

Chapter I

General Introduction

Brief Sketch of Cather's Life and Her Works

This research paper entitled "Disruption of Gender Binary: A feminist study of Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" seeks to prove how Cather has destabilized the gender binary. Women are always relegated from mainstream position and are always featured uncivilized, barbaric, insane, irrational, submissive, docile and meek in literature. Males always desire to prolong such discrimination hierarchical order. Cather, however, covertly reveals the male psychosis and dismantles gender binary by depicting bold and unyielding female characters on the one hand and on the other, Father Latour, the male protagonist, is portrayed with masculine and feminine characteristics which blurs the gap created between male and female by patriarchy. Cather is of the opinion that gendered roles attached to male and female are mere construction of male ideology. Male are highly extolled and females are fully condemned in the male literature so, Cather goes against such tendency and aspires hierarchy free society.

Willa Cather who was born and grown up in an era that did not let women vote and considered them as a secondary beings, is one of the most distinguished novelists of the early twentieth century America who has raised voice against male supremacy and endeavored to place women in the position of men. She challenges men for their exploitation and domination over women and assaults on orthodox patriarchs for using their politics of power to suppress women in the society. The domination of men over women and their discriminating attitude to them stimulated her to protests against it through writing. Willa Cather was born on December 7, 1873 at her material grandmother's house in the village of Black Creek Valley, Virginia. Her father Charles Cather

was an Irish descent gentleman of Virginia and her mother Mary Virginia Cather an Alastian Cather got no opportunity to go to school at her early age in Virginia. It might be either her mother's poor health or by her father's financial difficulty or by not having schooling facility in Virginia that she was prevented from her formal primary education in school. Her father Charles Cather was a farmer raising sheep in Virginia and a real state businessman in Red Cloud. He married Mary Brown, Virginia Book, the daughter of William Lee Boak and Rachael Seibert Boak from Back Creek Valley, Virginia on December 5, 1872. They had seven children, among whom Willa was their eldest daughter. She loved her tenderhearted father than her mother. When she was ten, her family moved from the peace of Virginia to the wild prairies of Nebraska. It is said that her real life began when she moved to Red Cloud, Nebraska, which has now got so much popularity in the United States because of Cather's Novels, was not her actual birth place. But it was a frontier land of her to shape her best feminist novels, *O Pioneer!* (1913), *My Antonia* (1918) and lots of other novels and short stories, leading her at the peak of greatness.

After she permanently settled in the Red Cloud, Nebraska, she got chances to develop her personality through her contacts with other pioneer women from various nationalities. She was sent to the Red Clouds High School for her formal education at eleven. She had good teachers in Red Cloud, and she was fortunate in finding several adult friends whose intellectual or articles interest stimulated her own developing mind. At the age of twenty-one she was graduated from the university of Nebraska and spent the next few years doing newspaper work and teaching high school in Pittsburgh. Her writing life started when she entered the University, of Nebraska (1890) for her higher education. To run her study in the University, she was forced to write articles for the

journals to earn money. She met several difficulties during her life. The male domination of the Victorian society was another difficulty she met as women in the university.

Since her father was a Real Estate businessman in Red Cloud, her encounter with her father different walks of life widened her horizon and proved her opportunities to study human nature as a preparation for her novels. Her father's physical and mental beauty naturally surprised in child Cather to build on her feminist career to help the poor and oppressed women of the frontier. Her mother Mary Virginia (1850-11931) possessed a strong will and stubborn nature, on the contrary to her easy going husband Charles. But she had a talent of carrying out all the traits of the sophisticated Virginia women. She revealed an unchallenging skill to enjoy life by arranging parties and other entertainments. She was helpful to poor and cared for the sick people. In Red Cloud, Mr. Cather seemed such a benevolent women who took more interest in social works than to her family. But she had good sense to let her children develop their own individuality and allowed them to be individual. Such free atmosphere developed her individuality and provided her chances to study the things and persons of her surroundings for the preparation of her personality as well as her family environment.

Her grandfather William Cather had married Caroline Smith whose female strength and humanistic approach to the poor and oppressed, helped Cather to mould her feminist spirit. Her maternal family lineage is also equally important to identify Cather as a feminist novelist as she was born at her maternal house and affectionately cared by her maternal grandfather Ruhama's to domination over her grandmother Boak. It developed her feminist characteristics, which proved to be very fruitful for her future novels. Apart from this Cather was also much impressed from her grandmother's generosity to the poor and impressed. Such legacy of her feminist grandmother, which had direct impact on sensation of child and Cather's developing mind, had been explored for her novels.

Cather's novels are written in her different circumstances and different moods, but the main theme of these novels are poured out her female experience to portray the true picture of women's life. When she viewed her novels, we get Cather intending to curtail men's excessive power with a view to make women powerful and happy.

Cather has written women-centered novels with the internal known materials and familiar autonomous women protagonists defending against male suppression. Her writing Career began when she was a university student. She began her Career as a journal writer and also wrote reviews of some important plays and musical events when she became dramatic critic for *The Nebraska States Journal*. (1896) She also worked as the managing editor of "Hesperian," the University journal and also worked as a joint class associate editor of "The Lasso" with Lause Pound. After her graduation from the University of Nebraska (1895), Cather faced a double life problem. She wanted to be a writer, but she had to earn her bread for her living. To solve her economic problem she wanted to be a writer, but she had to earn her bread for her living. To solve her economic problem, she wanted a full time job, but she could not get it immediately. Then, she continuously wrote for the journals and worked for Sarah "Harris's Courier"(1895), and "Overland Monthly"(1895) in Lincoln. In 1896, she moved to Pittsburgh as an editor for "The Home Monthly" and became a very popular journalist. She worked as an editor for "The Sombrero"(1894), "The Cosmopolitan"(1896), "The Leader"(1897), "The Library"(1900) and "Saturday Evening Post"(1902).

She has written many novels on the theme of feminist concerns. In 1903, her first book, *April Twilights*, a collection of Poems, was published, and two years later *The Troll Garden*, a collection of stories appeared in print. The most fruitful event of Cather's Journalistic life was her meeting to Miss Sarah Orine Jewett, a most popular story teller,

who suggested her to leave out her Journalism and write novels finding free time and quiet place to perfect her writings. Following her advice, she registered her journalistic career and extended her pen to write novel writing. After the publication of her first novel, *Alexander's Bridge* in 1912, Cather devoted her fulltime writing and over the years completed eleven more novels including *O Pioneer! My Antonia*, *The Professor's House and Death Comes for the Archbishop*. Cather's other novels *A Lost Lady* (1923), *My Mortal Enemy* (1926) and *Sapphira and The Slave Girl* (1940) are remembered for her feminist concerns.

Cather believes in the balance of power between men and women in her novels. She wishes that neither men nor women should be given extreme power to exercise. Her most popular novel *O Pioneer!* is written with the new theme of the new frontier land and new life style of the new heroine, Alexander Bergson. The material and characters of this novel are taken from the novelist's familiar frontier land and her familiar women of the pioneer community. Alexander Bergson, the heroine of *O Pioneer*, is free from romance, cosmetic world and any kind of suppression. Her heroine struggles against male supremacy for her right to the land and social justice to the women. Her another novel *My Antonia* (1918) which is also ranked as the finest novel also deals with the symbol of pains and struggles that are carried by female protagonist. Antonia, the protagonist is the symbol of all miserable pioneer women of the frontier her life is full of hardships and struggles in Black Hawk. She faces her father's suicide, gets ill-treatment from her brother Ambrosche and works as a hired girl for wolf like land owners. She encounters with various wrong males who rob her virginity but she succeeds to change her fortune.

Similarly, another novel, *A Lost Lady* (1923) also deals with female issue. Marian Forrester, the female hero is depicted bold and unyielding towards male hegemony. She disrupts all ideological construction of patriarchy. Her another novel *The Professor's*

House is also Cather's autobiographical novel to express her anti-materialistic feelings.

Annoyed by the materialistic spirit of her contemporary age, she aspires for the idealism of the past in another novel *My Mortal Enemy* is written with the power seeking, amorous heroine, Myra Hen Shawe. This novel is a short novel concerned with a selfish and strong willed woman who brings about her own downfall.

Criticism on the writer

Willa Cather is an exceptional novelist who has witnessed her power to keep herself aloof from the influence of her contemporary male dominated society. She had clearly given her views on art, love, marriage, sex, culture and religion through her novels. She has acted as a fore runner of the modern day feminist by depicting the world wide domination and corruption of males over women through her novels. In her actual life she saw nothing except corruption, domination and exploitation of men over women. She found the wives, suppressed by their husbands, hired girls dominated by their landlord and sisters exploited by their brothers in her communities. Such condition of her society enforced her bitter feelings against such males and led her to write novels with the episodes of the oppressed women. Through her novels, she wants to bring forth the actual position of the male dominated women to her general readers and make them aware of such villains. Perhaps Cather is the first writer who has understood the real society towards female and expressed her without any hesitation. About Cather's feelings towards women and their hard life, Carl Van Doren says:

In frequent rides over the prairie on a pony, she grew very fond of the immigrants, particularly of old women who told her about their former homes. Imaginative and generous, she was stirred by the difficult lives of the new Americans, and anxious to make them understood as human beings. (281)

Cather has included the hardship of life, domination, suffering and difficulty of women which gives impetus to arouse the consciousness of female. Some critics have explored her artistic aspect. They opine that she has made appropriate use of all literary tools, such as symbols, metaphors, smiles, alliteration, allegory etc. very carefully to bring out her

desire effects in her novels. About Cather's style she herself answers. Style is how you write well when you are interested. A writer's own interest in a story is the essential thing. If there is a flesh of wrath in him, it is repeated in the reader. "The emotion is bigger than style"(78-79). Throughout her novel, she seems much impressed from the classic as there is lucidity of her thought, precision of her expression, brevity, presentation and simplicity of her style. Praising Cather for her beautiful style, Brown and Crone say:

Willa Cather's art ... her style ... intangible as style is ample evidence that hers can be termed fine artistic, beautiful and even classical. It is economical, controlled and disciplined, refined and fastidious, clear and sharp ... her style is never an end in itself, but always a fitting implement.(152)

Novel to her is primarily a matter of selection and simplification of the materials to bring out the desired effects in the realm of her characters and situation. To her aim, she is more aware of the characterization and action of the novel than its plot. As a matter of fact, she is an expert in managing the situation and presenting the characters in her novels. She had elaborated the point of view technique to her novels, and the tales of the women's life problems are narrated by the narrators in some of her novels.

But some other critics view that amidst her severe financial and social inconveniences, she encountered several catastrophic events of her own life. But it had no effects on bold Cather. Domna Pastour Matzi in her essay "Willa Cather and the Masculine cult" write about Cather's compulsion to adopt masculine cult:

While Willa Cather exploits the cultural definition of manhood in order to delineate the identity of the lady killer she questions the ability of the

masculine paradigm by exposing the dangers of the traditional heterosexual love hunt. Cather may have not been a militant feminist by her imagination was undoubtedly gendered. (2)

Cather has presented revolutionary views in all her novels. She always takes the favor of her helpers and treats tired girls very sympathetically in her novels. Fearlessness, which is one of the possessions of the feminist women is strongly occupied by the novelist herself and her women characters. About the novelist's fearless nature, Edith Lewis says: "She was naturally a very fearless person, fearless in matters of thought of social convention, people never intimidated her and she was extremely self possessed in the presence of physical danger. (xiv)

Cather is awarded as a feminist novelist because of her treatment of female characters in her novels. Her revolt against the Victorian male for their monopoly to the women's world, her endeavor to provide social dignity to the pioneer women of the firm and her sympathetic treatment to the female characters are the indications of her feminist concerns in her novels. She has fought for the miserable women in many ways. Her revolutionary ideas on cross culture, her socialistic approach to the underprivileged women and her emphasis on women's independence and freedom resemble with the modern day feminists outlook on women. What undoubtedly ranks Cather as the most sincere novelist of the women is her selection of the women protagonists from both of the worlds, the good women of the common birth and the women of lost character from the upper class for her novels. She has shown her strong support to the male dominated women of the pioneer communities in her novels. So MasilMani rightly over: "Willa Cather does not impress one as a militant nor was she in the vanguard of the women's movement in the time. Yet her novels are strongly feminist" (1).

Another critic Dorothy Van Ghent in her essay "Willa Cather" has passed her fascinating criticism on the writer. She writes:

It is customary to speak of Willa Cather as an "elegist" of the American pioneer tradition. "Elegy" suggests celebration and lament for a lost and irrecoverable past, but the boldest and most beautiful of Willa Cather's fictions are characterized by a sense of the past not as an irrecoverable quality of events, wasted in history, but as persistent human truth repossessed salvaged, redeemed by virtue of memory and art. (71)

Dorothy again writes about her artistic creativity and her primitive cult in same essay.

She says:

Her art is a singular one. The Prose style is suave, candid, transparent, a style shaped and sophisticated in the great European tradition, her teachers were Homer and Virgil, Tolstoy and Haubert. But the creative vision that is peculiarly hers is deeply primitive, psychologically archaic in an exact sense.

Novel to her is primarily a matter of selection and simplification of materials to bring out the desired effect in the realm of her character and situation, to her aim, she is more aware of the characterization and action of the novel than its plot. As a matter of fact she is an expert in managing the situation and presenting the characters of her novels. She has elaborated the point of view technique of her novels and takes the women's life problems are narrated by the narrators in some of her novels. *Death Comes for the Archbishop* which is based on Cather's own experiences of her tour to New Mexico, is the novel of superb quality in the opinion of the authoress. Cather herself realizes that the novel is without major woman character. So the question arises whether the novel is feminist or not. Though Magdalena and Dona Isabella are the women characters in the novel: "they

appear in the Middle of the novels without any distinctive roles." "But the novel is feminist in the sense that these women characters are highly sympathized by the novelist" (Hart).

Her *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is also criticized in some other different lights. So Krishnamoorthy Aithal and David Harrell write:

Death Comes for the Archbishop dwells mostly on the theme of the brotherhood and love on how two missionaries win the people over by the goodness and purity of their heart. As the two complete their mission, different ethnic group reconcile and quietly. Settle down to live their different lives. (42)

Reviewing *Death Comes for the Archbishop* as religious novel and commenting upon Cather's religious cult, Michael Williams says:

Miss Cather is not a Catholic, yet certainly no Catholic American writer that I know of has ever written so stepped in spiritual knowledge and understanding if Catholic motives and so sympathetically illustrative of the wonder and beauty of Catholic mysteries, as she has done in this book. (13)

While a Christian, approach to Cather's narrative many seem natural and reasonable. Janis Stout, based on her study of Cather's letters, concludes that Cather's "religious vision" in *Death Comes for Archbishop* appears to be not an unambiguous one because "hers was ... a cast of mind keenly responsive to the aesthetic experience of religion and its moral and cultural associations" (26).

Cather has been critically explored from different critical apparatus since the publication of her first novel. Her novels are basically reappraised through the

perspectives of New Historicism, Marxism and Feminism. But her novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop* is not duly explored by feminist critics. So, my dissertation will be one new way to understand Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

This research paper primarily seeks to prove how Cather exposes the male domination and how she advocates for females for their upliftment. Cather as a feminist raises feminist voice and wants to establish female gender equal to male in the society. This dissertation consists of four chapters. First chapter "General Introduction" gives introduction of the whole thesis as well as brief synopsis about Cather and her works. Second chapter, "Theoretical Modality" draws the ideas of feminist theory of different critics. Third chapter, "Textual Analysis" applies the tool discussed in Chapter two to analyze how Cather dismantles patriarchal stereotypes by exposing male chauvinism. Lastly, "conclusion" provides the finding of the whole thesis.

Chapter-II

Methodology

Feminism: A Critical Introduction

Feminist Criticism examines the ways in which literature (and other cultural productions) undermine the economic, political, social and psychological oppression of women. It is a distinctive and concerted approach inaugurated in the late 1960s. It is a political movement struggled for social, legal and cultural freedom as well as equality for the women. All feminist activities, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality. Thus, all feminist activities can be seen as a form of activism, although the world is usually applied to feminist activity that directly promotes social change through political activity such as public demonstration, boycotts, voter education and registration, the provision of hotlines for rape victims and shelter for abused women, and the like. Emergence of feminist critics in the western countries remapped and retheorized the male dominated critical terrain. They began to develop systematically a self conscious theory with the realization that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation.

Generally, the feminist is one who takes the favour of women advocating for women's right. The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain the male monopoly positions of economic, political and social power. In other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means of acquiring economic, political and social power. That is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally not biologically, produced. Feminists do not deny the biological differences between men and women, in fact, many feminists celebrate those differences. But they do not agree

that such differences as physical size, shape and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women. For example more intelligent more logical, more courageous or better leaders.

Feminist critics found that the western civilization is pervasively patriarchal, white, male centered and male controlled. Because of which women are conditioned to derogate their own sex and to cooperate in their own subordination. M.H. Abrams in his *A Glossary of Literary Terms* writes:

It is from the Hebrew Bible and Greek philosophic writings to the present, the female tends to be defined by negative reference to the male as an "other" or a kind of non man. By her lack of the identifying male organ, of male powers, and of the male character traits, they are marginalized in the patriarchy. (235)

Feminism views that the issues like masculine and feminine are the cultural constructs. Women themselves are taught, in the process of their being socialized, to internalize the reigning patriarchal ideology (that is, the conscious and unconscious presuppositions about male superiority). It is widely held that while one's sex is determined by anatomy, the prevailing concepts of gender are largely, if not entirely cultural constructs that were generated by the omnipresent patriarchal biases of our civilization. As stated by Simone de Beauvoir in her masterpiece *A Second sex*, "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman ... it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature ... which is described as feminism"(993). In this way, the masculine in our culture has come to be described as active dominating, adventurous, rational, creative, and the feminism, by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, acquiescent timid, emotional and conventional.

Discussing about feminist theory, Valerie Bryson says that the whole Western philosophy has excluded feminist voice and they are only considered as mindless creatures worthy to be confined within the territory of domestic walls. She writes:

For most of its history, western political theory has ignored women, we seldom appear in its analysis of who has or should have power, when it has designed to notice us it has usually defended our exclusion from public affairs and our confinement to the home, only rarely have we been seen as political animals worthy of serious consideration. Even today this exclusion of half the human race is in general either perpetuated or dismissed as a trivial oversight, the inequalities that may exist between men and women are deemed practically unimportant and theoretically uninteresting. (1)

According to Bryson, feminist theory asks why it is that in virtually all known societies men appear to have power over women, and how this can be changed. It is therefore, a critical theory, which seeks to understand society in order to challenge and change it.

The term "feminism" first came into use in English during the 1880s, indicating support for women's equal legal and political rights with men. Its meaning has since evolved and is still hotly debated. Since then feminism is defined and argued by various critics in different senses. It is originated from the political movements of the women. An important precursor of the feminism is Virginia Woolf who has revealed the cultural, economic and educational disabilities within the patriarchal society. A male dominated society always prevents the women from realizing their productive and creative possibilities. Her central argument is that women do not have money and a room of their own. They do not have separate space for writing. Though she never adopted a feminist stance she continually examined the problems faced by women writers. Rejecting a

feminist consciousness, she desired to achieve a balance between a "male" and "female self annihilation"(882). According to her, literature is open to everybody. Libraries can be locked but freedom of women's mind can not be locked, Woolf has imagined a society in which men and women will come together in purpose and desire:

Women are supposed to be very calm generally, but women feel just like as men feel, they need exercise for their efforts as much as their brothers do, they suffer from too signed restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, and it is narrow minded in their more privileged low creature to say that they ought to confine themselves for making pudding and knitting stocking ... it is thoughtless to condemn them or laugh at them if they seek to do more or to learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for sex. (822)

In addition to this, feminist theory reveal how women are subjugated since long. Women, according to feminist critics, are always in submissive and docile objects so that they can overpower women. Therefore, they proclaim that the basic principles of the feminist approach is women centered understanding of the world. Women's powerlessness, victimization, lack of resources and marginalization constitute women's timeless history. Therefore, she sees the importance of women's struggle to assert the important role of female race. She wants to empower women by providing them equal right.

Talking about feminist theory, Valerie Bryson forwards her radical thought. For her, it is essentially a theory of, feminism by her and for women, as such, it is based firmly in women's own experience and perceptions and sees no need to compromise with existing political perspective and agendas. She speaks out:

It sees the oppression of women as most fundamental and universal form

of domination, and its aim is to understand and end this [...] women as a group have interests opposed to those men, these interest unite them in common sisterhood that transcends the division of class or race, and means that women should struggle together to achieve their liberation.

(181)

The major interest of feminist critics have been to reconstitute all the ways that deal with literature so as to do justice to female points of view, concerns and values, many feminist critics have decried the literature written by men for its depiction of women as marginal, docile and subservient to man's interest and emotional needs and fears. Such feminist studies have served to raise the status of many female authors hitherto more or less scanted by scholars and critics and to bring into purview other authors who have been largely overlooked as subjects for serious consideration. Pondering over the purpose of feminist study M.H. Abrams states: "The often asserted goal of feminist critics has been to enlarge and recorded the literary canon that have come to be considered "Major" and to serve as the chief subjects of literary history criticism, scholarship and teaching" (237).

In addition to this, women broke years of silence to discover the shared nature of problems. They thought that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation. Many radical feminists ponder over that the basic of women's oppression lies not in social organization or physical domination, but in a male control of culture, religion, language and knowledge that limits the ways in which we can think and cause patriarchal assumption to internalized by women as well as by men. Feminists have challenged the claims of philosophy and political theory to embody reason and universality arguing that, these are based on a male paradigm that ignores or devalues experiences and ways of thinking associated with women, so that objectivity in fact means the subjective perception of men. Masculinity is associated with quality such as

light, reason, and activity whereas femininity is recalls passivity and emotion.

Women's subordination was no longer based on physical necessity, the only thing preventing women from seeking themselves as subject in their own right was the artificial idea of womanhood engendered by society, which still saw women as secondary objects, acquiring 'meaning' only in relation to men. If women were to be free, they must therefore, be freed from this prevailing idea, and persuaded to take responsibility for their own lives, rather than accepting the security of dependence or bad faith represented by conformity to the feminine ideas. The aim of Beauvoir was, therefore, to reveal the artificial nature of womanhood, Beauvoir argued that women could lead independent, rationally ordered and autonomous lives once they were freed from artificially restricting myths and cultural assumption, she here, implies that only by denying her femaleness that a woman can achieve humanity, and devalues traditionally female qualities such as nurturing.

When the women's movement developed in France after 1968, Beauvoir was an active participant and convert to the idea of female solidarity. She called herself a feminist and organized the campaigns to legalize abortion, she defended the need for separate women's organization, free from the threat of male domination, and stressed on sisterhood as the value of female friendship. Her proposed theory saw women as independent, fulfilled and liberated being. "For individual pioneers things might be hard, but his was only to be expected at a time when the free women is just being born"(723). And she believed that changes in education, and morality were all working. In women's favour, she writes: "What is certain is that hitherto women's possibilities have been supposed and lost to humanity, and that it is high time, she is permitted to take her chances in her own interest and in the interests of all"(724).

It showed that women could make choices, they could reject their traditional roles and they could apparently, find happiness and fulfillment in so doing, as such, it was a symbol of the possibility, despite everything, of living one's life the way one wants for oneself, free from conventions and prejudices.

Every women living in a male dominated culture lives with the awareness that, merely by virtue of being a women, she risks sexual victimization. Women have been subjected to the gaze of psychologies since the earliest day of the discipline, one hundred years ago. It moments when women stepped out of "their place" or an eruption of feminist threatened the social order male intellectual and social critics of the day felt impelled to decide the question of "women's nature"(Jeanne Marecek, 103). Women's nature was taken to be separate from human nature (i.e., man's nature), implying that, whatever they were, not fully human. Marecek against avers, "orthodox psychology has not hesitated to render its judgement of women's nature" (103). In the late nineteen century, questions of women's nature were addressed in terms of mental capacity. Efforts to assess these capacities were carried out with reference not to skill and abilities but, rather, to various lobes, areas, and physical dimensions of women's brain.

Another prominent feminist Mary Poovey argues that the stereotypes and attitudes formulated in writing by men that reinforced the devaluation of women's lives, such as those, depicting women as angels or where, must be revalued. In her work "The Differences of Women's Studies: The Example of Literary Criticism" she writes:

Despite the claims that the terms man and mankind were representative of all human beings, that is, early proponents of women's studies argued that the knowledge commonly assumed to describe and analyze "men" did not equally apply to women, because what counted as knowledge was actually limited to the activities generally performed by men. Thus history usually

concern itself with wars, politics, or wage labour, not with domestic relations, philanthropy, or housework, [...] because man had written almost all of the 'great' works on 'universal' themes like war, works on 'universal' themes like war, heroism, and territorial expansion, while women writers had confined themselves to 'inferior' subjects like marriage and domesticity. (135)

Major feminist concern is that the most important obstacle to a woman's freedom was not her biology, or the political or the legal constraints placed upon her, or even her economic situation, rather it was the whole process by which femininity is manufactured in society.

To illustrate it more Beauvoir writes "no biological, psychological or economic fate determines that the human female presents in society, it is civilization as a whole that produces this creation"(Beauvoir Qtd. In Bryson, 135). At the most basic level of human consciousness each individual seeks domination by asserting himself as subject and the other as object. "In *The Second Sex*" de Beauvoir argued that freedom and responsibility could be achieved by women that are historically denied to them. Beauvoir forwards her view, women are defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her, she is the identical the inessential as opposed to the essential he is the subject, he is the absolute, she is the other's. (1000)

Women's subordination was no longer based on physical necessity, the only thing preventing women from seeing themselves as subject in their own right was the artificial idea of womanhood engendered by society which still saw women as secondary objects, acquiring meaning only in relation to men. If women were to be free, they must therefore, be freed from this prevailing idea, and persuaded to take responsibility for their own lives, rather than accepting the security of dependences or the bad faith represented by

conformity to the feminine idea. The aim of Beauvoir was, therefore, to reveal the artificial nature of womanhood, Beauvoir argued that women could lead independent rationally ordered and autonomous lives once they were freed from artificially restricting myths and cultural assumption. She, here, implies that only by denying her femaleness that women can achieve humanity, and devalues traditionally female qualities such as nurturing.

Present day feminists think that women's problems were shared and they could only be ended by collective political action. A new theory and strategy for women's liberation could only be based on women's shared experience, not on abstracted speculation. The New York, Red Stockings Manifesto of 1969 quotes Margans as:

Women are an oppressed class. Our oppression is total, affecting every facet of our lives. We are exploited as sex objects breeders, domestic servants and cheap labour. We are considered inferior beings whose only purpose is to enhance men's lives ... We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest most basic form of domination ... all men receive economic, sexual and psychological benefits from male supremacy. (598)

A central message of this must be that it is not unjust laws of economic systems that are responsible for women's oppression but men, that men as a group have interests opposed to those women and that it is therefore against the power of men that the battle must be fought. The feminist theory not only unveils the male oppression over female, their control of private as well as public life of female race but also asserts female individuality and consolidate their voice against patriarchy.

Another critics Ross Murfin and Supriya M. Ray also forwards their ideas about feminism. They say that since the early 1980s feminist literary criticism has developed

and diversified in a number of ways and is now characterized by a global perspective. It is none the less important to, " understand differences among the interests and assumptions of French, British and North American feminist critics writing during the 1970s and early 1980s, given the extent to which their works shaped the evolution of contemporary feminist critical discourse" 9121). Both Murfin and Ray discussing about the ideas of French feminist critic aver:

Many French feminist critics argued that language systematically forces women to choose between adopting the male dominate discourse or opting out and thereby remaining silent. Women may either imagine and represent themselves as men imagine and represent them (in which case they may speak but will speak as men) or they can choose "silence," becoming in the process "the invisible and unheard sex" (122).

Some French feminist critics, however, maintained that language only seems to give women a narrow range of choices. These feminists suggested that women not only have different life experiences than men but also write differently, which led them to advocate embracing and developing a feminine language.

A much more radical criticism launched by Adrienne Rich in her essay "Notes Towards a politics of location" (1980), forwards her radical view about feminism. She asserts:

[...] the common oppression of women the gathering movement of women around the globe, the hidden history of women's resistance and bounding, the failure of all previous politics to recognize the universal shadow of patriarchy, the belief that women now, in a time of rising consciousness and global emergency may join across all national and

cultural boundaries to create a society free of domination, in which sexuality, politics work, intimacy, thinking itself will be transformed.

(637)

Rich here, insists on creating a society without domination subjugation and marginalization. She, similarly, argues that when women come up with a single voice there will be declined in patriarchal power. She does not see patriarchy as an unchanging and monolithic structure of oppression, but allow for the possibility that patriarchal power may be challenged and feminists victories won.

Emergence of feminist critics in the western countries remapped and retheorized the male dominated critical terrain. They began to develop systematically a self conscious theory with the realization that women should struggle together to achieve their own liberation. They came up with the slogan that " the personal is political" and that a new theory and strategy for women's liberation could only be based on women's experiences, not on abstract speculation. Kate Millet's Polemical and hard hitting sexual politics (1970) has rocketed the fame of feminism. By" politics" Millet refers to the mechanisms that express and enforce the relations of power in society, she furthers, "western social arrangements and institutions as convert ways of manipulating power so as to establish and perpetuate the dominance of men and the subordination of women" (Abrams,238). Millet argues:

In all known societies the relationship between the sexes has been based on power and that they are therefore political. This power takes the forms of male domination over women in all areas of life, sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' and hence becomes invisible so that it is perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides in most fundamental concept of power. (25)

Millet's *Sexual Politics* marked an important stage in political feminist writing on literature she used the term patriarchy to describe the cause of women's oppression. Patriarchy subordinates the female as an inferior than male. Power is exerted directly or indirectly in civil and domestic life to constrain women. Millet and other feminists have attacked social scientists who treat the culturally learned female characteristics (passivity, docile, submissive, weak etc) as natural.

Millet recognizes that women as well as men perpetuate these attitudes in women's magazines and family ideology. Sex roles as perpetuated in society are in her view repressive. The acting out of the roles in the unequal relation of domination and subordination is what Millet calls '*Sexual politics*'. Her emphasis is political in the sense that she aims at struggle to raise consciousness among the oppressed and to effect a radical change in the power relations between oppressor and oppressed.

On the other hand, Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, in their work "The Mad Women in the Attic" (1980), discredits the literary stereotypes of women. The male tendency of creating images about women is deconstructed by them almost all literature present male as subject and usurp the power position but women are depicted powerless creature. Females are represented as powerless objects and given no prestigious position. They are shown in literature as they are to be suited the male ideology. In this way the masculine in our culture has come to be identified as active, dominating, adventurous, rational, creative, the feminine by systematic opposition to such traits, has come to be identified as passive, timid, emotional and conventional. They assert:

Before the woman writer can journey through the looking glass towards literary autonomy ... she must come to terms with the images on the surface of the glass, with that is those mythic masks male artists have

fastened over her human face [...] a woman writer must examine, assimilate and transcend the extreme "Images of angel and Monster" which male authors have granted for her. (596)

Gilbert and Gubar are of the opinion that the true self of women has never got space in literary domain. Images such as "angel" and "monster" always kill female creativity, and women must kill the aesthetic ideal through which they themselves have been killed into art before women can write. They express their anxiety, "the images of angel and monster" have been killed into art before women can write. They express "their anxiety, "the images of angel and monster" have been so ubiquitous throughout literature by men that they have also pervaded women's writing to such an extent that few women have definitively killed either figure" (596). Throughout most male literature, a woman is portrayed as a sweet heroine inside the house" and a vicious bitch outside" (604).

Gender as socially constructed

One of the accomplishments of feminist scholarship of the past twenty years is its demonstration of the constructed nature of gender. Most theorists agree in rejecting the view that gendered traits are essential aspects of being a biological male or a biological female and treat gender difference as a socially constructed mode of organizing society and culture. This mode includes the sexual division of labour and what is called the sexual division of virtue. Helen E. Longino in her essay "To see Feelingly: Reason, Passion and Dialogue in Feminist philosophy" exposes the biased culture of masculine society that portrays masculinity and femininity in different role models. She writes:

Masculinity is taken to consist in aggressiveness, independence a.k.a. dominance emotional control or lack of affect, insensitivity to the feelings of others, self confidence, taciturnity. Femininity is taken to consist in submissiveness and dependence, gentleness and nurturance, sensitivity to others lack of emotional control lack of self confidence, excessive chattiness. (24)

This constructivist conception of gender contrasts sharply with that, still characteristic of our culture, which specifies that there are two basic types of human being, male and female, and that certain traits, behaviour, and occupations are appropriate for each type: masculine and feminine are natural kinds. The inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal society has been culturally not biologically produced.

Women in almost every culture are subordinated to men and are responsible for domestic life. Individuals may in some respects mirror this cultural idealization, but the

ways in which they deviate will be masked or treated as deviance. While biology determines our sex (male or female), culture determines our gender (*masculine or

feminine). That is for most English speaking feminists, the world gender refers not to our behaviour as socially programmed men and women. I behave "like a woman" (for example submissively) not because it is natural for me to do so but I was taught to do so. In fact, all the tracts we issues play a part in every aspect of human production and experience including the production and experience of literature, whether we are consciously aware of these issues or not.

All of western civilization is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideology, as we see, for example in the biblical portrayal of Eve as the origin of sin and death in the world, the numerous patriarchal women and female monsters of Greek and Roman literature and mythology, the representation of woman as a non rational creature by traditional western philosophy; and the reliance on phallogocentric thinking by educational political, legal and business institutions. As we saw earlier, even the development of the western canon of great literature including traditional fairy tales, was a production of patriarchal ideology. To treat gender construction, as ideology, is to say that it must be understood not as a real attribute of individuals but rather, as a (socially enforced) ideal animating and regulating the behaviour of individuals. The representation of masculinity and regulating the behaviour of individuals. The representation of masculinity as active, independent, dominant, in control of emotions, and of femininity as passive, submissive, nurturing, controlled by emotion, interact with a number of distinctions of interest and importance to philosophers, in particular the distinctions previously mentioned between mind and body, reason and feeling and autonomy and attachment. According to the Stereotypes previously outlined, it is men who can be moral agents as they are independent and impervious to the feeling of others and capable of controlling their own. Women, as more emotional beings, sensitive to other, and incapable of independent judgement, are at best

faulty moral agents. These gender roles as stated by Lois Tyson have been used very successfully to:

Justify such inequalities, which still occur today, as excluding women from sexual access to leadership and decision making positions (in the family as well as in policies, academia, and the corporate world), paying men higher wages than women for doing the same job (if women are even able to obtain the job), and convincing women that they are not fit for careers in such areas as mathematics and engineering. (84)

Many people today believe such inequalities are a thing of the past because anti-discriminatory laws have been passed, such as the law that guarantees women equal pay for equal work. Patriarchy is thus, by definition, sexist which means it promotes the belief that women are innately inferior to men.

Feminists do not deny the biological differences between men and women, in fact many feminists celebrate those differences. But they do not agree that such differences as physical size, shape and body chemistry make men naturally superior to women: for example, more intelligent, more logical, more courageous, or better leaders. Feminism therefore distinguishes between the word sex, which refers to our biological constitution female or male, and the word gender, which refers to our cultural programming as feminine or masculine which categories are created by society rather than by nature. The gendered characters of the philosophical distinction between mind and body has a venerable history, especially through the gender associations of activity and passivity. Just as the man shows himself in activity and the woman in passivity so the province of the mind is activity and that of the perceptive sense passivity as in women. Due to gender biasness the society has bestowed the female attributes of "body" whereas "mind" to male. "Talking about this mind-body distinction Sherry Ortner in her essay is female of

male as Nature is to culture" (1974) writes:

In anthropology the mind body distinction has its parallel in the nature culture distinction, which is often used to construct gender, the association of the male with creativity, discovery, analysis and construction (of buildings, cities, nations) that is, with culture, and the association of the female with her role in biological reproduction birth and location hence with nature. (27)

She says such perennial distinction between mind and body has further enhanced the gendered roles. She further says: "Nature is understood as static (or at most cycle), while culture is innovative. Changing and improving upon nature" (28). Females are given the characteristics of body, while males are given the characteristics of mind.

The distinction between masculine and feminine is one of their constitutive elements as, over time, they have been elaborated philosophically out of the elements of daily life. Genevieve Lloyd Cites Philo of Alexandria to show how gender roles are further intensified in the society. Philo of Alexandria spells out:

The male is more complete, more dominant than female, closer akin to casual activity, for the female is incomplete and in subjection and belongs to the category of the passive rather than the active. So too with the two ingredients which constitute our life principal, the rational and the irrational: the rational which belongs to mind and reason is of the masculine gender, the irrational, the province of sense, is of the feminine mind belongs to a genus wholly superior to sense as men is to woman.
(Qtd in Lloyd)

As Lloyd goes on to demonstrate, this separation of reason and feeling is implicitly and

often explicitly linked with a division between the realism of public action, which is the site of development of a full, rational, autonomous self consciousness, and a realm of domesticity identified with the feminine. Reason defines itself as being not whatever is identified as feminine.

The feminist analysis of gender uncovers its construction via a series of dichotomies that are deeply embedded in the western philosophical tradition. As a number of feminist philosophers have noted, this leaves the dichotomies themselves unexamined. The alternative strategy is to notice that gender is constructed by the dichotomies, so the dichotomies are partly constructed by gender and that our particular concept of reason, mind and autonomy are shaped by ideals of masculinity and femininity as much as by any other aspect of the conceptual system of which they are a part. Longino commenting on this issue writes:

Feminist philosophy on this view is not simply a reevaluation of the elements constituting the dichotomies themselves, a re-thinking that takes into account current scholarship about the conditions of women's lives and the role of gender in the construction of knowledge.(31)

All feminist activities, including feminist theory and literary criticism, has as its ultimate goal to change the world by promoting gender equality.

Forwarding their ideas on Gender Criticism Murfin and Ray write: "Gender Criticism, an approach to literary criticism which focuses on and critiques gender as it is commonly conceived in order to expose its insufficiency as a category, has grown considerably since the mid-1980s" (127). Feminist criticism arose before gender criticism and heavily influenced its practitioners, even as they vigorously opposed many basic tenets of the feminist approach. As the gender approach has continued to gain recognition, however, some critics have suggested that it has over shadowed or even

subsumed the feminist approach, assertion many would contest. Whether or not feminist criticism is giving way to gender criticism, many critics continue to self identify with the feminist approach. While many commentators have argued that feminist criticism is by definition gender criticism because of its focus on the feminine gender. But the relationship, according to Murfin and Ray, between feminist and gender criticism is, in fact complex. They state:

[...] the two approaches are certainly not polar opposites but, rather exist along a continue of attitudes towards sex, sexuality, gender and language. None the less, several distinctions can be made between adherents of the two approaches, even as practitioners of each continue to critique and influence those in the other. Feminist critics, for instance, tend to focus on women and women's issue, where as gender critics have focused as much on men as women feminist critics have also tended to equate gender with sex, gender difference with sexual difference, where as gender critics have viewed gender as a cultural construct, distinct from biological sex. (127-28)

Furthermore, many feminist critics have spoken of a feminine language grounded in sexual difference which many gender critics would reject, such critics would posit a relationship only between gender and writing, not biological sex and writing.

Similarly, some contemporary gender critics also use the term gender to the socially constructed identities man, woman, masculine, feminine. They use the term to refer to various sexualities (for example, heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, etc.) Gender is distinguished from sex, which is the biological designation of male and female unlike sex, which is anatomical, gender is widely held to be a product of the

prevailing mores, expectation, and stereotypes of particular culture.

Thus, what it means to be "masculine" or "feminine" (rather than "male" or "female")- what attributes and roles are assigned to each of these categorizations, is determined by culture (which is shaped primarily by the dominant group) and may vary from one culture to the next. Most critics agree that western civilization has been predominantly patriarchal and has thus ended to devalue the feminine to which it has assigned such traits as passivity and emotionality, while extolling the masculine (which is commonly associated with activity and rationally). "Feminism" and "Masculine" in other cultures may be perceived entirely differently.

After talking what gender actually is, Murfin and Ray define gender criticism.

They state gender criticism is:

A type literary criticism that focused on and critiques-gender as it is commonly conceived, seeking to expose its insufficiency as a categorizing device. Many people associate biological sex male and female with a range of characteristics encompassed by the words masculine and feminine, respectively. Furthermore, people typically assume that these associations are somehow natural that men are masculine, women are feminine and that any other alignment is abnormal. Gender critics reject the view that gender is something natural or innate, arguing instead that gender is a social construct, a learned behaviour, a product of culture and its institutions. (139)

Certain gender critics have even questioned the distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, arguing that they too, are social constructs. Many of these critics would also agree that sexuality as it is commonly perceived ignores the myriad variations and differences among individuals. Such critics view sexuality as a continues, not a fixed set

of binary oppositions, they also recognize that sexuality encompasses a range of behaviours from bondage to bestiality. Some gender critics (especially gay and lesbian critics) also focus on sexuality but would disagree that it is culturally produced. These critics would argue that sexuality is innate, that homosexuals and heterosexuals are naturally different.

Gender criticism has also been associated with feminist criticism. Many commentators have argued that feminist criticism is actually a type of gender criticism, despite the fact that feminist criticism arose as an approach to literary criticism in the 1970s, whereas gender criticism appeared on the critical scene a decade later. Gender critics have drawn heavily upon feminist theory and practice even as they have attacked many feminists concepts and claims. In so far as feminist criticism focuses on the feminist gender, it may be defined as a type of gender criticism, but the relationship between the two approaches is complex, they are not polar approaches is complex, they are not polar opposite but, rather, exist along a continuum of attitudes towards sex, sexuality, gender and language.

Many critics have seen a nexus between feminism and gender criticism. In an essay entitled 'Feminist and Gender Studies' (1992), critic Naomi Socolof estimated that gender studies began to prevail over feminist criticism around 1985. In *Between Men*, Sedgwick adopts feminist theory in such a way as to analyze relationships between men, between male characters in literary works, and most importantly, between gender and sexuality. Many feminists of the 1970s equated gender with sex, gender difference with sexual difference. Another critic, like Sedgwick, has sought to separate gender from biological sex, arguing that gender is culturally constructed, by arguing that gender is "the product of various social technologies, such as cinema," rather than "a property of bodies or something originally existent in human

beings." Unlike biological sexual difference, gender is construct, a product of language, culture and its institutions. Since the difference between men and women are culturally constructed rather than "natural," constructionist to gender critic behave that it is possible for a man to write like a woman, a woman to write like a man, and for men to read as women, women as men.

Yet another critic of Gender criticism, Eve Kosofsky, Sedgwick makes critical examination of nexus between feminist studies and gender studies. She says, "gender studies" is another, equally appropriate way of designation "feminist studies." The reason for offering the emollient name no more, than tactical" (272). "She further clarifies that gender studies" "actually is the study of its gender most substantive and intellectually respectable meanings make it coextensive with feminist studies and gender criticism coextensive with feminist criticism" (272). For her, gender study gets its identity only under the patronage of feminist study. As stated by Sedgwick," gender analysis become possible only under the pressure of the most pointed and political feminist demand" (272). She advocates:

Feminist studies might be defined as the study of the dynamics of gender definition inequality, oppression, and change in human societies. To the extent that gender is thus at the definitional centre of feminist studies, "gender studies" can sometimes be used as an alternative name for feminist studies, euphemistic only is not specifying, as the "feminist" label more than implicitly does, how far inequality, oppression, and struggle between genders may be seen as differentially constituting gender itself. (271)

Therefore, many critics used gender studies to show the constructed nature of gender which the patriarchal society considers no biological and natural. Genders are constituted

as such, not only in dialectical relation to each other but in relation to the oppression historically exercised by one over the other.

This research, "Cather's Disruption of the Gender Binary: A feminist study of Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*" applies feminist and gender criticism to explore Cather's text. Cather has shown gender relation very covertly which will be analyzed by drawing the ideas mentioned, earlier in this chapter. Feminism seeks how women are marginalized and suppressed throughout the history. Aged long oppression of females and their endeavour to establish themselves in the society will be examined in Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. On the other hand, gender studies exposes how gender is an assembled and assumed costume rather than an essential expression of one's sex. The ideas drawn from gender criticism will be applied to show how Cather proves Gender is socially constructed rather than biologically and naturally.

Chapter III

Textual Analysis

Willa Cather tries to kindle the light in every woman's heart to rid off from gender discrimination and she advocates for the equality and upliftment of female gender. She always aspires economic, political and social equality for female in her novel "*Death Comes for the Archbishop*." The theme of Cather's novel is to raise voice against the male or female supremacy in the society and keep men and women in equal footing. This research applies two theoretical tools feminism and gender studies to analyze Cather's novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and seeks how Cather has disrupted gender binary and how she has disclosed the ideology of patriarchy.

Rather than repeating the standard conception of masculinity predicted on physical traits or, the direction of one's desire, Cather works to reconceptualize notions of gender through her contradictory characterization of Father Latour. Cather presents a male character who oscillates between norms of femininity and masculinity disrupting the assumed norms of gender. Cather's construction of Father Latour's identity presents gender as an assembled and assumed costume rather than essential expression of one's sex. Moreover, she creates a female character Dona Isabella, who is presented not as a submissive and docile character that patriarchy aspires but as an important component of the society who enjoys all privileges of the society. Even after the death of her husband Antonio Olivares she is able to defend herself and the property of her husband from her cruel brother-in-law. Another female character Magdalena who appears in the middle of the novel is also highly sympathized by the novelist. She also appears to be bold and highly determined woman who denies to kneel before patriarchy.

Texture of Disruption Gender Binary: Feminist and Gender Studies of Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

Cather portrays male character as the hero of this novel, *Death Comes for the Archbishop*. This may startle many of us. Being a staunch feminist, why has she depicted Father Latour as the major character of her novel? In the close inspection of the text, this research attempts to destabilize the rigid male female binary. She uniquely characterized Father Latour. Junnifer A. Smith examines Cather's *Death Comes for the Archbishop* and writes:

Cather's unique characterization of Father Latour destabilizes the rigid male-female binary, instead, she presents a male protagonist who oscillates between norms of femininity and masculinity. Father Latour is simultaneously impotent and authoritative, passionate and asexual. The extensive physical description of him as the book opens establishes his mosaic like character: His brow was open, generous, reflective, his features handsome and somewhat severe. There was a singular elegance about the hands below the fringed cuffs of the buckskin jacket. Everything showed him to be a man of gentle birth brave, sensitive, courteous. (19)

This description is contradictory composite of masculinity and femininity. Father Latour, being a male character, displays effeminate traits seamlessly aligned with feminine traits which helps to understand gender as an assembled and assumed costume rather than, an essential expression of one's sex. Judith Butler, another prominent critic of Cather, provides theories of gender and performativity in her book *Gender Trouble* through which we can view Cather's view of gender binary. Butler argues that "Both sex and gender are discursively constructed through repeated acts that have gained validation and

authority through repetition" (7). In this sense, gender is a performance: what you do at a specific point of time in a specific location and context rather than what you are. What makes Cather the advocator of femininity in this novel is her endeavor to portray a male here with ample qualities of femininity. His activities and behaviours are like that of female which a patriarchal society relates to femininity. We are bound to ask either Latour is male or female. Butler avers: "Cather performs a narrative drag by assuming a male consciousness and perspective, but as previously pointed out, the maleness that she assumes through Father Latour is anything but the traditional conception of masculinity" (4).

The conventional direction of Father Latour's attraction, his strong aversion to women yet obviously passionate attachment to men (most notably to his lifelong companion Father Joseph) further complicates his gender identity.

Moreover, his anxiety towards feminine sexuality is further revealed while staying in Padre Martinez's house. He discovers a tangle of women's hair in the corner: "This discovery annoyed the Bishop exceedingly Latour quickly jumps to the conclusion that clump of hair originated from a woman, revealing his growing annoyance with the women in Martinez's house. This apparent repugnance towards female sexuality, embodied by the clump of women's hair is balanced by this passionate regard for man, as he admires Kit Carson's features and "felt a quick glow of pleasure in looking at the man" (352). Latour identifies "something very engaging about Gallegos as a man" (360) and describes Martinez as having "an altogether compelling personality, a disturbing, mysterious, magnetic power" (383). This is not to mention his bond with Father Joseph whom Latour repeatedly recalls from his various duties so that he can keep him company and whose absence causes Latour much pain and loneliness. These instances may give us

the hint that Father Latour is homosexual but Cather as mentioned by Jennifer A. Smith, saves this novel from the touch of homosexuality. Latour does so because he possesses feminine quality within him, Smith says:

Latour, although possessing elements of feminine grace and courtesy, finds women to be repulsive and disgusting but is drawn repeatedly to those men who exhibit ruggedness and initiative. However, these gendered patterns of repulsion and attraction do not indicate Father Latour's homosexuality, skillfully Cather thwarts this too, easy, stereotypical assumption by assigning these feelings to a Catholic priest. (24)

Cather envisions sexuality beyond the borders of gender and creates a character whose desires and gender are fluid, unconventional and valid. Latour's celibate status and singular attractions reconfigure gender's relationship to sexual identity, pushing readers to move beyond restrictive, binary notion of sexuality and gender. Father Latour is anything but the traditional conception of masculinity. Moulding Latour's body as "elegance," "generous," "handsome" and "severe" to confuse and by extension, multiply the existing categories of gender and sex. Cather by portraying Latour in the borderline of male and female disrupts the aged long binary of gender disclosing the fact that gender is an assembled and assumed costume rather than an essential expression of one's sex.

Not only by projecting the complicated gendered traits of Father Latour but also by creating other male characters and their discriminating attitude, Cather stands herself in the territory of feminism. Her novel is replete with male characters. She did so to reveal the male ideology. How patriarchy desires to erase the existence and identity of female is covertly shown in the first half of the novel. Her novel begins with four men in the hidden garden talking about the practices of Church. They are going to elect a new Bishop for the Church. These four Cardinals debate on whom to make the Bishop. These

Cardinals are shown with unchaste behaviour. They are more indulged in drinking and flattery than to the truth. All the worldly pleasures and privileges are enjoyed by male and females are set aside and given just the secondary and appendage identity. Such projection of male in positive light and female in negative light can be considered as gender biasness. This politics of maintaining male superiority is understood by Cather and she unveils the structured psyche of male that pursued to thwart women from any progress act. Those constructed images subordinate women overlooking their creativity and clouding their potentiality. Cather writes:

This missionary smiled as he took up his untouched glass. "It is superb, your Eminence, but I fear, I have lost my palate for vintage out there, a little whisky or Hudson Bay company rum, does better for us. I must confess, I enjoyed the compagne in Paris. [...] He will eat dried buffalo meat and frijoles with chill and he will be glad to drink. [...] The three Cardinals broke into laughter and refilled their glasses. (281-82)

What Cather means to say by such behaviour of Cardinals is to show the position of women in the society. Females are being overshadowed even by the religious practices. These Cardinals who are there for the exercise of truth and justice are being indulged in mundane activities. Cather means to say that females are not there to enjoy. She very covertly questions why always 'He' not 'She'? For the new Bishop which they are seeking is 'He'. They say that the new vicar must be a young man, of strong constitution, full of zeal, and above all intelligent. He will have to deal with savager and ignorance, with dissolute priests and political intrigue. (280) The thinking of male or the ideology of patriarchy that only male can fight against savagery and ignorance and females are devoid of such capacity is minutely explored here. How can the patriarchy see women

capable of such things which always desired to propagate dominant male ideology? This deliberates depiction of female in a very negative light, help to reinforce the old hierarchical order prevalent in the society.

Moreover, Cather is well known about the fact that the place of religious practice has become the place to exercise male chauvinism. She knows, " the old mission Churches are in ruin. The priests are without guidance or discipline" yet she is helpless. (279) The Church men blur the existence and identity of female by no giving any space to them which is symbolically presented by Cather by depicting only male characters in her novel. Male ideology is well disclosed when she writes "men are apt to do in dangerous time "(283). They think that only male have intelligence and can in need, not the female. Quality of bravery, power and acting is rewarded to male and female are considered to be docile, submissive and meek.

In book one, After the thirty five years old Father Latour is selected as the Bishop, he is shown very brave and dutiful. He had lost all his world possessions except his books, which he saved at the risk of his life. (287) "The book" which is the source of knowledge is saved very bravely by male at the cost of his life. Males are depicted very courageous, brave and rational but females are given very derogatory roles. But Cather twists the plot by employing a lady showing the way to Latour when he dangles. A "young lady with black shawl" shows the way to him. By presenting this incident in her novel, Cather means to say that how can female be irrational and barbaric who can lead the way to male. The only thing they lack is proper environment to foster. Male always sees female scandalous and reductive way. They never realize the hidden potentiality of female. This, she covertly says, is done just to maintain and make domination in the society but Cather marches ahead to dismantle such biasness. Cather adds another trivial seeming but intensely important event that Father Latour experiences. While traveling by

a chariot Father Latour notices very strange thing. All at once Father Latour feels a chance in the body of mare. She lifted her head for the first time in along while, and seems to distribute her weight upon her legs. (289) The female horse, for example: mare is raising its head but females in the society are not raising their head which is realized by Cather and she writes this to stimulate female to come at fore front and fight against the suppressing walls erected by patriarchy.

The ideology of patriarchy can better be understood by the description of the wooden figure of the Mother Virgin made by Father Latour. The lines go like:

The Wooden Virgin was a sorrowing mother indeed long and stiff and severe, very long from the neck to the waist, even longer from the waist to feet, like some of the rigid mosaic of the Eastern Church. She was dressed in black, with a white apron and a black reboso over her head, like a Mexican woman of the poor. At her right was St. Joseph, and at her left a fierce little equestrian figure a saint wearing the costume of a Mexican ranchero, velvet trousers richly embroidered and wide at the ankle, velvet jacket and silk shirt and a high crowned, broad-brimmed Mexican sombrero. He was attached to his fat horse by a wooden pivot driven through the saddle. (292)

The figure on the side of Virgin Mother is described in a very positive remark. The phrases "high crowned," "broad brimmed," velvet trousers richly embroidered and wide at the ankle "velvet jacket and silk shirt " all give very prestigious position to the male figure but Mother Virgin is given very negative remarks like, "sorrowing mother," "long stiff and severe," rigid mosaics and like a Mexican of the poor.

Such derogatory remarks are nothing but just to suppress women. Cather

discloses more the concept of patriarchy by writing "she should hereafter deprive herself of her favorite condiment" (293). Moreover, patriarchy has accepted female in the role of housekeeper who is locked inside the domestic walls. "Josepha the girl who had run to meet the Bishop at the stream was his housekeeper" (290). All male counterparts are given very dignified roles in the society but "Josepha" female is given the role of housekeeper so as to hinder the female race. Women must forsake everything for the sake of men which is understood by Cather and revealed the repressing ideology of male. Religion is also a tool for male to marginalize and suppress the female for Cather.

Beside this, in an another chapter named Missionary Journeys Cather depicts the journey of Father Latour and his attendances to highlight the parochial concept of gender binary. During his journey Father Latour experiences different aspects of the world, oppression of women, control of the trade and business which a man is supposed to do. His ambitious journey is linked with societal norms of free and experienced male and bounded and suppressed female. Joseph R. Urgo in his book, *Willa Cather and myth of American Migration*, writes:

In *Death Comes for the Archbishop*, the simple faith of the missionary traveler and the integrity and solemnity of his belief in God are tied explicitly to the parallel business of ambitious trading, imperial soldering and oppression of half human race that is women. (188)

The ideology of the patriarchy that women must be happy within the limited territory of four walls and men must experience the world is disclosed by Cather. She presents male ideology so as to aware female and such binary is later ruptured by depicting some female characters who are assertive and deny to act in the role model given by the society. The journey or movement of male figure is associated with their inborn qualities where as women are presented very derogatorily. Urgo again avers:

As movement becomes a quality of mind, all ideas and belief systems are leveled by the common experience of crossing of having let go of some prior ideas and moved into another. Such is the single requirement for inclusion in the American system as projected by Cather's fiction. It does not matter what you believe in as long as you recognize that all beliefs are the product of crossing from some previous idea or situation into another.

(189)

The derogatory role of women is disclosed by Cather when she writes : "All the men and boys sat down at the long table with the host, the women and children would eat later"(311). Women are not given prestigious position in the society. They are compared with the children who does not possess any meaning in the society. But Cather provides prestigious women and inspires them to move faster in the battle of their identity. In all aspects of human life females are relegated. They can not come to fore because of the repressive psyche of male. Females prepare the meal but male eat this first. The fruit of women's labour is eaten by male and females are pushed back. Cather again speaks out, "Now hurry up with the fire, my good women" (311).

To dismantle the aged long gender binary Cather presents a lady figure who is shown greatly tortured by her husband first but later she confronts with him and gets her identity back in the society. Her prior condition is exposed to show the mercilessness of masculinity upon female. Cather inks: "She did not open her lips, but stared at them blackly for a moment, then dropped her eyes and cowered as if she were terribly frightened, the priests looked at each other, it struck them both that, this man had been abusing her in some way" (317).

She is abused by the patriarchy which hindered her to mouth. Women in a

patriarchal society, are supposed to be quiet and cower with them so they could not raise any voice against patriarchy. The egocentric and dominating concept of patriarchy despise women's progress so they desired for submissive role. Cather writes:

She began distractedly snatching rags and wet socks and dirty clothes from the chairs. Her hands were shaking so that she dropped things. She was not old, she might have been very young, but she was probably half witted. There was nothing in her face but blackness and fear. (318)

She is depicted poor and destitute so as to represent the condition of female. Her face is full of fear which caused her remain silent without speaking out against patriarchy. Being silent and submissive is considered the gendered role of female but Cather very artistically dismantles this concept by giving that lady the victory over such oppression. The lady named Magdalena manages her escape from such miserable condition and is also able to give punishment to him, ie. Her husband. Her victory over male chauvinism can be regarded as a rift in the strong wall of patriarchy.

Her husband, Buck Scales, who had already killed four travelers and her own three children is the epitome of patriarchy who can not endure female to come at the fore. But Magdalena manages the escape of Father Latour and his friends who were also would be victims of Buck Scales. She, herself also manages to escape and comes to the place where Latour and Joseph had gone. Her cruel husband is described as, " her husband put on his coat and boots, went to the door and stopped with his hand on the latch, throwing over his shoulder a crafty, hateful glance at the bewildered women" (318). Her deteriorating plight when she managed her escape from the clutch of male is described very pathetically. Cather puts forward: "She was brought in, her clothing cut to rags, her legs and face and even her hair so plastered with mud that the priests could scarcely recognize the woman who had saved their lives the night before" (318).

This "poor" and "destitute" woman is freed from the tyrannical power of male. Now she is shown bold and assertive who endeavors to dismantle the oppressive walls that were blocking her way towards progress. Magdalena explains her struggle with patriarchy as:

When the two priests rode away her husband had run to the house to get his gun, and she had plunged down a wash out behind the stable into the arroyo, and had been on the way to Mora all night. She had supposed, he would overtake her and kill her, but he could not. She reached the settlement before daybreak and crept into the stable to warm herself among the animals and wait until the household was awake.(320)

Her submissiveness and meekness is invigorated with the power that enabled her to fight against the patriarchy which was dominating her since long. This Mexican girl Magdalena who first supposed white man civilized and merciful is found very cruel and menacing to her. The cruelty of Buck Scale to her is more exposed by Cather as: "All white men knew him for a dog and degenerate but to Mexican girls, marriage with an American meant coming up in the world" (320). This man is portrayed very dominating over female who later falls for his pedestal and aged long superior of him is disrupted.

She had married him six years ago, and had been living with him ever since in that wretch house on the Mora trail [...]. "Magdalena had born three children since her marriage, and her husband had killed each of them few days after birth" (34). We could guess now that women are not always that was expected by the society. They could act in a very heroic and assertive manner if time comes. The role models associated with female gender comes at stake here when she manages to combat against such horrifying male figure. Her boldness is further highlighted as:

[...] she had managed to warn travelers away, when her husband happened to be out of house. This time she had found courage because when she looked into the faces of these two Padres. She knew they were very good men, she could not bear any more killing. She asked nothing better than to die to herself. (321)

This time she had found courage to save these two priests who were going to be killed by her husband. She did not like more killings so she came ahead to act against the wish and desire of her husband. Cather presents Magdalena in a deceive role which male Literature deny to do. She decides to stop more killings and she does it. She saved these priests who being themselves male were trying to flee from there. They knew that she could not stay here in such a state of terror but they could do nothing. Father Latour who wanted to flee away from such condition is portrayed with feminine quality but Magdalena being a woman, dared to fight against such tyranny which also help to disrupt the gendered binary asserting that gendered roles that are attached to male and female are just the construction and nothing more. Magdalena later tells in a bold voice with whole society that, "No, no Christobal, I would not be afraid with you. I am not a wicked woman" (322).

Cather gives victory to the hand of Magdalena and her husband is hanged to death. His death can better be associated with the decaying walls of patriarchy because the dominating and suppressive figure of patriarchy is ended here by supplying a covered meaning that the gendered role associated to male will not remain infact all the time because it is just a construction which was made on the fake foundation. It is not natural rather cultural. Cather even denies to give authority to any male when the issue of the patronization of Magdalena comes. She knows the ideology of patriarchy as she writes "yet one felt in him a quick and discriminating intelligence" (323). Magdalena now, after

the fall of patriarchy is found very happy and invigorating as stated by Cather:

She became housekeeper and manager of the sister's kitchen. She was devoted to the nuns and so happy in the service of the Church that when the Bishop visited the school he used to enter by the kitchen garden in order to see her serene handsome face. She became beautiful as Carson said she had been as a girl. After the blight of her horrible youth was over, she seemed to bloom again in the household of God. (324)

Women are always designed in a submissive roles in the literature written by male so that they can dominate women. They are always showed falling women and values and norms of patriarchy is always highlighted. Cather, here gave positive roles to female so as to disrupt the gender binary which was pervasively prevalent in the society. Magdalena is a mile stone to disrupt such discriminating gender binary from the society.

In another chapter in "Book six" Cather brings forth a lady named Dona Isabella who is very much assertive and undeniably a powerful lady who refuses to act the role model devised by the patriarchy. Cather frees her character who enjoys the worldly pleasures disrupting the gender role provided to her. She is learned lady having all the qualities to fight against male suppression and able to march with the patriarchy. She aptly described by Cather as:

[...] A Kentucky girl who had grown up among her relatives in Louisiana. She was preety and accomplished, had been educated at a French convent and had done much to Europeanize her husband. The refinement of his dress and manners and his lavish style of living, provoked half contemptuous envy among his brothers and their friends. (383)

The lady here is capable of refining her husband Antonio Olivares who described as " A

man of wide of experience, a man of the world" (383). She is able to Europeanize her husband which hints that she is not a mere puppet but as able an efficient as male counterparts. The gender roles given to female, submissive, meek, docile comes at stake here. She is pretty and accomplished and finely educated lady who does not fit in the gender role supposed by patriarchy.

Cather does not consider female race as submissive and docile. Her female character is highly sympathized by her and she is depicted as equal and efficient to male. She describes Isabella as:

She was a gracious hostess and though no longer very young, she was still attractive to the eye, a slight woman, spirited, quick in movement with a delicate blond complexion which she had successfully guarded in trying climates, and fair hair a little silvered and perhaps worn into too many puffs and ringlets for the sharpening outline of her face. She spoke French well, Spanish lamely, played the harp and sang agreeably. (384)

She documented by Cather, is a highly cultivated woman with all the virtues. She is not ignorant and submissive rather than an educated person with the knowledge of different languages and arts forms. But the patriarchy was not happy with all her such virtues.

When patriarchy observes some women breaching the code of conduct devised by them, they tag them with very derogatory terms. Cather writes:

There was a gossip about the lady in Santa Fe, of course, [...] the Olivares brothers said she dressed much youthfully, which was perhaps true that she had lovers in New Orleans and El Paso del Norte. Her nephews-in-law went so far to declare that she was enamoured of the Mexican boy the Olivares had brought up from San Antonio to play the Boryo for them, they both loved music and this boy, Pablo, was a magician with his

instrument. All sorts of stories went out from the kitchen. (385)

These lines disclose the ideology of patriarchy that always desire to thwart female. They never want female to come at fore. Patriarchy has devised certain adjectives for those female who tries to dismantle the walls erected by patriarchy. Dona Isabella who is not ready to act in the way she is provided with, is considered not as a good woman and gossips are made upon her. Her ability and efficiency are attached with illicit relationship with other male.

After the death of her husband, Dona Isabella has to fight legal fight with her brother-in-law who claimed her property despite her husband's approval for her. The income of the farm was to enjoy by "my wife, Dona Isabella Olivares and her daughter Inez Olivares, during their lives and after their decease his property was to go to the Church" (391). But the brothers of Antonio Olivares are not ready to give the property to her. They even blamed Dona Isabella that Inez Olivares is not the daughter of Antonio just to hinder the property right to Dona Isabella. Once she is forced to forsake her economic right when all other people came against her. She said, "but I never could hold up my head again. Let the Olivares have that old money, I do not want it" (393). Traditional values of patriarchy always desires to devoid economic and other rights to female but Cather ultimately provides such rights to her.

She said that she never could hold up her head again only because they (male) never wanted her to rise with dignity in the society. They did whatever they could to thwart her progress in the society. She is made to surrender in the beginning but Cather did not allow her to kneel before patriarchy. She came with certain vigor to fight against in justice and won the legal fight. The Olivares brothers are pushed back and she got the property. Her head is again held high and she became ready to combat against patriarchy.

Cather avers: "Madam Olivares stopped crying, she raised her head again and sat drying her eyes. Suddenly she took hold one of the buttons on the Bishop's cassock and began twisting it with fingers" (394).

Ultimately, she won the legal fight. Many people came there to congratulate her. She, then drank with other male counterparts as male used to do to celebrate her victory. Drinking with male and her legal victory can also be taken as the disruption of gender binary because females were never considered in the role of Dona Isabella. Cather inks:

Dona Isabella drank a little champagne when she had sipped one glass with young Georgia captain, she could not refuse to take another with their nearest neighbour, Ferdinand Sanchez, always true friend to her husband, everyone was gay, the servants and the guests everything sparkled like a garden after a shower.(395)

Cather blurs the gender binary by upliftment the position of women to the hierarchy of male. She (Dona) enjoys drinking and property right which had long been denied in the history. Cather aspires to write a new history which is devoid of hierarchy and all the gender are equal in the society. Dona Isabella is the spokesperson to materialize the point which the writer desires to maintain by the characterization of Dona Isabella. The society now calls her "The brave widow" which paves the way towards gender equality crushing the former injustices of the society.

Disruption of gender binary can further be noticed when she is further described by the Cather. She puts forwards:

As she saw the two black figures approaching, she droved her arms from the harp, took her stain toe from the pedal and rose, holding out a hand to each. Her eyes were bright and her face beamed with affection for her spiritual fathers. But her greeting was a playful reproach, uttered loud

enough to be heard above the murmur of conversing groups," I never shall forgive you, Father Joseph, nor you either Bishop, Latour for that awful lie you made me tell in court about my age." The two Church men bowed amid laughter and applause. (396)

What is noticeable in these lines is her "voice" which is loud and enough in the society. The society which ignored the voice of female is shown bold and loud above the murmur of conversing group. She is even able to threaten Church authority and they bow before her which apparently show the disruption of gender binary which was pervasively prevalent in the society.

In addition to this, in another chapter "The great diocese" Cather vibrantly disrupts the aged long gender binary. Philomena, the sister of Father Joseph is presented equally assertive and denying to march in the role model devised by patriarchy. Cather writes, "How richly she had responded and she rejoiced no less than his many devotions were so largely attended, especially by the young people of the Paris, in whom notable increase of piety was manifest" (400). Philomena is depicted as bold as assertive as her brother Joseph. In another instance presented by the author, Joseph, and Latour noticed a woman emerging who had saved them before. "[...] A woman was just emerging from the gate that led into the school grounds. Magdalena who came everyday to feed the doves and to gather flowers" (403-4). The same lady who rescued them in Mora is found more happy bold and assertive here. They saw her and talked:

But her body has changed, she was then a shapeless cringing creature. I thought her half-witted. No, no she has had enough of the storms of this world. Here, she is safe and happy. A handsome woman she had grown to be, with her comely figure and the deep claret colour under the golden

brown of her cheeks. (404)

From these lines Cather slowly rises Magdalena and patriarchy gradually comes down.

Yet another woman called Sada is dramatized with very submissive role first assertive

and bold later. "In a deep doorway of the sacristy, he (Latour) saw a crouching figure a

woman, he made out and she was weeping bitterly. He raised her up and took her inside"

(406). The same lady is shown with much power to come and worship with men.

"Tonight, unable to sleep for the cold, she had gathered courage for this heroic action had

slipped out through the stable door and come running up and alley way to the house of

God to pray" (406). Father Vallaint feel very happy to kneel beside Sada which show

gender equality. At the end part of the novel Cather maintains a position of equality,

Cather writes, " He was able to feel kneeling beside her" (409). Cather further explicates:

"Kneeling beside the much in during bond woman, he experienced those holy mysteries

as he had done in his manhood. He seemed able to feel all it meant to know that there

was a kind woman in heaven" (409).

The desire of Cather was to maintain equality between male and female. She

always aspired equal footing of male and female which she tried to achieve with this

novel. Father Vallaint who kneel beside " The much in during bold woman" symbolically

shows the equality between two genders. Sada gets happy when she realizes such equal

footing and utters "[I] did not accuse my oppressions" (409).

At the end of the novel the Bishop are portrayed dying one after another. We

here, need to understand why Bishops are dying? It is to express that the epitome of

patriarchy will fall one day and an egalitarian society will be formed. Father Latour in his

death bed was cared by Magdalena whom she had rescued once. The gradual wipe out of

Bishops make the novel free from gender binary because those patriarchal pillars are

fallen one after another.

Chapter IV

Conclusion

Willa Cather ends *Death Comes for the Archbishop* with the affirmation that egalitarian society should be established by dismantling the gender binary which is pervasively prevalent in the society. Cather is of the view that women are always desired and portrayed in very submissive, docile and meek roles. They are supposed that they can not do any progressive work. They are just subject of suppression. Cather materializes her desire of establishing a society without discrimination by depicting the characters like Dona Isabella, Magdalena and Sada as female characters and Father Latour and other male characters. Though the protagonist of her novel is male, he possesses masculine as well as feminine qualities. He dwindle between two genders disclosing the fact that essentialized conception of gender that adheres strictly to the established gender binary predicted on male and female sex is just the construction. In the term of Sarah Oroe Jewett, "Cather's constructions of Father Latour's identity presents gender as an assembled and assumed costume rather than an essential expression of one's sex.

Moreover, Cather's depiction of unyielding female characters like Dona Isabella, Magdalena and Sada also help to disrupt the gender binary. Magdalena who was tortured by her menacing husband. First escapes from such clutch and maintains her position in the society. She even cares Father Latour in his last days. Despite this, she helps Father Latour and Joseph to escape from the cruelty of her husband. She is later portrayed having power, courage and boldness has stated by Cather, "This time, she had found courage" (321). Yet another female character who is highly sympathized, Dona Isabella is shown more assertive, bold and unyielding to patriarchy. Her legal fight with her brother-in-law after the death of her husband is won by her. She now could enjoy the

economic right. She did not surrender rather came front to fight with patriarchy denying the role models given to her by the patriarchy. The woman who first said, "but I never could hold up my head again" is changed to a "Brave widow" (396). Another woman Sada is also depicted bold, powerful and assertive who is able to bring other males in her equal footing. Sada and Father Vallaint knelt together to worship the God at the end part of the novel.

Despite this, feminism has explored the psyche of male by disclosing the discriminating attitude of male. Females are taken to be a second class creatures of the society. Cather documents such incidents in her novel just to reveal the ideology of patriarchy which always desired female in the secondary position. During Latour and Joseph's journey, they come across many females who were in a very destitute condition. Cather's primary focus here, was to unveil the psyche of male towards female and to disrupt such binary by expressing her motto that gendered binary is detrimental for the establishment of the biasness free society. Her novel *Death Comes for the Archbishop* has materialized her point in a very subtle way.

Cather never considered women as second sex and unable to act like male counterparts. Rather she desired women to march with male for the establishment of an egalitarian society. She always wanted male and women in equal footing which the aged long history denied to female. This dissertation therefore, has explored how Cather has disrupted the gender binary using two methodologies feminism and gender studies. I think my research will add one more way to understand Cather's text *Death Comes for the Archbishop*.

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