

I. Troubled Gender Relation in Hannah's *Little Face*

This research probes into the issue of female gothic is instrumental in the elimination of patriarchal domination. Alice's disposition changes from one moment to the other. At one moment, she is bold and assertive. She acts as though she has an indomitable will. When this moment passes, she acts submissively. Her simultaneous shift from assertiveness to submission is a strategy to deal with the setbacks put by her husband on her way to truth, justice and dignity. At the moment of utter helplessness, she tends to be excessively sentimental.

When situations come to her favor, she acts in a rational manner. It is her changing subjectivity that helps her to proceed ahead effectively in her journey towards freedom. Alice, the main character in *Little Face*, is very much tortured and tormented by her mother in law. She is subjected to various psychological and paralyzing mishaps. She knows well that her own relatives have done harm to her but she is incapacitated to take any action. Her mother in law named Vivienne is a very scheming. She is too shrewd to inflict torture on her daughter in law. If the mother in law is not in complicity with Alice's husband, Alice might have asserted her voices and concern.

Finally she decides to take actions against those who have decided to take revenge on her. Without being vocal, she cannot save herself from danger. That is why she gives rise to her feelings and opinions. In Alice's battle against her husband's atrocity, Alice's mother in law does not assist Alice. Mother in law knows that Alice is right and Alice's husband is wrong. But instead of assisting Alice, she remains loyal to her son and continues to inflict pain in her. The whole society accuses Alice of acting like an insane woman. But Alice alone adheres to the idea that she is correct

in her claim that her infant is stolen. Alice relies on the power of her maternal instinct. But the community and even the police officers distrust her.

The striking aspect of the novel is Alice's single handed battle against not only her cruel husband but also the whole patriarchal society. Had Alice's mother in law and other women of the community understood Alice and assisted her, she might have won the case quite earlier without being seriously affected by the prolonged inquiry and backbiting. Outwardly Vivienne seems to be very sensitive and caring to her daughter in law. But inwardly she feels infuriated by Alice's distinct way of choosing to make much of her life.

Once Alice's child named Florence is lost. She knows that someone stole her child because her maternal instinct told her to believe in the loss of her child. But her mother in law and her husband David tell her that her child is not lost. Rather she has failed to recognize the baby. The same baby is lying on the cot but Alice fails to identify her child. This is what mother in law and her husband tells her. But Alice is not as stupid as they think. Alice files the case in the police administrative office. Sergeant and the detective Simon come to investigate the issue of the loss of the child.

The police officer and detective are convinced that Alice is suffering from prenatal depression, so it is dreadful to believe in what she says. Some other people also accused Alice of blaming her husband and mother in law under the fit of prenatal depression. But the real fact is that Alice's child is stolen and in place of her child, the child of another woman is kept. Mother in law and her husband create the environment in which Alice's infant is kidnapped.

In the outer professional world, Alice is not free and secure as she has to face sexual advance of a police officer who comes to conduct investigation on the abduction of Alice's infant. She is sexually harassed by a police officer, who

undertakes the charge of conducting an inquiry. In the same pattern, Laura is unable to feel confident and assertive. Edwin's flamboyant passion for eventful life brings her in conflict with existing pattern of decent social life. In their single handed struggle for decent life with dignity and freedom, they are troubled constantly.

The concluding tone of Hannah's serious works is characterized by the pleading for endurance so that human beings can bear the brunt of lives. Reading the novel, Tammy John points out the distinguishing characteristic of *Little Face* in the following terms:

Alice starts living a life of desperation as she is subject to psychological torture by her husband and his mother. And then the trouble starts. When Alice Fancourt comes home from her first outing since the birth of her baby Florence a week ago her world falls apart. The baby in the nursery of the house (called 'The Elms') she shares with her husband David, his son by his first wife and his mother Vivienne is not, she claims, her own. David is equally adamant that the baby *is* the same one they brought home from the hospital. When police are called, in the form of DC Simon Waterhouse initially, David is more convincing and suggests that his wife is mistaken or suffering from post natal depression. (17)

According to John, the psychological torture faced by the female protagonist of the novel is the sensational content of the novel. It is quiet shocking to know how one female plays a huge part in giving torture to another woman. More than Alice's husband, David, it is Alice's mother in love, Vivienne who plays an instrumental role in subjecting Alice to the severe case of torture, blackmailing, and bickering.

Common readers are shocked to know the process in which Alice is victimized in the

house in which an old woman enacts the ritualistic cult of tolerating the imposition of the legacy of patriarchal subjugation.

Celia Jones is less convinced about the realistic dimension of the main character Alice. The dramatization of Alice's suffering has not garnered approval from the side of critic, Celia Jones. She is hesitant to offer credibility to Hannah's mode of character portrayal. Celia Jones makes the following observation:

For all that, Alice is at least vaguely credible in a way that most of the other characters are not, or at least not all in one time and place. The book failed the 'ring of truth' test for me by converging five of the most emotionally crippled people I've ever encountered all together. It's not only all three of the Fancourts who are barking mad, but the two main coppers aren't far off it themselves with their insecurities, sexual obsessions and adolescent behavior. The pair carried out such a mixture of implausible, illegal and incompetent activities. When juxtaposed with the oedipal goings on at 'The Elms' it was all too much. (26)

By portraying a psychologically deranged character like Alice, Hannah would be landed in difficult position to argue for the realistic dimension of Alice. It is really difficult to say that a character whose verges on the border of sanity and insanity can be a life-like character. Alice is not dramatically convincing though her suffering slightly evoke sympathy amidst readers. But Hannah is able in one regard. She is far more successful in choosing the sensational mode of depicting reality.

Danny Anderson gives incalculable praise to the power of this novel to intensify thrilling psychological thriller. Anderson makes the following disclosure:

Sophie Hannah is best known to me as a poet, but she is also a fine writer of psychological thrillers. Alice leaves her two-week-old baby daughter, Florence, with her husband David while she goes to the health club her strong-willed mother-in-law has made her join. Alice's confrontations with her spineless, cruel, bullying husband are what stand out the most for me, horrifying, claustrophobic and believable. The writing is precise and exquisite and the atmosphere of dread and suspicion is evoked perfectly. The ending was a little disappointing, after such a brilliantly executed build-up. This is thoroughly satisfying psychological thriller. I wouldn't hesitate to recommend it. (36)

The fear psychology of Alice, the major character, constitutes the core content of this novel. If any reader dares to understand Alice's psychological and claustrophobic agony, it is necessary to ground her problem in the socio-economic context in which she is living. Her sufferings are not inseparable from the place she is living and from those with whom she is interacting. Thus it is good to point out and praise the purity of author's motive.

Susan Bordo is interested in knowing Hannah's art of including several unexpected twists and turns in the plot of *Little Face*. In this regard, he gives credit to Hannah's technical nuance to manipulate plot with the remarkable display of craftsmanship in the following terms:

Hannah shows herself a clued-up observer of the pathological dynamics of desire. This missing-baby tale chimes with very modern anxieties. Custody issues lie at the heart of the resolution, and the increasingly perverse relationship between Alice and David is grounded in a recognizable reality that serves only to make our flesh

crawl more. Alongside Alice's account is the police investigation. In an emotion-driven narrative, Hannah struggles with procedural developments. The DNA test is too conveniently deferred, and a subplot involving underworld activities at the health club feels strained. Happily, the personal lives of the constabulary are intrinsic to the plot. (46)

The term desire is probed and technically experimented with subtlety. Desire of sergeant for Alice and estrangement of David from his better half, Alice are probed convincingly. There is nothing wrong with the way Hannah has invested her fictitious power and prodigy. To cut the matter short, Hannah wants to say that desire works as a metaphor which align and split unprecedented relation. It is, according to Bordo, difficult to charter the locus on which desire arises and dissolves to the utter shock of those who desire.

Cecilia Bartoli arrives at the conclusion that Hannah has introduced the typical problem of a modernist woman. To her, Alice represents the modern woman who is dubbed as an insane woman due to her assertive and independent cast of mind.

Capturing this aspect of this novel, Bartoli makes the following point:

Hannah also wrote persuasively about modern women who buckle under the stress of motherhood in *Little Face*, but characters in that novel felt compassion for the young mother who insisted that someone had switched newborns on her. Here, everyone hates Geraldine and recoils from the sentiments that come to light in her journal. There's a conspiracy of silence about what motherhood is really like. No wonder the police are easily persuaded that Geraldine killed herself after drowning her daughter. (21)

However assertive a woman might be, she is doomed to suffer when she has to pass through extremely paralyzing constraints. Alice is devoted to her life as a daughter in law and wife. Her individual ideals have had no effect in the surrounding of family life. But all of a sudden, challenges come and compel her to yield to the demand and requirement of a marital life which is the life of compromise and surrender. When Alice happens to know this sort of bitter reality, she has no option other than remaining silent.

Billie Holiday notices detective element and realistic elements in the novel *Little Face*. For the sake of her lost child, Alice goes to the extreme extent of losing her sanity. She is ready to face any kind of dread and danger. No matter where she has to go and what she has to face, she is ready to do. Her adamant nature pushes the tricky plot to the furthest point of mystery. It is at this mysterious point that the novel demands interventionist approach of a detective. Holiday clarifies the point further:

Little Face is concerned with women's feelings, fears and protectiveness of their children. Its disturbing scenario opens with anxious mother Alice Fancourt returning home to find that her new baby has gone, and been replaced by another. Charlie's view of failed relationships is that they affected everything that came after them, like radioactive accidents. They poisoned the future. Alice becomes increasingly fearful, while the warring detectives gradually unravel the contradictory elements of the case. (36)

Alice is rebellious in defending her rights. She is intolerant of the acts of injustice leveled against her. But when the question of fighting for her children's right comes, she is far more affectionate and loving. She embodies love and affection which a mother naturally possesses. Apart from this, she seems to be driven by her

maternal instinct. She tends to embody different kinds of qualities which are closer to the spirit of feminism and patriarchal custom.

John Walworth makes different point with regard to Hannah. According to Walworth, Hannah's style of expression is creative. She frequently uses stereotypical languages in her poems and short stories. In a precise way, Walworth makes the following point:

Hannah's formal dexterity, her playing with cliché or swear words as in *Mountains Out of Small Hills* or *The Only Point is Decimal*, became strong characteristics. Her subject is a perennial one, given a contemporary twist: the ways that personal relationships inevitably go wrong. Yet she usually treats this in comic terms. The opening stanza of 'A Day Too Late' sets out its scenario and the speaker's air of resignation. (33)

Hannah's fictional works and her poetical works are full of cliché-ridden expressions. In capturing the exact ethos of realistic social life, Hannah is far more successful in poetry than in fiction. But her commitment to realism is noticeably seen in novel than in poetry. Thus, Walworth's ideas sound far more relevant. Any deviant line of critical scrutiny of Hannah's works sound obsolete in the contemporary context.

Although all these critics examined this novel from different perspectives and arrived at different conclusions, none of them hinted at the issue of female gothic. By bringing variations in the gothic female, women can open promising avenues of freedom, self-esteem, gender equality and assertion of selfhood. Coherent and consistent form of subjectivity can hinder progressive march of feminism. That is why women should introduce modification in the structure of

their subjectivity. The researcher makes use of gothic female to probe into how resistance on the part of women becomes good means to assert selfhood for women.

Some studies have shown that there is relatively strong female bonding evidence which is shared among single women. Donald J. Greiner says that “it is evident that this particular cohort of women sees each other as lifelong confidants due to the absence of a lifelong commitment to a spouse”(65). Along with this, the lack of commitment allows women to develop and maintain the strong ties between other single female friends. Female bonding can be further explored within the human context of relationships within the family. The positive mother-daughter ties which develop have been described to provide immense emotional, financial and instrumental support; indicating that female bonding is present.

In an alternative study, a mother described her daughters as more like sisters, communicating that equality was an essential feature of their current relationships. They used the language of companionate ties. In addition to mother-daughter ties, “sibling ties can be carefully examined for further exemplification in female bonding. There is much evidence that sister-sister ties are the strongest ties that exist, out of the possible combinations of gendered sibling ties which are shared” (Greiner 125).

The willingness of women to work together for protection from hazards and threats like sexual assault, molestation, untimely dismissal and subordination exists as the striking issue in the text. Such feminist sense of solidarity ensures the chance of the success of Alice’s movement towards maturity and freedom. By using the theory of female bonding and gender based feminism, the researcher probes into this topic. The mutual cooperation and collaboration of oppressed girls is the chief domain of this research.

Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions it enacts. One or more categories of sexed identities are privileged or devalued. In modern western societies, gender divides into two. This is not necessarily the case in other times, places and cultures. Gender in the modern west usually refers to two distinct and separate categories of human beings as well as to the division of social practices into two fields. “The gendering of social practices”, according to Beardsley, “may be found, for example in contemporary western societies, in a strong association between men and public life and between women and domestic life, even though men and women occupy both spaces”(10). The more gender differences are narrowed down, the more optimistic scope feminism acquires. If none of the significant differences between man and woman exist, men will automatically come in defense of the rights and freedom of women. Only in the space in which gender differences cease to exist, even the unity and harmony amidst women come to flourish. Only by destroying the patriarchal structure of society, women won't accomplish complete level of freedom and access to different sorts of rights. Thus that aspect of feminism which talks about promoting gender bonding and the harmony amidst women would be quoted and used in this research.

This thesis has three chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding to the text. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. The second chapter makes a thorough analysis of the text by applying the tool of female solidarity and alliance. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

II. Assertion of Female Gothic in Hannah's *Little Face*

In Hannah's *Little Face*, female gothic is presented as the most essential condition for getting justice, equality and proper treatment. Alice, the protagonist, is tortured and tormented by her husband. But she is bold and assertive. She does not yield easily to the hostilities posed by her enemies to her. If other women including her own mother in law had understood her agony and assisted her in her single handed battle, she might have freed herself from further troubles. Alice's battle against domestic violence and patriarchal prejudices would have declined, if women, who have similar trouble, had helped her. In Hannah's *Little Face*, women who are victimized by males are not united. They tend to fight against their sufferings single handedly. That is why they are not empowered. Thus, it is crystal clear that alliance and solidarity amidst women are stepping stone in women's battle against patriarchal domination. Even in their campaign for gender equality, female solidarity is a must.

In addition to being bold and assertive, she is submissive and silent. At the moment of being submissive, she hardly nurtures rebellious thoughts. In Sophie Hannah's *Little Face*, one woman is portrayed as the victim of another woman. Alice is a daughter in law in her husband David's house. Her husband naturally feels aligned with his mother in Alice's search for her lost child. For Alice, the loss of her child is an irretrievable loss. She cannot bear the unexpected loss of her child. A few hours ago she left her child on a cot. For that time she went outside to fend for something. When she returns she is painfully amazed to know that her child is missing. In place of her child on the cot, another child is kept. Alice is startled to see a new child in place of her own child. She quickly identifies the child who was put on the place of her own child. She exercises her strong maternal

instinct and wastes no moment to identify who the new child is. Her strong maternal instinct tells her that her own child is replaced by a different child.

Denise Riley suggests “ we could try another train of speculations that woman is indeed an unstable category, that this instability has a historical foundation, and that feminism is the site of the systematic fighting out of that instability”(16). In other words, there is a productive tension between essentialist, constructivist, and deconstructivist understanding of gendered subjectivity. There is a straightforward split in responses to this question between a politically engaged feminism and an academically motivated one. This idea of Riley is applicable in examining the shifting notion of Alice’s subjectivity.

Alice’s thoughts sometimes get the characteristic of irrationality too. She abandons rational prudence and follows the dictation of irrational thoughts. Alice trusts her instinct and motherly affection. She tells her mother in law and her husband David that her own child is lost and in his place a new child of someone else is kept. But her mother in law and her husband decline to believe that her child is lost. The one who is sleeping on the cot is her child. They convince her that her child is not lost. Nothing has happened to her own child. They point out that Alice is prone to delusional doubt. That is why she is screaming with a false charge that someone stole her child and put someone’s child in the place of her own child.

Amidst all public criticisms and backbiting, she is driven by the sense of justice. Different sorts of claims and counter-claims are made by Alice and her husband as well as her mother in law. It sounds natural for Alice that her husband could be so insensitive to her. He reiterates constantly that her child is not missing. The fact, according to David, is that nobody has done anything to her own child.

But Alice does not believe. The real truth is that Alice's child is lost. In the place of her child, a different child is placed. The loss of Alice's child is the biggest moment loss for her. Even if Alice's husband could not support her, and understand her agony, her mother in law, who is a woman, should have certain feeling for her agony and amazement. A mother in law is not trying to understand the suffering and agony of her own daughter in law.

Monique Wittig a theorist who elaborates on the notion of female gothic. Formation of subjectivity of women should be treated as a historically constructed category. It is relevant to cite the view of Wittig to reinforce the constructed nature of Alice's subjectivity. The following lines reflect Wittig's idea on female subjectivity:

A materialist feminist approach to women's oppression destroy the idea that women are a natural group: a racial group of a special kind, a group perceived as natural, and a group of men considered as material specific in their bodies. What the analysis accomplishes on the level of ideas, practice makes actual at the level of facts: by its very existence, lesbian society destroys the artificial fact constituting women as a natural group. (220)

A lesbian society pragmatically reveals that the division from men of which women has been the object is a political one and shows that we have ideologically rebuilt into a natural group. There should have a strong gender bonding between Alice and her mother in law. It would not be surprising if David betrays his wife Alice.

Alice has to follow different track of thoughts to maintain the integrity of her mind. In a patriarchal society, it is natural if a man reveals his patriarchal

prejudices and arrogances. But in Alice's battle against her husband's prejudice and perfidy, her own mother in law does not support her. On the contrary, she encourages her son David to commit more acts of atrocities against Alice. If anything has become the biggest hurdle on the way to the real salvation of women, it is the lack of gender bonding.

She is guided by the vision of dignity and justice along with freedom. So he is flexible and adaptable in the changing situations in her life. In woman's battle against patriarchy for emancipation and equality, women should side with other women. Otherwise, feminist programs and agendas may not yield the intended result. The following lines cited from *Little Face* illustrate how the mother in law is goading her son David to be harsher in his treatment of Alice:

When he last spoke to Vivienne on the phone, he agreed with her that it was safe for me to drive, despite what the midwife has said. Now, it seems, he has changed his mind. David is not accustomed to disagreeing with his mother. Faced with one of her strong opinions, he is usually quiet and acquiescent. In her absence she elaborates her theories about life word for word, as if he is trying on a personality that is too big for him. I sometimes wonder if David really knows himself at all. Or perhaps it is just that I do not know him. (58)

By creating an atmosphere in which Alice will claim her lost child David wants to prove that Alice is really mad. She is so mad that she is unable to identify her own baby. In this way he intends to prove that Alice is mad. In this way, he could succeed in holding sway in her life. It is really an act of injustice to commit such an environment in which a sane woman is being called insane. Alice's mother in

law should have understood the agony of Alice. Rather than showing empathy to Alice, she goes on goading her son to be more harsh and callous in his dealing with Alice. The lack of unity amidst woman to woman is the dominant thematic of this novel.

Helen Cixous argues says that “what permits this elimination of the between nature and the interpreter is the extraordinary opening of the field of subjectivity”(231). In the light of subjectivity, the researcher explores essential elements from the novel. The theory of feminism particularly postmodern feminism and the feminism of Simon de Beauvoir focus on the fact that gender is a construct. In a patriarchal society, several practices, norms, trends and institutional cults exist to intensify the gender differences. To justify and buttress the patriarchal society and ideology, the notion of gender difference is intensified. The rationale of gender difference would be proved and restated. So long as gender difference is fostered and disseminated to fulfill the benefit of one group, the other would always be in the disadvantage. The core essence of feminism is that gender is the socio-cultural construct. The dominant trends, customs, beliefs and ideologies have given birth to the notion of gender differences. So long as gender differences are abolished, it would be difficult to put into practice some of the revolutionary agenda and programs of feminism.

Chris Beardsley hints at women’s group identity. She contends that Union among women is a milestone to reaching the ultimate destination of liberation. Her view is mentioned below in a precise way:

Women suggest that women should be considered in their own terms. Hence, the focus is not on a universal human nature but upon positively re-valuing group identities like women/ the feminine.

Where the equality perspective associated with strongly modernist accounts like liberal and Marxist feminisms is inclined to argue that difference between men and women is either a myth or produced to perpetuate women's oppression and should be transcended. (46)

Gender difference is not always the sources of domination. It does not always foster the climate for oppression and subjugation of women by men. Even if gender differences are abolished, women may not be totally free from the pitfalls and hazards set by patriarchy as restrictive measures to those women who are on the way to securing the prospect of liberation and individual dignity.

Toril Moi has extensively dwelt upon the notion of female subjectivity. She, like other theorists, traces the formation of female subject in the socio-cultural milieu. Moi makes the following observation with respect to the process in which female subject happens to grow:

Among many feminists it has long been established usage to make feminine represent social construct and to reserve female and male for the purely biological aspects of sexual difference. Thus feminine represents nurture and female nature in this usage. Femininity is a cultural construct: one is not born a woman, one becomes one, as Simone de Beauvoir puts it. Seen in this perspective, patriarchal oppression consists of imposing certain social standards of femininity on all biological women, in order precisely to make us believe that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. (247)

Thus a woman who refuses to conform can be labeled both unfeminine and unnatural. It is in the patriarchal interest that these two terms stay thoroughly consumed.

Patriarchy, in other words, wants us to believe that there is such a thing as an essence of femaleness called femininity.

Unless and until women are guided by the common cause of sacrifice for the collectivization of their freedom, it would be really difficult to actualize the dream of liberation. Several evidences can be forwarded to claim that many women have not supported other women who have been struggling for justice and equality. One group of women must have active sense of empathy and participation in the struggles of another group of women who are victimized. If the sorrow of a woman does not touch the other, and if they do not unite in their efforts, how can they secure the sound prospect of freedom? Group identity of women is cornerstone in guaranteeing the freedom and justice for women.

This idea of subjectivity is applicable in examining Alice's struggle for self-esteem and dignity. Alice's confidence and indefatigable power amidst torture and subjugation appeal and attract other females as well. Though she is alone and unassisted in her resistance, other women feel increasingly that if Alice is assisted, she can get justice. Alice is forceful and assertive in saying that her child is lost. She gives evidence after the other to ensure that someone might have kidnapped her child. She is genuinely concerned for the absence of her child. The power of her maternal instinct tells her that her baby is perhaps stolen or kidnapped. Though submissive and shy most of the time in her household life, she appears to be formidably angry, assertive in the defense of her lost child. But her husband easily dismisses her claims and arguments. The following lines describe how forceful and assertive she is in her need for the restoration of her own child on the cot:

It is more than a mess! Someone's kidnapped my daughter. You need to get out there and start looking for her. The policeman looks uncomfortable when I say this. I suspect that he is embarrassed on my behalf. How can she stand there and say that he wonders, when there is a clearly visible infant in her husband's arms? He will be tempted to draw the most obvious conclusion: there is a baby in the house; therefore that baby must be our daughter. (58)

Alice gives evidences to prove that her child is missing. The one which is kept on the cot is not her child. But her husband flatly dismisses her claims. He says that what Alice claims and doubts is all rubbish. They are the projection of her fancy and fantasy. So there is no atom of truth in what she says. Her own child is in front of her on the cot. Why she is worrying, I wonder, says David. The dismissive nature of her husband is an indicator of how helpless and vulnerable Alice is. Alice is in the dire need of help. When her husband turns into a callous and insensitive monster, she has no option other than supplicating for help from others. Having seen the rudely dismissive behavior of her husband, Alice becomes wounded and guilty.

It would be relevant to cast light on Alice's uninterrupted resistance in the light of further theoretical insight. Woman to woman relation is essential in strengthening the possibility of progress women's struggle for salvation and identity. If women are driven by the common purpose and goal and if they are sensitive to the suffering of sisterhood, they can face any challenge that comes on the way. In this regard, it is more relevant to quote Chris Beardsley who always stands in favor for woman to woman relation. Beardsley makes the following remarks:

If men/ masculinity is not to be inevitably valued, and women/femininity is to be acknowledged, even celebrated, then woman to woman relationships can no longer be viewed as of marginal significance against women's relationship with men. In a social context in which women are commonly characterized as engaged in a war among themselves over men and incapable of sustained friendships with each other, women-centered feminists typically promote a counter- strategy in which woman to woman relationships are given credit and encouraged. (49)

Chris Beardsley points out clearly the core aspect of gender bonding. If feminism aims at reshuffling women's relation with men, the significance of woman to woman relation should not be ignored and marginalized. The collective sense of being the member of organized sisterhood is imperative in reformulating man-woman relation in a new way. Thus the important thing is that it is pretty difficult to launch revolutionary programs of feminist movement without strengthening woman to woman relation from certain viewpoint. Women-centered feminism is supposed to make certain contribution to this direction.

To conduct an inquiry over the alleged disappearance of Alice's child, detective Simon comes to the house. But the case turns out to be far more puzzling and mysterious. So police inspector calls both the daughter in law, Alice and mother in law Vivienne. In the police station, Vivienne demonstrates a kind of indifference. While the daughter in law is restless and anxious, the mother in law is indifferent. She has maintained composure and indifference, which is an evidence of how estranged she is to Alice. Instead of being cooperative and sympathetic in Alice's battle for the identification of her child, she remains neutral

and indifferent. The following lines depict Vivienne's callous and atrocious sense of indifference which blocks the possibility of gender bonding:

Vivienne does not rant and sob and make a fuss. The more despondent she feels the quieter and more composed she is. She sits and broods. She stares at the wall, and out of windows, her face revealing nothing, sinister in its stillness. Even for the benefit of her beloved Felix, she cannot pretend to be her usual animated self. She holds him tightly in her arms; as if afraid he too might vanish. I told her this morning that I thought Felix out to go and stay with friends, but she said firmly, nobody is leaving this house. She has always issued orders in this way, like a ruling force, confident of her absolute power. When David first took me home to meet her, I loved the way she laid down the law about which train I was to take back to London. (116)

From the above-cited extract, it becomes clear that Vivienne is harsh and oppressive towards Alice not only during the loss of her children but also in her marital life. Vivienne's mood betrays the fact that she has engagement in the complicity against Alice. At the sudden disappearance of Alice's child, Vivienne must have an involvement. The rapid throbbing of her heart, shifting heart palpitation, her grimaced face and sinister mood jointly betray the fact that she is guilty. Had she been innocent and unaligned against the kidnapping of Alice's child, she would have been affected and anxious like Alice.

The foregrounding of the ways in which both action and character are produced through a negotiation with existing texts forces a questioning of the natural bases of character and identity. Cixous produces multivocal forms of oppressions,

where voices echo each other, contradict each other and constitute each other. She represents the power of history to disturb to question the certainty of the present. All of these strategies can be related to her instinct that writing should infinitely dynamism by an incessant process of exchange from one subject to another. Cixous argues that feminism has achieved some of its proclaimed agenda and goals. New goals and visions have evolved in the direction of feminist thinking. The new horizon of socio-cultural life has rendered obsolete the old programs of reforms and equality. Barbara briefly points out her viewpoint in the following extract:

Subjectivity –based feminism is the popular designation for the largely liberal but sometimes postmodern –infected feminist movement in the west during the 1990s. This movement frequently promotes the idea that western societies have reached an era of post-feminism, suggesting that the goals of second-wave feminism have been achieved and or that this older form of feminism is now outmoded because it is overly focused on women’s victimized status. In this way, third wave feminism often positions itself in antagonism to more established feminist projects and displays doubts about the concept of women as a broad social grouping, arguing that this category is unhelpful. (256)

Cixous does not encourage the trend to study the problem of a single woman as an individual being having distinct sensitivity and understanding of her own. According to Barbara, problems of women should be viewed in broader category. It is imperative to check the group status and position of women in society to find out factors that contribute to the happening of this sort of problem. If women are viewed as social grouping and if their problems are studied in terms of the loopholes of this social

grouping, certain uplifting measures can be taken to achieve the intended goals of women centered feminism. Otherwise it would remain a tough and impractical job.

If anything is accountable for the degradation of marital tie of Alice and David, it is Vivienne. Vivienne is dogmatic in her approach to her daughter in law. Before her dogmatic overture, her son David seems to be an enfeebled man who is none other than the puppet in the hands of his mother. The text is pervaded with plenty of evidences regarding to Vivienne's dogmatic stand in each and every household things. For the collapse of David's first marriage with Florence, Vivienne's interventionist activities are largely responsible. She wants to micro-manage Alice's life. Alice had taken Vivienne's dogmatic and patronizing attitude positively. But when Alice guessed Vivienne's complicity in the sudden disappearance of her child, her attitude changed permanently. The dogmatic attitude of Vivienne towards Alice tore the thin banner of gender bonding. The following lines throw spotlight on Vivienne's dogmatic and oppressive outlook:

When Vivienne dogmatically seized control of my life, I thought that she was treating me as she would a daughter. I mattered to her, a lot, otherwise why would she have bothered? And she was right about the train, right about the food. Vivienne is no fool. She made decisions for me that was better than the ones I would have made for myself. Within two months of meeting David, I had a more flattering hairstyle and clothes I loved and looked fantastic in but would never have dared to choose for myself. (116)

There was never harmonious relationship between the mother in law and the daughter in law. David's role in the life of Alice remained limited only as a husband. He tilted more towards what his mother says rather than what Alice tells

him. Vivienne naturally took delight in oppressing Alice and confining her in the limited zone of household activities. Vivienne cannot tolerate to see any independent overture in Alice's life. Alice's submissive posture and inferiority pleased Vivienne. One after the other the mother in law continued to impose her ideas and understanding on Alice. But for the sake of her family integrity, Alice goes on to endure all such activities of Vivienne as the manifestation of affection and love.

Before seeking to have control over Alice, Vivienne tries to know each and everything about Alice. That is why Vivienne had gone to Florida to bring Felix. Once she brought Felix, she watches everything about the house and about Alice. This is an instance of how shrewdly and subtly Vivienne wants to manage and delimit some of the fresh and natural longings of Alice. Most of the time, Vivienne seems to be disdainful and dismissive. Her disdainful and dismissive attitude became source of trouble and unbearable pain. It shocks the readers why women cannot get aligned and make a common cause with each other even for the sake of their common goal. The following lines demonstrate this aspect of truth:

I wonder how Simon feels about being described as her detective. She did not even look at me when she suggested to Vivienne that I was mentally impaired. I can feel the beams of her hostility as they radiate across the table. She is busy and regards me and my ludicrous baby-swap story as a waste of her time, but I sense that it is more than that. She dislikes me personally. I tell my patients or I used to that the best way to deal with someone who is aggressive towards you is to follow the DESC script: describe, explain, strategies, consequences. You

describe the unacceptable aspects of their behavior and explain how they make you feel. (119)

There are self-evident proofs that Alice is on the right side. She is alone in her search for her lost infant. Alice is unassisted and ignored in her endurance of sufferings as well as in her struggle. That is why her sufferings have increased. If her voice is heard, her sufferings might have decreased. If she is enabled by other women's sensitivity, she might have got access to justice and self-esteem. Although her husband and mother in law have done her injustice, other women at least should have cooperated with her because she is victimized by not only her husband but her own mother in law. Simon is a female detective. She possesses remarkable sense of expertise and power. Within a short time after she conducted an inquiry over the case of Alice, Simon came to know that Alice is the victim and both Vivienne and David are guilty. Simon should have felt bonded with the plight of Alice. What befalls Alice can befall to her too. So Simon should have helped Alice.

Morag Shiach strongly takes social grouping of women as a means to maintain the integrity of individual differences and social recognition. She insists them not to ignore their distinct gender traits. She makes a call to respect those qualities which make woman a distinct individual. Social grouping and harmony amidst women belonging to any community and culture is instrumental in actualizing some of the long cherished visions of freedom and prosperity. The following lines capture Shiach's distinct view in this regard:

Subjectivity is a feature of sexuality and Masculinity Studies, which similarly decenters the notions of the norm in relation to sex and power. Subjectivity not only decenters the usual assumptions about what is central and what is at the margins, but also shifts the subject of the

analysis, in that the notion of woman is placed in center stage. This occurs even when feminists questions the validity of this sexed identity. (16)

Even the subject of analysis undergoes change. Nothing related with women is left as irrelevant and negligible. Everything appears to be equally important so far as the object of analysis is concerned. If discursive as well as non-referential matters are examined in relation with the politics of the matter, it would remain the same practice which promises many things but yield none of the significant conclusion. Thus, critical attention should be directed by the gender feminists to the specific object of analysis.

Vivienne, David, Simon and others left no stone unturned in proving that Alice is psychologically insane. She is making a mere bargain. She is prone to delusion and delirium. So in the fit of delirium and insanity, she is unable to identify her own child. In this way they sought to twist the matter to the new direction. Alice challenges them by asking why Vivienne tore the photos of grandchild and grandmother. A few weeks after the birth of Alice's baby, Vivienne had taken a photo of her and her grandchild. To be secure in her claim that Alice is afflicted with insanity and craziness, Vivienne immediately gets the photos torn. Alice puts forwards this line of arguments in a confident way. The following lines justify the point:

I bought Vivienne the digital camera for her birthday. She is usually resistant to anything she regards as modern, but she wanted to take the best possible photographs of her new grandchild. I still have a vivid picture in my mind of her frowning at the manual, too proud to admit she was daunted by its many instructions, determined not to be

defeated by new technology. She refused to accept help from David, even though he could have saved her a lot of time. (122)

Vivienne is scornful of anything new, innovative and modern. She is confined in her old trajectory of her thoughts and assumptions. She is allergic towards new trends and tendencies. She is out and out a hypocrite. She acts as though she does not need anybody's help. But the circumstances pressurize her to depend on others' help. Supercilious and vainglorious woman, she is an extra source of burden to young generation women with delicate sensibility and perceptive ideas.

Alice demonstrates a great deal of audacity in charging Vivienne with demolishing pair photos of her child and Vivienne herself. In front of Alice's straightforward charges, Vivienne feels helpless and diffident. Alice directly raises question "Come on, what are the odds of two sets of photos being wrecked accidentally? This is evidence, I pleaded with the sergeant. Two films, both ruined, and they just happen to be the only photos of Florence ever taken"(122). Sergeant and detective along with Vivienne and David talk about conducting DNA test to finalize if the child is Alice's real child or not. Alice knows that this is just the way to deviate and distort the matter. They are not ready to conduct the DNA test. They are, according to her, just trying to twist the matter and put the issue to the sideline. This sort of deceptive strategy is already understood by Alice. That is why she goes on raising one concern after the other. She asks why are evidences destroyed one after the other, if they are so sure that the child on the cot is really the really of Alice. Before the bold presentation of Alice, others are shocked and silenced.

A helpless and unaided women's pathetic outcry is hardly attended by men but also by women. In the name of conducting inquiry over the household surrounding, only time is wasted. Months pass away; but the child is not found. Those women

whom the detective Simon takes interviews twist the matter. Those women claim that Alice had been suffering from post-natal depression. The shocking and painfully unpalatable thing is that women are not united in Alice's endeavor towards tracking her lost child down. Even if they could not help Alice, it would be better if they do not talk about unnecessary nonsense at least. But they do not do this much only. They, like terrible chatterbox, go on talking about untested assumptions and abstract suppositions. Such a garrulous trend really kills the spirit of investigating the true matter. The following extract presents what and how gender bonding is hindered by factors which arise out of the chaos and confusion of real life situation:

After her original allegation that her baby had been swapped, Simon had been strongly in favor of interviewing Alice's friends and colleagues to find out whether they thought she was trustworthy, whether they knew of anything in her past that might shed light on her present baffling behavior. But Charlie had insisted on cuffing it. I am not wasting any more resources on this, she said. Alice Fancourt's got a history of depression, she has been on Prozac, and she has just had a baby in about the most traumatic way possible. It is a shame for her, I agree but post- natal depression is not a police matter, Simon. (130)

There is no sense of awareness about how patriarchal society builds conspiratorial measures against women and their progressive movement towards independences and equality. Any progressive movement of women towards different kind of dignified life is doubted not only by men but by women too. The majority of female characters in this novel are far detached from reality. They are simply attracted towards illusion, rumor, abstract suppositions and other untested realities. That is why women have

been found acting against other women who are on the progressive path of perfection and freedom.

Rachel Bowlby has expounded some of the basic tenets of gender subjectivity. Like other theorists, she is critical of the reform oriented ethos that has gained currency in the recent feminist discussion and discourse. Bowlby's view adds further clarity to the method of the analysis of the text. Her view is mentioned below:

Difference theorizing involves privileging the marginalized, at least strategically. Subjectivity has meant revaluing the Feminine. Such thinking tends towards an at least bifurcated account of different social and cultural positioning. In the modernist identity politics versions of gender difference, this amounts to asserting differently constructed gender politics versions of gender subjectivity and experiences and mounting political platforms based upon the specific positioning of women. (21)

Subjectivity comes to operate strategically in the field which is entirely dominated by the patriarchal discourse. Without operating strategically, it is really difficult to maintain solid ground in the voices of women can be projected. Just by looking critically at the social and cultural positioning of women, none of significant breakthrough will arise. Strategic approach is key to creating solidarity amidst women. By raising directly the political voices alone, it would be tough to expect genuine sense of achievement. Efforts should be made to unite the fragmented voice, unacknowledged experience and unidentified expectation so that the discourse of representation works as a strategy.

Vivienne is scheming, shrewd and calculative woman. Since she had not experience the joy of being an affectionate mother, she bears envy of Alice's

instinctive show of motherly affection. Of course David was brought up by Vivienne in a careful and affectionate manner. But Vivienne was not as instinctively spontaneous in carrying out her motherly duty. Although her daughter Florence is stolen and different child is placed in Florence's cot, Alice develops the premonition that she has look after the substituted child because someone is also looking after her own child wherever she might be. The following lines describe this point:

David always does the night feeds and I want to. I cannot say it because it is too painful. I am desperate to do all the things mothers do, to freeze small blocks of pureed vegetables in ice- cube trays, brush each new tooth as it appears, sing lullabies, hear myself called 'Mummy' for the first time. I clear my throat and continue, looking at Vivienne. I hope that wherever Florence is, some woman is looking after her and will keep her safe until I find her. I want to do the same for the baby upstairs. If I cannot be a mother to my own daughter, I want to at least do the best I can to take care of the baby I have got. My eyes fill with tears. The way you looked after me when my mother died. (142)

Alice's maternal instinct knows no bound. She acts like a mother to the new child kept in the place of her own missing daughter Florence. Alice fully trusts her maternal instinct. She relies on the dictation of her instinctive and intuitive urge. Passing through different phases of agony of losing her child, Alice finally decides to love and care the child kept unknowingly in the place of her daughter. Alice was deprived of enjoying her mother's love because when Alice was born her mother died. Since then she had been living the life fully deprived of enjoying maternal care and affection. Now Alice recollects some of the tragic moment of her past. She comes to the

conclusion that she does not delay to provide motherly love to this strange child though her own child is missing. This kind of awareness strengthens Alice a lot. She succeeds in coping with the sufferings of marital life which is constantly handicapped by the pride and prejudice of patriarchal society.

Some women conscious of feminist movement embody both the rebellious and conformist conviction. The closer scrutiny of their activities and thinking yields a new level of understanding. Subjectivity does not just appear as the socially constructed category which has to be dismantled. Of course gender is the category which is the outcome of social happening and individual's interaction with social practices and institutions. But the lingering effect of an individual's immersion in gender category is really shocking. It is baffling. The notion of gender as the constructed category needs manipulation so that it would could facilitate women to obtain sense of solidarity. With this aspect of feminist thinking, Seyla Benhabib makes additional remarks:

Female Subjectivity is disputed both on the grounds that it is associated with the diminution of a focus on particular sexed identities and with the shoring up of such identities. Still others view gender's concern with sexed identities as precisely the means to undo these identities. What this debate signals is an ongoing discussion central to the entire field of subject based search regarding the question of whether focus on particular identity groups is politically helpful or harmful. (13)

The political and apolitical advantages should not be sought for while executing some of the topmost agenda and prescribed goals of feminism. To make feminist vision far

more viable, Benhabibhas sought to bring the true reformist ethos from the plethora of confusion.

Alice's dedication to the principle of providing motherly love to the child of an unknown man does not appeal Vivienne. Vivienne outwardly demonstrates her caring nature. She produces the impression that she cares and protects those who come closer to her. But this is just the pretentious act. She tends to nurture, care and love Alice so that Alice could obey and then finally disown the baby. Mother, Vivienne and son, David enacted gimmick to subdue and silence Alice's perpetual sighing and longing for her lost child. The mother in law is soft outwardly but scheming and conspiratorial inwardly. On the contrary, the son is bullying and formidably threatening. Mother in law's deceptively soft approach and husband's bullying temperament ultimately failed to cool down Alice. The following lines hint at how the mother and son hatched conspiracy against Alice so that she will finally decide to disown Florence:

Because that is how Vivienne's appeal prods Alice to act
 submissively. When you are under her wing, she makes you feel that
 the harsh blows of life cannot touch you. Leave it to me, she says and
 the next thing you know, your troubles have vanished as if by magic. I
 can see from her face that mind have not. She is not on my side, not
 yet, or not entirely. Certainly not in the way I need her to be. I feel
 exiled, desolate. This would be hard even with Vivienne's support.
 Without it the next few days will be agony. No way, David snarls.
 You have chosen to disown Florence. You are not going anywhere
 near her. His words jar. I cannot understand why I am shocked anew
 every time he is cruel to me. (142)

Vivienne never thinks about giving her daughter in law right to freedom and self-esteem. She cannot tolerate to see Alice acting and deciding independently in her life. She derives pride from seeing Alice's submissive mentality. The more Alice is robbed of her individual traits, the more rapturous delight she takes. More than David, it is Vivienne who should have understood the conditions and predicament of Alice. But when actual troubles well up in Alice's life, she goes to David's side against Alice. At this moment, if anything has added extra burden and anxiety on Alice, it is the lack of gender bonding between her and her mother in law not the formidable approach of her husband. It is customary if husband performs some gimmicks to ensure the rights of his son from his first wife. David is already a difficult man whose failed first marriage is likely to affect his second marriage. Already a troubled man, it is not natural if such a man acts in a biased and arrogant way in relation to his wife. But Vivienne's insensitivity towards his son is really disgusting. It rather intensifies Alice's suffering tremendously.

Benhabib holds different kind of view regarding to the formation of female subject positron. She holds patriarchy as the mechanism to foster exploitation of women by men. She holds different kind of view. She argues that social class of women is far more important than the concept of ideology. Her view runs as follows:

The concept of subjectivity is of social class is considered to be more important than the concept of patriarchy since the latter is seen as a form of subjectivity that stems from class exploitation. Women are not a sex class because the only thing they have in common is their sex - an upper class woman, for example, has little if nothing in common with a psychologically troubled woman. (72)

The idea of being an attractive woman capable of tempting man of substance should be kept at bay if and only if women are to be empowered economically. Without economic empowerment, it is pretty challenging to upgrade the working condition.

Laura is the first wife of David Fancourt. David's marital relation with Laura did not last more than half a decade. After giving birth to a child, Laura divorced and they started living separately. Laura had not asked for alimony. She had been supporting and bringing up her son on her own earning. When Laura had known that David had brought another wife and a child is also born from their relation, Laura filed a case in the court asking for alimony. Incidents then started occurring in an unexpected way. Alice's child is missing; Laura is consulting her legal adviser for securing good future for her son; and Vivienne has also returned from Florida. When Alice's case is being examined in police custody, news about Laura's death spreads. This news enables sergeant to doubt about the moral honesty of David. In the murder of Laura, the alliance of David with Vivienne is explicitly felt. A woman, who is old enough to be wise, takes part in murderous act too. The following extract further illustrates this point:

Sometime after Laura's death, I realized I had never asked her, directly, why she was so determined to keep me away from Felix. Now I will never know. She cannot have thought I would harm him. I adore him. Vivienne frowned at her hands. Her mouth twitched, as if she were trying to stoop herself from saying something. But it came out in spite of her efforts. I wish, every day of my life, that I had asked her. You know, in a funny sort of way, losing an enemy is as hard to bear as losing a loved one. You are left with the same strong feelings, you

always had, but no-one to attach them to. It makes one feel, cheated, I suppose. (158)

To deduce conclusion about Vivienne's alleged involvement in Laura's death and in Florence's sudden disappearance, it is necessary to rely trustfully on Alice's observation and description of Vivienne's facial expressions. When Vivienne hears news about Laura's death, her face twitched and grimaced. Certain degree of bitterness prevailed in her face. Soon she struggled to behave as though she is painfully affected by Laura's untimely death. Vivienne tried within a moment to bring sorrowfulness in her face. It is an artificial show of sorrow and pathos over the untimely death of Laura. Vivienne herself has had hand in the death of Laura. Alice's survey and acute observation betray plenty of facts about Vivienne. Two daughters in law cannot be held accountable for the lack of gender bonding. It is the rude, scheming and callous mother in law who is to be held responsible for Laura's death and kidnapping of Florence.

The shifting situation and circumstance force the sergeant to doubt about David's moral integrity and honesty. So far the sergeant and other police offers are not fully convinced that Alice's allegation about the loss of her child is credible. There are other people who raised fingers at the mental sanity of Alice. Many people who knew Alice and David's family question Alice's state of mind. So the police authority is slow to conduct inquiry and arrive at major finding. Following the death of Laura, the sergeant and the detective began to trust in Alice's words and doubt David's so-called moral uprightness. They have evidences to take the benefit of doubt. The following lines describe how the turn of adverse events enable the sergeant to take the benefit of the doubt:

Why is not his name up on that board with a circle round it and a big number on next to it? I do not care how baffled he is. This is a man whose first wife was murdered, whose second wife last week accused him of lying about the identity of their baby and this week disappeared with that baby. Here are so many suspicious circumstances surrounding Fancourt, it would be the utmost negligence not to investigate him from every angle. (174)

Even the employees of those institutions like Simon and sergeant were convinced that Alice's charge is pointless. There were other people who confirmed that Alice is really subject to the fit of prenatal depressions. When some people reiterated the fact that Alice was subject to prenatal depression, sergeant and Simon declined to take the accusation leveled by Alice against David seriously. As time passed by, the haze of doubt and mystery vanished, and a genuine truth came to the surface. Since then the sergeant and Simon began to doubt David. They raise question about the so-called sincerity of David. This is how Alice's case and complaint gets an upper hand in the novel.

The stunning fact is that Vivienne does not exert an ounce of her sympathy and sensitivity to Alice when Alice is constantly in rush to track down her lost child. In an ironic and complacent manner Vivienne begins to instruct and exhort Alice. Alice's mind is going stormy; she is about to go berserk. But Vivienne pretends to act complacently as though Alice is mistaken and only she knows the reality. Vivienne says "Alice, what has got into you? I have put it in the kitchen. The baby is sleeping. There is no conspiracy against you. David and I are both very concerned about you. Why did you lie to us?"(181). Vivienne is a mistress of dissimulation. She can go to

any extent in the name of producing any impression. Reality is one thing which she has the audacity to discolor and distort.

Vivienne's outward show of genuine humanistic concern and inward cruelty betray the fact that she is wolf in sheep's clothing. Ironic and sarcastic remarks are the perpetual traits of her personality. She knows how to suppress, subdue and dispossess her daughter in law not in an aggressive manner but in a soft and appealing manner. Her approach is further revealed in the following citation:

Alice. Vivienne is on the landing, a bodiless voice. Please try to calm down. The baby is sleeping in the little lounge. She is perfectly all right. You are behaving like a maniac, Alice. I cannot allow you to rampage around the house in your present condition. I am worried about what you might do to yourself and the baby. I sink to my knees and rest my head against the door. Let me out, I groan, knowing it is pointless. An image of Laura appears in my mind. If she could only see me now she would laugh and laugh. (181)

A shrewd and scheming woman, Vivienne knows how to trap daughter in law. Most probably she knows how to reduce son to the level of a puppet and then to impose harsh and punitive measures on daughter. Alice is painfully haunted by the loss of her son. Moreover she is ridiculed as the woman prone to the fit of prenatal depression. In addition, nobody believes in the charge she has leveled against her husband and her mother in law. Even the detective and sergeant rather act indifferently towards Alice. Overburdened with pain and torture, she is on the verge of losing the normal psychological makeup of her mind. It is not the prenatal depression from which she is suffering but the rude and harsh treatment by her mother in law and husband which

pushes her on the verge of psychic disintegration. The indifferent manner of her mother in law and her husband gradually pressurize her to hallucinate.

In a moment of utter helplessness and insecurity, Alice begins to hallucinate. An image of dead Laura, who is the first wife of David, comes to Alice's mind. In this moment of undergoing nightmare, Alice is instructed by the image of Laura. In this hallucinatory moment, Laura delivers the following instructive remarks:

Alice wakes up. Laura actually seized me by the shoulders and shook me. I felt the skin on my face wobble and was furious that she had touched me without permission. There is no David. The person you know as David Fancourt is not a human being, he is Vivienne's puppet. Vivienne says no exercise during pregnancy, David agrees. Vivienne says no exercise during pregnancy, David agrees. Vivienne says a comprehensive school education is out of the question, David agrees. His personality consists of a few half-formed instincts, compulsions and fears rattling around in a great big vacuum. (189)

Having seen the miserable predicament of Alice, it is relevant to conclude that expecting gender bonding is a farfetched dream. In the real life situation, it is unreasonable to talk about gender bonding. The utter lack of gender bonding has hindered the progressive march of women's struggle for freedom and self-esteem.

To sum up, patriarchy is of course a deep-seated stumbling block on the way to women's liberation movement. But the lack of gender bonding is also another severe hindrance. Rather than intensifying feminist movement, it would be far better to build up the culture of gender bonding. Even in the advanced society where feminism has almost reached its height, the prospect of gender bonding is lacking. That is why women have fallen prey to several pitfalls and hazards.

III. Hannah's Vision of Gender Equality

This research yields the finding that female subject position is socially and culturally determined. The thorough analysis of Hannah's *Little Face* offers the finding that women are pressurized to develop different versions of their subjectivities as per the requirement of situations and circumstances. Alice is taunted as an insane and insane woman by her mother in law and husband. Even the entire community, where she lives, treats her as a mentally mad woman.

In the face of strong social exclusion and condemnation Alice remains poised and unmoved. She continues to endure it. She does not feel resigned and defeated. On the contrary, she demonstrated that brand of subjectivity which is indomitable. For a short span of time, she tends to be melancholic and ostracized. To the utter dismay of her husband and mother in law, she cultivates strong sense of determination to fight against the entire system. She has to fight against her family, the entire community that takes delight in mocking her and the indifferent police administration.

Amidst strong public condemnation and ostracism, Alice affirms her sanity. Her battle for justice takes momentum due to her strong determination. Alice's subjectivity ranges from her submissive tone to assertive stand and from assertive outlook to compromising viewpoint. For the sake of tracking down her lost child, she goes to any extreme. She is ready to display any kind of temperament and disposition to create favorable situation in which she can find her lost child. Excessive sentimentality on the part of Alice is obviously noticeable. At the sudden loss of her child she reacts in a far more sentimental way.

When she happens to be surrounded by harsh mockery and strong public denunciation, she cultivates a great deal of fortitude. In her search for justice, she is relentlessly committed and determined. A good deal of rationality is manifested in her

behavior while dealing with representatives of police administration. Alice is painfully aware of the fact that her mother in law is in complicity with her husband in the sudden abduction of her child.

Alice does not badly treat her mother in law. She remains cool and calm in her dealing with her mother in law who is too monstrous to overlook the urges of Alice's maternal instinct. Surprisingly enough, she exhibits remarkable prudence in her relationship with her mother in law. No single locus of Alice's subjectivity is found throughout the novel. Her style of approaching problem shifts from one moment to the other. But that does not mean she is endowed by nature to handle situations in this way.

The existing situations and adverse circumstances are largely responsible for her shifting mode of subjectivity. The variations in the locus of her subjectivity are the effects of socio-cultural restrictions and rigidity. In this regard, it would be fair to conclude that Alice is compelled to cultivate various versions of subjectivity because the unfavorable circumstances put pressures in her. The more Alice faces adverse charges leveled against her, the more assertive and bold she appears to be. Singular line of reactions and responses cannot take her to the intended destination.

This bitter fact is internalized by her. That is why she is far more flexible and adaptive. To be more specific, question of surviving with dignity in hostile society is inextricably joined in Alice's adaptability, flexibility, sentimentality, fortitude and assertiveness. While giving vent to her tantrums too, Alice increasingly appears to be methodical. In really tough and adverse conditions, she relies on her premonition and intuition that situation, no matter how hostile, can turn to her favor. Her reliance on her intuitive mode of perceiving reality has helped her a lot. That is why her troubled

subject position sometimes verges on disintegration and picks up to the level of confidence and assertiveness.

Alice's victory shows how assertion of female subject position is going to be successful. After establishing her innocence and justice, she succeeds in gaining back those things which she had lost in the course of fighting against hazards and hindrances. She expresses her wish to attend to the ordinary domestic world. Once her lost child is restored she returns to the same position from which she had started to fight against injustice and groundless allegations. Alice is self-centric, for a particular time span. She is bold and assertive in her decision. Her secluded cell in her house represents a traditional world which is highly oppressive.

It confines women in the predicament of subjugation, subordination, dependency and dispossession. Any woman endowed with the rebellious conscience must have the rash audacity to tolerate alienation and estrangement. Those women who defy and challenge the established tradition and norms must face the suffering, agony and anguish. Therefore, Alice develops the habit to insist upon the acceptance of her own will and passion. As far as possible she tries her best to create an aura in which her decision will gain an upper hand. Such a seemingly obstinate habit sometime brings pain and inner agony in her.

Alice is fearful due to the fear of being killed by her in-laws and husband. For her, her husband's home becomes a source of terror which is about to overpower him. She is driven by the eerie desire to remain cool in the midst of alienation and estrangement. Everyone calls her an insane woman. Even the public started calling her an insane woman. Therefore, the whole public life and her private family life become the source of fear for her. When the whole life is surrounded by fear and terror, she develops narcissism, inner premonition of being assaulted by unknown

forces. Sometimes she takes delight in the horrific prospect. At times she swoons over the moment she ponders on the sudden disappearance of her baby.

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