voices of the past from the material and political context of the present. Unlike Spivak's reading of the subaltern studies on historical work, this essay combines Spivak's political re-formulation of Western poststructuralist methodologies with a re-reading of the nineteenth-century colonial archives in India. What is more, it signals a departure from the historical work of the subaltern studies group in that Spivak focuses on the historical experiences of subaltern

women, a constituency whose voices and social locations have generally been ignored by the subaltern studies collective, as well as by colonial and elite historical scholarship.

By engaging with the historical knowledge of such disempowered women, Spivak expands the original definition of the subaltern, developed by Ranajit Guha and others, to include the struggles and experiences of women. This expansion of the term subaltern further complicates the lower class connotations of the word because it includes women from the upper middle class, as well as the peasantry and the sub-proletariat.

Nevertheless, the crucial point for Spivak is that the active involvement of women in the history of anti-British colonial insurgency in India has been excluded from the official history of national independence. As Spivak writes:

Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the track of sexual difference is doubly effaced. The question is not of female participation in insurgency, or the ground rules of the sexual, division of labor, for both of which there is evidence.' It is, rather, that both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keep the male dominant. If, in the context colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more, deeply in shadow. (Spivak 287)

This emphasis on the gendered location of subaltern women expands and complicates the established concept of the subaltern. Yet as Neil Lazarus's emphasis, Spivak's injunction to investigate the histories of subaltern women's insurgency is rarely accompanied by any substantial historical research (Lazarus 113). The reason for this, as Spivak points out, is because 'the ideological construction of gender' in the colonial archives and the historical records of subaltern insurgency 'keeps the male dominant' (Spivak 281). Against this

historical erasure of subaltern women, Spivak thus traces the disappearance of the subaltern woman in order to articulate their material and cultural histories.

Spivak's statement 'the subaltern cannot speak' (Spivak 308) has generated much controversy about the limitations of contemporary theoretical paradigms, as well as political structures of representation. Indeed, critics such as Benita Parry (1987) have argued that Spivak's use of poststructuralist methodologies to describe the historical and political oppression of disempowered women has further contributed for their silencing. To this regard Parry writes, "Spivak in her own writings severely restricts (eliminates) the space in which the colonized can be written back into history, even when "interventionist possibilities" are exploited through the deconstructive strategies devised by the post-colonial intellectual" (Parry 39).

Patriarchy rules women by inculcating on them its ideology which, in Louis Althusser's words, "interpellates individuals as subjects" (qtd.in pecheux 148). Ideology produces "women's submission to" what Althusser calls, "the rules of established order" (104). Patriarchy inculcates in them an ideology which they do not object. In other words, it rules women through hegemony affected by the ruling ideology. In reference to hegemony, Gramsci argues that "the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population [...] is caused by the prestige which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production" (12). In the world of production, males play the active role, i.e. they work in the public space. As a result, women consider the men as their patriarchal ideologue.

Patriarchal society defines women as object and as a mere body. Similarly, the capitalist society uses the females as its property to enhance its profitability. But in the present context, woman as subaltern subject raises the rebellious voice against patriarchy and capitalism.

As gender, class also plays the important role in subalternity. The concept of class was propounded by the Marxist thinkers in subaltern studies. Here, the term subaltern in terms of class is used to denote marginalized and oppressed people specifically struggling against hegemonic globalization. According to Marxism, there are two classes in every society. They are, the first one is upper class and the second one is lower class. The upper class people always try to dominate the lower class people and the lower class people go against the domination of upper class people. Ultimately the victory will always be tilted towards the lower class people.

The source of inspiration of subaltern studies is Marxism; it owes a certain intellectual debt to the Italian Communist Antonio Gramsci in trying to move away from deterministic, Stalinist reading of Marx. Historians such as E.P. Thompson and Eric Hobsbawm also began to challenge old categories, did not depoliticize the writing of history or class analysis. The subaltern studies group however did do this. This fact is important although obviously the subaltern school emerged as a voice for the oppressed in the concrete context of India people's movements.

Subaltern studies began on the very terrain that it was to contest: historiography had its roots in the colonial education system. After the independence of India in 1947, Dipesh Chakrabarty writes in *Habitations of Modernity*:

Early phase of subaltern studies bore all the signs of an ongoing struggle between tendencies affiliated with imperialist biases in Indian history and nationalist desire on the part of historians in India to decolonize the past [. . .] Anil Seal's approach synthesizes both colonial and nationalism as the work of elite 'competed and collaborated' with British in their search for power and privilege. (Chakrabarty 4-5)

A few years later in the 1960s this idea as fore-grounded as an extremely narrow view of what constituted political and economic 'interest' for historical actors. At the extreme of this debate Bipin Chandra saw nationalism in a different way as an article of colonialism. Arrival of Ranajit Guha's opinion in this study makes a democratic project and its aim was to produce historical analysis in which subaltern groups were viewed as the subject of history.

Subaltern classes right from the beginning of hierarchy in society are known as "demographic differences' between the total Indian Population" (Chakrabarty 8). For Guha, Subaltern politics in colonial India constituted 'autonomous' domain which did not originate in or depend on the domain of ruling group, the politics of the elite. Subaltern politics and its horizontal affiliation of depending on the level of the consciousness of the people involved made it aggressive and violent than the elite politics. Subaltern consciousness of class, caste and gender leads them towards 'primitive rebellion.

Subaltern politics tended to be more violent than elite politics central to subaltern mobilizations was "a notion of resistance to elite domination". (Guha 5) "The experience of exploitation and labor endowed this politics with many idioms, norms and values which put it in a category apart from elite politics," wrote Guha (Guha 5). Peasant uprisings in colonial India, he argued, reflected this separate and autonomous grammar of mobilization "in its most comprehensive form." Even in the case of resistance and protest by urban workers, the "Figure of mobilization" was one that was "derived directly from peasant insurgency." (Guha 4-5)

Guha insisted that, instead of being an anachronism in a modernizing colonial world, the peasant was a real contemporary of colonialism and a fundamental part of the modernity to which colonial rule gave rise in India. The peasant was not a backward consciousness- a mentality left over from the past baffled by modern political and economic institutions yet resistance to them. Guha suggested that the (insurgent) peasant in colonial India did in fact

read his contemporary world correctly. Examining, for instance, over a hundred known cases of peasant rebellions in British India between 1783 and 1900, Guha showed that these always involved the deployment by the peasants of codes of dress, speech, and behavior that tended to invert the codes through which their social superiors dominated them in everyday life. Inversion of the symbols of authority was almost inevitably the first act of rebellion by insurgent peasants.

Elitist histories of peasant uprisings missed the signification of this gesture by seeing it as pre-political. Anil Seal, for example, dismissed all nineteenth century peasant revolts in colonial India as having no "specific politic content", being "uprisings of the traditional kind, the reaching for sticks and stones as the only way of protesting against distress". Marxists, on the other hand, explained these gestures as either expressing a false consciousness or performing a "safety- valve" function in the overall social system. What both these explanatory strategies missed, Guha, contended, was the fact that, at the beginning of every peasant uprising, there was inevitably a struggle on the part of rebels to destroy all symbols of the social prestige and power of the ruling classes : "It was this fight for prestige which was at the heart of insurgency. Inversion was its principal modality. It was a political struggle in which the rebel appropriated and/or destroyed the insignia of his enemy's power and hoped thus to abolish the marks of his own subalternity."

Guha's point was that the arrangements of power in which peasants and other subaltern classes found themselves in colonial India contained two very different logics of hierarchy and oppression. One was the logic of the quasi-liberal legal and institutional framework introduced by the British. Imbricate with this was another set of relationships in which hierarchy was based on the direct and explicit domination and subordination of the less powerful through both ideological - symbolic means and physical force. The semiotics of

domination and subordination were what the subaltern classes sought to destroy every time they rose up in rebellion.

Subaltern Studies also claims that it can find Indian subalterns' voices, despite problems with sources: Indian peasants and workers have not kept diaries, as British workers have done. This absence of "workers' authentic voices" led to a shift in the methodology of the subaltern studies. To find these voices, subalterns have to use different methods of reading the available documents, i.e. to read them against their grain (102). For this purpose they found the postmodern and postcolonial methodology useful.

Using postmodernist methodology, subaltern studies now concentrates on how the history of knowledge was produced and how its construction can be 'decolonized'. In raising these 'new' questions, the Indian subalterns realized that they could write history only from a position of subalternity because India, as a British colony, itself (as a sub-continent and its people, but irrespective of class structure) was a subaltern nation.

On the basis of region also people are subalternized. Region is most commonly a geographical term that is used in various ways among the different branches of geography. In general, a region is a medium-scale area of land or water, smaller than the whole areas of interest and larger than a specific site. Regionally people can raise their voice against domination over them. For instance, in the present context of Nepal the people of Karnali are raising voice and demanding their rights. This is one of the examples. Not only this, there are many places of the world which are still marginalized because of socio-economic and geographical condition. America is the most advanced country in the world but within America there are some places which are still marginalized. If people of specific geographical area are backward because of socio-economic and geographical condition, they are subalternized.

One of the most dynamic concepts to emerge from resistance studies has been that of subalternity. Applied throughout the field of study, it has opened up new

areas for debate surrounding the question of agency and power. In general, the ideas of subalternity have been used to incorporate all forms of subversion into the broad spectrum of conflict and resistance, particularly in post-colonial societies. Steve Stern, for example, has found the subaltern a more elastic category of historical analysis and less value loaded than 'peasant' or 'poor', enabling him to account for without appropriating the heterogeneous nature of peasant society.

Under subaltern studies resistance remains in the center. The first concept of resistance is most clearly put forward by Selwyn Cudjoe in his *Resistance and Caribbean Literature* and by Barbara Harlow in her book, *Resistance Literature*. For Cudjoe and Harlow, resistance refers to an act, or a set of acts, that is designed to rid a people of its oppressors, and it so thoroughly infuses the experience of living under oppression that it becomes an almost autonomous aesthetic principle. Literary resistance, under these conditions, can be seen as a form of contractual understanding between text and reader, one which is embedded in an experiential dimension and buttressed by a political and cultural aesthetic at work in the culture. And 'resistance literature', in this definition, can thus be seen as that category of literary writing which emerges as an integral part of an organized struggle or resistance for national liberation. Jenny Shape's wonderful article in *Modern Fiction Studies* entitled "Figures of Colonial Resistance". Sharpe's article involves a reconsideration of the work of theorists such as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Abdul Jan Mohamed, and Benita Parry, each of whom has worked to correct the critical 'tendency to presume the transparency' of literary resistance in colonial and post-colonial writing (138).

In conclusion, 'subaltern' is a term applied to those who exist at the bottom of a hierarchical power system without any means of improving their social condition. In the 1970s, the term began to be used as a reference to colonized people in South Asian subcontinent. 'Subaltern Studies' began in the early 1980s as an 'intervention in South Asian

historiography'. While it began as a model for the subcontinent, it was quickly developed into a 'vigorous post-colonial critique'. With the passage of time subalternity increases its power of resistance. The English term 'resistance' denotes using force to oppose something/somebody. Resistance opposes to the proposed of changing where power remained undamaged or unaffected by something. Literary resistance is to question the colonial authority in colonial and post-colonial writing. Benita Parry views in her seminal essay, "Theorizing Resistance too Cheers for Nativism," that "it is a reverse discourse as an oppositional practice, posing problems about the appropriate models for contemporary counter hegemonic work" (qtd. in Mongia 84). Thus, literary resistance counters the hegemonic work and all kinds of traditional ways of writings.

The above description on methodology shows that many theorists have participated to speak about the rebellious consciousness of the Subaltern people. This research paper is also trying to elaborate the rebellious nature of Subaltern characters in front of their masters in Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres*.

III. Rebellious Consciousness of the Subalterns in Smiley's

A Thousand Acres

Jane Smiley's novel *A Thousand Acres* is the representation of subalternity and resistance against the then elitist ideology of mid-western America. Most of the characters of this novel are dominated by the power holders. Larry Cook, the principal antagonist of this novel, remained invisible to his daughter Ginny because she had blocked out the memory of Larry's rape and beating for many years. Unable to recognize him as the source of her misery, Ginny could not resist her father. Ultimately, however, Ginny is able to resist her father and carve out a livable existence because she comes to see Larry as the center of the power exerted over her.

Jane Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* tells a dark tale of a corrupted patriarchal society which operates through concealment. It is a story in which the characters attempt to manipulate one another through the secrets they possess and the subsequent revelation of those secrets. In her novel women who remain financially and emotionally dependent on men decay, whereas those able to break the economic and emotional chains develop as women and as better human beings. Thus, the whole novel covers the struggle of subaltern people for the establishment of their identity.

Roots of *A Thousand Acres* can be seen in numerous novels and plays. The most obvious of which is Shakespeare's *King Lear*. The parallels are too great to ignore. Smiley is successful because she fills up so many of the gaps left open in the play. She gives us new and different perspectives.

One of the strengths of the novel lies in its depiction of the place of women in a predominantly patriarchal culture. In this male dominated culture, women are subalterns and the values privileged in women include silence and subordination. Ginny is acceptable as a woman as long as she remains "oblivious" (121). She is allowed to disagree with men,

contingent upon her doing so without fighting. Ultimately her opinion as a woman remains irrelevant. Ginny remarks, "Of course, it was silly to talk about my point of view, ' when my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished" (176). When she makes the "mistake" of crossing her father, she is referred to as a "bitch", "whore", and "slut" (181, 185).

It could be argued that many of the male characters in the novel are suffering from a type of virgin/whore syndrome. As long as the women remain docile receptacles they are "good", when they resist or even question masculine authority, they are considered to be "bad". Rose complains, "When we are good girls and accept our circumstances, we're glad about it...when we are bad girls, it drives us crazy" (99). The women have been indoctrinated to the point that they initially accept these standards of judgment. The type of patriarchy described by Smiley simply serves to show the inscription of the marginalization of women by men in the novel.

Another strength of the novel is its treatment of secrets and appearances. Like characters in a Lewis or Bellow's novel, the characters in *A Thousand Acres* are more concerned with maintaining a veneer of social respectability than with addressing reality. Life for them becomes some kind of facade. Nearly everyone has a secret and nothing is as it seems. The narrator tells us, "They all looked happy"(38); and later, "most issues on a farm return to the issue of keeping up appearances"(199).

Amid all of the sub-plots and mini-themes (and there are many) in *A Thousand Acres*, one recurring theme which stands out is Smiley's criticism of a masculine – dominated culture. One element clearly valued by this patriarchal society is female's silence: "The girls sat quietly"(95) and they are good girls. For a woman to express her own feelings, in the novel can lead to harmful repressions. So, it is that Ginny suppresses her voice. Her inability and unwillingness to stand up to her father, and even to Ty (in reference to the babies

especially), shows that she allows herself to remain marginalized mostly throughout the novel.

In *A Thousand Acres*, Smiley tries to capture the tensions of real everyday living in her representation of a dysfunctional rural family steeped in a patriarchal tradition. She shows the effects of the unreasonableness of our patriarchal society and indicts it in the process. Ginny is defined within a double set of cultural constraints. She is confined not only by prevailing expectations regarding social behavior but also by those governing the proper behavior of women. Reticence is an essential part of the code of feminine decorum based on the idea of woman's inherent weakness and the need to defer to and rely upon masculine strength and protection. By allowing Ginny, to break the chains of reticence and flee, literally to a new life, Smiley turns weakness into strength as she envisions a more reasonable (and perhaps more feminized) social order. She forces us to ask what ideals we are being sacrificed to patriotism? Maintaining appearances? Maintaining patriarchal standards? Smiley speaks for all who have been marginalized when she states (through Jess) "may be to you it looked like I just vanished, but I was out there" (55).

Ginny's discourse is shaped by a culture that devalues and silences women. Girls learn to be quiet and unremarkable, not to be seen and not heard. When Ginny remembers family harmony in her childhood, none of the girls speaks. Their silence appears to be the condition in which the father's contentment can be expressed. Ginny's silenced voice expresses:

My earliest memories of him are of being afraid to look him in the eye, to look at him at all. He was too big and his voice was too deep. If I had to speak to him, I addressed his overalls, his shirt, and his boots. If he lifted me near his face, I shrank away from him. If he kissed me, I endured it, offered a little hug in return. At the same time, his very fearsomeness was reassuring when I thought about things like robbers or monsters, and we lived on what was

clearly the best, most capably cultivated farm. The biggest farm farmed by the biggest farmer. (19)

The father's repressive and dominative nature affects Ginny throughout her whole life keeping her in full of tensions and pressures. Living under his domination, she suppresses her creativity and potentiality and lived away from creative genius in her society. Here, Ginny's father Larry always tries to keep daughter in silence. But Ginny as a rebellious subaltern character revolts against patriarchy at the latter part of this novel.

Ginny's repression of painful memories destroys her identity. As Larry creates the occasion for a memory so horrible that it must not be allowed into consciousness, Larry is the root of Ginny's "Feathery non-existence" (20). Ginny, as the other, is not allowed to exist as her true self or as she might want to be but must conform to Larry's idea of who she should be. In other words, she sees herself only in terms of her father: "The biggest farm farmed by the biggest farmer. That fit, or may be formed, my own sense of the right order of things" (20). Ginny's charge that Larry never sees things from her point of view provides evidence of this situation. In fact, her father does not even consider her point of view: "When he talked, he had this effect on me. Of course, it was silly to talk about my point of view. When my father asserted his point of view, mine vanished. Not even I could remember it" (176). Larry Cook as a leading member of a family thought that he was all in all. When he is talking, at that time, no one is allowed to talk. This also shows that he is playing the role of dominator in that farming family. His daughters are living under his domination. Here, also the daughters are subalterns in terms of gender.

The domination does not stop, however, with the sexual and physical abuse of Ginny's younger life. It continues in her adult life in the form of silencing, misrepresentation, and expectations. Ginny's fear of her father confines her to the role of daughter only: "On the other hand, perhaps she hadn't mistaken anything at all, and had simply spoken as a woman

rather than as a daughter. That was something; I realized in a flash, that rose and I were pretty careful never to do" (21). Ginny can hardly speak at all. This fear has its roots in early childhood: "My earliest memories of him are of being afraid to look him in the eye, to look at him at all"(19). Ginny is deathly afraid to speak to her father because she cannot use her own voice. When she does speak to him it is in the accommodated, neutralized voice of his language. Ginny erases herself -- her subjectivity is destroyed and kept silent by herself, her father, and her husband, Tyler.

After Rose reveals or retrieves the secret for Ginny, Ginny is able to resist her father, to begin to see him for what he is -- a cruel patriarch? Her first memory of her father creeping into her room at night to have sex with her is one of silencing. Her father says, "Quiet, now girl" (280). She is not allowed to resist and she does not. Not until she begins the reconstruction of her identity through memory retrieval does Ginny find the self that should never have been concealed. In her father's house -- the place where she was beaten and raped -- after every one has either left or died, Ginny is able to speak in her own unmasked, un-neutralized and loud voice: "I screamed in a way that I had never screamed before, full out, throat -- wrenching, unafraid -- of -- making -- a -- fuss -- and -- drawing -- attention -- to -- myself sorts of screams that I made myself concentrate on becoming all mouth, all tongue, all vibrations" (229). Had the secret been withheld from Ginny, or not retrieved for Ginny, she would have gone on living in her oppressed and ignorant world.

In *A Thousand Acres* the Cook family's success in agrarian Iowa is the result of determination and industry by nearly four generations of the male members of the family. The tales of Sam Davis and John and Larry Cook in pursuing capitalistic and material success and respectability in Zebulon County, Iowa, can be agrarian versions of Alger's success stories. Ween has pointed out that John and Edith Cook "represent the rags -- to riches, Horatio Alger tradition of America" (117).

Sam and Arabella Davis move to Zebulon County from England in 1890, believing in "the American promise, which is only possibilities" (48). They eventually become the benefactors of sixteen – year – old John Cook: as his first employer, then his adoptive parents, and later his in laws (48). Ginny Cook Smith describes her grandfather John Cook as:

[O]nly a clerk in a dry – goods store, but a reading man, interested in the newest agricultural and industrial innovations, and he persuaded my great – grandparents to use the money remaining to them to drain part of their land. [...] He sold my great – grandfather two digging forks, a couple of straight sided shovels, a leveling hose, a quantity of locally manufactured drainage tiles, and a pair of high boots. (14)

John, of the same age group as many of Alger's heroes is apparently a self – educated young man much like Ragged Dick, who rises from a bootblack to a clerk in a counting room after leaving how to write and calculate. John's ability to sell Davis the tools and goods and necessary for draining standing water is proof of his resemblance with an Alger hero.

Alger heroes often move from country to city, from manual labor to clerical positions, but, despite their urban settings, the novels present country life as preferable to city life. According to Gary Scharnhorst, Jr., Alger uses "the nostalgic myth of the country boy as a moral exemplar to the modern notion of the city as sphere of economic opportunity" and discouraged "the rural poor from migrating to the city" (78). Scharnhorst writes that "[...] in some of his later novels about a socially and geographically mobile hero Alger even reversed the expected journey of the hero from country to city, instead transplanting a stunted street Arab into more fertile country soil" (79). With a response similar to Alger's nostalgia for the preindustrial era agrarian life, John Cook resigns his clerical position and follows Sam Davis to his farm. John probably uses the fork and shovel meant for Arabella, who remains in

Mason City to give birth to Ginny's grandmother Edith. Emphasizing the success of the family farm, Ginny notes that "the history of Zebulon Country was not the history of wealthy investment, but of poor people who got lucky, who were sold a bill a goods by speculators and discovered they had received a gift of riches beyond the speculators' wildest lies, land whose fertility surpassed hope" (141). Ginny regards her grandfather Cook as a man who found "possibilities where others saw a cheat" (48). He finds the hidden fertility of the Davises' farm and leads the family to success.

Larry Cook disciplines himself and his family members with what Ginny calls a "catechism" (47); the story and the lessons embedded within them, are further reinforced by contrasting the success of the Cook farm with the failures of the neighboring farms. Ginny details the Catechism:

What is a farmer?

A farmer is a man who feeds the world.

What is a farmer's first duty?

To grow more food

What is a farmer's second duty?

To buy more land.

What are the signs of a good farm?

Clean fields, neatly painted buildings, breakfast at six, no debts, no standing water.

How will you know a good farmer when you meet him?

He will not ask you for any favors. (45)

Ginny continues, "A good farmer was a man who so organized his work that the drainage-well catchment basins were cleaned out every spring and the greets were pointed black every two years" (47-48). Larry Cook is, in fact, an ideal farmer. He studies to increase the

productivity of his farm and has added acreage to the Cook farm. He fulfills the last item for "the signs of a good farm" and "a good farmer" (47) because the tile system on the Cook farm drains "fields that were nearly as level as the table" and the "water courses [...] had been field in and plowed through, so the tile lines drained into drainage wells" (47).

Ginny remembers feeling "secure and good" as a child because of "the knowledge that the work at (her) place was farther along, the buildings at (her) place more imposing and better cared for" (5). Larry's daily life is so organized as to have a "usual routine for supper (49): "pork chops baked with tomatoes [...], fried potatoes, a salad, and two or three different kinds of pickles" at Ginny's house on Tuesdays; he eats at his second daughter "Rose's on Friday's" (50). He is punctual and resists Ginny and Rose's efforts to change his habits" (50). Although Larry Cook is stubborn and inflexible, he does practise what he believes in and what he says to his daughters.

While talking about subalternity, Smiley's tragedy connects the patriarch's story to national myths of identify and value that erases women and authorizes their abuse. Ginny's narrative virtually begins with her father's view of women as objects for use. Larry Cook has "a whole theoretical system" concerning the place of women in the scheme of things: Caroline is twenty-eight and failing her function because "according to Daddy, it's almost too late to breed her. [...] he'll tell you all about sows and heifers and things drying up and empty chambers" (10). Inevitably, he thinks about Ginny as a "barren whore" because she is sexual, but she is "not really a woman" because she has produced no children (181). Producing, bearing and nurturing children are the avenues to fulfill womanhood in Larry's view. Larry regards women as livestock. Outside of the offspring they produce, women only value in laboring to feed and clothe their fathers and husbands- Larry has high standards for the punctuality and content of meals. Women- called "girls" in this system-should not produce

ideas or words but rather they should be silent and respectful: "You girls should listen to me", says Daddy; "You shouldn't talk to me like you do" (176, 174).

Larry's perspective on women appears almost comical when Rose first describes it the notion of a "whole theoretical system" about breeding, about "things drying up and empty chambers" is reductive enough to make Jess laugh (10). But Larry's are the eyes and ideas of his culture; not by accident is he widely respected as the leading farmer in his community. There, nobody laughs at Larry, but rather at the peculiar ways of the outsider, Jess. The other farmers who gather at the store and the coffee shop resemble Larry closely, and they and their wives and daughters confirm Larry's views of women: "Others of them like him and look up to him. He fits right in, "Rose observes" (302). Larry speaks for western patriarchy and thus defines the assumptions that allow and even encourage the abuse of land and daughters. Smiley brings ecological themes together with familial ones: damage to the daughters and damage to the land become one, braided legacies of the patriarch's 'will to power'. Violence against life itself is permissible in either form of abuse, as sociologist Ellen Bass has observed: "The sexual abuse of children is part of a culture in which violence to life is condoned our forests, our rivers, our oceans, our air, our earth, this entire biosphere, all are invaded with poison -- raped just as our children are raped" (118). The results include ecological disaster -- a theme emphasized in Smiley, present but muted in Shakespeare. Lear, travels with a hundred retainers, men seen by Goneril as: Men so disordered, so deboshed, and bold" that they in fact court with their "Epicurism and lust" (*King Lear*, 248-50). They seize the servants and lay waste the surrounding countryside, and Lear's kingdom becomes progressively desolate. Similar assumptions about the rights of ownership lead Larry to poison his own well, not only in metaphor but in literal fact. His methods of farming, like those of his father and his neighbors, have polluted the groundwater with chemicals in the effort to raise bigger crops and profits Smiley anticipates the crucial link between the abuse

of women's bodies and land with the text's epigraph from Meridel Le Sueur: "The body repeats the landscape. They are the source of each other and serve each other. We were marked by the seasonal body of earth, by the terrible migrations of people, by the swift turn of a century, verging on change never before experienced on this greening planet."

Smiley's novel is narrated from the perspectives of two daughters (not the third daughter who refuses her father's commands out of a sense of her own dignity and honor) but the eldest daughter, who first obeys her father later resists to his domination. Ginny Cook is the pure product of her father's upbringing and values. She is obedient, quiet, clean, self-deprecating, careful of appearances, ashamed of her body and unable to take pleasure. Unlike Goneril, she recognizes no desire. She is much afraid, particularly of her father. She is defined by what she does not know, which includes both past sources of her own personal identity--what happened to her between ages nine and eighteen, what led to her marry Ty, what caused her miscarriage--and present motives and actions of those around her in the present. A latter-day picaresque innocent, she is surprised at every turn by revelations, mostly of the selfishness and greed of those around her. Although the shift from the public stage to the privacy of fiction entails a loss of objectivity, Smiley's chosen narrator exaggerates the distance from Lear, because Ginny is not only a subjective filter, but an unusually tentative, uncertain one, a figure of repressed knowledge and refused intuitions.

Importantly, Smiley's critique is aimed against the conventional reading of *King Lear*: "I had an intention in *A Thousand Acres* that grew out of something less rational a response to the play. I wanted to communicate the ways in which I found the conventional reading of *King Lear* frustrating and wrong" (Smiley, 160). Until recently, the predominant critical reading of Goneril and Regan could be summarized in Harold Bloom's acceptance of the two as 'unnatural hags' and 'monsters of the deep' (Bloom 64). It is true that previous critical attempts have been made to challenge these images, notably by Stephen Reid in 1970 but it

is only in recent years that a change seems to have occurred, possibly in the wake of *A Thousand Acres*.

Jane Smiley approaches *King Lear* from a feminist perspective, which is one of the parts of subaltern perspectives, creating a space from which Ginny/Goneril speaks; counteracting the patriarchal images of Shakespeare's women and granting silenced female character a voice. In contexts concerning opposition or resistance to male normativity, voice has come to denote 'power of expression'. For Nancy A. Walker, *A Thousand Acres* counts as a "disobedient" narrative in that it 'expose[s] and question[s] patriarchal patterns that Shakespeare and his contemporaries took for granted' by giving 'narrative authority to the female characters" (Walker 7-8).

The change from a traditionally masculine perspective to a feminine one in *A Thousand Acres* makes it possible for women to acquire more prominent positions. The reader receives Goneril's version; her inner life and feelings are put on display as Smiley provides her a voice and a 'history of her own'. This alteration cannot suddenly make Goneril 'more Sinned against than sinning' or Lear a 'monster of the deep'. Granting narrative authority to the female characters does not mean that we suddenly just side with Goneril and Regan, or that Goneril becomes the epitome of goodness. Smiley makes it quite difficult for the reader to identify Ginny as the counterpart to Goneril as they are very different characters: One is the daughter of a king, married to a duke, about to inherit a third of the kingdom, and as such in a very powerful position the other is a farmer's daughter.

A Thousand Acres is written in a first-person narrative, which makes the speaking voice much more subject to critique and suspicion than a third-person mode of narrative would be. It is true that as a first person narrator, Ginny inhabits a very powerful position; the story and the other characters are filtered through her perspective. At the same time, however, the first person voice only claims 'the validity of one person's right to interpret her

experiences'. The first person narrator runs a greater risk of being questioned about his/her intentions. It might be difficult to establish authority, as the novel actually avoids the masculine position of authority which is, traditionally associated with an omniscient narrator.

Subaltern people are always fighting to establish their own identity. The power holders do not like to leave their power but subaltern people until and unless, get the power; they are fighting. Here, in the novel as well there is the struggle for getting power. Larry as a leading member of family tries to preserve his power but Ginny and Rose, who are dominated in the family, try to get power. The transfer of power and property is central in both *King Lear* and *A Thousand Acres*. As any reader of *King Lear* knows, the division of the kingdom will come to dominate the original purpose of the ceremony: to select a future husband for Cordelie. In *A Thousand Acres*, the transfer of the farm comes to overshadow the welcome home party for Harold Clark's son Jess. Without previous notice and without any intention. It seems, of diminishing his power; Larry announces his plan to form a corporation between his three daughters and their respective husbands. Both taken by surprise, Ginny and Rose express their admission. Ginny thinks 'It's a good idea', whereas Rose thinks 'It's a great idea' (Smiley 19).

Ginny is a woman, whose power over her life and even over her own body is severely impaired by her father's sexual abuse, by Ty's reluctance to let her become pregnant, and by the farmers' poisoning of the well-water, which obstructs her reproductive capacities. It is the sudden change from a position of powerlessness to one of comparative power, and the effects this has on a person, that are important to bring to ask whether certain actions or behaviors are morally reprehensible or not. The novel offers a context for understanding why and how a person can become blinded by power. Ginny as a subaltern character tries to get her power from the hand of her father and her husband. When she becomes conscious about domination, she starts to explore her rebellious desires.

In subalternity, class also plays the important role. In the intrinsic heart of subaltern class resistance is there. The concept of class was propounded by Marxist thinkers in subaltern studies. According to them, there are two classes in every society. They are the upper class and the lower class. Here in the novel as well two classes are in confrontation. The upper class character is represented by Larry Cook and the lower class is represented by Ginny Cook and other marginalized characters. In the whole novel, Larry Cook represents the power holder who tries to dominate all the other characters. As a powerful member from the Cook family, Larry tries to exploit his own daughters physically and mentally. In capitalist society the leading member of family / society tries to dominate all the other members. Similarly, in the novel, Larry Cook as a member of capitalist society is in the way of dominating other characters.

As an agricultural producer and consumer on a grand scale, Larry Cook does not operate in human isolation. His daughters Ginny and Rose, who remain on the farm throughout their lives, are incorporated into his sphere; his life's work consumes their lives quite literally. Larry's decision to incorporate the farm underscores the degree to which Ginny and Rose have been incorporated into Larry's domain. However, Larry's monolithic status and his assertion of his fierce independence and self-reliance belie his dependence upon others. Just as he produces and consumes--farms and eats--on a large scale, his life as a farmer consumes his own daughters' lives.

Ginny Cook, Smiley's narrator, provides the filter through which we read the novel, and her narration privileges her own perspective, whereas most characters in the novel give more priority to Larry's authority. Throughout much of the novel Ginny's character is easily interpreted as a typical farmwife on a family farm, managing the domestic sphere while men manage the farming. Ginny and her sister Rose are considered "provided for" by their father

Larry, but much of their energy and efforts throughout the novel are devoted to feeding the men in their families (74).

Much of each waking day for Ginny is spent in preparing meals for her family as the farm at large ostensibly provides "food for the world" (75), her domestic activities of cooking, canning, and gardening illustrate her efforts to put food on the table in a literal sense while male family members work in the fields to supposedly do the same. In the eyes of Larry, Ginny's husband Ty, and even neighbor Harold Clark, this work justifies farm wives' existence, but remains practically invisible to the men who rely on their cooking.

Ginny and Rose's younger sister, Caroline, provides the women's dramatic foil, for Caroline has escaped the life of a farm wife to become a lawyer--a fate made possible by her sisters' resignation to remaining on the family farm, a fact she appears oblivious to throughout the novel. Rose's wedding gift to Caroline, highlights the cultural gulf between Caroline and her sisters. Rose and Ginny are women who must cook, unlike Caroline, and neither can afford fancy kitchen gadgetry such as a Cuisinart, a convenience that could remove some of the tedious labor from the never ending task of feeding the family.

Ginny's name itself nods to her lot in life: "Ginny Cook" suggests the imperative "Ginny cook". It is not difficult to imagine her father issuing this statement, or at least implying this, as he waits impatiently for Ginny to prepare a meal for him. Ginny begins cooking for her father when she is a young girl, after her mother dies of cancer. The morning after her mother's funeral, she remembers, "My father awoke me at five-thirty to make his breakfast," and she quickly assumes her mother's domestic duties (316). Years later, as an adult, she still prepares her father's breakfast daily.

Despite his utter dependence upon his daughters to cook his meals, Larry demonstrates a stunning ignorance of his dependence upon either his daughters, who cook for him,

or the work on and from which the food grows. When Ginny arrives to cook breakfast one morning, Larry informs her, “Nobody shopped over the weekend. There’s no egg” (122). Larry illustrates the other end of the complex chain that is industrialized agriculture; food simply comes from the store and is prepared by Ginny or Rose. On a farm where hens are raised for slaughter, eggs are purchased at the store rather than gathered from laying hens, as was customary on farms in the past. Larry illustrates a 50 disconnect between farming and the kitchen, and for all his fierce independence, reveals his unwitting dependence on Ginny and Rose.

But Larry’s use of his daughters extends well beyond relying on their cooking his daily meals. Rose forces Ginny to remember their father’s sexual abuse of them as teenagers, after their mother’s death. Though initially skeptical--Ginny neither believes nor remembers the abuse--she slowly realizes that it did in fact occur, and that she must have repressed those memories. Accordingly, then, Larry’s abuse of Ginny and Rose upon their mother’s death suggests that they fulfilled the role of their mother, not only to satisfy his appetite for food, but his sexual appetites as well.

The object status of Ginny and Rose in their father’s eyes is suggested numerous times through comparisons drawn between the daughters (and children in general) and the farm’s hog operation. Rose demonstrates a clear awareness of this, claiming that “[w]e were just his, to do with as he pleased, like the pond or the houses or the hogs or the crops” (206). Speaking of their sister Caroline’s upcoming marriage, Rose says to Jess Clark, a family friend, and Ginny, “According to Daddy, it’s almost too late to breed her. Ask him. He’ll tell you all about sows and heifers and things drying up and empty chambers. It’s a whole theoretical system” (11). Children are discussed like hogs, and hogs are discussed like people or children. Ty, fantasizing about expanding the breeding operation, wants “a couple of champion boars, the kind whose breeding is so pure they can sit up to dinner with you and

not spill anything on the tablecloth” (24). The offspring would be so desirable that one could “put those babies up for adoption”; Ty goes on: “You can say, ‘Yeah, Jake, but you’ve got to feed him with your own spoon, and let him sleep on your side of the bed,’ and they’ll say, ‘Sure, Ty, anything. I’ve already started his college fund.’ Looking at Ginny, he adds, ‘Or hers. Sows with that kind of endowment get all the benefits too’” (24-25). The metaphor elevates hogs to the status of children--children with advantages never enjoyed by Larry Cook’s daughters-- and also like Ty and Ginny to hogs, as if they have become breeding stock for the farm operation. These comparisons also speak to the incorporation of women into the farm’s cycle of consumption; as the roles of children and livestock are reversed, hogs perversely displace children at the dinner table. Ginny has even internalized this correlation; while having sex with her husband, she imagines herself in porcine terms: “[Her] back seemed about as long and humped as a sow’s,” and she “longed to wallow, to press [her] skin against his and be engulfed” (174).

Larry’s “lust for every new method designed to swell productivity” (47) figures into his valuation of his own daughters, who (perhaps ironically) provide no male heir to directly inherit the Cook farm, which Larry had, not surprisingly, inherited from his own father. Though no direct discussion of heirs emerges, instead remaining cloaked in a discussion of hog breeding, the daughters on the farm are likened to livestock destined for human consumption. Rose takes pains to keep her two daughters away from the farm operations; Ginny remains childless. In a rage, Larry calls Ginny a “dried-up whore bitch” and a “barren whore,” suggesting that her true value on the farm is indeed her reproductive capacity and that her apparent inability to have children makes her worthless (195). Of course, Larry’s anger at Ginny’s inability to bear a child, an heir, is ironic since her bearing a child from his incest would have produced evidence of his abuse. Importantly, Ginny’s infertility allows

Larry to “keep up appearances” in the community, for “a good appearance was the source and the sign of all other good things” (215).

Ginny’s childless state (she catalogues five miscarriages) does not just conveniently mask Larry’s abuse over the course of the novel she, and the novel’s readers learn that her infertility is very likely the result of the farm’s reliance upon nitrate fertilizers, which are terribly common in large-scale agriculture. Though Larry (and the rest of the family) betray no knowledge of the dangers of nitrate fertilizers, Jess Clark explains that they jeopardize human health by leaching into water supplies: ““People have known for ten years or more that nitrates in well water because miscarriages and death of infants. Don’t you know that the fertilizer runoff drains into the aquifer? I can’t believe this”” (177). These fertilizers are used to increase crop yields, chiefly because planting the same crops on the same land year after year strips the soil of nutrients; continued farming is made possible (and profitable) only with the use of synthetic fertilizers. Ginny eventually sees in the farmed landscape, which had been “pure fertility” before its agricultural “improvement,” nothing but “hills that are ringed with black earth and crowned with soil so pale that the corn only stands in it, as in gravel, because there are no nutrients to draw from it” (23, 398).

Smiley reveals a very real and persistent environmental threat through Ginny’s increasing awareness of the interconnectedness of human and environmental health through the water supply provided by the underground aquifer beneath the farm. The water, managed by a network of drainage tiles laid beneath the soil, provides drainage of the land as well as well water for the family. She slowly realizes it is a “loop of poison” with “water running down through the soil, into the drainage wells, into the lightless mysterious underground chemical sea, then being drawn up, cold and appetizing, from the drinking well into Rose’s faucet, my faucet” (398). This “cold and appetizing” water that nourishes them, and the crops, is a source of poison and illness; evidence accumulates that Ginny and Rose, as well as

a number of ancestors and neighbors, are likely victims of poisoning by contaminants, like fertilizers, that accumulate in groundwater. Cancer crops up throughout the novel: Rose suffers from chemotherapy for her breast cancer throughout the novel; Rose and Ginny's mother died of cancer at an early age, as did Jess Clark's mother; and Edith Cook, their grandmother, also died mysteriously at an early age. It is implied, by novel's end, that these women are likely victims of the farming that is also their families' livelihood. Though they were farmers, they were also dominated because of which they start to revolt against that domination, when they become conscious.

Ginny, who never went to college is engaged in a "lifelong course of study about the tricks of appearance" (56), about the lure of appearances (239); about the seemingly "irrefutable logic of appearances" (266). In Zebulon County, which was settled mostly by English, Germans and Scandinavians, a good appearance was the source and the sign of all other good things" (199). Among these farmers, Ginny tells us, "most issues... return to the issue of keeping up appearances" (199), which is to say that for these farmer's, what is beyond the surface of the visible shall remain beyond, and invisible. To achieve this to keep the surface clear and unbroken, requires discipline, which addresses the way one lives one's life and is directed as much towards relationships with others as towards objects or the physical world. If Ginny is comfortable with the discipline of making a good appearance to friends and neighbours, tackling one mindless household after another (285), she is also comfortable with the discipline of "practising courtesy" and "putting the best face on things" in her relationships with her husband Ty, her father Larry, and her sisters Rose and Caroline such discipline, Ginny confesses, helps to contain things' making them "clear and hard" (239). Courtesy and manners "cool the passions" (239), precisely because they allow one to 'harbor [. . .] secrets', even from those with whom one is most intimate (260).

While talking about region we have to include the cooking and eating habit of Midwesterners. From this point of view as well they are subaltern people. Jane Smiley in her 1993 article, "Reflections on a Lettuce Wedge", complains that she is fed up with eating at restaurants where "the salad" is a wedge of iceberg lettuce floating in bright orange 'French' dressing, where patrons gladly pay top dollar for "instant mashed potatoes" and "machine-formed turkey breast" (70). "Why do Midwesterners hold their taste buds in lower esteem than everyone else in the whole world, even the notorious British?" (125). She demands to know.

Anyone who reads *A Thousand Acres* cannot help asking this same question about the eating habits of the farmers who inhabit this Midwestern novel. Smiley's aptly named Cook family is always cooking or eating, and much of the food sounds heavy and unappetizing. Most of us cringe to think of Midwest-Mex garbanzo bean enchiladas or pork liver sausages canned with sauerkraut (to say nothing of tuna noodle casserole), yet these are foods that her characters prepare and expect their family and friends to eat –never mind enjoy. What does Smiley mean by constantly placing her characters in front of a plate especially when that plate is so often filled with bland stick-to-the ribs food? "Reflections on a Lettuce Wedge", gives us lots of hints. Here, she argues that Midwesterners don't demand better food because they have "internalized" and "Anything is good enough for me attitude" (42). Quoting one of Garrison Keillors radio monologues she says that Midwesterners learn "early" the "who you think you are to aspire to something more beautiful, more exotic, or more unusual than what is put before you?" (127)

Every one of her characters in *A Thousand Acres* is well-versed in this Midwestern asceticism. In fact, we can draw a direct connection between the blandness of the food the Cook family eats and the self-denying, pinched lives they live. This novel deals largely with the complications that lie beneath the calm, healthy appearances of Midwestern farm life.

And what could seem more harmless than bland food? The spicesless meat-and-potatoes dishes that the characters choke down are all so undisguised that we are tempted to assume that nothing could be simpler. However, as Smiley says, these meals where "ingredients" are "juxtaposed but not allowed to mingle" represent "despair incarnate" (*Reflections* 47). The lack of flavor suggests zestless living -a hunger for something more satisfying. Furthermore, even the raw ingredients that make up the Cook family meals are more insidious than they seem. Supposedly pure well water turns out to be laced with poisons that furtively kill off the women and cause their miscarriages; vegetables are chock full of insecticides, and meats are tainted with drugs. Also, cooking itself appears deceptively unimportant: but proves to be a source of both power and oppression. Initially, the oldest daughter, Ginny, dutifully plays the role of family hash-slinger and views herself as a minor player next to the men who tend the profit-making cornfields and pigs. But as she awakens to her own self-worth - and to the realization that her father has slept with his own daughters, that her sister Rose has slept with her lover, and that the men in her family have sacrificed their integrity, their wives, and their children for their land- cooking food and serving it becomes her means of asserting power and gaining freedom. From the opening scene at Harold Clark's pig roast, to the last page of this novel, where Ginny reflects on the connection between her sin of poisoning Rose's sausages and her father's incest, food and the way it is served mirror her submission to and final rebellion against the cook family patriarchy.

A Thousand Acres emerged from Smiley's own strong reaction against convention--her sense that 'conventional readings of *King Lear* frustrating and wrong'--; particularly in the ways they glamorize Cordelia's coldness and Lear's selfishness and humourlessness, his grand standing and self-pity. Yet in rejecting conventional readings of *Lear*, Smiley does not reject convention, only the conventions of drama, which privilege [...] action over point of view. Knowing like another novelist, that 'it is impossible to regard a tragedy from two points of

view', she places her faith in the conventions of narrative, which she believes', always call in to questions the validity of appearance always [propose] a difference between public perception of events and their actual meaning, narrative, and particularly the expansive realism of the novel, allows Smiley to produce a 'faithful but still' profoundly subversive' revision of *King Lear*, one that seeks 'an acquittal for the daughters.

Smiley as a radical feminist raises the voice of subaltern people and goes against the dominant power. She is always in favor of subaltern people. Most of her novels deal with the issue of marginalized people. In this novel, Larry Cook represents the power holder in mid-western farming family, whereas his daughters and the rest of the other characters are represented as subaltern characters. Smiley powerfully adopts an eco-feminist perspective, which begins from the notion that male domination of women and of nature are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. In so doing Smiley protests the tendency of men to treat 'nature and women as exploitable objects'; *A Thousand Acres* links the family to the land they work associating in particular the patriarch's treatment of the land and treatment of the body, and more precisely, associating his abuse of the land and his abuse of women. Thus, Ginny as subaltern character of this novel raises her voice against dominating power, which is the voice of rebellious consciousness of the subaltern.

Chapter IV. Conclusion

Smiley's *A Thousand Acres* is the epitome of rebellious consciousness of subaltern people. Ginny is one of the most important characters of this novel who follows the way of rebellion against her own father. It is not because of her but because of her father's attitudes, she compels to rebel against him. Larry Cook, as the father of Ginny, Rose and Caroline, exploits his own daughters especially Ginny physically and mentally. In the beginning of this novel, Ginny does not have the sense of domination but in the latter part of this novel she becomes conscious and starts revolting against him. It is because of her consciousness and with the help of her sister, Rose she dares to protest her own father.

Consciousness is something that is inherent in human being. Human beings are human because they have consciousness. But having rebellion consciousness is something other than having consciousness. In this present research work, too, the rebellion consciousness of Ginny is the main force behind her revolutionary attitude.

The present research work helps us to dig up the causes on why Ginny revolts or why she revolts against her father. Ginny as a member of that Midwestern farming family, she had no identity. Her identity was in the hand of her father. After her marriage as well she did not get her identity. Larry Cook as a leading member of that family and also the member of patriarchal society exploits his own daughter in a very cruel way. He is even ready to do sex with his own daughter. So, it is because of his cruel and inhuman nature, Ginny is compelled to move on the way of rebellion consciousness.

Larry Cook, the power holder of that farming family, considers himself as a master and rest of the other are like slaves. Because of which the whole family gets divided into two: oppressor and oppressed. Ultimately Ginny is compelled to take strong reaction to overthrow and weaken the vile and corrupt nature of oppressor. Instead of supporting and taking

responsibility of corrupted father in his business and then bearing unnecessary tensions and pressures given by him, she turns aside and follows the life of freedom. Along with that, the knowledge of father's rape of her, and his accusation of mismanagement of the farm, incites in her a strong sense of rebellion against him. In this way, she revolts against the discriminatory laws of the father, sometimes with the help of her sister and sometimes alone.

To sum up, *A Thousand Acres* explores the psyche of subaltern character like Ginny as a rebellion. Rebellion consciousness is something needed by every human being who is suffering from domination and segregation. Human beings are social animals and therefore need social equal status. All human beings are equal. So, we should not treat anyone as other.

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