

Tribhuvan University

Subversion of Conventional Gender Roles in Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the

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By

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**Letter of Recommendation**

Sujata Rai has completed her thesis "Subversion of Conventional Gender Roles in Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*" under my supervision. She carried out this research paper from July 2015 to December 2017. I hereby recommend this thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

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Dr. Anju Gupta

Supervisor

Date: .....

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**Letter of Approval**

This thesis entitled "Subversion of Conventional Gender Roles in Cowley's *The Belle's Stratagem*" submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University by Sujata Rai has been approved by the undersigned members of Research Committee.

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## **Abstract**

*The Belle's Stratagem* is the eighteenth-century English comedic play by Hannah Cowley. This play is based on the issues of gender studies and feminism. It analyzes a female character, Letitia Hardy in relation with other characters. Letitia is in search of her individual freedom and emancipation by changing the conventional norms and values. She always finds out an unusual way in search of her gender identity and freedom which is restricted by the patriarchal ideology. Actually, this play is about the issue of eighteenth-century traditional marriage between two lovers named Letitia and Doricourt. Letitia attempts to get arranged marriage with Doricourt but Doricourt has little trouble accepting this type of arranged marriage for the sake of family and money. It creates marital problem between them. It shows that women are socially and culturally dominated by the men in the eighteenth-century English society. It shows the main problems of this research. She has to compromise her identity and manipulate a male-dominated system to gain Doricourt's attention. It is a great challenge to the patriarchal society which wants to keep her within restrictions.

There is socio-cultural discrimination or inequality prevalent in the society regarding women. Cowley's play depicts her unsatisfied characters, both male and female, with their too narrowly defined gender roles. This thesis explores how some characters, especially Letitia works to dismantle these kinds of pre-assigned gender roles for the creation of equality between man and woman and then empowers voice to the voiceless women to bring them to the mainstream. In this way, the study discovers that women are not born inferior but society imposes inferior roles to them and creates gender discrimination. So, women should subvert such type of gender social construction.