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Female Masculinity as Resistance to Patriarchy in Milan Kundera's *Identity*

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Abstract

The present thesis explores the female masculinity in Milan Kundera's Identity, applying gender criticism, especially female masculinity. As theory of alternative masculinity, female masculinity locates masculinity outside the male body. The women having strong determination, courage, resistance, advance thinking is regarded as masculine woman. Judith Halberstam and Judith Butler are the major theorists discussed in this research. The thesis will introduce their concepts to interpret the book Identity that provides a new identity to Chantal, the female protagonist of the novel. The role of Chantal is not supportive with the traditional female identity, as weak, passionate, docile, kind-hearted, inferior woman. She is portrayed like as bold, strong hearted, decision maker and courageous. She stands as rebellion figure as an independent individual with unique identity woman in contemporary Czechoslovakian society. She resists all the established patriarchal norms and condition of the society denying her husband without any fault. She blames her husband unnecessarily for the untimely demise of her son. She takes the rapturous delight in having an affair with a man much younger than herself. She feels suffocated to live in a marital life. The strong determination and courage of Chantal has remained until the last moment of her life; just for the slightest provocation she leaves her extramarital partner. She spends her whole life fighting against unjust practices.

Keyword: Masculinity, feminism, resistance, patriarchy, independence, new identity

Introduction

This research focuses on the novel *Identity* by the Nobel Prize winning French writer Milan Kundera. The main thrust of the research is the study of female masculinity in the novel. The female protagonist of the novel exhibits masculine qualities in the patriarchal society of Czechoslovakia. Female masculinity is understood as the study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. In other words, female masculinity is ascribed to a female who is female biologically or by birth but behaves like a male and exercises power to resist the patriarchal norms and values in the society. It challenges the stereotypical images of female as submissive, emotional, passive love caring and receptive being and establishes women as a bold, courageous, sexual and active individual. Furthermore, female masculinity is masculinity outside the male body. However critically thinking masculinity outside the male body is the suggestive of female masculinity because it directly interferes with the presumed male ownership of masculinity. Judith Halberstam is a pioneer theorist talking about female masculinity who claims “female masculinity is about women who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine” (xi). She further argues that female masculinity “is specific gender with its own culture history rather than simply a derivative female masculinity” (77). She refutes the notion of reserving masculinity for the people with male bodies and denying it to those with female bodies. She claims “masculinity one must conclude has been reserved for people with male bodies and has been actively denied to people with female bodies” (269). In other words female attributed with the conventional notion of masculine traits are said to be masculine females.

Identity is a novel set in Europe published in 1998. Generally in Kundera’s writing we can find strong type of irony and evolution of the consciousness of

women. In this novel we can find how a single woman constructs her consciousness and how she demonstrates masculinity by subverting traditional stereotypical notion of woman in the society. The whole story moves around the protagonist Chantal and her nature, characteristics, attitude and longing for an independent and dignified life in Czechoslovakian society. The story commences from a hotel in a small town on Normandy, French coast, where Chantal goes on holiday with Jean Marc, a man who is intimated with her. Despite the faultless behavior of her husband, Chantal displays her unhappy attitude and involves in lovemaking with Jean Marc, who is four year younger than herself.

Chantal is attributed with masculine traits like reason, power, courage, assertiveness and so on. She consists of a dream to live an independent and a dignified life full of joy and happiness. She is very assertive in nature who does not like to remain within the four walls of a house. She disobeys her family member's advice and she turns away from her husband Jean Macon's life. She blames her husband unnecessarily for the untimely demise of her son. Similarly, like the males she keeps multiple relationships with different men and involves in love making. She does not remain in relation for long time. She does not need any company to visit different places either in day or night. In this regard, this research attempts to prove the hypothesis how the central female character of the novel Chantal is attributed with masculine traits, how she refutes the traditional notion of patriarchy. She proves to be assertive, proactive and bring reconsideration in the concept of women's role and nature in the family and outside the family as well as her work places.

Identity is about masculine nature of female protagonist Chantal. From the first publication of the *Identity* in 1998, it has been matter of discussion among various critics and readers throughout the world. All the adaptations of the work for

film, theatre, television and radio are strictly prohibited by the writer. Kundera says that the reader's imagination and creation automatically completes the writer's vision. Since he believes in interaction among readers, authors and characters consequently. It gives plurality in interpretation and develops multi-perspective analysis. So, different critics have supplied their views regarding this novel.

Most of Czechoslovakian women suffered from male dominated culture, biased legal system, inhuman ethical code, and patriarchal social structure. The women were deprived of their fundamental rights. They had to submit to the male of their families, to their father before marriage, to their husband after marriage and to the son after the death of their husband. They lived the life under the full authority of males. The protest and women's right movement, to change women's place in society began in Europe and cities from the beginning of twentieth century. By the 1920s female equality was commonly accepted and large numbers of girls attended school. Almost, all the urban women and the majority of rural work outside the home. But women remain in disadvantages in many ways. After they have achieved political power slowly and gradually and become more powerful in the patriarchal society.

Milan Kundera is a Czechoslovakian leading author of the twentieth century. His novel *Identity* has received critical reviews in different books and articles.

Regarding this novel, Daniel Robertson argues that:

Milan Kundera is one of the most important contemporary Czech writers. He is one of the few Czech writers who have achieved wide international recognition. Each of his creative work and each of his contributions to the public political and cultural discourse always provoked a lively debate. In the context of its time *Identity* is the story of freeing themselves of the Marxist dogma and of gaining and communicating important insight, based

on the traumatic experience of life under totalitarianism in central Europe.

(40)

In a sense, Kundera is a writer who belongs to Czechoslovakia and is politically aware of what is happening in central Europe. He contextualized Czechoslovakian society and raises the issue of biological and social right in the society. Though it is difficult to raise the voice openly, he took resort to allegory. Allegory becomes the chief means of the voice of dissent towards the corrupted totalitarian ruler. In this regard, it can be summed of that almost all the writing of Kundera is political allegory implicitly or explicitly.

Janet Simpson is attentive to the internal structure and organization of the novel. She wants to discover the reason behind the recurrent shift in the tone and strategies of manipulation. To add the distinctness and direction to the issues he handles, Kundera gives the twist and turn to the uniform unfolding his subjects. Simpson makes the following statement about this narrative dexterity of Kundera:

In *Identity*, Kundera switches from the mind of Chantal to inside the head of her lover, Jean Marc. Their relationship changes and evolves, influenced by thought they don't share and unique pasts. At one point Chantal sadly says that men don't look at her anymore and in response Jean Marc is offended, shouldn't he be only man she is concerned about? What this novel boils down is when Jean-Marc mistakes a stranger for Chantal, not even recognizing the women he has spent many years with. (23)

This notion of identity is designed to make human beings less obsessive about their self and subjectivity. The existential notion of the formation of the self and subjectivity affirms that the self is largely the product of unconscious and unprecedented forces. Though human beings have freedom to shape their identities,

they lose the power to keep their identities intact in the face of ineluctable moments.

Similarly the critic Eric Goffman's explores some of the possible implications of Kundera's concept of identity. He comes to terms with Kundera's notion of identity after exploring diverse its implications. Goffman's understanding of identity is mentioned below:

Social identity refers to the area of highly stereotyped categories which is based on socio-cultural patterns of classifying persons who are recognized as members of a particular group. Personal identity arises in the area of close and intimate interaction, and is tied up with an aspiration to treat a partner in interaction in terms of their non recurring nature and recognition of their unique individualities. Self identity consists of all the auto-definitions. (76)

Identity is a term that is pretty confounding. It is clear that this term offers fixed and concrete idea. In different spaces, it gives to seekers with different implications. In the social sphere, it means stereotyped category. Social identity exerts pressures in human life. Individual can hardly grow once trapped in such situation. In the narrower circle, there is tendency to embrace personal identity. Of all the versions of identity, self identity is of utmost importance.

James Hynes argues that there is presence of the proto-postmodernism in the work of Milan Kundera's work *Identity*. The vulnerability of identity is a tomfoolery to Kundera. This aspect of Kundera is manifested in the following short views of James Hyness:

The notion of human identity is contingent and constructed is inherently postmodernist. This sort of underlying assumption regarding identity is found in the novel *Identity*. The common maxim that self is capable of understanding the other is simply turned upside down by Kundera. The trend to valorize

possibility of identifying and understanding self is categorically rejected by Kundera in *Identity*. (54)

Indeed much of the Kundera's sense of perspective comes from balancing irony with pathos. He is, according to James, determined that the serious stories become neither sentimental nor facetious. As his view about human identity, his stand on the fragility of self and identity is similar. Collective conscience is always in the mood of pouncing upon its prey. Constant alertness and revitalization are necessary to keep the fragile self-intact. Else anytime any kind of disaster can occur. It is in the management of this existential fate that human beings turn out to be rational.

Andrew Blackman notices dream like qualities in *Identity*. He praises Kundera's power to discuss realistic side of life with in the surreal surrounding and setting. This power of Kundera is praised profusely by Blackman. But Blackman does not decline to tell frankly the element of ambiguity in this novel of Kundera. The following excerpt contains Blackman's view:

The novel is narrated from two separate points of view, the lovers Chantal and Jean-Marc, and the perspectives are quite separate, marked off by chapter breaks. So, whose dream is it? Another problem is that the dream is not very dreamlike for long time. Remembering our past, carrying it around with us always, may be the necessary requirement for maintaining, as they say the wholeness of the self. (56)

The wholeness of self is, according to Blackman, the sole concern of Kundera. But Kundera has been hindered constantly by the complication that can arise from his attempt to valorize and encourage a woman acquire the wholeness of her subjectivity, In the domestic world of daily drudgery, how can a woman with the feministic cast of mind hope to achieve the wholeness of her selfhood without harming family integrity.

This problematic is not addressed quietly in this work of Kundera.

Andrew Robertson has been widely known for his attempt to perform rhetorical analysis of Kundera's *Identity*. His attempt to illuminate thematic logic via rhetorical analysis is highly meritorious. He makes the following observation with respect to this novel:

The tenses of the narration shifted constantly. The present tense seemed to be used mostly for thoughts or feeling, and the past tense for action. Perhaps this was hinting at the dream resolution. Chantal thinks early on in the book. He comes to know that Marc dislikes dreams. They impose an unacceptable equivalence among the various periods of the same life, a leveling contemporariness of everything. Perhaps the mixed-up tenses are part of the author's dream. Perhaps it's not Chantal or Jean-Marc who are dreaming at all, but Milan Kundera. (32)

Marc's aversion to dream is expected to carry the aversion harbored by the author himself. This is the estimation of the critic Roberston. By representing a female character is averse to dream, Kundera has done nothing other than externalizing the inherent ambiguity of feminist movement. Moreover, realities of domination and inferiorization are rather softer than the burden of dream, no matter how appealing it might be.

Jan culik has made a critical survey of most of the representative works of Milan Kundera. He comes across the preponderance of the rejectionist voice in the works of Milan Kundera. According to Culik, Kundera's major works contains variegated traits and topicalities. Culik's cursory view runs follows:

Kundera resects political propaganda and again stresses the importance of natural, ordinary, authentic human experience. Some of his major works

highlight the tension between emotion and the intellect and the irrationality of love which often conquers even those who would be guided by the intellect alone. In his works, the sexual impulse is disconcerting. Love making can sometimes assume the form of escapism which hides unpleasant reality. (42)

The very portrayal of women in Kundera's leading works is subject to severe criticism. Women are usually obedient, whereas men are assertive and aggressive. The nobility of man's greatness is juxtaposed with the pettiness of women. By doing so, Kundera might have given the impression of being a committed writer to a realist cause.

Though different critics have critiqued and researched about this novel from multiple perspectives, this text is still important for further study. No researcher has researched and analyzed this novel from the theoretical perspective of female masculinity as resistance to patriarchy. In this regard, there lies a gap in the existing knowledge about this text regarding the issue of female masculinity. The issue of my research is an unexplored issue which fulfills the gap of existing knowledge on the text. The research portrays how Chantal is epitome of the masculine female, how she subverts the traditional stereotypical masculine ideas like females are irrational, submissive, and receptive and cowardice. She proves to be assertive, proactive and brings reconsideration in the concept of women's role in the family and in the work place. By creating a woman character such as Chantal the novel proposes a critique of traditional gender division between masculine and feminine. Mainly, the research will base on Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity*. She does not agree on the prevalent issue of gender and sexuality. For her, issue of gender is fluid. Our action, determination and behavior are key factors to present our identity as masculine or feminine. The research also takes idea from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble*:

Feminism and the Subversion of Identity, Kamala Bhasin's *Exploring Masculinity*, Todd W Reeser's *Masculinities in Theory* and Cora Kaplan and David Glover *Gender*.

Female masculinity is a new concept in the field of gender study. Traditionally, masculinity and femininity were used to reflect sexual relation. Masculinity connotes the male whereas femininity refers to woman or female. So in the simple sense, masculinity refers to the qualities of men. But with the changing course of time, the term analyses only the qualities of gender not the sex. Everyone, having qualities of male; bold, ambitious, strong and breadwinners can be taken as masculine. Masculinity means having qualities or appearance considered to be typical of men; connected with man or like man.

While dealing with the issue of masculinity, we need to find differences between sex and gender. Sex is close to the nature, it is biological. Nature determines our sex; either male or female. But gender is cultural. Culture creates the gender. Gender is qualities of human beings. Qualities traditionally associated to male are masculine whereas qualities close to female are feminine. Masculinity and femininity are two opposites' terms to indicate two different genders. Cultural practices, norms and values can lead us to develop our gender quality. Society teaches the boy to be bold, powerful, courageous, muscular and stout-hearted. On the contrary, girls are taught to be passionate, shy, submissive and obedient. If such qualities appear in the opposite sex, the issue of gender can be altered. Gender is therefore constructed and alterable not static.

Generally, female masculinity is understood as the study of females who feel themselves to be more masculine than feminine. Judith Halberstam in *Female Masculinity*, argues that "given my premises in this book, namely, that female

masculinity is a specific gender with its own culture history rather than simply a derivative of male masculinity” (77). In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own culture history rather than derivatives of masculinity in women, it embodies qualities that are usually associated with maleness, such as strength, authority and independence.

In female masculinity, appearance is very important, though it is not about how one looks. Halberstam notices that heroic masculinities depend absolutely on the subordination of alternative masculinities. She claims that far from being an imitation of maleness, female masculinity actually affords us a glimpse of how masculinity is constructed man. In other word female masculinities are framed as the rejected scraps of dominants masculinities in order that male masculinity may appear to be the real thing. But what we understand as female masculinity has been produced by and across both female and male bodies. In dwelling upon the contribution of female masculinity, Halberstam makes the following argument:

Female masculinity signals a new understanding of masculine behaviors and identities, and a new direction in interdisciplinary queer scholarship.

Illustrated with nearly forty photographs, including portraits, film stills, and drag king performance shots, this book provides an extensive record of the wide range of female masculinity is not some bad imitation of virility, but a lively and dramatic staging of hybrid and minority genders. (77)

Whenever a female being asserts masculine characteristics, she will have to develop new advanced activities and encounter several scornful attitudes. Most of the females with the masculine traits have been facing the risk of social condemnation and ridicule. The protagonist of the novel, Chantal portrayed herself as new understanding woman which is clearly shown in following lines. “She wanted be a

rose fragrance, a pervasive, overwhelming fragrance, she wanted to move thus through all men and, by way of the men, to embrace the entire world” (37). Generally, female who follows the rule and regulation governed by society and remains under the control of man. Unlike the tradition she develops new understanding and wants to keep man under her control. She tries to taste the man one after another which is not legal in patriarchy. Hence we can say that female masculinity is really signals new identity and behavior in one’s own life.

Women are supposed to be very calm in the past but with the changing course of time, women have brought new thought and attitudes about a woman’s role in the society. Female tries to hold male values and follow male behaviors such as courage, inner direction, technological skill and adventures. Cora Kaplan and David Glover in their book *Gender* have talked about female masculinity. Regarding female masculinity they argue: “women feel just as men feel. They need exercises for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute, stagnation precisely as men would suffer” (24). Chantal feels as men feel. The following remarks suggest that:

In an effort to identify her correspondent discreetly but carefully looks on her. At the corner of their street is bistro: ideal spot for everyone who should want to spy on her; from there one could see the door to her apartment building, the two streets she walked along every day, and her bus stop. She went in, sat down, ordered a coffee, and inspected the customers. (64)

Here, researcher clarifies the fact that who is bold enough. She made a plan and does certain work. She holds the control over customers. She walked on street like boy, where many people come and go. She ordered the customers and inspected them.

Radical feminism constitutes the methodological framework of this thesis.

Feminism has not only weaker sides but strong too. The display of the masculine nature of Chantal seems to be dominant in her attitude and ambition. She wants to dismantle the dominant social norms, values and practices in order to redraw the demarcation between males and females and their respective gender roles in the society. The evidence of masculine nature dominant in Chantal is proved through her vision of life, her quest for freedom and independence, her passion for travelling through different countries without any company. Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* argues “Gender can be neither true or nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived, as credible bearers those attributes, however gender can above rendered thoroughly and radically incredible” (180). It means the notion of female masculinity is associated with gender role as well it is culturally constructed. In the novel “She was not by nature of woman born to run through the lovers” (37). This given line proves that Chantal is not poses masculine qualities by birth. According to her circumstance social environment made her masculine. Despite the love and affection from her husband and lover, Chantal feels excessive hunger for the love of other males. “Chantal approached and offered him both her cheeks in France” (34). Looking such type of activities we can say that Chantal become masculine woman by own action and behavior. The perception of gender role includes attitudes and personality, traits associated with a particular gender with that culture.

Similarly, Butler’s argument is that there is coherence of categories and sexuality. She understands gender, along with sex and sexuality to be performative. She further illustrated her view in the following lines:

In this sense gender is not noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes, for we have seen that the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practice of gender

coherence. Hence, within the inherited discourse of metaphysics of substance, gender proves to be performative that constitutes the identity it is purported to be. (34)

With this conception, we can say that Chantal has displayed masculine behavior from her journey to France. The following line suggests this fact that “Chantal got there Friday night and would spend a night alone, without Jean-Marc, who was to join her on Saturday around noon” (1). It means in the context of Czechoslovakia this novel presents woman protagonist Chantal with masculine qualities who makes a male revolt against the patriarchal society and does not concern about pre-existing norms, values and practicing of the society. She is a daring woman who has confidence, courage and sets out her journey for many European countries. And she stays alone at night that can be seen in the above quoted lines from the novel. In this sense the men and women to be masculine or feminine is determined by his/her action. The performance of gender itself creates gender. So Butler argues that everyday action, speech utterances, gesture and representations, dress codes and behaviors as well as certain prohibitions and taboos all work to produce what is perceived as an essential masculine or feminine quality. Chantal poses such power, strives and combativeness that resist the social practices of women constrained within the four walls of house.

Similarly, in the later days she becomes famous as a rebellion figure and is almost people take her as masculine female. She is authoritative over the business aids financially to her boyfriend. She takes leadership and is governed by rigid and cruel behavior. She exercises her authority and order over others. She is short tempered woman, gets furious over tiny mistakes even by child. Chantal's cruel behavior becomes clear from the line: “Chantal repeated and she pointed to the door one of children was holding an apple he had taken from a bowl on the table, put the apple

back where it was; Chantal told him crudely” (111). Here, Chantal represents herself as strong and powerful woman. Instead of showing kindly behavior upon small child she becomes angrier. In this sense we can say that Chantal lacks loving and forgiving nature of a female expected by patriarchy. Halberstam asserts, “Masculinity in this society inevitably conjures up notion of power and legitimacy and privilege; it often symbolically refers to the power of the state and uneven distribution of wealth” (2). She means that the notion of masculinity is ultimately associated with power legitimacy and privilege. It refers to the power of state. For Halberstam, masculinity seems to extend outward into patriarchy and inward into family. The power of man lies in his own property. Regarding this fact Halbertstam claims Masculinity represent the power of inheritance” (2). In this context Chantal who portrays herself in this novel “She says to herself: this apartment belongs to me and I have an enormous desire to be alone in it; to be superbly, supremacy alone. And aloud she says: This apartment belongs to me and no one has the right to open my wardrobes and rummage in my personal things. No one. I repeat: no one” (111). Here, Chantal takes control on property and wants to live independently without any company. She becomes worthy and venerable figure. She wants to prove that she bought the apartment originally so as to be free at last, to be not spied on, to be able to put her thing where she wants and be sure that they will stay right where she put them. All these attributes are very unique and entitled with the power of inheritance. It epitomizes her as a masculine female.

Indian gender critic, Kamala Bhasin, in *Exploring Masculinity*, argues that female masculinity and male masculinity are similar. For her, neither we can locate masculinity in male body nor can we do it with the female body. For her a female can be masculine if one inherits such traits. Asserting this fact, Bhasin claims:

Masculinity cannot exist in isolation of femininity. In most societies, masculinity and femininity are mirror images of each other; if men are supposed to order, women have to take orders; if men are allowed to hot tempered; women have to patient, and so on. Even though there is masculinities, masculinity normally means having qualities like strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition. (33)

Bhasin's opinion clarifies that masculinity is integral part of femininity. It means masculinity and femininity are not polar opposite phenomenon. They do not exist in the isolation to each other. If masculinity means having qualities like strength power, assertiveness, fearlessness independence females can be called masculine if they are attributed with these traits. While matching Bhasin's idea with Chantal the researcher found masculinities traits such as "I'm not an orderly woman, I like thing to move, I like think to change, I like thing to sign- I mean, I like life" (106). This given line suggests that Chantal is one of fearless orderly women who live her life in her own way.

For Halberstam if women behave like men, it is the influence of the feminist ideology. Likewise, Todd W Ressler argues, "others have suggested that while masculinity may be influenced by biological factors, it is also culturally constructed. As much, masculinity is not restricted to men and can, in fact, be females as women frequently display behavior, traits and physical attributes that are considered "masculine" in a given historical and social context"(12). Chantal is also governed by such masculine activities. After 1960s women got political power through women rights movement. That type of historical context helps Chantal create herself as masculine figure. So Ressler claims that the notion of masculinity is a social construct and somehow human nature depends on historical context of society.

Society gives positive attributes to men like rational and brave and the very society supplies negative stereotype images like emotional, cowardice and receptive to women. It is influenced by biological factors. He further says that masculinity is not restricted to men as female can be masculine. Female also display masculine behavior and physical attributes which are considered to be that of masculinity.

Furthermore, Ressler introduces the idea of masculinities rather than a single category that every man fits into. Masculine can be demonstrated by women. He approves the notion of multiple masculinities by forwarding the concept of female masculinities. In this view masculinity is not private property of male. It is not singular and remains with certain group rather can be applied for multi-purposes as an alternative use. His idea becomes clear in the following lines:

Masculinity is not a conscious process. It is perpetuated social institutions and is enforced and policed through individual interactions. There are intersections and variations of masculinity based on race, location, culture, time period, age, ability and developed four classifications: hegemony, subordination, complicity, and marginalization. Masculinity is the norm, something that men are expected to exercise and that women are discouraged from associating with. Masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (121)

Here, he opines that gender is a social construct and it may be the prevalent in our cultures. Masculinity is not only birth quality of male. It can be shown on the women according to situation. Women can possess the manlike qualities at some encounters. Chantal's behavior and action in the novel hint women become masculine according

to situation and location. The following citation reflects the same spirit: “The memory of her dead son filled her with happiness and she could only ask herself what that meant. The answer was clear: it meant her presence at Jean-Marc’s side was absolute and that the reason it could be absolute was the absence of her son. She was happy that her son was dead. Seated across from Jean-Marc” (38-39). Unlike the traditional concept of feminine qualities such as submissive, docile, caring Chantal behaves differently. She does not lament for the death of her son rather feels free to live her life as she wants. She enjoys with Jean-Marc. It means becoming masculinity depends upon social practices encountering with different condition and situations.

In this way, female masculinity is a recent study of females who feel more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. It is a beyond the traditional masculinity. It is a new brand of gender studies which is developed in the twentieth century. It has occurred as a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities usually guided by male like strength, power, authority, control, independence and so on.

Likewise, masculinity becomes more vivid and assertive on Chantal’s encounter with different type of male in the society:

In the large, empty room, two men stared at her: one young leaning against the front edge of the counter, in the black outfit of a cafe waiter; the other older, brawny in T-shirt standing at to back of the room...she said to the brawny one: can you turn off the music, he took a few steps towards her Chantal looked at his muscular tattooed arms: she repeated reducing her demand. The man answered: The music? You don’t like it. (19)

Here, two men try to tease her when she was in hotel. They seem to trap and threaten her sexually. But Chantal is very clever woman. She does not get easily trapped by

them. Instead of remaining silent in front of them, she remains constant till the two men reduce the music. She was governed by extreme desire of becoming free and for the same she raises voice in public arena. So, Chantal takes it normal and deal with that situation normally. This type of incident, environment and treatments make more revengeful. The environment and treatments is more revengeful. By analyzing above mentioned lines researcher proves Chantal have such strong quality who does not accept remaining silent.

Later in the story, she encounters with tourists where many couples carry their babies with belly and pram. But women only played important role for holding babies and pushing the pram. Chantal feels very angry and appeared very dangerously. She represents her voice against the showy nature of men, which can be clear from the following remarks “Chantal thinks men have daddified themselves. They aren’t father; they are just daddies, which mean: fathers without father’s authority, the daddies who had managed to escape their wives” (13). The above lines suggest the power of Chantal over the male society. She is masculine in traits that have enough courage and power. She argues that men do not take responsibility of father only they introduce with the name of daddy. The daddies who do not have any kind of love, care and affection for the babies. It clarifies Chantal have such quality who does not accept the injustice upon women. So she raises voice to patriarchy and tries to break down patriarchal norms existing in the society.

Additionally, Chantal goes on facing hurdles and hassles one after other. This is clear from the following lines from the novel. “I follow you around like spy, he wrote in the first letter. So, he’s spy. He scrutinizes her; he does experiment on her to prove that she’s not what he thought she was” (86). The above mentioned lines clarify that Chantal faces lots of problem. Even her own boyfriend is trying to trap her

through the source of letter. He is looking for a reason to leave her after keeping all relationship. But Chantal is very intelligent and sharp minded. She is aware about Jean-Marc plan slowly and gradually she betrayed him. It means she trapped Jean Marc before trapping herself by him.

In this way she feels confined to the city of London. The traditional gender role fix as the women in the patriarchal society of England. She no longer likes to be circumscribed and confined by social restrictions and conducts which an English woman is likely to face. By nature Chantal is a woman having uncompromising ideals such as: “There is big house, first her sister-in-law and then her husband exhorted her to have another child. And there, in a little bedroom, she refused to make love with him. Every one of his erotic invitations reminded her of the family campaign for another pregnancy, and the idea of making love with him became grotesque” (30). Here, Chantal does not get engaged in relation. She does not want to compromise with the family rule and regulation. She cannot live without changing sexual partners. She takes as wastage of time and energy for holding social and family values. She is dissatisfied with the traditional gender role. She has excessive desire to presents herself as independent women. So once she says: “I want to live in a world where men will never look at me again” (13). The given line from the novel clearly shows that Chantal is a rebellious woman, who wants escape from family bonding of society. She tries to keep herself in such position or place where nobody disturbs her especially male society.

The dominant patriarchal ideology of English society favors those women who are willing to conform the patriarchal status and ready to internalize traditional gender role. But Chantal does not seem to be fit into the model of patriarchal society of London, as she is a writer by profession. She has to take the risk in exploring the

unexpected province of human experience. She is modern and ultra modern in her thought who does not obey the dogmatic social norms and convention. She has excessive inner desire to transgress the social norms and values for the sake of merriment and pleasure. The following lines from the novel suggest the combative natures and inner desire of Chantal to being equal to male in the society: “She has taught in high school since the work was poorly paid...she felt guilty at betraying her own inclinations for the sake of money, but this was the only way to obtain her independence” (31). These lines clarify the fact that Chantal is in dilemma due to exposure to radical feminism. She is extremely hunger for exploring innovative role compatible with her dream of complete freedom. She thinks that her freedom is maintained by doing job. In one side she loved teaching a lot and her job is only one way to make her independent. In another side she is not satisfied her job because it is low paid, money is not enough for her. She thinks she is poorly paid because she is a woman. It clears that she is governed by gender hierarchy of society. She wants to be paid large amount of money equal to male. So she works hard and produces the impression that she is an ultra-glamorous youth. She has to accept and explore any kind of strange experience and areas. For rupturing traditional gender role, she is ready to pay any kind of price; any kind of situation detestable to her.

Chantal was not only quick and strong on her thought and expression, she was also equally performative. She subverts all social conditions not conducive to her free life. She wants to be fully free and matter of beauty, like a bird. She could fly anywhere anytime. Her nature was not like a caged bird so each and every time she made a plan to break the rod of cage and be free. She had full confidence and strong will in her life. She was not such a woman who could easily bow down her in front of patriarchal society when they are going against her feeling and emotion. She did not

consider social, cultural and religious norms and traditions to save identity and personal freedom. With this conception, Chantal gets involved in love making with her boyfriend Jean-Marc. The following lines clarify the fact that:

It was back when they still didn't know each other by name. In the great hall of a mountain lodge, with people drinking and chattering around them,...they withdraw into empty corridor where, wordlessly they kissed. She opened her mouth and pressed her tongue into Jean-Marc mouth, Eager to lick whatever she would find inside. This Zeal of their tongues was not sensual necessity but urgency to let each other know that they were prepared to make love right away, instantly, fully and wildly and without losing a moment. (48-49)

Chantal is quite hungry for self exposure and get happiness that can be seen in the above mentioned lines from the novel. Actually she gets indulged into the act of kissing with Jean-Marc in the isolated and personal place whose pleasure and emotion she can describe. She thinks that everything is good whatever she does. She does not feel any humiliation by doing such type of activities with other man. She only feels comfort and taking extreme pleasure by doing such activities even she was bonded on marriage relation. The study shows that Chantal is really a masculine figure who has enough confidence that her deeds do not discontent her because she prefers the moments of unreasonable joy in her life.

Furthermore, she proves herself that she is an assertive female and tackles down the problems of sexual harassment inside and especially outside the house not only by her lover but by unknown stranger whom she meets while traveling to different places of Europe. She is excessively sensitive to the notion of individual freedom. Her obsessive attachment to radical notion of female freedom, she is goes away from motherly role and responsibility. She grows increasingly indifferent to the

joy and beauty of domestic life. She takes the condition of being a mother as bondage. The following lines from novel suggests the struggle for freedom by damaging motherly role values like trust, martial, loyalty and sense responsibility for society and family.

Her son was five when she buried him. Later during the summer vacation, her sister in law told her: You're too sad. You should have another child. That's the only way you'll forget; her sister-in law remark wrenched her heart...A week later, her husband told her: I don't want you falling in depression. We should have another child right away. Then you'll forget. You'll forget: he didn't even try to find another way to say it! That was the moment she decided to leave him. (29-30)

The above lines demonstrate Chantal's masculine traits which differentiate her from other females of the then society. Actually she loves a lot to her demised child although she disobeys her family member's advice and delivers children accomplishing her feminine gender roles expected by the family and society. Chantal wants to escape from biological duty of a woman giving birth to a baby and married life. She expects her new life on the castle. She had interest that Marc would be the first man to satisfy her excessive sexual desire. She has chosen free life with Marc by ignoring her husband because she wants to taste new experience of living together with the male.

Chantal is a very courageous woman who breaks all relationships with her family. She rejects husband and lives independently. Generally women are considered to be submissive to their families but Chantal is not that type of woman. As her family member her sister- in-law pushed her into married life and forced to live in four wall of the house. But she breaks all the kinship of the family. The following lines suggest

her masculine behavior: “She asked her astonished husband for divorce. Her sister-in-law admiration mixed with hostility, called her the Tigress: You’re stock still, nobody knows what you’re thinking and then you pounce; Three months she bought an apartment and dismissing any notion of marriage, moved into it with the man she loved” (32).

Chantal rejects the social customs of marriage but enjoy the relation. She is involved in adulterous activities with younger man than herself. She exercises her independency and power of authority in the society despite of being a woman. If she were ordinary woman, she would never be ready to divorce her husband without any big issue. If she really sounded feeble she would have been punished for her activities. But she receives power authority by her community and hence become masculine female. This was the real courage of Chantal. With such action, she was more than a common woman who is timid, shy and guided by others. She boldly handles her personal life challenging all social norms and values as well as unjust social practices.

Chantal develops some qualities that resist the existing social and ethical norms. She was not only strong on her thought and expression she was also equally per formative. She was such strong hearted woman who exposes her inner feeling very proudly on graveyard of her son. Despite her deep love to her child she becomes happy after his death, only because she wants freedom. In this sense researcher says that Chantal has possessed such tolerating power which does not exist in many women and rove masculine behaviors. In this manner Chantal shows her ability further justifies her action as: “By your death you deprived me of the pleasure of being with you, but at the same time you set me free. Free in my confrontation with the world I don’t like...I want to tell you now, all these years after you left me, that I’ve come to understand your death as a gift and that I’ve finally accepted that

dreadful gift” (55). The above mentioned remarks suggest that Chantal’s creative pursuit and hunger for freedom has killed her desire for child. She was happy with on her single life. The idea of being mother is one type of burden for her. Opposite of feminine quality, Chantal takes death of her child as an opportunity to make herself free from boundaries of patriarchal society. Instead of showing grief she seeks alternative way of disappearing from restriction upon her life in Czechoslovakian society.

The evidence of masculine nature of Chantal is proved through her action and deeds. By ignoring her loyal husband, she develops her affair with Jean Marc. But once he decided to play with her. He sends letter expressing love and affection to her under the new name other than his name. He thinks that Chantal could be easily fooled but that is his only imagination: “He writes her letters under the name of some unknown person and then watches her behavior, he spies on her right down to her wardrobe, right down her brassieres;...But as soon as he’s sure she is betraying him, that she is capable of betraying him” (86-87). When many letter come to her, she is interested to know the man who has written so many letters to her. Jean except that Chantal will tell him about his letter. But she remains silent and does not tell him about the letters. So, research proves that in one way Chantal remains silent because she was not heartily dedicated to Jean-Marc only rather she has multiple relationships with other. She only keeps relation for the sake of pleasure. So she does not want to share all of her secrets. But only in detective manner she eagerly wants to know the truth about the writer of those letters.

The masculinity of Chantal can be further illustrated “If a man writes letter to a woman, his point is to prepare the ground for approaching her later to seduce her. And if the woman keeps those letters secret, it is because she wants today’s discretion

to protect tomorrow's adventure" (90). Similarly another side research clarifies that Chantal keeps secret those letters because in the future she might be trapped by Marc and his plan and betrayed him. Those letters are alternative prove leaving Jean-Marc. Chantal quests for new identity through her action and attitudes.

Chantal is very powerful and influential woman in the novel. She plays important role in making decisions. It was Chantal who was delighted with a plan for going to London. But Jean-Marc is surprised and asked Why London? And she answered you know very well why London: She already knows about the sender of letters so she tries to impose reality indirect way with Marc. Which action is clearly shown in: "Chantal had torn mask off poor cyrao and she was telling him: you yourself invited me to London, so I'm following your orders. But if she has guessed (my god, my god how could she has guessed) that he is the one who wrote the letters, why is she taking it so badly? Why is she so cruel" (118). Here, Chantal gets very angry With Jean-Marc and taught him indirect way. She denies him because of his wrong trick. The Jean-Marc who mentioned everything on the letter even about London visits and thinks that Chantal was fully unaware about of his activities. But Chantal has such scheming quality who knew everything and decided to left him slapping. This action of Chantal is the action of rebellion. In this context Judith Halberstam argues that female masculinity sometimes appears as social rebellion as the result of excessive male supremacy: "Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excesses of male supremacy, and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion" (9). Here Chantal rejects Jean-Marc and ready for London to spent single independent life.

Later in the story, Chantal is in London and Jean-Marc also visits there. She appears as a strong woman even after nonsense activities of Marc and she was ready

to deal with every problem of her life. She is assertive and committed. Her entire life is governed by different forces. The following lines give one glimpse of Chantal's intentional act of traditional gender role:

Jean-Marc stands on tiptoe hoping to spot Chantal over the crowd's heads. At last, he sees her. She is on the far side of the column of children, in a telephone booth. Receiver to her ear, she is talking. Jean-Marc struggles to cut himself a path. He jostles a cameraman who, in a fury, gives him a kick. Jean-Marc jabs him with an elbow, and he just misses dropping his camera. A policeman approaches and orders Jean-Marc to wait till the shooting is done. Just then, for a second or two, his eyes meet Chantal's as she leaves the phone booth. (135)

Chantal is on the border of thinking about changing the direction of her life. But she has many problems which do not allow her to take decision freely. She does not see Jean-Marc anymore but Jean-Marc eagerly wants to see her in the crowd of London. And thinks that Chantal looks at him but she ignores and goes against his wish. His imagination does not fulfill his patriarchal feeling turns into negative way. This incident also proves Chantal has masculine figure who defies traditional gender role.

It is clear that Chantal is not a coward, opportunist and weak woman. All the time, she stood more than female and challenges the ill social norms, convention and patriarchal thinking of society. She reversed the general concept of people about female and stood as new woman that is similar to accepted nature of male. She makes her new identity that is strong masculine woman. She deals boldly with the situation. She is satisfied with the way of life she has led. She was the master of her body and life, so she used it as she pleased. She moved and performed as the need, other suggestion is not matter for him. So she had to come up with her own choice and

feeling all the time. She is even in great number of problems; she creates her identity with assertive manner.

Similarly the study explores how Chantal, the protagonist of *Identity* demonstrates the certain masculine traits, how she questions and resists the traditional gender role in patriarchal normative social background. She overturns the traditional stereotypical notion of woman as soft hearted, docile, and weak, angel of the kitchen and fragile being. She encompasses the qualities like strong, intelligence being that makes protest in the society. With her living in free lifestyle, she feels herself as masculine female challenging and breaking the established ethics. She lives with different men struggling with the social dogmas of patriarchy. Her individual freedom seeking tendency does like to remain within the four walls of the house. She disobeys family member's advice to maintain marital bond and give birth to babies, she denies complying with feminine gender role expected by the society. In opposition to the exception of her family and society, Chantal travels to different European countries for the sake pleasure. She does not feel problem to visit many places alone day night and indulges with different men. She chooses a man younger than herself and captures him in her fist.

This research proves how the female protagonist Chantal of the novel *Identity* is attributed with masculine characteristics. She resists the patriarchal norms and ethics dominant in Czechoslovakian society in the twentieth century. She establishes her dignified and independent existence in the society.

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