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**Female Masculinity in Janny Scott's *A Singular Woman:*
*The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother***

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled “Female Masculinity in Scott’s *Singular Woman* submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Manju Devi Ghimire has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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Abstract

This thesis entitled "Female Masculinity in Scott's A Singular Woman" unfolds the story of Stanley Ann Dunham, the central female character who challenges the established norms and values of the society where interracial marriage is against the law. This thesis revolves around the biography of Stanley Ann Dunham, who revolts against the society by showing her bravery which is the main source of her victory over patriarchal norms and values. Stanley is attributed with masculine characteristics as she feels herself as more masculine than a feminine. Janny Scott includes Stanley's biography in her writing because Obama has written a lot about his father who left him, but has revealed less about his mother who raised him. In this thesis, the theory of "Female Masculinity" by Judith Halberstam is applied to portray the characteristic of Stanley who is known as single working mother of two bi-racial children. Scott portrays Obama's mother as a masculine character to encourage all the women who still believe in patriarchal norms and values of the society. Stanley is not masculine by birth but in the process of dealing with patriarchal society as a single woman she faces many obstacles in her life such as problem between family, making money and work. Based on the reviews of different critics and library-based materials, this research focuses on the dominant role of Stanley who challenges the established values and revolts against racist society.

Key Words: Female Masculinity, Patriarchy, Gender, Motherhood, Identity, and Race

This thesis analyzes the significance of female masculinity in Janny Scott's *A Singular Woman: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother*. I find the politics in topic that 'Untold' represents the untold story of Obama's mother. As a white mother from Kansas, Barack has less revealed about her in *Dreams from my Father*. Females are not given much value at that contemporary time but Janny Scott exposes the story of Stanley which is not notified in American history. It illustrates the story of Stanley Ann Dunham who challenges the existing norms and values of the society. Stanley is a bold character who feels threatened the cultural normativity. She was a small town girl who grew up in the shifting wake of restless and westward moving father. This text is an inspiring and insightful look at how character is built and then passed on from parents to child. It is also the heartbreaking story of a woman whose death at fifty-two, as Obama was embarking on his first campaign for public office, prevented her from ever knowing what he would make of his life.

The story begins at a time when inter-racial marriage was a crime in the United States, and segregation and discrimination were raw facts of American life. It moves from the former rural areas of south eastern Kansas and the bombing post war suburbs Seattle to the Indonesian cities of Jakarta and Yogyakarta and the villages of Java. The life of an unconventional woman from a conventional era followed in the text. Stanley crossed the broader and cultural boundaries and defied the rules of race, motherhood and gender. Her story culminates in the present, with the historic presidency of her son. An award-winning reporter Janny Scott spends two and half year in the research process. She combed through archives, personal and professional papers, photographs, letters to friends and interviewed nearly two hundred of Dunham's colleagues, friends and family members including Dunham's children.

This text deals with the issue of why we are comfortable thinking about man

as mother, but we never consider woman as father. Stanley proves to be assertive, proactive and brings reconsideration in the concept of women's role in the society and nature in the family and in the work place. This thesis portrays how Stanley Ann Dunham is epitome of masculine female, how she subverts the traditional stereotypical masculine ideals like females are irrational, submissive and cowardice. On the contrary, she proves to be self-confident, positive and brings new ideas and thoughts in the concept of women's role in family and society. Stanley is ambitious figure who worked on the largest self-sustaining commercial micro finance program. As a young anthropologist she did fieldwork for her PhD dissertation on peasant blacksmithing. By presenting a woman character Stanley, this text proposes a critic of traditional gender division between masculine and feminine.

A Singular Woman reveals the story of Stanley, who is known as Ann most of her life. She is from the Kansas where historically the people of Kansas are idealistic, progressive and pragmatic. They tried to do things that other people just talked about, and they believed on the possibility of change. Stanley is independent minded, curious and lively with the willfulness of her mother. Physically she resembles her father; she has his enviable hair and compact mouth. Stanley is teased about her name because at that time girls were given names like Mary, Betty, and Barbara. She hates her father as only a teenager can hate because he is strict, overprotective and embarrasses her with her friends. Stanley Ann's humor was quick, wry and ironic. She found things funny that other people simply missed and was direct, confident of her brains than of her appearance.

In ancient days, females were regarded as submissive gender. The study of gender is limited within the issue of masculinity and femininity. Basically society has constructed different roles to perform for each sex. Stanley Ann Dunham challenges

the normative system of the society. She fights against the society that utters women should be in house with children. Being a single mother, she raised her daughter in Indonesia and sends her son halfway around the world alone at the age of ten for better education. Jakarta, Indonesia is a place where Stanley began her professional career in 1968. She became an anthropologist, worked as U. S. aid development consultant of the department of industry in Indonesia and often visited small remote villages in Yogyakarta to empower women in poor communities.

Stanley is a girl with a boy's name and grew up in the years before the civil right movement, the women's movement and Vietnam War. She married to an African at a time when nearly two dozen states still had laws against interracial marriage. In her entire life, she faces the conflict between family and work, conflict between need to make money and desire to work. She was witty and self-contained, wry sense of humor, curious about people and was tolerant, not leaping to judgment. Twice divorced, she is the single working mother of two multiracial children with a father of different nationality and race. She raised both of them for years in Indonesia, a country few Americans knew well. Directly or indirectly, she left a mark on to the hemispheres. Her values and choices shaped the man her son today that is Barack Hussein Obama. Stanley is independent minded character, she would decide to do something and do it whether anyone wanted her to or not.

This thesis primarily explores the female masculinity in Janny Scott's *A Singular Woman: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother*. Stanley faces different kind of difficulties throughout the biography. She becomes pregnant before she married to the African man at the age of eighteen, divorced and remarried at twenty-two. She revolts against the racist society to balance the established rules and regulation. Her strong values and bravery is the main source of victory to challenge

the laws in her society.

Numerous critics have examined *A Singular Women: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother* as increasingly progressive. Stanley faced so many challenges in her life. However, she is very enthusiastic and accepts all the things to move ahead in her life. One of the *New York Times* reviewers Eliza Griswold argues:

In many ways, Dunham's life tracked the increasingly progressive times in which she came of age. At the church her family attended near Seattle when she was a teenager in the late 1950's, the annual Christmas pageant featured children re-enacting "the birth of Jesus Christ, Confucius, and the Buddha. At home, sex roles were changing too. While Stanley Dunham drifted between sales jobs. Ann's mother, Madelyn, ultimately rose to prominence as one of the first women to be vice president of the bank of Hawaii. It was Madelyn who supported the family and paid for the grand children's private schooling as her daughter struggle to support herself abroad.

Above statement describes about the position of woman during 1950s. There was a shift from established values and Madelyn was one example, who supported her family as the male does. It also shows the example of the power of female that not only the female remains female rather they also can equate them as male in terms of serving in the family or in the society. Though, Stanley and Madelyn are females, they play the role and take responsibility to nourish other. Eliza Griswold further adds:

Barack Obama was 6 years old when his mother took him from the comfort of his grandparents' home in Hawaii to live on the edge of poverty in Indonesia. Jakarta shaped Barry, as his mother called him. Skin color was even more of an issue there than in America, Scott notes. He was teased relentlessly, but

Dunham taught him to pay no heed. In Javanese culture, true power means never losing one's cool.

Being a mother has more responsibility to her family as well as the whole community to solve the problems. Stanley Ann Dunham has the love and passion to her family. She cares and loves her son Barack Obama. She points out the skin color was more issue in Indonesia rather than in America. Stanley taught her son about how to become intellectual and brave person in the society and how to maintain peace among the people.

Catherine Lutz in *The New York Times* also talks about female masculinity different from the ideal female and the norms and values in the society to equate the masculinity which are deeply rooted in the society. She demonstrates:

We meet a very non-ordinary woman born Stanley Ann Dunham, "singular" from her naming onward. ("My father wanted a son", she would say, "but he got me.") Ann Dunham followed her peripatetic parents—a mother in banking and a father in furniture sales—through several states, to an island in Washington state, and finally on to Hawaii, where she meets two husbands and got her B.A. and eventually her PhD in anthropology.

The given description implies the struggle and achievements of Stanley in her life. It focuses on the familial relationship of Stanley. Stanley's life draws the life history as well as how she struggles and able to deconstruct the conventional gender role.

Similarly, Stacy Schiff in *The Daily Beast* also talks about the gender role where bearing and nurturing children is an act and courage of the female. This kind of act, courage and the abilities marks the optimism of female masculinity in the society. She argues:

Motherhood is always an act of courage. It is all the more so for a woman

alone. As of 1973 Ann Soetoro was single-handedly raising two biracial children, of different fathers while attempting both to support them and make her own way through graduate school. There was some irony there: she worked in microfinance providing capital or credit to those living in Southeast-Asian poverty but was often broke herself. Part of her reason not to return to the U.S was financial. She could live abroad comfortably, while life in America only buried her in debt. When a woman of accomplishment has children, we do not normally first inquire about her parenting abilities, but Ann Soetoro's case is different. We need after all, to explain where our 44th president came from.

Schiff focuses on the economic life of Stanley rather than other social obstacles and tussle of her life in her society. A mother always has a great role to raise their children. Likewise, Stanley's effort of hard working shaped the life of a man who becomes president that is Barack Obama.

Another critic Ann Gerhart in *The Washington Post* views that as though her family members were educated; in the same way education became the tool and marked her as masculine to subvert the established notion. She claims: "Dunham's choices and character were not without family precedent. Education was both goal and structure for her Kansan forebears, who were farmers, teachers and ministers; both of her paternal grandparents attended college, and two of her mother's siblings earned graduate degrees." Gerhart argues Ann's source of success was also her parents and relatives who were conscious about education. She was influenced especially by her mother who encourages her in every step of her life.

David claims that Ann was an ambitious woman, who in her own way, a devoted mother never loses sight of the fact. In the journey to the presidency of her

son her own life took on a meaning. Though, she was not described by her son on many pages like the father, but her struggle to establish him on the world's history.

More, David L. Ulin in *Los Angeles Times* explores:

Yet while Dunham comes across in these pages as a smart and directed woman, ambitious and, in her own way, a devoted mother, we never lose sight of the fact that it is not what she did much as who she raised that is important, that in her son's unlikely journey to the presidency, her own life took on a meaning, and a resonance, that it might not otherwise have had.

In this way her devotion and ambition becomes fruitful when her son becomes president. Though she is not much described by her son as his father but her life seems very meaningful with the establishment of history, her son's journey to the presidency.

The set of attributes, behaviors and the roles associated with male is known as masculinity. While the qualities like; power and potency, courage and assertiveness, the behavior like males are applied on female, there is more or less the sense of female masculinity. This thesis observes the theme of female masculinity epitomized by the female character Stanley Ann Dunham in the biography *A Singular Woman: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother*. It applies the theory of Judith Halberstam notion of 'Female masculinity' which is defined as the study of females who feel them to be more masculine than feminine. In other words, female masculinity can be described as female born person feeling more comfortable behavior. Female Masculinity signals a new understanding of masculine behaviors and identities. Masculinity studies began in the 1970s with the rise of Men's Liberation. Men's liberation primarily concentrate on the psychological and consciousness, to women's liberation feminist critics of gender injustice.

Masculinity is a form of gender studies which focuses upon critical studies of masculinity. Chris Beasley in *Gender and Sexuality* states, "Masculinity politics emerges around the 1970s. Like the feminist and sexuality movements, masculinity politics split in to various directions. In recent time, masculinity studies has also focused on LGBTI, queer and race, ethnicity" (187). Similarly, female masculinity also arises at a same time. Here, Judith Halberstam, a professor of English American Studies and ethnicity and gender studies clearly demonstrates that female masculinity is not some bad imitation of virility, but a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders. Halberstam uncovers a hidden history of female masculinities while arguing for a more detail understanding of gender categories that would incorporate rather than pathologize them. She considers masculinity as self-evident, prior to definition, valuable and powerful.

Judith Halberstam, in her book *Female Masculinity* argues, "Female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than simply a derivative of male masculinity" (77). Female masculinity is not biologically based rather it is materially constituted and socially developed. It is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that is usually associated with maleness, such as strength, authority and independence. In the biography *A Singular Woman*, Stanley's life is presented as the masculine female by her courage, strength and action.

Likewise, Todd W. Resser in *Masculinities in Theory* argues, "Others have suggested that while masculinity may be influenced by biological factors, it is also culturally constructed. As such, masculinity is not restricted to men and can, in fact, be female as women frequently display behavior, traits and physical attributes that are considered "masculine" in a given historical and social context" (12). He claims that

the notion of masculinity may be influenced by biological factor but it is more social construct. He further argues that female can be masculine and masculinity is not restricted to men. Female also demonstrate masculine behavior and physical attributes which are considered to be that of masculine men.

Gender seems reversible only in one direction and this must surely have to do with the immense social power that accumulates around masculinity. Halberstam argues, "Masculinity, one must conclude, has been reserved for people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies" (269). This is not only the matter of equality but all female would desire masculinity. Female masculinity is not merely a perverse supplement to dominant configurations of gender, but masculinity itself cannot be fully understood unless female masculinity is taken into account. Female masculinity has played a crucial but unrecognized role in the emergence of contemporary formations of the masculine. Empowering models of female masculinity have been neglected or misunderstood because of a cultural intolerance towards the gender ambiguity that the masculine woman represents.

Halberstam provides concrete examples of masculine women who pay attention to differences of race and social class. Her valuable historical and ethnographic story has made a fundamental impact on queer studies, even as some of its arguments remain tied to earlier gender binaries. In the text, the female character Stanley is attributed with masculine traits like; reason, power and potency, courage and assertiveness. In her view masculine female challenges the traditional gender system. She further argues:

Some popular accounts of female masculinity suggest that appearance of the virile woman is a relatively recent occurrence and that is herself a product of feminist ideology. Other accounts situate her as a sign of relaxation of gender

conformity and a harbinger of greater latitude for gender identification. Few popular rendition of female masculinity understand the masculine woman as a historical fixture, a character who has challenged gender system for at least two centuries. (45)

For Halberstam, masculine character is an indication of greater liberty for gender identification. For her, if women behave and do the action like men, it shows the influence of feminist ideology.

Masculine woman is known as the historical fixture who challenged gender system for centuries. J Newton in *Feminist Studies* portrays,

Masculinity is part of an effort to question the naturalness of the gender order and gender categories like masculinity. It enables masculinity writers to redefine masculinity as non-unitary, as multiple, rather than as a biological or even social given. The 'abject' aspects of the construction of masculinity- its 'underside' include groupings delimit and yet destabilize masculinity, even while these groups are specifically constituted by a relationship to masculinity. (212)

Female masculinity as non-unitary and more multiple, it is more socially constructed rather than biological. Female masculinity is the naturalness of the gender order and categories like masculinity.

Kamala Bhasin, an Indian feminist activist, in her book *Exploring Masculinity* defines female masculinity and male masculinity is similar. For her, neither we locate masculinity in male body nor do we do it with female body. In her own words:

Masculinity does not exist in isolation of femininity. In most societies, masculinity and femininity are mirror images of each other; if men are allowed to hot temper; women have to patient, and so on. Even though there are

masculinities, masculinity normally means having qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition. (33)

By these lines we find that Masculinity and femininity are mirror images of each other in most societies. Masculinity is integral part of femininity. It means masculinity and femininity have not deep oppositeness that they do not exist in isolation. Masculinity has different qualities like; strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, and ambition. In the text *A Singular Women*, Stanley is filled with the qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence and so on. Stanley devoted her years of life to helping poor people. In big or small way she lived bravely.

Judith Kegan Gardiner in her essay “Female Masculinity and Phallic Women Unruly Concepts” argues, “. . . her goal is to raise female masculinity from a term that is disparaged to one that is celebrated so that “masculine girls and women do not have to wear their masculinity as a stigma but can infuse it with a sense of pride and indeed power” (11). Gardiner wants to raise the female voice in the society where male masculinity does not give the importance of female. Females do not accept masculinity because of the set of negative and often unfair beliefs of the society but they are able to infuse pride and the power of female. Gardiner gives the importance of female on the male dominated society.

This thesis is the study of female masculinity in the Janny Scott’s *A Singular Woman*. It portrays the story of Stanley Ann Dunham, who is known as Ann most of in her life. In ancient time, female are regarded as submissive, irrational, have no courage and so on. But this research clearly visualizes the real picture of Stanley who has the power and potential like male. The study of gender is limited within the issue of masculinity and femininity. Janny Scott depicts the life story of the Stanley Ann Dunham, mother of Barack Hussein Obama, the former president of United States.

Here, female masculinity is the main tool to present Stanley. She is very much influenced by her mother because she is the role model of her family. This story moves around Stanley who challenges the stereotypical masculine features like; females are irrational, submissive, and receptive.

At the beginning of the text, Janny Scott depicts the early life of Stanley and the action she did is quite intolerable to society. Scott states, “She became pregnant at seventeen, married at eighteen, divorced and remarried at twenty-two” (3). These lines clearly show that Stanley breaks the cultural rules which are beyond the society. Her mother too was married at the age of seventeen. Madelyn memorize the similarities between herself and daughter Stanley. She remembered her youthful romantic rebellion, her secret marriage, and her parents’ reaction, when her daughter at age of seventeen, learned that she was pregnant with the child of an older man whom she would marry few months later.

In the conventional era, women did not share their own privacy even with their family. But talking about Stanley she dares to share her privacy with her family. Stanley has a strong aptitude to talk with others. Her second husband, Lolo Soetoro expects the female quality in her such as getting dressed like other women, wearing jewelry, and so on. In that context Stanley’s close friend Renske Heringa declares, “Ann was a hefty woman. She did not care about getting dressed, wearing jewelry, the way Indonesian women do, that was not her style” (125). Stanley dressed simply without makeup and wore her long hair held back by a headband. She was very concerned about her business being successful rather than involving in minor activities. She never hurt anyone intentionally and has strong opinion to others. She had a great sense of humor and was quite mature intellectuality.

Stanley proves herself as an assertive female and faces many difficulties in her

life. Janny Scott presents her as a struggling single mother. She says, “Stanley was the struggling single mother, the food, stamp, recipient, the victim of a health-care system gone awry, pleading with her insurance company for coverage as her life slipped away” (2). Here ‘single mother’ refers to a person who plays a role of caring and serving a family as well as the whole community by her own courage and intellectuality. Talking about gender Chris Beasley argues, “Gender trouble is hence created by not ‘doing’ gender as it is supposed to be done” (107). Likewise, Stanley is a woman who plays the role of single mother to raise the voice of female in society. She did each and every action clearly in male dominated society too. Stanley is a magnet for the people of her society. She encourages the people of her society to be more confident, expressive and outgoing.

In patriarchal society, women’s position is pitiable. They are looked at as if they are commodities for male. There is a binary opposition between male and female in the conventional society. Males assumes female as puppet. They think that they can possess them when they want and also can get rid when they do not want. Judith Butler in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of the Identity* argues:

The masculine/feminine binary constitutes not only the exclusive framework in which that specificity can be recognized, but in every other way the “specificity” of the feminine is once again fully decontextualized and separated off analytically and politically from the constitution of class, race, ethnicity, and other axes of power relations. (6)

The notion of patriarchal society is clearly visualized in the text. Patriarchal society has indeed been well served by masculine images, where all images of women has been male centered. Time and again, we came across the ambivalence between male

and female. In this sense Beauvoir argues, “To be a woman within the terms of masculinist culture is to be source of mystery and unknowability” (10). It is not easy to remain masculinist woman in a patriarchal society. Through the centuries, patriarchy has determined and shaped almost entirely the nature and quality of the society; its values and norms, the place and image of women within it and the relation between the sexes in which men are valued above women. Men are always overpower with the sense of ‘I am a men, she is a women’. Similarly in the text, Stanley’s father wants son but he had a daughter Stanley. He is a person who is guided by the patriarchal norms and beliefs. One of the Stanley’s friends Iona Stenhouse says, “From an early age, she ran circles around him. She would trick him, he would become angry, she would play innocent, and he would stomp up and down. If she wanted to do something, he would say no for no reason” (57). These lines clearly visualizes Stanley’s father is overprotected to her daughter. Stanley’s father tried to control her where she went, what hours she kept, whom she was with.

One of the Stanley’s friends Ralph adds, “Stanley was very strict with her- which is probably why she may be tried to break out the mold wants she get older” (57). It shows about the characteristic of her father who was very strict for her daughter in every situation. According to Gwen Hunnicutt, “Patriarchy is the term which evokes images of gender hierarchies, dominance and power arrangement. It is also useful that it keeps the gaze directed towards social contexts rather than toward individual men who are motivated to dominate” (554). These lines prove that patriarchy evokes images of gender, dominance and power arrangement. Patriarchy plays the roles in social context and it gazes socially as well as individually. Stanley’s father judges more about her, where she goes and what she does. It shows that her father is over protective. In *Dreams from My Father*, Obama writes, “My mother was

offered early admission to the University of Chicago, but my grandfather forbade her to go, deciding that she was still too young to be living in her own” (71). These lines prove that Stanley’s father is guided by patriarchal norms and values. Even in the case of study too Stanley’s father forbade her to go for the admission. Obama does not revolt against the existing values of society but he portrays himself as the supporters of everyone. The society which is guided by patriarchal norms and values is obviously a male dominated society. By that situation also Stanley has increased her power of masculinity and wants to become closer to her father.

Stanley is a bold and assertive woman who is, unlike other women, masculine in nature. In other words, she is attributed with masculine nature. She does not obey the traditional role of female that is expected by the society. Chris Beasley in "Gender and Sexuality" states, “In the context of masculinity studies, female masculinity represents the opportunity to escape from and/ or reconfigure gender and sexuality power arrangements, rather than being merely a minority version of masculinity” (237). Stanley is rebellious in nature from her childhood. Most of her friends were boys in childhood times and she was independent minded girl. One of the Stanley’s friend Jon remembered her as, “she was, in some ways, a different person than the one he remembered. Having weathered the turbulence of the intervening years-pregnancy at seventeen, raising biracial children, her years in Jakarta –she seemed to have come in to her own” (140). This illustrates that she is different among others. At the age of seventeen it is quite challenging to raise the biracial children. But Stanley has the power to cope with this situation and proves herself as self-dependent women. She was not simply a mother; she was raising two biracial children with different fathers. In this regard, Halberstam argues, “Sometimes Female masculinity coincides with the excess of male supremacy, and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social

rebellion” (9). This argument clarifies that female masculinity sometimes appears in the form of rebellion too. Similarly in the text, the role of Stanley seems rebellious because she is against the deep-rooted traditional norms and values.

Stanley is in the quest of independence and freedom. She is ambitious enough as male and likes to take her own decision. Ambition, strength, bravery, assertive are considered to be the characteristics of masculine male but this feature is inherent in Stanley's journey of her own independent life and career. She wants to establish herself as the economically and educationally successful which is seen in the lines:

In late 1974, Ann passed the oral exams for her master's degree, moved on to the Ph.D. program, and received approval to study the role of cottage industries “as a subsistence alternative” for peasant families on Java. Ann's choice of subject was unusual, Dewey told me, in its focus on the production of handicrafts and on their economic dimension. (156)

Above mentioned lines show that the subject choice of Stanley Ann is unusual which is beyond the traditional society. It proves that she is quite different from the existing society. She wants to involve in economic activities, which is not allow to the women because their role is expected in household activities rather educational and external activities with the changing situation of time. She again states, “By the end of the 1970s, hundreds of thousands of women had moved out of agriculture and into rural manufacturing, many of them as part time unpaid cottage industries workers, and estimated in an apparently unpublished paper in the early 1980s. Some had difficulty finding stable employment as hired workers” (113). These lines clearly pictures that, women started to came out from private to public sphere. They become capable to take the position as industry worker and try to equate them as male.

Females too display masculine behavior and physical attributes which are

considered to be that of masculine man. Beasley argues, “Masculinity Studies is a small and new subfield in the wider arena of Gender/Sexuality Studies” (189). The notion of female masculinity is associated with gender role as well. Gender role refers to the behavior and attitudes of male and female members of the society. The perception of gender role includes attitude, actions and personality traits associated with a particular gender within that culture. But with the changing course of time, gender roles get shattered with the emergence of notion of male and female. Women have brought reconsideration in the thought and attitude to look at female role and nature in the society.

Cora Kaplan and David Glover in their book *Genders* have talked about female masculinity. Regarding female masculinity they argue, “Women feel just as men feel they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, to absolute stagnation, precisely as men would suffer” (24). The masculine nature in Stanley develops when she is involved in a project by the US agency where she seems like male figure, she decide to leave home for the project. Which is seen in the lines: “She accepted a job as a consultant in international development on a project in central Java funded by the US agency for international development. The job came with a salary, a house in Semarang, a car and driver, and home leave . . . “well, now that I am working, I am hoping to clear all debt soon,” Ann wrote to Dewey several months into the job” (196). These lines clarifies that Stanley is involved in an international project funded by US agency which demands home leave and she accept it and works for future betterment. She hopes that by this job, she clears all debts soon which she expresses to Dewey. Her job is charming like as male’s. But the society blames her as the soul seller. She heard, “Ann had sold your soul to the large international organization, and

apparently mounted a persuasive defense” (197). This hints that Stanley is bold in nature and decision because she refuted all the charges against her from the society persuasively. Traditionally, it is believed that bold and decisive quality is the masculine entity and she challenge this kind of notion and shows masculine characteristics. In this way, Judith Butler argues, “Gender does not necessarily follow from sex and desire and sexuality do not seem to follow from gender” (3-4). Here, she differentiates sex and gender which does not follow traditional concept of gender role. These types of activities are also seen in Stanley’s character. She wants to challenge the gender role.

Janny Scott, taking example of Stanley supplies the message to the society that female should be brave and courageous in order to bring the reconsideration in the concept to look at females and their position in the society. They have their own identity and can be courageous and aspiring too. By bringing Stanley as masculine character Janny Scott tries to revitalize and upgrade the social position of the female with the view to inspire other female and to protest against the dogmatism of the society which undermines their existence in the society. It is because society treats female as a matter of non-entity. In this context, Stanley as a bold and assertive character wants to live a dignified and independent life of her own. Stanley’s friends accept her role as independent character. Stanley’s friend Nancy Peluso remarks:

I must say that your job is AID sounds fascinating and challenging I can well understand the excitement of doing something practical rather than theoretical and actually working in the field of development rather than theorizing it and criticizing from the safety of a US University. In addition I know what you mean when you described the people you work with (or at least some of the people in your team) as being dynamic, progressive, social

minded and involved. (197)

Stanley involves in such work which is challenging not only for women but also for the male which her friend Dewey accepted as a male. Dewey shows the difficulties of doing such type of work; he argues that it is quite challenging to do practical work rather than theoretical one. Though, Stanley is female, Dewey appreciates her work as being dynamic and creatively involved in her responsibility where she represented a new approach. In this context, Halberstam argues, “Many masculine women have had to create elaborate rationales for their ways of loving, their desire to provide for and protect a loved one, their decisions to live explicitly masculine lives. They have had to imaginatively recreate masculinity through writing and other forms of cultural production” (276). In these lines, women have the quality of love, care, protection and so on and even women have power to recreate masculinity through their own works like writing or others forms. In the same way, Stanley also creates her identity and masculinity through her work like; she raised both of her children for years in Indonesia, a country few Americans know well. She sent her son half way around the world alone, at the age of ten for a better education.

Appearance is very important in female masculinity, though it is not about how women look. Halberstam refutes the notion of reserving masculinity for people with male bodies and denying it to those with female bodies. In the biography, the following lines indicate, “She would be one of the bank’s first female vice president and the formidable “grande dame of escrow” as a younger colleague would remember her when her grandson made her famous decade later” (93). Even being a female, Stanley’s mother Madelyn became the vice president of the bank which influences her to be bold and self-dependent female. This is not easy to purchase by the female but in exceptional case woman can do the challenging and creative work which leads to

success of institutions. In Halberstam words, “Masculinity, one must conclude has been reserved not only for male bodies and has not been actively denied to people with female bodies” (269). Halberstam provides concrete example of masculine women that pay attention to differences of race and social class. She provides ideas that differentiate many varieties of masculine women including butches and the luminal category of trans man, who sees to identify as female at all.

Stanley marries for the sake of freedom, independence, self-dignity and pursuit of happiness after all. Furthermore, she is enriched with masculine nature who feels comfortable looking and behaving like males. In this regard, she married with Obama senior who had not only pregnant wife but a child back home before marrying Stanley. After knowing the fact she decided to divorce him. She gets her husband’s changing attitude towards her after marriage. In this regard, her friend Warner says:

His attitude changed when she got married. She became his wife, and he became very critical. One evening, Warner remembered Ann telling her, Ann had cooked dinner for Obama. She put the food on a plate and put the plate in front of him at the table. “You expect me to eat this?” He barked. Then he grabbed the plate of food and hurled it against the wall. (93)

In these lines, Warner clarifies the condition of the Ann’s married life where harmonious relationship between husband and wife is not seen. Being a female she does not feel any kind of hesitation. Her behavior and actions were somehow similar to male. She seems to confidant in her childhood days and even now. She cultivates her own ambition as a masculine female. She is not a docile and submissive woman who easily accepts traditional norms and values. So, she does not tolerate this kind of activities of her husband and decided to divorce. After that, she married with Lolo Soetoro for the sake of pursuit of happiness but there is no record of wedding and

attendance of families, which is seen in the following lines. Janny Scott portrays, “There’s no record of a real wedding, a cake, a ring, a giving away of the bride. No families were in attendance, it is not even clear that people back in Kansas were fully informed” (86). Through these lines, it is clear that her second marriage is not formal and there is no role of family too. Even the community people were not informed about the marriage ceremony which demonstrates her freedom and independent.

After her second marriage, she hopes to live a happy and prosperous life but her aspirations turned wrong. As a married woman her desire and goals are confined within herself and her sufferings do not get an outlet and cause her more and more suffering. She finds her family quite antagonistic because of male dominance. Instead of helping her, they blame her of groundless thing which she goes on refuting. Her second husband wants to see her as a beautiful Indonesian woman in traditional female role. Her husband, Lolo utters:

You have to be the little wife . . . as a wife; you were not supposed to make yourself visible besides being beautiful. By the time I knew Ann, she was a hefty woman. She did not care about getting dressed, wearing jewelry, the way Indonesian woman do. That was not her style. He expected her to do it. That is one reason she did not stick it out. She absolutely refuses to. I understand why he could not accept it. (125)

Through these lines, we can see the expectations of her husband that female should follow traditional role but she does not accept it and refused absolutely because all these traditional roles are in favor of patriarchy. Wearing jewelry and getting dressed is not her concern rather she wants to become the rational being and wants to lead happy, prosperous and satisfied life.

Stanley’s expression is a great challenge to the patriarchal society which never

pays attention to female expression is as powerful as males' and it can even overcome the male expression. The patriarchal domination in which Stanley is living is revealed through her friend Warner.

According to Luce Irigaray, "Women are the sex which is not one, but multiple" (13). Same in the text, Stanley is the representative of all women who challenge traditional norms and values of the society. She portrays the male values and her struggle which is not based upon weapons but by words and her bold masculine actions. Words are the powerful expressions to struggle for women because they are silence traditionally. The traditional belief is that women should always accept male wishes positively or with a positive attitude but passively. But feminist believes that silence could be used as a weapon against the norms and hence could prove more powerful than speaking. Silence is more than speech because there is power in silence.

According to Halberstam, "Female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed as masculinity. In other words, female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominant masculinity in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing" (16). Female masculinity gives us the picture of masculinity about its construction in the society. Male masculinity is appeared to be real thing. Female masculinity celebrated as superior than male masculinity. In the contemporary society, masculinity rapidly changes popular culture and communication technology that create new communities and gender formation.

Cary Levene argues in "Manly Crafts: Mike Kelly's Moronic Gender Bending", "The contention that masculinity is an appropriate subject of progressive thought remains debated. Such efforts can be seen as a shrouded form of anti-feminism, an attempt to evade the more pressing detrimental problem of female

subjugation” (4). Here, masculinity is defined as the subject of liberal thought of effort that is seen by the hidden form of anti-feminism. It attempts to avoid the negative and harmful problems of female. Masculinity is the subject that remains debated. Masculinity is organized around social power in terms of access to higher education, entry to profession and command of communication. It has a link with society. Likewise, in the text Stanley is presented as the masculine figure by her rational, bold and courageous behavior. She more or less recovered her family and community that are guided by the patriarchal norms and values.

Stanley, through her action, proves that she is an energetic and bold woman. She is the representative of all women who needs to expose their masculine power in order to threaten the male made cultural and social norms. She shows that though women have to suffer mentally and physically while fighting male rule and order, they don't care about the suffering as long as they attain their goal. Stanley was ambitious; she seemed always to be thinking as though her mind is operating on multiple levels. She slept four hours a night on average. While talking about her boldness, Janny Scott brings Stanley's private activities too. Janny says, “Ann accepted whatever was offer rather than risk appearing rude by declining” (180). Stanley is ready to take risk for achieving her goal. She further says, “She never complains even walking long distances in heat or rain during her work” (180). To achieve her goal Stanley dares to do whatever difficulties come.

Traditionally, women are always kept away from the heroic works like the work of males but Stanley breaks down all the patriarchal norms. She plays an important role in changing the outlook of women's thought. While she went to Kajar village of Indonesia for research she visits handicraft people. There was Kasongan, a center of crockery production seven km south of Yogyakarta, where competition from

factory-made pottery was cutting into the market for traditional earthenware products. In this place tourism was creating a new market for animal banks, toys and terra-cotta souvenirs. This place was more or less guided by male dominated culture. At that village she does very influencing work and gives opportunities to handicraft people. She visited those villagers who were switched to trading or to making perforated leather shadow puppets out of animal hide, which turned to converting bamboo and palm leaves into items such as baskets, winnowing trays, and rice steamers.

While Ann visits those villagers she has played the great role for their survival. She faces many problems but she is much more concerned about the problems. In this context, Janny Scott brings the reference from the interview from Ann. Scott writes:

With the rise of tourism had come increased demand for leather “wayang-style” souvenirs including bookmarks, lamp-shades, miniature puppets, and key rings. Problem with marketing through stores because store only wants cheap wayangs, Ann observed in her notes from a long interview with a puppet maker named Sagiyo from the village of Gendeng. (189)

At the time of research, Stanley has a problem in managing marketing stores where the rise of tourism had increased demand for original goods. There is the problem because of the cheap collection of materials. Store only wants cheap products rather than the quality. Stanley is very aware of her character and tries her best to solve the problems. The women who were not necessarily benefiting from industrialization are more or less recovered. When female dominated industries adapted to competition by producing new products for new markets, the best paid jobs often went to men. Stanley’s attention involved the industriousness of Indonesians. Stanley involves on the governmental meeting and wants to help the community for their well survival.

She is very strong person in her own way. She has an area of interest like; geography, technology, labor investment, purchasing, output, and agricultural yields. Janny Scott further states, “She was attending a meeting of the Indonesian government agency that had sponsored her research, a unit within the department of industry that worked with small enterprises. According to her field notes the subject of the meeting was income distribution and employment” (190). In the traditional society men were only the person who attends the governmental meetings and programs but here, Stanley takes a position of man that is challenging factor for the patriarchal society.

Likewise, the critic Cressida J Heyes, in her text “Reading Transgender, Rethinking Women’s Studies” states, “Gender expression is thus not only an aesthetic choice about cosmetics or hair-style, skirts, and suits. It’s also implicated in politically fraught behaviors, economic marginalization, and exploitation, and political consciousness” (5). Heyes describes about the gender expression not only the beauties about the cosmetics or pictures of tiny matters like; hair style, skirts and suits but also in the economic, social and political matters. But, Stanley focuses more about labor investment, trade, politically fraught behaviors and so on. She has the political consciousness towards the society and wants to play role of supporter of economic marginalization and exploitation. It shows the quality of feminine masculinity in Stanley which is challenging issue on her society.

The hope, power and strength are clearly visualized when Stanley states, “I’m very much a can-do, will-do, do-it-now person. But I also related to Mother Ann” (313). These strong words has brought by Janny Scott when there is the confrontation between Stanley and her son Barry. These lines seem the bold and courageous decision about Stanley. The confident of Stanley proves her feminine character as masculine. She has played the role of husband too. In this context, Halberstam also

raises the voice of binary opposition between male and female. In her own words, she questioned, “Why are we comfortable thinking about men as mother, but we never consider women as father?” (269). This is the main problem in the contemporary society too. Halberstam’s argument proves that the binary between male and female is created by men themselves. In the conventional society, people think that a father can play the role of mother but a mother cannot play the role of father. She challenges the binary between male and female. In the text Stanley’s role is presented as mother as well as father in her family and more or less to her community.

Similarly, the nature of Stanley is presented by Lawrence Yanovitch, director of policy and research at FINCA, who serves on the executive committee with her. He states, “She had little ego, and she cared about issues first. Barry told me, “she could be kind of a fat lady with big hair and a bohemian, but she was trying to do the right things for right reasons. And she did it with great intelligence and very strong rigor in terms of preparation and methodology and thinking through strategy” (315). These lines simply point out the nature and behavior of Stanley. She cares more about the issue first while the problem is raised. Barack has hope in her mother that she did all the work with great intelligence and careful manner. He valorizes the role of her mother in terms of intelligence, strong rigor and thinking through strategy that is somehow characteristics of masculinity. It proves that Stanley has a quality of Feminine masculinity.

In this way, this research is about female masculinity which revolves around the bold nature, attribute and thought of the female character Stanley Ann Dunham. Stanley has an ambition to become independent in her society which is guided by patriarchal society. By facing many challenges in her life she is able to make a shift from conventional gender role. It is only possible because of her courage and

enthusiastic behavior.

This thesis entitled *Female Masculinity in Janny Scott's A Singular Woman: The Untold Story of Barack Obama's Mother* explored the female masculinity of Stanley Ann Dunham who is attributed with masculine traits, how she counter the traditional stereotypes like females are submissive, receptive, irrational, and cowardice. *A Singular Woman* is about Stanley's nature, characteristics, attitude and longing for an independent and dignified life of an ambitious and adventurous woman who crossed the cultural boundaries and challenges the rules of race and gender. She is the mother of two multiracial children with a father of different nationality and race. Being a single working mother, twice divorced, she struggles until her last breathe. Also, proves Stanley is revolutionary character who balances the established values and norms and her great decision to revolt against the male-controlled society. She is the voice for those women who should come out from private to public spheres and live a life of own decision. Her strong hope, determination and bravery are the main source to challenge conventional society.

To sum up, the finding of the research applying Female Masculinity is not only in the female character Stanley who challenges and revolts against the patriarchal norms, beliefs and values of society but it do exist within the people mainly female all over world. Janny Scott portrays Obama's mother as a masculine character to encourage all the women who still believes in patriarchal norms and values of the society. By presenting masculine characteristics of Stanley Ann Dunham, Janny Scott tries to awake those feminine women who cannot stand against patriarchy. In fact, this text is the message for those suppressed women who need to be bold and strong not only in family but in society too.

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