

Tribhuvan University

Undoing Gender Boundaries: A Post Modern Feminist Critique of Kate Chopin's  
Selected Stories

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Letter of Recommendation

Mr. Netra Bahadur Gurung has completed his thesis entitled “Undoing Gender Boundaries: A Postmodern Feminist Critiques of Kate Chopin's Selected Stories” under my supervision. He carried out his research from June to July 2020. I hereby recommend his thesis be submitted for viva voice.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled " Undoing Gender Boundaries: A Postmodern Feminist Critiques of Kate Chopin's Selected Stories" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Netra Bahadur Gurung has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

The aim of this research paper is to prove Kate Chopin's stories *A Kiss*, *A Respectable Woman* and *A Pair of Silk Stockings* as the reflection of postmodern feminism. These texts reflect heterogeneous aspects of feminism in the line theoretical perspective of performativity by Judith Butler. On the one hand one can find the confrontation between male and female by interpreting the texts as the epitome of patriarchy. On the other hand, there exists the friendship, co-operation between male and female based on the performance of the characters. The paper reveals that Kate Chopin is creative genius as there are heterogeneous aspects in her own version of feminism that resembles with the idea of post-modern feminism, humanism and deconstruction. Rather than rigid feministic ideas her ideas also possess humanistic concerns as she has critiqued as well as deconstructed patriarchy. The paper ends with the conclusion that Chopin's selected stories stand as the perfect reservoir of postmodernism.

*Key Words: Classical feminism, post-modern feminism, deconstruction, heterogeneity*

This research paper attempts to prove the ideas of postmodern humanistic feminism in Kate Chopin's *A Kiss*, *A Respectable Woman* and *A Pair of Silk Stockings* from the theoretical insights post-feminist Judith Butler and Mary Poovey. The paper, in this way, shows the reengineering of patriarchy in the contemporary era based on humanism. Based on the plot, incidents, characterization, the stories exist to be the perfect laboratory of post-modern feminism. So, this research paper mainly deals with the co-patriarchal issues, which refers to the process of treating males in a heterogeneous manner. It also means not only to criticize patriarchy but to remove the

problems of patriarchy. This paper goes beyond the textual interpretation and touches the context in order to comprehend the broader issue of feminism and shows the endless striving of the female characters to be free and live in that world where male and female undo the gender binaries in order to establish harmony. Therefore, it is significant to analyze the selected texts from the perspective of postmodern-feminism.

In her text, *Undoing Gender* Butler argues how gender is performed without one being conscious of it, she also discusses gender has been made 'automatic or mechanical' by the society. She argues that we have desires that do not originate from our personhood, but rather, from social norms. She also critiques the existing concept of feminism in her book *Gender Trouble* as the text reflects "feminist theory has assume that there is some existing identity, understood through the category of women, who not only initiates feminist interest and goals within discourse, but constitutes the subject for whom political representation is pursued (3). As she critiques upon the existing feminism, this paper also brings theoretical insights of Butler.

Butler states that one may feel the need of being recognized in order to live, but at the same time, the conditions to be recognized make life unlivable, as she argues "the political problems that feminism encounters in the assumption denotes a common identity" (6). The writer proposes an interrogation of such conditions so that people who resist them may have more possibilities of living. For her, identity is constructed by action not by some pre-established ideas as Butler vividly juxtaposes "my argument is that there need not be a door behind the deed, but that the door is constructed in and through the deed" (181).

One of the most notable realistic American writers Kate Chopin was born on 8<sup>th</sup> February 1850 and died on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1904 in St. Louis Missouri US. She belonged to Irish immigrant merchant family. She was grown up among male

dominated family. Her father was killed in train accident in 1855 just five years later of her birth whereas grandmother and great-grandmother had been already widowed and never remarried. At the age of five. She was sent to Sacred Heart Academy however upon her father's death, she was brought back to home. For two years she was tutored about history, music, French on how to handle life without fears and life related lessons at home by mother, grandmother and great-grandmother. Therefore, she was highly influenced by female with the feministic impacts though she was from Victorian Era.

Chopin graduated from Sacred Heart Convent in St. Louis in 1868. She was married with Oscar Chopin in 1870 and moved to New Orleans; home city of Oscar Chopin. Then they engaged in plantations, cultivations and general store. Between the period of 1871 to 1879, Chopin gave birth to six children. Her husband died in 1882, when she was young. After his death, she knew that her husband left her \$42,000 debt. As her husband died in very young age, she started to make sensual relationship with one farmer who belongs to the same place. In this context she is not only guided by traditional notion of patriarchy where female are supposed to live in isolation.

It was Victorian age; highly patriarchal time when Kate Chopin became widow. She would be good female of that era as if she always used to feel sorrow to her husband's death and stayed far away from other males. However, she seemed against patriarchy as she attached herself physically with another man and perhaps emotionally as she even engaged in a relationship with a married farmer as Linda Wolfe argues "a sexual lance with a flighty roué who makes her feel joyous about her body" (43). Social norms did not stop her to do so. After two years of husband's death Kate sold all business properties and moved to birth place St. Louis Missouri with children. She acted on its own by creating mutual relationships with male as per

necessity. Therefore her approach matches with the post-modern feminism as she thinks male as her counterparts and enemy as per the need of time.

She struggled with pain of loss of business, death of husband, mother and became a victim of depression. She started writing, believing that it could be therapeutic for her because writing was her passion so she loved to write. As a therapy she started writing and all short stories and novels are known as products of her treatment. Kate Chopin's work has been categorized within the 'local color' genre that is style of writing presenting peculiarities of a particular locality and its inhabitants. Chopin's ideas departure from feminism which doubts patriarchy in an egotistical way.

Kate Chopin belonged to Victorian age when industrialization and urbanization brought new challenges to Victorian norms and values. It was highly patriarchal society that considered women work meant labor for others was changing to labor for themselves. Women were becoming more educated during this period as we know being a female, author Kate Chopin herself was also graduated person. She marked a point of departure from the homogenous, one-sided and essential values of male. This paper also shows the daring life of Kate against the egotistical concept of patriarchy. In this paper, the researcher will show how Chopin is centered to create equality between male and female instead of polarization.

Meanwhile, Concept or movement of 'The New Woman' also initiated in Victorian age that searches freedom, voting rights for women, self-identity and independency from traditional ideology regarding male and female. This movement distinguishes female's rights from traditional belief upon female as Maria Frawley states:



New woman typically demonstrated their independence from restrictive domestic:

Ideology by flouting conventional feminine behavior- i.e. by wearing clothing that allowed greater freedom of movement or by riding bicycle. While new woman embraced a variety of social and political causes, they were particularly preoccupied with the sexual double standard and with inequality within marriage. (446)

The similar thing happened in case of Chopin, therefore she started to write and she was embracing freedom to write for the sake of life, as Linda Wolf juxtaposes Kate Chopin as not “a woman who worshiped their husband and esteemed a holy privilege” (43). This concept did not limit only within the word rather it had shaken off the core values of male dominated beliefs. Chopin also, from her notable novel *The Awakening* and short story *A Pair of Silk Stockings* she revealed the seeking to self-attitude, self-esteem, selfhood and self-happiness of Victorian women. In this sense, Chopin can be regarded as postmodern feminism is because she focuses rather on her own subjectivity than to be a subject of patriarchy. The realistic version can be seen in Kate’s stories and novels such as *The Strom*, and *The Awakening* respectively where not only male characters but also female characters are involved in extra marital affair that depicts the society was turning into realism.

One of the valuable works *The Kiss* by Kate Chopin was written in 1892, which reveals the pivotal incident regarding kiss including only three characters. Initially the story might be set in early evening as light is still pure outside the door whereas inside the room curtains are drawn and the smoldering fire making dim and uncertain glow. The room was covered by deep shadows. Brantain, a wealthy man is wishing to fasten ardently the girl named Miss Nathalie, who sits in the fire light. The

shadows are obscured that made Braintain feel attach to Ms. Nathalie. He is very handsome, certain fine, and has rich color who belongs to rich class as the story *The Kiss* hints Miss Nathaile as being closed to Mr. Braintain “they turned into a long, deem corridor...they walked slowly to the very end of it (2).

On the one hand, the narrator shows how the male forces has harmed the woman on the other hand it exposes the freedom between the two genders. She looks quite composed with cat that lay curled in her lap. She occasionally charges her glance to her fellow which seems little bit unclear inside the shadow. Nathalie is waiting for him to declare his love because she knows he loves her. Indeed, she is in favor to accept his proposal despite his unattractiveness but he is extensively rich.

For a while their conversation pauses and at the same time a young man, Mr. Harvy enters there. She turns toward him and before she alerts him, there is the presence of Mr. Brantian, who passionately kisses upon her lips as Nathalie says “your husband has sent me over to kiss you” (2). She tries to shake Mr. Brantian’s hand but he leaves them alone without noticing that. In the meantime, Mr. Harvy apologizes but she threatens him for entering into the room without ringing the doorbell. Mr. Harvy replies that he came into the room with her brother who now is in upstairs. He talks with her so courteously to defend himself. She is centered to go beyond patriarchy through peaceful way, without keeping the sense of revenge. Miss Nathalie, rather desires to make them self-realization their misdeeds.

After that, the three characters meet in one wedding reception. Mr. Harvy is rarely seeking her when she stands alone. Once he says Nathalie ‘your husband, he has sent me over to kiss you’ (2). He further opines, her husband has no issue for their pleasant intimacy. Perhaps she feels not bad on Harvy’s talk because her bright eyes are glancing up into him: “Your husband. Her eyes were bright and happy. She looked

at him. And her lips looked hungry for the kiss” (3). She might be ready to accept his invitation for kiss but Mr. Harvy lastly tells that he stopped kissing women as it is dangerous for him.

At last, Miss Nathalie has Brantian and his wealth left but not Mr. Harvy’s kiss. And story ends with the sentence ‘a person can’t have everything in this world’. This idea marks a point of departure from French feminism which believes the antagonism between male or female and the vice versa. Regarding the lapses of the classical feminism, Alice Jardine opines “while preceding a belief in our own oppression, we are nevertheless caught up in a permanent vertigo...within a universe...but a few official exceptions of men” (220). There in classical feminism, exists the inadequate application of middle voice in which the objects and the subjects are the same. This idea is analogous in the relationship between Brantian and Miss Nathile. On the one hand we can interpret it as the symbol of assault and on the other hand it can be regarded as the intimacy between them which mirrors the concept of feminism and post-feminism. Thus, the relationship between them constitute of post-feminism because there is co-relationship between male and female.

Likewise, Chopin’s another story *A Respectable Woman* shows Mr. Gouvernail comes to spend a week or two on Gaston Baroda and Mrs. Baroda’s plantation in New Orleans. Despite the once meeting Mrs. Baroda is quite familiar to Mr. Gouvernail through her husband. He is Gaston’s college friend who now is a journalist. She has made his imaginary picture of tall, slim, cynical with eye-glasses, hands in his pockets and the most important thing is that she does not like him. However, except slim body of her all images regarding Mr. Gouvernail proved wrong when she sees him for the first time.

Chopin's story reflects the holding of the non-universalist concretization of feminism. It matches with the idea of Butler who criticizes one of the central assumptions of feminist theory: that there exists an identity and a subject that requires representation in politics and language. According to her "the question of women as the subject of feminism raises the possibilities that there may not be subject" (5). During the time of Chopin, female writers started to use feminism in writings as female were treated poorly in every aspect of society, whether it is social, political or economic, they had been avoided or mistreated. But Chopin's idea focuses on the intimate interrelationship between the both genders along with confrontation. In the story we can find the absence of such trend like, biologically located essentialism and male dystopian depiction. There are heterogeneous aspects in the text. On the one hand, females are physically exploited, on the other hand they are getting love and fulfilling physical desires.

Mr. Gouverneil neither seems tall, nor cynical nor he uses eye-glasses nor his hands are inside his pocket, rather she likes him. Even woman's imagination proved wrong by patriarchal society hence that revealed his appearance differently:

She had unconsciously formed an image of him in her mind. She pictured him tall, slim, cynical; with eye-glasses, and his hands in his pockets; and she did not like him. Gouvernail was slim enough, but he wasn't very tall nor very cynical; neither did he wear eye-glasses nor carry his hands in his pockets.

And she rather liked him when he first presented himself. (1)

In this sense, we can interpret *A Respectable Woman* as the co-existence between male and female rather than hierarchy. Patriarchy can prove women's imagination as wrong but can't control their emotions and feelings as Mrs. Baroda herself is in confusion why she likes and satisfies with Mr. Gouvernail. In traditional or classical

feminism, we can find the male dominating female. There is also hostility between male and female as per the ideas of French feminism. The name feminism itself is problematic for postmodern feminism as there exist the feminine word. It is supposed to take the side of female. But the concern of post-modern female is to dismantle the binary opposition between male and female. In this story too, there is the intimate relationship between Mr. Gouverneil and Mrs. Baroda. The story does not only take the side of female rather it shows the co-relationship between male and female.

He is courteous toward her but he never makes direct appeal to her esteem. He likes cigarette and enjoys it at the plantation with talk of sugar planter, Gaston. He may be animals' lover therefore he does not care about living fresh fish and not interested to hunt animals as Gaston does. Mrs. Baroda likes his activities and him too but unknowingly. She rebels in spirit refusing; refusing to submit to the man's will. She exhibits her power by taking on the force and dare of her own. Analogous to the male, female also possesses a daring force, in this way by providing circulatory notion, the story dismantles the binary relation as Mary Poovey also focuses on the dismantling of "hierarchical and oppositional logic" (107).

Unlike classical feminists, who often look male derogatorily, this story reflects the realistic and balanced depiction of male, which mirrors Carole S. Vance's materialistic idea. According to Vance male can not only be the source of oppression and domination but also a source of pleasure and happiness as she focuses "The truth is that the rich brew of our experience contains elements of pleasure and oppression, happiness and humiliation" (6). It suggests that male can be the source of pain and also pleasure in different societies. As opined by Poovey, deconstruction primarily offers to demystify institutions or concepts that appear neutral or natural in being. It means it is about the avoidance of existing view on female. In the same vein, the story

has also been able to revisit the contemporary concept of viewing the masculinity. The story is in the line of Poovey as it portrays multiple vision and rejecting the biased attitude regarding woman's attitude towards man.

Mr. Gouverneil's personality makes Mrs. Baroda puzzled nonetheless he is loving and inoffensive fellow. She becomes more puzzled when she could not understand him even after few days. Now she has curiosity when Mr. Gouvernail goes back from their plantation and with such curiosity she asks with Gaston. He answers no for a week by taking Mr. Gouvernail's side that he makes no troubles to her and she also agrees. This idea of Chopin, as represented in the story can be helpful to eliminate the antagonism between male and female. According to Poovey as described by Richard J Lane "The notion of in-between can be used to re-think power structures created through binary thinking" (107). It can also be helpful to avoid extremist or fundamentalist concept of feminism. It is because such homogenous concept will create further trouble in the relationship between male and female. There exists absence of hatred towards male counterparts. Therefore, this notion matches with the ideas of Butler who explores the relationship between power and categories of sex and gender as "genders can also be rendered thoroughly and radically rendered" (586) *Global Literary Theory* Edited by Richard J. Lane.

Mr. Baroda takes wife's pretty face between his hands and looks tenderly into her troubled eyes while answering. Then he kisses her when Mr. Gouvernail enters there that makes commotion for them. She questions on her husband's appeal about him as he says his best friend Gouvernail is man of ideas. She is going to city tomorrow morning to fit spring gowns and expecting Gaston will let her know when Mr. Gouvernail returns back. Classical feminist and their ideas have been debunked by Chopin as she focuses on concrete and specific facts of the women. Mrs. Baroda is

post-feminist because she questions her husband instead of just following him. In this sense, Chopin's ideas mark a departure from the biologically located essentialist notion of female identity.

At the same night Mrs. Baroda sits alone upon a bench where later Mr. Gouvernail comes. He gives a white scarf to her that is sent by her husband. Regarding baneful effect of the night air at this season he makes some words. Then he gazes out into the darkness and a murmur with self for what Mrs. Baroda does not care. He reminds her their college days; her husband's frank nature with all others. In this part of the story we can find the friendship between male and female. There is no hierarchy between male and female rather they complement with each other. Such reciprocal ideas have been explained by Poovey as "deconstruction transforms binary opposition into an economy in which terms circulate than remain fixed" (112). So, there exists the relationship between male and female rather than hostility.

However, Mrs. Baroda does not care what words are thrown out by Mr. Gouvernail rather she is sinking on his voice. She just feels his voice. Now she wants to be romantic with him; wants to touch his hands, face and lips with her sensitive fingers. She wants to be closer to him as much as possible with whisper against his cheek. She damn cares as she might have done if she has not been a respectable woman. Yes, she is very sensible regarding a respectable woman that is why she leaves him alone before something happens wrong or before she appears with great rudeness. He has become inspirations for her as she is learning things from her own exploitation. In the early of tomorrow morning Mrs. Baroda has departure towards city and does not come until and unless Mr. Gouvernail leaves her roof. Mr. Gouvernail again comes in a couple's talk in the summer.

Gaston wants his friend to be in home again but his wife is not ready to invite him. However finally she agrees to invite Mr. Gouvernail at the end of the year that makes Mr. Baroda surprise and delight. In such a situation also she favors her counterparts and claims that his every activities has been a mere touch for her. Earlier existing relationships has been decentered because the subject and the object has been the same. The task of it, as defined by Poovey mirrors, the middle voice in the story as she elaborates “the middle voice...disrupts the structure of the binary oppositions and therefore the identity of the terms the structure supports and depends upon (109). Being a post-modern writer, Chopin identifies women friendly practices and real life struggles. This story is a defense for the comprehensible identity within a network of opposing and complementary oppositions. Realistically, rather than imagining male less fictional society, she advocates the gender as cultural construction therefore it is changeable.

In the story *A Pair of Silk Stockings* Mrs. Sommers unexpectedly gets fifteen dollars. She is very careful about her children as a model mother. She has no time for herself but always ready to fulfill children’s needs. Actually she has forgotten better days that she knows before being Mrs. Sommers. She has no second of time to remember her past because the needs of present absorb the every faculty. She plans to purchase something for children by the help of this fifteen dollar. This afternoon she becomes little tired and faint because of no luncheon. She actually forgets to have lunch and is preparing for shopping.

Butler notes that feminists have frequently made recourse to the supposed pre-patriarchal state of culture as a model upon which to base a new, non-oppressive society. She questions upon existing notion of gender in her book *Gender Trouble* as “there a gender which persons are supposed to have" (79). This idea is similar with



the deconstruction. One can also associate the story with deconstructive notion of mistrust upon metaphysics that no longer believes in the center, coherent whole and suspicion of values of the final truth. Derrida suspects universalism and the concept of binary oppositions that is the value of truth, meaning of being, and the concept of primary signified. Derrida thus views:

It was necessary to begin thinking that there was no center that the center could not be thought in the form of present being, that the center had no natural cite...not a fixed locus...that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified is never absolutely present outside a system of differences....it would be somehow naïve to refer to an event doctrine. (96)

The things turn opposite at that time; a mother who always thinks about children and spends an hour for bargains that makes possible buy something for children now is busy for selecting silk stockings and gloves for herself. Mrs. Sommers wishes to read expansive magazines and books therefore she buys. Adopting the assurance feeling she thinks as she belongs to well-dressed multitude with silk stockings, boots and well-fitting gloves. Her longing to have Rhine wine and black coffee in shining crystal restaurant is changing into reality. She delightfully spends restaurant time with food and magazines. The person masters in bargains everything here leaves extra coin on waiter's tray.

Her day ends not with this pleasurable restaurant time rather she goes to theater where play has already begun. She sits among brilliantly dressed women who seem gaudy. They weep on drama. Play is over and music ceases and crowd fills out. She stands along the corner waiting for cabal car. When she is waiting for cabal car at

the corner a man sitting opposite to her with keen eyes seems to like reading her pale face. He himself is being puzzled to decipher what he sees there but he sees nothing.

Kate Chopin's many writings were rejected to publish at that time because of feministic essence in writhing. Male dominated binary society had no capacity to digest such feministic words. Feminism is the system or belief that focuses on equality between male and female regarding social, political, economic and biological factors. It searches the identity, self-value and self-essence of women. The term 'feminism' is the product of highly patriarchal social norms and values. But postmodern is a new brand of feminism which breaks the hierarchical relationships and manifests the existence of circular relationship. Analogous to the male, female also possesses a daring force. In this way, by providing circulatory relationship, the text dismantles the binary opposition.

According to biblical mythology sexual discrimination starts when human life starts as Andrew Hiscock speaks that "At the limit of our period in Milton's *Paradise lost* (1667), the description of Adam and Eve reminds us that they were not equal as their sex not equal seemed"(174). Though the word feminism has not been started from the very beginning of human lives, some of the literary works prove that the women's steps against the patriarchal society have already started from centuries back. In Geoffrey Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* wife of Bath's shows feministic essence. Various unacceptable words were given to women by patriarchal society. Men had derived stereotypes like a binary opposition, woman as the second sex.

Especially history of feminism has been categorized in three waves or period in English speaking countries. The first wave feminism occurs in nineteenth and early twentieth century through directing feministic issues like legal inequalities, female education right, right for vote, better working facilities, abolition of double gender

standards. This wave of feminism specifically addresses the issue of women suffrage. The first wave of feminism although is not taken as the activism of unchain of women rather the dramatic change in supremacy feminism took place during second-wave feminism started from 1960s and ends in 1980s.

The second wave of feminism discusses cultural inequalities, gender norms and women's role in society. Even during that era, the exclusion of writings by women from publications and academic field give continued. Only famous female or canonical women writers like George Eliot, Emily Bronte, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Emily Dickinson, Christina Rossetti, Sylvia Plath got chance to teach as part of compulsory option of literature students. That was criticized by other marginal feminists. Joanna Russ enlisted the reasons of frequent exclusion of women's writing from the mainstream in his book *How to Suppress Women's Writing* (1984).

She didn't write it.

She wrote it, but she shouldn't have.

She wrote it, but look what she wrote about.

She wrote it, but 'she' isn't really an artist and 'it' isn't really serious, of the right genre, i.e. really art.

She wrote it, but she wrote only one of it.

She wrote it, but it's only interesting/ included in the canon for one, limited reason.

She wrote it, but there are very few of her. (76)

Likewise, the third wave of feminism took place between 1990s and 2000s that is called postmodern feminism. This wave of feminism has differences with first and second one. The main purpose of postmodern feminism is demobilizing the patriarchal ideology which has enveloped society. It decreases individual experiences

and alerts women to be aware of stereotype that has been created in favor of masculine society. It is an iteration of feministic movement that focuses on abolishing gender-role stereotypes and expanding feminism that include women with diverse racial and cultural identities.

Feminism changes face of the world. These two hundred years of feministic revolution has broken meta-narratives and patriarchal beliefs that had made women an object. The society that previously considered females are childbearing machine, care taker of husband, children and family and they have no space in the outer world has given freedom to go to outside for works, school, college and university just because of feminist revolution. The hidden qualities of women are tremendously overflowed when feminism spread over the world.

Butler argues "all ideas are construct and this constitutive foreclosure is the epitome of essentialism" (693). She is even against strategic essentialism because they are founded on the dangerous illusion of stable identity. She believes that the subject is dead; she is the supporter of anti-identity. Some female writers for instance Mary Ann Evans used boy's name George Eliot for the publication of own writings. Even in initial phase of feminism whereas such pitiable condition has turned opposite during and after feministic movement. They started to challenge male as a result grown themselves in parallel to men. Writers like Kate Chopin, Virginia Woolf, Elaine Showalter, and Helene Cixous started writing against patriarchal social norms and values. Female gets voting right, educational right, common values, identity, self-esteem, selfhood, equality and freedom for everything.

Kate Chopin's literary works demonstrate her as a post-modern feministic author similar to Butler and Poovey. Butler justifies critiques of bodily or biologically based theories, a critique of one sided feminism. She is centered to deconstruct the

classical essential feminism. In this sense Richard J .Lane interprets that "essentialism is entirely rejected and shown to be the ultimate illusion of human subjectivity" (582). Chopin belonged to nineteenth century society and was well familiar with first wave feminism therefore she wrote many short stories and novels including the issues related to identity and freedom. She undermined the patriarchal society that ruled by men through bold and strong female characters who go against social norms and values. Almost all writings, even children literature has similarities concerning identity issue, marriage issue and the ideas of gender. Her great works; *The Awakening*, *The Storm*, *The Kiss*, *A Pair of Silk Stockings*, *A Respectable Woman*, *The Story of an Hour* hold the matching complications of gender identity. She faced patriarchy and went directly or indirectly went to it.

Chopin's remarkable short stories *A Kiss*, *A Respectable Woman* and *A Pair of Silk Stockings* have influence of feminism but rather than hardline feminism, there is the influence of soft line feminism. In this sense, Chopin is practicing both version of feminism i.e. French feminism and liberal post-modern feminism. In all these three stories, feministic features can be found as drop of water in sea. In *The Kiss* Miss Nathalie is ready to kiss Mr. Harvy in wedding reception even in the presence of husband Mr. Brantain. Chopin beautifully displays the feminist feature like that: "Her eyes were bright and tender with a smile as they glanced up into his; and her lips looked hungry for the kiss which they invited". In this way the author demoralizes patriarchal belief as opined by existing feminism that forces back women to reveal their love, emotions, and feelings, hence the freedom of women have been glorified by both Butler and Chopin.

In the story *The Kiss*, Miss Nathalie and Mr. Harvy already had a kiss, a passionate and lingering kiss in front of Mr. Brantain: "before she could suspect his

intention, for she did not realize that he had not seen her visitor- he pressed an ardent, lingering kiss upon her lips” (1). If she heartily thinks about social norms she definitely pushes Mr. Harvy while he is kissing her. However, she helps him to convert a kiss in ardent and lingering kiss. She might be eager to find spiritual happiness hence despite the presence of enormously wealthy person she gets ready to accept Mr. Harvy’s kiss offer. Her ideas departures from the essential feminism which is also known as elitism feminism.

Furthermore, in *A Respectable Woman*, Mrs. Baroda has no voice initially but gradually she finds voice for herself. As a result, she is even able to ask Mr. Baroda about the return back date of Mr. Gouvernail. Same as at last Mr. Baroda has to take Mrs. Baroda’s permission to invite Mr. Gouvernail for the next time. That means Mrs. Baroda is getting more strength of voice. There is conflict between heart and mind. Suddenly Mrs. Baroda becomes a victim of emotion at the same time he thinks as a rational being. Though she has a fear of identity crises of ‘a respectable woman’, she falls in love with husband’s friend Mr. Gouvernail. According to the patriarchal norms and beliefs, love to another boy by married woman is not acceptable in the society but she loves another boy even in presence of husband. Thus, it matches with the idea of Butler who mainly centers to find the loopholes of existing notion of gender as "Gender is a style, rather than a substance, and styles are subject to change" (582) . In this sense, rather than supposing male as opposition, we can find the post-modernist version of feminine issues where male and female live together with co-existence and harmony.

Perhaps, directly the story tries to prevent the patriarchal norm that is why author does not want to lose Mrs. Baroda’s established identity of a respectable woman. She was not thinking of his words, only drinking in the tones of his voice.

She wanted to reach out her hand in the darkness and touch him with the sensitive tips of her fingers upon the face or the lips. She wanted to draw close to him and whisper against his cheek- she did not care what- as she might have done if she had not been a respectable woman whereas, on the other hand the story has counter behave on patriarchal beliefs. That is why, no one can control her feeling; neither her husband can control nor the society can. This event proves the author's vision toward feminism as the epitome of post-feminism.

In addition, the story *A Pair of Silk Stockings* is also post-feministic text which has weighty post-feministic feature. Little Mrs. Sommers is hugely caring mother and she forgets children and their needy things when she relishes with shopping for own self. Her shopping materials give better assurance to her. And she feels too proud of that: "Her stockings and boots and well-fitting gloves had worked marvels in her bearing- had given her a feeling of assurance, a sense of belonging to the well-dressed multitude" (2). Mainly, in this text we can find the ideas of Butler who remarks "western feminism cannot represent the issues of women of the universe" (341). Here female has been shown in opposition to male. In this sense Chopin is practicing French feminism too.

Objects built her confidence and make her cheerful. Little Mrs. Sommers who used to bargain for everything drops an extra coin as a tip in the restaurant while paying the restaurant bill. "She counted the money out to the waiter and left an extra coin on his tray". And she has no guilt on that rather she is enjoying largely. Actually she turns back to the better days that she knows before her marriage. Hence, the story depicts feministic view through little Mrs. Sommers. She also buys expansive magazines and books, means she loves to enjoy own inward desire as feminist woman

does. This ideas of the text can be connected with the classical notion of feminism which valorizes the notion of gender reversal and getting beyond patriarchy.

The story *The Kiss* also portrays similar issue. Miss Nathalie depends upon Mr. Brantian's property and money in spite of his unattractiveness. If she could work by herself, she might not have been attracted by Mr. Brantian's money. She loves Mr. Harvy and is with Mr. Brantian because she has no job, no way to get money. If she has source of money, she may not be waiting for Mr. Brantain's marriage proposal and rather she might ignore.

Similarly, the story *The Kiss*, along with the love between the two carries huge volume of phallogentric. Here we can find the dominance of rigid classical feminism. Male can do anything as his wishes in the text from one angle. Mr. Harvy objectifies the girls, so he kisses Miss Nathalie whenever he likes and ignores her when he does not want: "I didn't tell him so, it would have seemed ungrateful, but I can tell you. I've stopped kissing women; it's dangerous" (3). He does not care about Miss Nathalie's emotion and love and avoids her hunger of kiss. He is centered to exploit her physically.

Moreover he says word 'women', that symbolizes he has been making sensual relationship with many girls. That is quite same as Helene Cixous's point of view in her essay *The Laugh of the Medusa* as male mark out himself proud of male: "It has been one with the phallogentric tradition. It is indeed that same self- admiring, self- stimulating, self- congratulatory phallogentric" (542). Male always feels grateful to be phallogentric. Therefore Mr. Harvy reveals his disagreement frankly.

Chopin in *A Pair of Silk Stockings* does not mention any male's name. She has totally ignored man in this story. An indebted mother; little Mrs. Sommers does not use even own son's name rather says boys: "She would buy so and so many yards of



percale for new shirt waists for boys and Jaine and Mag” (1). The author has applied extraordinary technique to bias male even from her literary piece as Elaine Showalter declares feminist writers between 1880 and 1900 adopted such style: “In their rejection of male society and masculine culture, feminist writers had retreated more and more toward a separatist literature of inner space. Psychologically rather than socially focused, this literature sought refuge from the harsh realities and vicious practices of the male world” (539).

Mrs. Baroda in *A Respectable Woman* gets more chances to speak till the end of the story. During few days of Mr. Gouvernail’s arrivals, she becomes puzzle time and again as a senseless woman: “After a few days. When she could understand him no better than at first, she gave over being puzzled and reminded piqued” (1).

However, at the mid of story she informs about plan to go to city with husband in spite of asking. And also alert Mr. Baroda about returning time of Mr. Gouvernail: “I’m going to the city in the morning to have my spring gowns fitted. Let me know when Mr. Gouvernail is gone” (2). The story goes ahead that provides more voice to Mrs. Baroda as her husband is not able to invite Mr. Gouvernail again without her permission: “There was some talk of having him back during summer that followed. That is Gaston greatly desired it; but this desire yielded to his wife’s strenuous opposition” (3).

These stories have left certain impacts in the society as we cannot have everything in the world. It is up to us to make the most of what we do on the basis of story *The Kiss*. When Mr. Harvy ran away from Miss Nathalie, Brantain and his million left for her. If she has made honest relationship with Mr. Harvy, there was possibility of togetherness of Harvy and Nathalie. However, she engaged with another boy. It might be reason of Mr. Harvy’s ignorant behaves then lastly he left even

without giving kiss. Hence, the story gives a lesson that the people's work or behavior leads their way. This story also alerts women regarding vocation. If she was a jobholder, she probably did not choose Mr. Brantain then, Mr. Harvy could accept her. Despite such cases, Chopin strongly manifested female's self-happiness before the society.

Though the author directly or indirectly involved in opposition of contemporary patriarchal society, Chopin seems little bit unsecure on such steps. Perhaps, the author Kate Chopin presented Mrs. Baroda somehow self-control female in case of love, emotion and intimate desire in *A Respectable Woman*. Mrs. Baroda has fear to lose well established position or great nickname given by the society 'a respectable woman' despite having lots of feelings and emotions toward Mr. Gouvernail which has been shown by the following lines:

Her mind only vaguely grasped what he was saying. Her physical being was for the moment predominant. She was not thinking of his words, only drinking in the tones of his voice. She wanted to reach out her hand in the darkness and touch him with the sensitive tips of her fingers upon the face or the lips. She wanted to draw close to him and whisper against his cheek. (2-3)

This conveys patriarchal mind set during early nineteenth century in western society. Females were not fully ready to lose their locality which had been shaped by patriarchy. Furthermore, at the very end paragraph of "*A Pair of Silk Stockings*" author exhibits no value of female. A man was gazing to Mrs. Sommers but author at the same time making controversy by saying 'he saw nothing' as the text reflects "A man with keen eyes, who sat opposite to her, seemed to like the study of her small, pale face. It puzzled him to decipher what he saw there. In truth, he saw nothing—

unless he were wizard enough to detect a poignant wish, a powerful longing that the cable car would never stop anywhere, but go on and on with her forever” (3).

There were also other females in theater except Mrs. Sommers who were well dressed but wasting time in theater according to the author: “It was a little later when she entered the theatre, the play had begun and the house seemed to her to be packed. But there were vacant seats here and there, and into one of them she was ushered, between brilliantly dressed women who had gone there to kill time and eat candy and display their gaudy attire” (3). Of course, the female tried to establish the new society where there is equality and equity between male and female.

Even through Mr. Harvy’s ignorant attitude towards Miss Nathalie at the end of *The Kiss*, the author communicates women’s pity environment. Whether females go against the social norms and beliefs or not, the patriarchal males used to down them. Marry with Miss Nathalie is beyond the imagination of Mr. Harvy because he even did not kiss her later. Harvy was among the guests at the wedding, and he went towards her when she stood alone. “Your husband,” he said, smiling, “has sent me to kiss you” (2). She turned red. “He told me he didn’t want his marriage to stop that close relationship which has existed between you and me. I don’t know what you’ve been telling him, but he has sent me here to kiss you.”(2-3). Here we can find the issue of patriarchy.

Males treated females as object that is why Mr. Harvy utters he has been sent there to kiss her by her husband himself. There was no respect in men’s heart for women.

In *The Kiss* the protagonist Miss Nathalie presented as a financially poor girl whereas Mr. Brantain presented as a wealthy man. Kate Chopin alertly exposes vertical social status of men and women at the contemporary society. Miss Nathalie

might not have avarice on Mr. Brantain's property and money and probably she would leave him if Mr. Harvy treated her as a lover in spite of object. Women were shown financially weak in comparison to men: "She was waiting for him to propose and she knew she would accept. Brantain was not handsome or important, but he was very rich; and she liked the things which all the money could give her" (1). Also the story shows the material dream "Well, she had Brantain and his money. A person can't have everything in this world; and it was a little stupid of her to expect it" (3). Not only once rather twice money and property get glorified to introduce Miss Nathalie's condition.

Similarly, in case of Mrs. Sommers's too in *A Pair of Silk Stockings* money priorities at the very initial line because of what whole story gets further move. That money has high value in Mrs. Sommer's life. Along with that her financially critical condition can see: "Little Mrs. Sommers one day found herself the unexpected possessor of fifteen dollars. It seemed to her a very large amount of money, and the way in which it stuffed and bulged her worn old porte-monnaie gave her a feeling of importance such as she had not enjoyed for years" (1).

Female had no money to enjoy their wishes even for a single day that is why Mrs. Sommers enjoyed a lot within single day just because of the help of that founded money however she was thinking to buy several needy things for own children previously. A dollar or two should be added to the price usually paid for Janie's shoes, which would ensure their appreciable time longer than they usually did. She would buy so and so many yards of percale for new shirt for the boys and Janie and Mag. Mag should have another gown. She had seen some beautiful patterns, veritable bargains in the shop windows.

And still there would be left enough for new stockings—two pairs apiece—and what darning that would save for a while! She would get caps for the boys and sailor-hats for the girls”. She sat herself upon a revolving stool before a counter that as:

Comparatively deserted, trying to gather strength and courage to charge through an eager multitude that was besieging breast-works of shirting and figured lawn. An all-gone limp feeling had come over her and she rested her hand aimlessly upon the counter. (1)

In contrast, Mrs. Baroda seems financially strong woman in *A Respectable Woman* as she goes to city to fit spring gown with revealing money issue with husband as the text reveals “I’m going to the city in the morning to have my spring gowns fitted. Let me know when Mr. Gouvernail is gone; I shall be at my Aunt Octavia’s” (2). When Gaston arose in the morning, his wife had already departed. She had taken an early morning train to the city. She did not return till Gouvernail was gone from under her roof. Although she has portrayed weak understandable woman initially, she went before husband get up from the sleep. This story depicts controversial stages of women during Victorian period. Women were following feministic root as well as they had fear of social norms and values.

Kate Chopin was one of the representative of controversial character that has fear of contemporary patriarchal society and also has feministic view point at the same time. According to the critique Emily Toth, Chopin “physically engaged with another man after husband’s death but no hints that prove she gets married for the second time for a while the widow Kate ran his Oscar's business and flirted outrageously with local men; she even engaged in a relationship with a married farmer” (26). Women were not informed about financial situation of owning house as

author Kate was also unknown about debt that was left by husband. Women were in subordinate position at that time whether in financial case or in identical case but Chopin went beyond that as she dismantles the areas of patriarchy.

In conclusion, to understand Chopin's text exists as a critical task for the reader, as there are heterogeneous issues which are comparable to Poovey and Butler. Before the formal inauguration of feminist and post-feminist movement, Chopin has shared abundant ideas related to this movement. As post-modern believes in heterogeneous aspects, Chopin's philosophy is also related with the heterogeneous aspects. In this aspect she can be termed as visionary as her ideas have been practiced later on. In this paper, we can find the notion of critique to classical feminism and at the same time there exists also deformation, collapse, breakdown and change of existing gender in the eyes of post-modernism. Therefore *The Kiss*, *A Respectable Woman* and *A pair of Silk Stockings* are in the footsteps of heterogeneity as shared by Chopin in her life.

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