

I. Rebecca West, Her Work and Subversion of Gender Roles

Based on Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*, this thesis inspects West's reassessment of the conventional roles for women and the suggestion of new roles for women that, ultimately, leads to the subversion of gender roles in the novel. The change in women's roles underscores women's agency and their subject position that allow them to reconstruct the emotional and sexual order and participate in the restructuring of civil society.

In the novel, the male characters are shown unsuccessful to accomplish the assigned masculine traits. They are unable to confirm the male values, practices and traits. Rather, they have adopted and exposed the feminine qualities like emotional, irrational, timid, dependent etc. On the contrary, females are active, bold, courageous, independent, rational and so on. On this basis, this research paper aims to prove that females are also equal to males. They can also lead the society, family, and even the nation if the situation demands or if they get the opportunity. In order to prove the hypothesis, this project borrows some ideas from the critics like Judith Butler, Judith Halberstam, Roger Lanchester and so on.

The position of female characters is powerful, active and independent in the novel. However, the males are timid, cowardice and dependent on females who could do nothing for the welfare of society, family and the nation. The subversion of gender roles arises in the novel not because of the female characters' strong resistance but because of the male characters' failure to prove their masculinity. Patriarchal social system has given certain positive qualities to males that are superior to female. They, therefore, need to take the responsibilities of their family, society and the nation. Nevertheless, the females rather than males take these responsibilities in the novel. On the other hand, the rising consciousness of females about their rights and duties in

patriarchal oppressive society has played the role to push the notion of masculinity and femininity in crisis and subvert it.

Rebecca West, the novelist, presents Margaret as a major figure in the novel. Apart from Margaret, the activities of Jenny and Kitty are presented as the main cause of subversion of gender role. These characters work not for themselves but for other members of the family and society. Kitty and Jenny take the responsibility of Baldry Court in the absence of Chris, the soldier. Margaret comes to Baldry Court with the information of Chris's mental illness. Despite the hatred of Baldry Court women, she insists on the truth-value of the information. She, being bold and courageous, faces the charge and accusation of Kitty. After the homecoming of Chris, she is summoned to Baldry Court in order to take care of Chris. Even though it is contrary to the rules and regulation of patriarchal society, she pays regular visit to Baldry Court to accompany her amnesiac ex-lover. Neglecting the possible social scandals, she helps, takes care of and nurtures Chris for the sake of humanity. Guided by new awareness about her roles and duties, she comes out of her domestic chamber and actively participates in the activities like curing her amnesiac ex-lover. She, accompanied by Jenny, Chris's cousin, takes rational and bold decision and makes Chris to confront the bitter reality. By showing the clothes and playthings of Chris's dead son, she reminds him the events that happened in the past fifteen years of his life and cures him back to health.

On the other hand, when Chris is brought back home, he exposes feminine attributes. He stays lonely and does not communicate with others. He not only neglects his property but his wife, Kitty as well. He is always nostalgic and obsessed with the memory of his former beloved, Margaret even though, he knows very well that fifteen long years have been passed and they both are grown older and married

now. He does not see the value of life without Margaret and wishes to lose himself in her arms. Chris, being a male and head of the family should have taken the task of protecting his family and property. He should have enough courage to confront the reality no matter how much bitter it is. As a soldier, he should have fulfilled his duty towards his nation too. In the same manner, Frank Baldry, Chris' cousin visits Chris at the hospital and sends a telegram to Baldry Court women asking to take Chris back home. As a male, he himself has to take this responsibility and find some way out to solve this problem. However, he just tries to console Chris with some soothing words and keeps on watching Chris weeping bitterly as a child. Similarly, Dr. Anderson, whom the task of curing Chris is given cannot cure Chris. All he can do is to make Chris happy only.

In this sense, these male characters are not active, bold, courageous, rational, and intelligent as defined by patriarchy. These characters are dependent on others and escape away from the problem. Their masculinity is in crisis, as they cannot perform the masculine codes. According to the traditional masculinity, when a male fails to prove his masculinity, he is lowered to feminine. These males are lowered to feminine, as they cannot accomplish the assigned tasks of traditional masculinity. A male lowered to feminine means to say that his masculinity is subverted here. On the contrary, Margaret possesses the qualities like active, bold, rational, logical, self-conscious, independent etc. that refer to the traditional masculinity and belongs to males. This situation is quite contrary to the patriarchal social system. Hence, it has created crisis in the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity, which has become the generative force for the subversion of gender roles in the novel.

Rebecca West (1892-1983), pseudonym of Cicily Isabel Fairfield, is a well known British American novelist. She got her pen name from Henrik Ibsen's play

Rosmersholm and started her career as a journalist from *Free woman*, the suffragists weekly. She also worked with many feminist and socialist papers like *Clarion*, *The Star Daily News*, *New Statesman* and so on. Her turbulent love affair with H.G. Wells established herself as a literary writer. Her major novels include *The Return of the Soldier* (1918), *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), *A Train of Power* (1955), *The New Meaning of Treason* (1949), *The Fountain Overflows* (1956), *The Real Night* (1948) and *Cousin Rosamud* (1985). Apart from Wells, she befriended Violet Hunt, Ford Madox Ford, Wyndham Lewis, George Bernard Shaw and so on.

Rebecca West, in her early works, portrays the contemporary social, political and economical condition affected by Great wars. In the awareness of the condition of modernity and rural life and the consequences of family structure and individual characters, West plays vital role in modern literary field. Most of West's early novels are based on the social, political and domestic background in which she raises the issue of gender, sexuality, class, politics and others against the background of the World War I.

The Return of the Soldier is one of the famous novels of Rebecca West. Since the beginning of its publication, it has been able to attract the attention of various critics and scholars. Criticism from multiple perspectives has made the novel really successful and praiseworthy. One of the renowned critics, Marina Mackay in "The Lunacy of Men, The Idiocy of Women: Woolf, West and War" writes:

To be sure, West insists on the death-driven inclination of men; that is not to say, though, that she characterizes women in public life as life-enhancing heroines. Rather, it seems that only because most political figures in European and American history have been men, are men more usually associated with public atrocity. When women are placed

in public role, as in the case of Archduchess Sophie, the evil empress of Austro-Hungary, they contribute their full share of ignorance, mismanagement, and villainy. (128-29)

Through these lines, Macay means to say that men are inclined to death driven instinct not because women have life enhancing power but because the European and American political leader, who are usually males, are associated with public barbarity. When women are placed in public life, they become also responsible for the ignorance, mismanagement and villainy created by the males.

The next critic, Kristen Renzi in "Prophetic Madness, or Being "Madly" Human: A Reading of the Social Dimension of Cure and Sanity in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*" reviews the novel from psychological point of view:

The Return of the Soldier is famous for its depiction of mental, not physical trauma of war; it focuses on British soldier, Chris Baldry, who returns home to Baldry Court from the warfront as a victim of shell, unable to recall the past 15 years of his life. Chris Baldry's lapse of memory is so complete that while in hospital, he writes to not his wife, Kitty, nor to his cousin, Jenny (the text's narrator), but rather to Margaret Allington, a woman he had loved in youth and with whom, he finds himself, via his amnesiac (which Margaret terms "shell shock"), to be still in love. (1-2)

Here, Renzi notes that *The Return of the Soldier* deals not with the physical but with the psychological injury of the main character, Chris that is even more dangerous than physical injury. Because of mental illness, Chris is filled up with sense of loss and nostalgia. Mental trauma causes lapse of memory and one can be obsessed with unachievable desire being failed to confront the worldly reality. In this way, Renzi

reads the novel from the viewpoint of psychological effects of war on soldiers that ultimately ruins their lives.

After studying *The Return of the Soldier*, Karl Rollinson in *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West* argues:

The Return of the Soldier is inspired by a medical journal article that describes the case of an old factory employee who fell down a staircase on his head and revived thinking he was twenty-year-old. Due to the loss of memory, he rejected his wife and sought out a woman he was in love with when he was twenty. (69)

Rollinson, through this extract, states that West has recycled the second hand plot in which a factory worker falls down a staircase and thinks that he is only twenty years old. He discards his wife and longs for another woman. Here, what Rollinson notices is that West has applied the medical case of amnesia in literature.

James Harper Strom in his thesis "Modernist Aesthetics of 'Home' in Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* and Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* argues:

On its surface, it is the sort of timely narrative of shell shock and the family that proliferated during and after the war. However, West's novel would be more accurately described as an exploration of the spaces of women and an indictment of the forms and attitudes traditionally associated with such space in the fiction. (23)

James Storm in these lines notices that, *The Return of the Soldier* not only presents the effect of war in domestic spheres but also raises the issues related to women. It gives a new role, subject position, an identity and agency to woman. It creates new space for women and challenges the traditional forms and attitudes of patriarchal social system.

Similarly, Ann V. Norton in *Paradoxical Feminism, the novel of Rebecca West* remarks, "As a feminist...she blames men and the patriarchal structure of society – or fathers – for human unhappiness. As a Freudian...West looked to mothers and fathers as the key to human soul" (80). Norton argues that the simultaneous presence of feminist and psychological views makes the feminism of West paradoxical. On the one hand, West states men and patriarchal social system are the causes of human unhappiness and social disorder but on the other hand, she accepts the importance of both father and mother for the physical, mental and social development of the human beings.

Talking about the approach of Rebecca West, Peggy D. Pence, in her thesis *Irreconcilable Difference in the Early Work of Rebecca West*, quotes, "West has not explored the political and economic revolution and celebrated the release of female desire and power which the revolution made possible" (36). In Pence's opinion, West ignores the positive impact of economic and political revolution upon the lives of women in Britain. The revolution had awaken the women and risen the feminist consciousness in them. It, slowly and gradually, had led them to power position. Nevertheless, West has missed this point in the novel.

Similarly, Wyatt Bonikowski, in "*The Return of the Soldier Brings Death Home*" asserts, "In West's novel the soldier brings home a revelation about the war and the effects of war on the domestic scene, but the experience of war in general and Baldry's experience of his own trauma is absent from the novel. Chris's trauma has no origin and content" (514). Here, what Bonikowski views is that the negative effect of war is brought to domestic spheres by Chris. It affects the family members and creates disorder in family life. However, the novel hides what Chris experiences in war. On

the other hand, Chris never experiences trauma at all for his traumatic condition is an appropriate means for him to resume his past love affair.

In close analysis to the reviews discussed by various critics, *The Return of the Soldier* can be said to have been able to receive the different perspectives within a single novel. Different from the reviews given by the critics, this research paper has attempted to approach the novel from the perspective of masculinity, femininity and gender. It is a new kind of research as it reconsiders critically the traditional notion of masculinity, femininity and gender, which is no more noticed by anyone in this novel. Focusing on how the female characters defy the traditional notion of patriarchy, it attempts to prove the subversion of gender roles. In the novel, the male characters such as Chris, Frank and Dr. Anderson fail to perform their assigned masculine roles but the female characters such as Margaret, Jenny and Kitty occupy that position and bear the responsibilities. Males' cowardice nature, passivity, escapist mentality, dependency and female's courage, rationality, independence etc. are considered as the strong evidences for the subversion of gender roles in the novel.

With the aim of achieving the issue the subversion of gender roles, this study especially focuses on the theory of masculinity, femininity and gender as well. Here, the notion of femininity is assumed to be the outcome of extreme male domination in the society that further gives birth to masculinity in turn. When the women came out of their domestic chamber with a new awareness of their identity, rights and freedom, masculinity was endangered and males were alarmed to hold their patriarchal principle about men. As a result, masculinity came as a theory just opposite to the theory of femininity. The term masculinity refers to the quality of being male possessing the characteristics like rational, protective, leading, domineering, aggressive, active, independent, judgmental, self-controlled and so on. Oxford

Advance Learner's Dictionary defines masculinity as, "a noun which means the quality of being masculine" (942). It regards masculinity as an affirmative term and it is taken as having masculine quality. Both masculinity and femininity are not innate; they are based upon social and cultural condition.

Masculinity and femininity are differentiated based on the activities one performs. As it is not innate, it can equally refer to both male and female. In this regard, Roger Lancaster in "Subject Honor, Object shame" states:

"To give" (dar, meter, poner) is to be masculine; "to receive" (recibir, acceptor, towar) is to be feminine. At the same time, however, when the idiom of violence or coercion comes into play as the word verga (cock) most frequently connotes (hacer verga, verguiar) – "to take by force," "to seize," or "to grab hold of" (coger, sometimes tomar) is to be masculine, whereas "to surrender," "to yield," or "to give up" (rendirse; sometimes dar), is to be feminine. In any case, the one who initiates action, dominates, or enters is masculine; whoever is acted upon, dominated, or entered is feminine. (46)

Through this extract, what Lancaster means to say is masculinity and femininity are not innate terms. They are defined according to the different roles performed by human beings in socio-cultural affairs. Even a female is defined as masculine if she can perform masculine roles, duties and activities in society and culture. The terms masculinity and femininity are constructed socially, culturally and historically. Hence, they are contingent.

Judith Halberstam in her essay "An Introduction to Female Masculinity" further gives the similar view to Roger Lancaster about the construction of masculinity. She says, "If masculinity is not the social and indeed the political

expression of maleness, then what is it" (355)? Halberstam in the form of question avers that masculinity is not any other thing but the social, cultural and political indication of maleness. The notion of masculinity changes as per these circumstances. Traditionally, it was defined as the sole possession of male but in present era it is defined on the basis of certain qualities. If a woman possesses those qualities and behaves accordingly in socio-cultural and political scenario, she is also considered masculine.

One's gender identity is revealed through masculinity and femininity. Gender roles, gender stereotypes and gender attitudes influence gender identity. The gender identity as masculine or feminine is based upon the meaning of individuals that is internalized from their association with the roles of male and female in the society. A person with masculine identity is expected to act more masculine such as behaving in a more dominant, competitive and autonomous manner. Similarly, a woman in the society is expected to act as per the stereotypical identity such as emotional, nurturing, sensitive, irrational, dominated etc. Judith Butler, another feminist, believes gender as a social construction as gender identity is per formatively constituted. Here, she says, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (179). Butler opines gender as a social construct though it seems to be natural as it is created out of repetitive acts within a highly rigid regulating system. For Butler, "gender is "a corporeal style", an 'act', as it were, which is both intentional and per formative, where 'per formative' suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning" (177). There is no ideal form behind those performances. "There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; that identity is per formatively constituted by the very "expression" that are

said to be its results" (33). When male and female perform the social roles, their identity is constructed.

Traditional gender system of patriarchy has given all the positive qualities to male, defined as masculine and negative attributes to female, defined as feminine. Thus, feminist theorists claim that masculine mode of thought has been the root cause of oppression on female. In this regard, Chris Beasley in her essay "Gender/Feminist Studies" forwards, "the focus specially is upon a system of oppression based upon a lower social status than men as sex class" (148). Traditional gender role created by patriarchy appears as a means to dominate women. Women have lower social status than man does. Man enjoys freedom and power and treat women as inferior sex.

In the society, boys and girls are introduced with numerous masculine and feminine traits respectively since their childhood. They tend to perform as per their standard. Masculinity and femininity is deeply rooted in the psyche of people. When a female behave in more autonomous manner, she is considered as masculine. However, when a male fails to confirm his masculine traits, he is lowered to feminine. He suffers from a crisis. Hence, these both situations lead to the subversion of gender roles. In this regard, Roger Lancaster reasserts:

Every act is, effectively, part of an ongoing exchange system between men in which women figure as intermediaries. To maintain one's masculinity, one must successfully come out on top of these exchanges. To lose in this ongoing exchange system entails a loss of face and thus a loss of masculinity. The threat is a total loss of status, whereby one descends to the zero point of the game. (42)

Lancaster views that even male need to confirm his masculinity in order to be masculine. If he fails to prove in ongoing social exchange system, his masculinity

falls in crisis. Masculinity is not the exclusive property of biological male subjects. Therefore, many female subjects lay claim for equal share to masculinity in present time.

In the same vein, Tim Edward in *Cultures of Masculinity* defines masculinity as, "The position of man, often perceived as being is related to institution such as the family, work, education or even representation. On the other hand, the crisis of masculinity refers more precisely to men's experience of these shifts in position" (14). Edward views that men are expected to bear responsibility in relation to family, work, education etc. When they fail to bear those assigned responsibilities, their position of masculinity falls in crisis.

In this sense, femininity becomes stronger and upgrades to masculinity when masculinity falls in crisis. Female comes to replace male if he fails to prove as masculine. When female takes the masculine responsibility, the traditional definition of masculinity works no more. With regard to these issues, this research attempts to justify that the traditional interpretation of masculinity and femininity has become out of date. These expressions are carried out to have ascendancy over one and elevate another. The masculinity as a terminology does not belong to anyone male or female. Anyone can be masculine irrespective of gender or sex. It is just created to suppress the women and promote the men. So, as this research attempts to redefine the term masculinity from a new framework in which females can also be masculine, the traditional notion of binary between masculinity and femininity is subverted here.

Applying the theory of masculinity and femininity along with gender studies, this study pays deep concentration upon the subversion of gender roles in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*. In order to make research convenient and expose the theme of subversion of gender roles effectively, this research work has been divided

into three main sections. The first section presents an introduction that gives the overall outlines of the research work. It begins with the introductory paragraph, general introduction to the text, literature reviews upon the novel, point of departure, hypothesis, introduction of the tool and organization of the entire research work. Similarly, the second section contains the textual analysis with the application of methodology. It depicts the sufficient evidences from the text and presents how gender role is subverted. The third chapter concludes the whole project in short and aims to offer a new parameter to look upon the position of male and female. It aims to redefine the traditional notion of masculinity and femininity.

II. Subversion of Gender Roles in Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier*

This chapter of the study examines the novel *The Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West from the view point of masculinity in order to prove the issue of the subversion of gender roles. The study mainly focuses on the dialogues and the activities of major characters like Margaret and Chris Baldry that ruptures the binary between masculinity and femininity. Patriarchal society gives a male certain positive traits like active, bold, intelligent, rational, courageous, powerful, judgmental and so on and defines as masculine and gives negative characteristics like weak, emotional, submissive, subjugate and so on to females and defines as feminine. Patriarchy imposes bread earner ethics and subjugates females within the four walls of house. But, going beyond the expectation of patriarchal society, Margaret, the protagonist of the novel, justifies that females are also no less than males. They can also lead the family, society and the nation if they get chance or are given the opportunity in the absence of male.

To achieve the issue of subversion of gender roles, this study mainly examines the roles of Margaret Allington and Chris Baldry. Chris Baldry, a soldier, goes to the war front and becomes the victim of shell shock. As a result, he develops amnesia and becomes unable to recall the last fifteen years of his life. In such state, he sends a letter not to his wife, Kitty Baldry but to Margaret Allington, a woman with whom he was in love in his youth. When he is brought back home, he longs for the same woman but not his wife. Even after knowing the reality that Kitty is his wife, he wants to be embraced by Margaret in her arms. He fails to confront the reality and tries to escape away from it. He fails to fulfill his responsibility towards his family, society and the nation which creates crisis in his masculinity. On the contrary, Margaret Allington establishes herself as a bold, thoughtful and courageous woman. She not

only goes to the Baldry Court with the news of Chris's shell shock, but pays regular visit and nurtures Chris like a nurse and mother neglecting the possible social scandal. She, accompanied by Jenny, takes strong, thoughtful and bold decision and makes Chris confront the bitter reality. By showing the toys and clothes of Chris's dead child, she becomes able to cure her amnesiac ex-lover. Thus, she becomes successful to dismantle the notion of masculinity and femininity as constructed by patriarchy.

Masculinity and femininity are constructed socially, culturally and historically like gender. Traditional patriarchy created two categories as masculinity and femininity and gave superior characteristics to males. The males exercised their masculine strength and started to suppress and dominate the females. They limited the female within the household activities. But sometimes, males fail to maintain their self created masculinity due to their own fault. Some other time, female may revolt against men because of new awareness about their role and position. In the novel, the major male character Chris becomes fail to prove his masculinity. As a male and head of the family, he should be able to take care of his property, the Baldry Court. As a soldier, he should be able to pay back the debt of his nation by fighting in the war. But, Chris is failure in both situations. Therefore, it creates crisis in his masculinity. On the other hand, the female character, Margaret is able to come out of her domestic chamber and able to cure her ex-lover, Chris Baldly. The decision she takes is really rational and the activity she perform is really heroic.

Masculinity and femininity depend on the activity one performs in the society. Traditional patriarchy associates activity with men and defines them as masculine and passivity with women and defines them as feminine. It regards male superior in terms of the activities they perform. In this regards Roger Lancaster in "Subject Honor, Object Shame" asserts: "Every gesture, every posture, every stance every way of

acting in the world is immediately seen as “masculine” or “feminine” depending on whether it connotes activity or passivity (42). Here, Lancaster means that every act is either masculine or feminine. If the act is related to activity, it is considered masculine and if it is related to passivity, it is regarded as feminine. It is a belief system that is equally applied in all societies and remains the same all over the world.

In this regard, Jenny’s narration about the activities of Margaret and Chris is significant here in this context. She narrates:

It means that the woman has gathered the soul of man into her soul and is keeping it warm in love and peace so that his body can rest quite for a little time. That is a great thing for a woman to do. I know there are things at least as great for those women whose independent spirit can ride fearlessly and with interest outside the home park of their personal relationships. (139-40)

Through Jenny’s narration, we can view the active role played by Margaret. She comes out of her domestic chamber and actively participates in nurturing her amnesiac ex-lover. Though she is a married woman, she comes to Baldry court. Her independent spirit helps her to face the humiliation of Kitty and possible social scandal. It is really a great act for a woman to do. On the other hand, Jenny portrays Chris as: “He lay there in the confiding relaxation of a sleeping child, His hand unclenched and his head thrown back so that the bare throat showed defenselessly. Now he was asleep and his face undarkened by thought” (138). Chris, a male and a soldier becomes passive and dependent after being the victim of shell shock. He loses the memory of last fifteen years of his life and becomes obsessed with the memory of his ex-beloved. He is a patient receiver of Margaret’s action. The activity of Margaret and the passivity of Chris prove the issue of subversion of gender roles in the novel.

Traditional patriarchal society demands a male to take a concrete action and decision in each and every matter. Men are doer of action and women are receivers. In this regards, Lancaster reasserts:

Every act is, effectively, part of an ongoing exchange system between men in which women figure as intermediaries. To maintain one's masculinity one must successfully come out on top of these exchanges. To loose in these ongoing exchange system entails a loss of face and thus a loss of masculinity. The threat is a total loss of status whereby one descends to the zero point of game. (42)

Here, Lancaster views that even a male needs to confirm his masculinity in order to be masculine. If a man cannot take an action at the right moment or fails to prove in ongoing social exchange system, his masculinity falls in crisis and he is lowered to be feminine.

This idea of Lancaster is viewed in the novel in Chris's activities. Chris, a victim of shell shock, cannot act any more. He is dependent on others for everything. "He said he is lonely and afraid, and that I must bring Margaret Allington to him at once or he would die" (39). Even after knowing the reality that he has lost the last fifteen years of his life and is a married man now, he cannot confront the reality. Neglecting his wife, Kitty, he seeks for another woman to be acted upon. "He said that he was consumed with desire for her and that he would never rest until he once more held her in his arm" (39). That Chris is unable to act and dependent on other creates crisis in his masculinity and lowers him to feminine that ultimately leads to the subversion of gender roles in the novel.

Patriarchal society divides male and female on the basis of the activity they perform. Males are expected to do outdoor activities and females are supposed to

remain in indoor activities. Males are assumed to be active and strong and further expected to act in more masculine manner. Males are considered as givers and women are the passive receivers. Lancaster further asserts:

“To give” (dar, meter, poner) is to be masculine; “to receive” (recibir, acceptor, towar) is to be feminine. At the same time, however, when the idioms of violence or coercion comes into play as the word verga (cock) most frequently (hacer, verga, verguiar)- “to take by force,” “to seize,” or “to grab hold of” (coger, sometimes tomar) is to be masculine, whereas “to surrender,” “to yield,” or “to give up” (rendirse; sometimes dar), is to be feminine. In any case, the one who initiates action, dominates, or enters is masculine; whoever is acted upon, dominated, or entered is feminine. (46)

In the extract above, Lancaster tells us that regardless of their sex those who can give and dominate others are masculine and those who are receivers only, dominated, entered and acted upon are feminine. Even a female is defined as masculine if she can perform masculine roles, duties and activities in society and culture. The terms masculinity and femininity are constructed socially, culturally and historically.

This view of Lancaster can be seen in the novel through Jenny’s narration. The novel shows Margaret as a giver and an actor whereas Chris as a receiver and acted upon. Jenny narrates:

Under the cedar-boughs I dimly saw a figure mothering something in her arm. Almost had she dissolved into the shadow; in another movement the night would have her. With his back turned on this fading unhappiness Chris walked across the lawn. He was looking under his brows at the over arching house as though it were a hated

place to which, against all his hopes, business had forced him to return.

(183)

Margaret acted upon Chris and gives him a motherly affection and lover's love to cure him from amnesia, the loss of memory. Chris being acted upon by Margaret becomes cured and regains his health back. Hence, Margaret's part of nurturing and curing is masculine and Chris's role of receiving the care is feminine.

Traditional patriarchal hegemonic society expects a male to act in more masculine manner. He is expected to suppress and dominate the female. When a man fails in his attempts to subjugate female, he becomes the subject of public criticism. In this regard, Lancaster again asserts: "If a man fails to maintain the upper hand in his relation with women, his demeanor might well be judged passive and he may be stigmatized, by degree, as a carbon, maricon and cochon. Whoever fails to maintain in an aggressively masculine front will be teased, ridiculed and ultimately stigmatized" (48). In these lines, Lancaster says that men have to overcome and maintain the upper hand relation with women to prove their masculinity. Anyone who fails to do so, loses his face in the society and his masculinity is questioned.

We can find the above mentioned idea matching with Chris's activities in the novel. Chris's single mind obsession for Margaret makes him fail to love his wife, Kitty even after knowing the reality. "'Kitty', he said softly and kindly. He looked around for some graciousness to make the scene less wounding, and stopped to kiss her; but he could not. The thought of another woman made him unable to breathe, sent the blood running under his skin" (45). While involving in conversation with Kitty, he tries to love her but fails because of his love for Margaret. "I am glad that I did that. You look very beautiful in them." But as he spoke his gaze shifted to the shadows in the corners of the room, and the blood ran hot under his skin. He was

thinking of another woman of another beauty” (50). Chris is failure to love his wife because of his love for Margaret. Only Margaret is his reality and Kitty, a mere illusion. This failure in love causes his failure to cope up his masculinity that degrades him in the eyes of patriarchy.

Masculinity views women through the eyes of patriarchy. It usually underestimates women’s power and agency. It exercises male norms, values and rules upon women in the society. Males are supposed to have the characteristics like active, bold, rational, intelligent and so on. They are supposed to hold masculine power and are expected to dominate females. In this sense Patrica Sexton in her book “The Feminized Male” mentions:

What does it to be masculine? It means, obviously, holding male values and following male behavior and norms. Male norms stress values such as courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, commanding power, mastery, technological skills, group solidarity and a considerable amount of toughness in mind and body.

(15)

On the basis of Sexton what can be said is that to be masculine one should possess the qualities like courage, inner direction, aggression, autonomy, command, leading, technological skill and so on. If one does not possess these values, one can no longer be considered masculine rather lowered to feminine. To be masculine his mind and body should be tough enough so that he can be firm and steady in his status. If he fails to handle all these things, he is no longer masculine but feminine. Masculinity is related to male and his activities in the society. If he loses his status or command in the society, he no longer is masculine. As a result, his masculinity is threatened and falls in crisis.

This idea of masculinity is applicable in the novel in Jenny's narration about Margaret. Jenny narrates:

We gaped at her who said this of our splendid Chris, and I saw that she was not as she had been. There was a directness of speech, a straight stare, that was for her a frenzy. "Doctor," she said, her mild voice roughened, "what's the use of taking? You can't cure him," –she caught her lower lip with her teeth and fought back from the brink of tears, - "make him happy, I mean. All you can do is to make him ordinary. (164)

Margaret in the above extract states that the doctor cannot cure Chris completely because he is not an ordinary patient. He needs a special treatment and attention. All the doctor can do is to make him normal and make him happy only. Margaret boldly declares that though the doctor is male, he cannot cure Chris fully. Accumulating her inner strength, she suggests the doctor to make him normal. The doctor who is a male has not understood Chris and cannot cure him. It brings the crisis in his masculinity. On the contrary, Margaret has rightly understood the situation and tries from her side and finally gets the success which proves her masculinity.

Masculinity demands males to be the head of their family. It regards them as courageous, bold, rational and the protector of their family. Males are to take strong decision when needed in the family. To possess their masculinity, they have to act the role of an actor and the bread earner. If they fail to act these roles, their masculinity falls in crisis and they become the subject of public criticism. In this regard, Tim Carrigan, Bob Connell and John Lee in "Towards the New Sociology of Masculinity" write: "Not all men are "responsible" fathers nor "successful in their occupation, and so on. Most men's life reveals some departure from what the "male sex role" is

supposed to prescribe” (106). In these lines, Carrigan, Connell and Lee view that the so called masculinity is a myth. Though males are expected to handle and bear the responsibility of their family, they are failed to do so in many cases. Such cases make females to be active to take care and to have command over their family especially when males are weak and ineffectual.

This idea is viewed in the novel in Jenny’s narration about Chris. She narrates:

Yet all through the meal I was near to weeping, because whenever he thought himself unobserved he looked at the things that were familiar to him. Dipping his head, he would glance sidewise at the oak paneling, and nearer things he figured as though sight were not intimate enough a contact. His hand caressed the arm of his chair, because he remembered the black gleam of it, stole out and touched the recollected salt-cellar. It was his furtiveness that was heartrending; it was as though he was an outcast, and we who loved him stout policemen. (52-53)

As stated in the above lines, Chris becomes failure to perform his duty and responsibility towards his family. As a soldier, he becomes failure to pay back the debt of his nation too. He has to depend on others. He does not feel how a normal man feels. On the contrary, the women Kitty and Jenny act according to the changing time. They are able to maintain the each and everything of Baldry Court. Therefore, when men fail to perform their masculinity women come to replace it. Masculinity does not mean male only. Traditional definition of masculinity has become outdated. It needs to be redefined.

Masculinity is not a static term. Like gender, it is constructed socially, culturally and historically. It is contingent according to time and space. Masculinity is

not the property of males only. Many females lay claim on this term in present era. In this regard, Carrigan, Connell and Lee reasserts: “Masculinity not as a single object with its own history but as being constantly constructed within the history of an evolving social structure, a structure of sexual power relation” (110). In the given extract, Carrigan, Connell and Lee view that masculinity is not a single object and history of masculinity is constantly constructed within the history of evolving social structure in which both sex male and female have equal power in the society.

In traditional patriarchal society, masculinity had to do with man only. Women were untouched by the term masculinity since they were destined to limit in household activities only. But, in this changing era because of male’s failure’s and female’s rising consciousness, even the females can have masculine quality. To quote Jenny’s narration is significant here in this context. She narrates:

I knew that he would pitch on his knees when he reached safety. I assumed naturally that at Margaret’s feet even before I saw her arm brace him under the armpits with a gesture that was not passionate, but rather the movement of one carrying a wounded man from under fire. But even when she raised her hand to the level of her lips, the central issue was not decided. I covered my eyes and said aloud, “In a minute he will see her face and her hands.” But although it was a long time before I looked again, they were still clinging breast to breast. (117-18)

Jenny through these lines, describes Margaret as an active doer and Chris a passive recipient. Chris is being acted upon that brings crisis in his masculinity. He neglects everything and wishes to lose himself in the embrace of Margaret. On the other hand, Margaret acts courageously going beyond the rules and regulation of patriarchy. She

gives motherly affection and care to Chris to cure him from amnesia. In this sense, she possesses masculinity which Chris lacks.

Masculinity imposes different ethics in patriarchal society. It restricts males and females with different dos and don'ts. Men and women are expected to behave in different manner. If they do not behave accordingly, they are the subject of public criticism, if males fail, they are ridiculed and if females fail, they are stigmatized. In this regard, Karl Bednerik in "Male in Crisis" says: "Alienation at work, bureaucracy in politics and war, and the commercialization of sexuality all undermine masculinity" (104). According to Bednarik, when one is alienated in his work, his masculinity is questioned. Similarly, if sexuality is commercialized, it shatters patriarchal rules and regulations that believe in one-to one sexual relationship between male and female.

This situation of alienation at work and commercialization of sexuality is clearly viewed in the novel in Chris's activity. Jenny narrates Chris as being fed up with his job in the army. He wants to get rid of his job to resume his past love affair with Margaret through the veil of amnesia. After returning back home, he tries to love and kiss his wife, kitty but he fails. He is filled up with the memory of another woman, Margaret. "The thought of another woman made him unable to breathe" (45). Similarly at the time of appreciating his wife, Kitty in her beautiful clothes, he fails to look at her and shifted his gaze to the shadow in the corners. At this time also he thinks about another woman, Margaret. "The blood ran hot under his skin. He was thinking of another woman of another beauty" (50). In this sense Chris tries to commercialize sexuality. Though he is a married man, he thinks of another woman and wants to possess her. It further bring crisis in his masculinity.

Traditional patriarchy associates masculinity with males only. It gives certain traits to men and defines them masculine. Such a definition of masculinity regards

male superior to females. In other words, Masculinity is defined in such a way only to dominate female. But, in present time many feminist lay claims over the term masculinity. For them, masculinity is a socio-cultural construct and not only refers to male. In this regard Paul Smith in an anthology *Boys: Masculinity in Contemporary Culture* says:

And it may well be the case, as some influential voices often tell us, that masculinity or masculinities in some real sense not the exclusive “property: of biological male subjects- it’s true that many female subjects lay claim to masculinity as their property. Yet in terms of cultural and political power, it still makes difference when masculinity coincides with biological maleness. (14)

In the lines above, Smith suggests that masculinity must be thought in plural as masculinities. It is not the exclusive property of male only; rather it refers to both male and female irrespective of their gender and sex. If masculinity is coincided with biological maleness only, it still makes difference in political and cultural power.

One is considered as masculine not because of one’s sex but because of one’s qualities. If a female possesses masculine qualities, even she is considered masculine. Masculinity does not refer to sex in present time. Rather, it refers to characteristics one possesses. The views expressed by Smith closely resemble with the activities of Margaret in the novel that make her masculine. Jenny narrates:

“An old friend of mine has been wounded,” was the only phrase I heard; but when she drew him out in the garden under the window she had evidently explained the situation away, for he listened docilely as she...but he looked pleased when she touched him, and he said in a

devoted way, “very well, dear. Don’t worry about me. I’ll trot along after tea and have a game of draught with Brown.” (91-92)

This dialogue between Margaret and her husband clearly establishes her having masculine quality. Contrary to the expectation of traditional patriarchy, she has good command over her husband. She is free to go out of her house to meet her ex-boy friend. Her husband does not mind in such matter and still be content even if she comes home late. He listens the instruction given by Margaret as an obedient boy and tells her not to worry about him. Such cases, though minor in a family, plays a great role in creating gender hierarchy. Margaret, having command over her husband, proves that masculinity is not the only property of biological maleness.

Masculinity is social and cultural construct. It means that it depends on the activities one performs in society and culture. Society and culture differs from one place to another. Hence, masculinity is a contingent term. In this sense, Halberstam reasserts: “If masculinity is not the social and cultural and indeed political expression of maleness, than what is it?” (355). Halberstam in this line expresses that masculinity as a concept is constructed by society and culture. As the history of society is patriarchal, it created masculinity to dominate women and show the superiority of men. In the term masculinity, there is no innate quality. Hence, anyone male or female can obtain it. But, there lies a politics of males in this category that creates a binary between male and female and regards male as superior.

On the basis of the ideas above, it is clear that masculinity is not an innate quality. It is the quality that can be possessed by anyone depending on his/her activities. Patriarchy misrepresents and misinterprets women’s power and regards masculinity as a means to subjugate them. Indeed, masculinity is a common term that can be applied to anybody in a particular society and culture on the basis of his/her

performance. Margaret, in the novel, possesses masculine quality though she is a woman. It is revealed through various activities that she performs in the novel. She is not an ordinary woman who goes to Baldry Court with the news of Chris's illness and takes care of him but also a woman who is the only means to cure him. She is the only hope of all in this mission. Jenny narrates:

I thought of Chris, to whom a second before I had hoped to bring a serene comforter. I perceived clearly that that ecstatic woman lifting her eyes and her hands to the benediction of love was Margaret as she existed in eternity; but this was Margaret as she existed in time, as the fifteen years between Monkey Island and this damp day in Lady Smith Road had irreparably made her well, I had promised to bring her to him. (94)

On the basis of the passage above Margaret can be claimed to have masculine quality. She is not only the necessity of Chris but the only hope of all. Jenny goes to fetch her, when Chris asks for his longing for Margaret. Jenny finds Margaret quite co-operative though she was rejected at first by them. Margaret goes with Jenny and nurtures Chris as a nurse and a mother and finally cures him. Margaret takes risk in her society while going to Baldry Court. It is because, she is a humanitarian and she wants to restore happiness in Baldry Court. These activities uplift Margaret above the level of an ordinary woman who possesses the masculine quality.

In patriarchal society, it is considered that only males have masculine quality. Masculinity is defined as if it has to do with male only. They are given certain positive traits and defined as masculine whereas women are given only negative and stereotypical characteristics and defined as feminine. Masculinity connotes maleness and femininity connotes femaleness. But, in the present era especially after the

feminist revolution, many feminist claim masculinity as their property as well. They regard masculinity as a peculiar quality that belongs to male and female both. If males have male masculinity, female do have female masculinity. In this regard, Halberstam further mentions:

It is important while thinking about gender variation such as male femininity and female masculinity not simply to create another binary in which masculinity always signifies power; in alternative models of gender variation, female masculinity is not simply the opposite of female femininity, nor is it a female version of male masculinity....(371)

In the extract above, Halberstam opines that female masculinity needs to be separated from male masculinity because the way male and female behave is different. But, it does not mean to create another binary between them; rather it means to reduce the power that the term masculinity is holding. Female masculinity is not the opposite of female femininity. Neither is it the female version of male masculinity. It is something extra-ordinary form of masculinity that erases the hierarchy between male and female.

West, in the novel, exposes the female masculinity through the narration of Margaret. Margaret narrates to Jenny about what had happened between Chris and her at the end of their relationship. She describes Chris as an obstinate and establishes herself as a woman who can take decision about her by herself. She says:

And he went on talking, and then it struck me. He wasn't trusting me as he would trust a girl of his own class, and I told him so, and he went on being cruel. Oh don't make me remember the thing we said to each other. It doesn't help. At last I said something awful, and he said: 'very

well; I agree. I'll go,' and he walked over the boy who was chopping wood, and got him to take him over in the punt. As he passed me he turned away his face. Well that's all. (101-2)

Through the passage it is clear that Margaret is a self-reliant woman. When Chris accuses her of larking with Bert, she tries to clarify the situation at first. But when Chris becomes obstinate and insists on what he is saying, she revolts at the end. She becomes bold and tries to maintain her innocence but all her effort goes in vain. At last, she takes quick and rational decision and puts an end to their relation. Because, now, she knows well that Chris cannot trust her as the girl of his class. As their class is different there can no longer be a relation between them. In this way, Margaret proves herself as an extra-ordinary woman which proves that there exists different sorts of masculinity in her that is female masculinity.

Female masculinity clarifies how masculinity is related to women as well. It brings females on equal footing with males in gender hierarchy uplifting the status of females in society and culture. It gives agency and authority to females. Female masculinity is against the male masculinity where the domination of males no longer prevails. It is the females, who were having active role inside the house, and traditionally sex was the weapon to prove male's ultimately superiority; however which is fast collapsing. In this regard, Halberstam further mentions:

Far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scarps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing. But what we understand as heroic masculinity has been produced by and across both male and female bodies. (355)

In the extract above, Halberstam claims that female masculinity makes the notion of masculinity clear showing how it is really constructed in society and culture. It proves itself as a rejected bit of dominant masculinity in society and culture in which only the male masculinity appears to be the real thing. But, beyond male and female masculinity, heroic masculinity transcends the both male and female bodies.

It is vein to dispute over male masculinity and female masculinity. These two versions of masculinity cannot include the each and everyone in the society.

Masculinity is an umbrella term that includes man, woman, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and third gender in modern time. It focuses on the activities one performs rather than gender and sex. Anyone can be masculine irrespective of gender and sex. In the novel Margaret proves herself as a masculine woman. Jenny narrates:

She went over the rocking horse and gave a ghostly child a ride. For long she hummed a tuneless song into the sunshine and retreated far away into some maternal dream. “He was too young for this,” she said....But where is his engine? Didn’t he love puffer trains? Of course he never saw them. You are so far from the railway station. What a pity! He’d have loved them so. Dick was so happy when I stopped his pram on the railway-bridge on my way back from the shop, and he could sit up and see the puffers going by.” (170)

Margaret searches various means to cure Chris. When she finds the case of her dead son resembling to Chris, she tries to cure him through that means. She searches for something that can bring him back the memory of his lost child. This decision of Margaret is really a great decision because it spoils her relation with Chris. It means, when Chris comes back to reality, he will no longer love her. But, Margaret, though

she knows this fact very well, acts accordingly and fulfills the task by curing Chris back to health which stores masculinity in her.

Masculinity started dominating females since the beginning of human society and civilization. When the domination became extreme, females revolted and femininity came as a threat to masculinity. Especially after the publication of *Sexual Politics* by Kate Millett in 1970s, the feminist criticism began to be applied in the field of literary criticism as a distinct theory. Millett suggests that patriarchal system is preserved by social, cultural, political, governmental and many other organizations. So, females need to unite and revolt against these agencies to dismantle the patriarchal power. She asserts:

Our society, like our historical civilization is patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, sciences, universities, avenue of power within society, including the coercive power of police, is entirely in male hands. As the essence of politics is power, such realization can't fail to carry impact...if one takes patriarchal government to be the institution whereby that half of the populace which is female is controlled by that half which is male.

(54)

Millett says that females are ruled by males because the power in every sector is in males hand. The very system makes male superior to females. But, Millett suggests females to make collaborative effort and violet such system, females are also no less than males. It is the power politics imposed by males on females that makes women inferior. In order to acquire their lost position and identity, they need to unite and revolt against the patriarchal belief system.

This idea of Millett is viewed in the activity of Margaret in the novel. She protests against the patriarchal society and Baldry family as well. She says:

“Either I never should have come,” she pleaded, “or should let him be.” She was arguing not with me, but with the whole hostile, reasonable world. “Mind you, I was not sure if I ought to come the second time, seeing we both were married and that, I prayed and read the Bible, but I couldn’t get any help. You don’t noticed how little there is in the Bible really till you go to it for help... You wouldn’t let them take him away to the asylum. You wouldn’t stop me coming. The other one might, but you’d see she didn’t. Oh, do just let him be! (175)

In the above passage, Margaret clarifies why she comes to Baldry court though she is a married woman and it is contrary to the expectation of patriarchal society. She violets the rules and norms of patriarchy to do the best thing that she thinks. She asks for Chris’s happiness since everyone has the right of being happy. She suggests the Baldry women not to send Chris to the asylum. She further asks them not to stop her coming to meet him. She has a faith in herself that she can cure him. She revolts and violets the rules of patriarchy and pays regular visit to Baldry court and cures Chris at last. It shows Margaret as a revolutionary figure who is conscious of her right and duty.

Patriarchal society expects a man to bear the responsibilities of his family. He is considered to handle his family and property. He has to take the strong decision and save the family in need. If a man cannot fulfill his duty, his masculinity is threatened and when a female takes this responsibility, she is no more a feminine but a masculine.

In the novel, Kitty and Jenny take all the responsibility of entire Baldry Court where there are many servants. "I want to snatch my cousin Christopher from the wars and seal him in the green pleasantness his wife and I now looked upon" (7). They manage each and everything and handle the estate so beautifully even in Chris's absence. They wait impassionedly for him who has not been writing to them for a forth night from the warfront. Jenny further remarks:

Because we had made a fine place for Chris, one little part of the world that was, so far as surfaces could make it so, good enough for his amazing goodness. Here we had that surpassing amiability which was so habitual that one took it as one of his physical characteristics, and regarded any lapse into bad temper as a calamity as starting as the breaking of a leg; here we had made happiness inevitable for him. (9)

Through these lines, it is clear that women are also no less than men. They can also do the best for family, society and the nation if they get chance or if they are given the opportunity. It is the patriarchy that restricts and dominates them as weak and ineffectual. Giving such stereotypes patriarchy wants to suppress and rule over them forever. But quite contrary to this situation, Kitty and Jenny proves that females can also contribute to and save the honor of their family.

Patriarchy assumes a man not only to take a strong and bold decision but also act according to the need of time. He has to act rationally and overcome the possible misfortune. If one cannot act rationally and becomes an escapist, his masculinity falls in crisis. As a result, he can no longer be considered as masculine but lowered to feminine. In the novel, Frank Baldry, Chris's cousin, though goes to hospital to see him, escapes from his responsibility of taking Chris back home. "In view of Chris's expressed longing for Harroweald, he ought to be taken home, and advises me to

make all arrangement for bringing him back sometime next week. I hope I shall be upheld in this difficult enterprise” (40). As a male, he should find some way-out to this problem by himself. But, he requests the Baldry Court women to find out solution to this problem. It creates crisis in his masculinity that paves the way to subversion of gender roles.

In the society, men are supposed to be stronger and able to face the reality. As reality and once happened thing cannot be altered, one has to be active to save the possible loss. Accepting the reality, one has to try to heal the previous wound and mistake. One has to allow one’s life to continue, even if one’s dreams of life are all over. When one cannot face the reality and revolves around in the past happening, one’s masculinity is threatened and falls in crisis.

In the novel, Chris, being the victim of shell shock and developing amnesia, discards the reality. He cannot confront the reality and is lost in his past blissful state of love with Margaret. He discards his wife and the people of his large estate. “All the inhabitants at this new tract of time were his enemies, all its circumstances his prison-bars” (55). He cannot trust on anyone even after knowing the reality that fifteen long years have passed and a great change has taken place. “Jenny, is this true?” “That Kitty’s been a good wife?” “That Kitty is my wife, that I am old, that”- he waved a hand at the altered room- “all this” (62). Chris is obsessed with the memory of his past beloved, Margaret which is the only reality for him. Amnesia, for him, is a means to resume his past unsuccessful love affair. It is the only reality in his mind which he had spent with Margaret in Monkey Island. “Why Monkey Island is real. But you don’t know old Monkey. Let me tell you” (63). In this sense, Chris cannot face the present reality that makes his life sink. It further questions his masculinity leading it into crisis.

Patriarchy restricts a married woman within the limitation of four walls of her house. She is expected to perform her duty towards her husband and children. She has to take care of her house and family. She is not allowed to meet or even think about other male. If she breaks this rule, she will be a social outcast. So, only a courageous woman can do so in patriarchal society. But, in the novel, Margaret, though she is a married woman, becomes ready to go with Jenny to take care of her amnesiac ex-lover, Chris Baldry. She becomes strong and bold and takes the rational decision that challenges the patriarchal ethics. Jenny remarks:

She said in a manner that was at once argumentative and narrative, as though she were telling the whole story to a neighbor over the garden wall. "I suppose I ought to say that he is not right in his head, and that I'm a married, so we'd better not meet; but, oh," she cried, and I felt as though, after much fumbling with damp matches and many doubts as to whether was any oil in the wick, I had lit the lamp at last, "I want to see him so! It's wrong, I know It's wrong, but I'm so glad Chris wants to see me, too!" (88)

In the extract above, Margaret tells Jenny that she is ready to go with her though it is contrary to the rules of patriarchy. She wants to go not to meet Chris only but to take care of him so that he can be cured. Further, she wants to resettle the happiness in Baldry Court. It makes Margaret really a revolutionary character who goes beyond patriarchy for the sake of humanity which becomes a causative factor for the subversion of gender roles in the novel.

In patriarchal society, women are expected to have relation with one man only. When a man sees his wife or beloved with other male, he cannot trust her any more. It brings crisis in the relationship between man and woman. Mostly the females are

victimized by such cases. They are neglected by males and further can be punished by the society if they are found with other males. In the novel, when Chris finds Margaret with Bert, he accuses her of flirting with him. But, she boldly faces the accusation and says something awful that puts an end to their relationship. Margaret narrates:

‘Here am I coming to say good-by, because I must go away to-night, and I find you larking with that bounder.’ And I said: ‘O Chris, I’ve known Bert all my life through him coming to his uncle for the holidays, and we weren’t larking. It was only that he couldn’t row.’ And he went on talking, and then it struck me. He wasn’t trusting me as he would trust a girl of his own class, and I told him so, and he went on being cruel. Oh, don’t make me remember the thing we said to each other! (101)

In the lines above, Chris accuses Margaret of larking with Bert. But, Margaret becomes revolutionary and faces the accusation boldly. They dispute over this matter and their relationship ends. Patriarchy expects a woman to be a dumb dog in such a case but going beyond the expectation of patriarchy, Margaret revolts and even puts an end to her relationship. This act of Margaret makes her independent to take the decision of her life by herself. As she takes the decision about her life by herself, it makes her really masculine.

In the society, when one does something for the sake of other, he/she is considered great. Such activities are considered heroic which are independent of profit to oneself. These activities really uphold one’s status in the society. In the novel, Margaret becomes ready to go to meet Chris not for her personal benefit but to treat him and bring him back to health. She says: “Oh that will be lovely,” she said and

laughed nervously, looking very plain. “Do you know, I know the way we are coming together is terrible but I can’t think of meeting with Chris as anything but a kind of treat. I have got a sort of party feeling now” (94). Margaret, who is a married woman now, knows very well that the task she is going to handle is terrible because it is against the rule of society but she is going to handle it for the sake of other. She does not want anything but tries to treat the one who is in need of her. This act makes Margaret really a great woman.

Generally a man is regarded as the head of the family. He has to tackle with the different problems that occurred in his family. When he cannot tackle with these problems due to his physical, mental and social disability, there comes crisis in his masculinity. It gives a way to female to act actively in such circumstances. In the novel, Margaret takes the responsibility of her family and acts accordingly when her husband, Mr. William Grey develops weak chest. Jenny narrates:

Soon after their marriage he lost his job and was for some time out of work; later he developed a weak chest that needed constant attention. “But it all helped to pass the time,” she said cheerfully and without irony. So it happened that it was not till two years after that she had the chance of revisiting Monkey Island. At first there was no money, and later there was the necessity of seeking the healthful breezes of Brighton or Bognor or Southend, which were the places in which Mr. Grey’s chest oddly elected to thrive. (106)

Through the passage it is clear that Margaret manages to handle the situation of her family when her husband loses his job and suffers from a disease. She shifts him to different places and manages to survive even in the case of having no money. This act

of managing the bad situations of family really makes her an active, courageous, patient and decisive woman that further makes her a masculine woman.

Similarly, when males cannot fulfill the assigned task to them successfully, their masculinity falls in crisis. They are, then, considered inferior and ineffectual and females come to replace them that cause subversion of traditional gender roles. In the novel, Dr. Gilbert Anderson, who is the only hope of Kitty and Jenny cannot cure Chris completely. He says:

“I grant you that’s all I do,” he said. It queerly seemed as though he was experiencing the relief one feels on meeting an intellectual equal.

“It is my profession to bring people from various outlying district of the mind to the normal. There seems to be a general feeling it’s the place where they ought to be. Sometimes I don’t see the urgency myself.” (164)

Dr. Anderson regards Margaret as his intellectual equal and offers her to act. He cannot cure Chris through his futile hypnotism. All he can do is to make him normal. It is Margaret, a woman who accomplishes the task and cures the soldier. It makes Margaret a capable woman and proves the issue of subversion of gender roles.

Masculinity not only refers to heroic, active and courageous deeds ever. It has to do something with social works and values also. If one performs his or her work according to the need of time, he/she is considered great and thus masculine. In the novel, Margaret goes to Baldry Court and successfully handles the task of curing Chris that proves her masculinity because masculinity is not the sole property of male only. Jenny narrates: “He lay there in the confiding relaxation of a sleeping child, his hands unclenched and his head thrown back so that the bare throat showed defenselessly. Now he was asleep and his face undarkened by the thought” (138).

Because of Margaret's treatment Chris feels better and is cured at the end. She treats him well and gives him motherly affection and lover's love. "He is not cold. I put the overcoat on him as soon as he was fairly off. I've just I felt his hands, and they are as warm as toast." If I had whispered like that I would have wakened him" (144).

Margaret provides care to Chris for each and every single matter and time. She takes good care of him and nurtures like a mother. Slowly and gradually, Chris starts recovering from his illness due to the sustained care provided by Margaret.

Rebecca West presents her main character Margaret, who going beyond the patriarchal rules and codes acts rationally and cures her amnesiac ex-lover, Chris Baldry. After being cured Chris comes to the present reality and rejoins his job. In the process of curing Chris, Margaret undergoes various stages. At first, she makes Chris feel comfort physically. Later, when she learns that he has lost a child, she takes a rational decision and makes Chris to confront this bitter reality by reminding him something of his dead child. "Take him something the boy wore, some toys he played with" (166). Margaret thinks that some clothes or some toys of his lost child can bring the bitter memory of his child so that he can face the present bitter reality. Jenny, who accompanies in this mission remarks: "I think these are the best thing to take. This is one of the blue jerseys he used to wear. This is the red ball he and his father used to play on the lawn" (173). Margaret finds them as a better means to cure Chris. "She nursed the jersey and the ball, changed them from arm to arm, and held them to her face" (173). She thinks she has better understood him and can cure him with these things.

Margaret thinks that Chris must face the truth no matter how much hard it is for him. She believes that only through this means he can come to reality. She is going to remind him everything by telling him all the incidents in detail. "My spirit

was asleep in horror. Out there Margaret was breaking his heart and hers using the words like a hammer, looking wise, doing it so well” (182-83). Margaret knows very well that she will be a stranger after the recovery of Chris. Nevertheless, she is doing her job just for the sake of Chris because she wants to resettle the happiness in the Baldry Court. Margaret throws her last card and asks: “Give me the jersey and the ball.” The rebellion had gone from her eyes, and they were again the seat of all gentle wisdom. “The truth’s the truth,” she said “and he must know it” (180). In this way Margaret brings Chris to his present state of affair by showing the ball and jersey of his dead son and ultimately cures him.

III. Remapping the Notion of Conventional Gender Roles

The novel *The Return of the Soldier* by Rebecca West illustrates the subversion of gender roles due to the activity of females and passivity of male characters. The male characters like Chris, Frank and Dr. Anderson are failure to confirm their male values and fulfill their responsibilities towards their family, society and the nation. The male characters are timid, cowardice, passive, dependent and so on. On the contrary, the female characters like Margaret and Jenny actively take part in the affair of their family and society. They prove themselves as active, independent, bold, rational, courageous and so on. Even though they are females, they come out of their domestic chamber and release their family and society from patriarchal domination which ultimately becomes the generative force for the subversion of gender roles in the novel.

Margaret, the prominent character of the novel, possesses the masculine qualities. She is active, bold, courageous, rational and patient. She becomes able to cure her amnesiac ex-lover, Chris Baldry back to health. Chris, as a victim of shell shock, develops amnesia and is unable to recall the last fifteen years of his life. In such state, he writes not to his wife, Kitty from the hospital but to Margaret Allington with whom he was in love fifteen years ago. Even after knowing the reality that Kitty is his wife, he becomes obsessed with the memory of Margaret and wishes to embrace her in his arms. His single minded obsession for Margaret makes him passive and dependent. He is acted upon and taken care of that makes him go beyond the expectation of patriarchal society. It further creates crisis in his masculinity. He can no more be considered as masculine but lowered to be feminine which is the main issue for the subversion of gender roles.

Basically, this research concentrates on the activities of male and female characters, Chris and Margaret respectively. The male character is expected to act in more masculine, independent and autonomous manner and the female is supposed to act in feminine, submissive and emotional way. But quite contrary to this expectation, Margaret is active, independent, rational and self reliant whereas Chris is passive, dominated, dependent, lethargic and so on. Margaret pays regular visit to Baldry Court. At first Kitty and Jenny are indifferent to her. But her rationality, patience and self reliance compel them to trust her. Later, they themselves ask her to take care of and cure Chris.

Margaret is presented as an insurgent figure in the novel who is more than a woman. She neglects the norms and values of patriarchal society. Though she is a married woman, she comes out of her house and successfully takes part for the happiness of another house. She breaks the rules and regulation of patriarchy for the sake of humanity. She goes to Baldry Court with an information of Chris's illness. The Baldry women do not believe in her and accuses her of telling a lie for money. Nevertheless, she faces the accusation boldly. Later, she is asked to take care of and nurture Chris. Margaret takes the task and cures Chris eventually. By so doing, she resettles the happiness in Baldry Court. Further, she shows the society that females are also no less than males. They can also contribute to the society if they get opportunity. Patriarchy demands them to act as per feminine traits but Margaret acts just opposite of that notion which is the cause to subvert the gender roles.

Margaret is the central character in the novel. She leads all the characters with her idea. Even the doctor, Anderson allows her to act in her own way leaving his practice of hypnotism. Margaret reminds Chris all the incidents that had happened in the last fifteen years of his life. She makes him able to confront the bitter reality and

the truth. Showing the jersey and the ball of Chris's dead child, she reminds him the memory of his lost child; thus the memory of last fifteen years of his life. The environment of Baldry Court changes after the curing of Chris. Everything becomes as usual and he returns back to his job. In this way Margaret leads all the characters that is an act associated with traditional masculinity. But Margaret being active and bold enough to handle the situation possesses it which is another proof of subversion of gender roles.

Rebecca West, the novelist, through the female characters, reassesses the conventional roles for women and gives the suggestion of new roles for women. It underscores women's agency and their subject position that further allow them to reconstruct the emotional and sexual order and participate in the restructuring of civil society. By constructing the notion of masculinity and femininity, patriarchy has subjugated women since the beginning of human civilization. But the presentation of the character like Margaret proves that masculinity is not the sole property of biological maleness; even the female can be masculine. So, the traditional definition of masculinity is wrong and it is created to dominate the women and promote the men. The definition of masculinity expects a male to be masculine. But, when a male fails to possess masculine characteristics, his masculinity falls in danger. And, when males fail to accomplish their assigned roles, the very definition becomes the cause of subversion of masculinity. Hence, the traditional definition of masculinity has been outdated and it needs to be redefined from a new framework.

Works Cited

- Beasley, Chris. *Gender & Sexuality*. London: SAGE, 2005. Print.
- Bednarik, Karl. "Towards A New Sociology of Masculinity." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Ed. David Savren and Rachel Adams. London: Blackwell, 2002. 104. Print.
- Bonikowsky, Wyatt. "The Return of the Soldier Brings Death Home." *Modern Fiction Studies* 51.3, (Fall 2005): 513-35. Web. July 18, 2013.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge, 1999. Print.
- Carrigan, Tim, Bob Connell, and John Lee. "Towards A New Sociology of Masculinity." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Ed. David Savran and Rachel Adams. London: Blackwell, 2002. 104-110. Print.
- Edwards, Tim. *Culture of Masculinity*. New York: Routledge, 2006. Print.
- Halberstam, Judith. "An Introduction to Female Masculinity." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Ed. David Savren and Rachel Adams, London: Blackwell, 2002. 355-370. Print.
- Lancaster, Roger. "Subject Honor, Object Shame." *The Masculinity Studies Reader*. Ed. David Savran and Rachel Adams. London: Blackwell, 2002. 41-62.
- Mackay, Marina. "The Lunacy of Men, the Idiocy of Women: Woolf, West and War." *National Women's Studies Association (NWSA) Journal* 15.3 (Fall 2003): 124-144. Web. July 21, 2013.
- Millet, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York: Banes, 1979. Print.
- Norton, Ann V. *Paradoxical Feminism. The Novels of Rebecca West*. Oxford: Internal Scholars Publications, 2000. Web. July 21, 2013.
- Pence, Peggy D. *Irreconcilable Difference in the Early Work of Rebecca West*, Oregon State University, 1998. Web. July 28, 2013.

Renzi, Kristen. Prophetic Madness or Being “Madly” Human: A Reading of the Social Dimension of Cure and Sanity in Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier* (1918): 1-9. Web. August 1, 2013.

Rollinson, Karl. *The Literary Legacy of Rebecca West*. San Francisco:International Scholars Publication, 1998. Web. July 23, 2013.

Sexton,Patrica. *The Feminized Male* (New York: Random House, 1969), p.15. Print.

Smith, Paul, ed. *Boys: Masculinity in Contemporary Culture* (Boulder, Colo..Westview Press, 1996), p. 14. Print.

Strom, James Harper. Modernist Aesthetics of “Home” in Virginia Woolf’s *Mrs. Dalloway* and Rebecca West’s *The Return of the Soldier*” George State University, 2009. Web. July 25, 2013.