

Chapter 1

Representation of Man-Woman Relationship in *The Secret Agent*

This research examines the masculinity embodied in Verloc who has both positive and negative attributes. In Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, the masculinity of Verloc is incredibly fragile following his exposure to politics of terror. Mr. Verloc is indolent and he is held as an arrogant figure incapable of exercising any grain of love and sensitivity. He chooses a profession to sell pornographic material. He wants to carve his future in this profession of selling pornographic films. He has dual exposure to both French and English culture. Mr. Verloc is half-French, half-English. He wants to take advantage of his dual citizenship. Due to this dual citizenship, Mr. Verloc is able to act as a spy for his home country of France while living and working in London.

This research examines how traditional gender role is critiqued in Joseph Conrad's novel *The Secret Agent*. Verlock's wife, Winnie, is loyal and sensitive to him. She does what he tells her to do. Winnie is willing to obey the traditional role of a wife. But the moment she knows that her husband fabricated a destructive plan in which he intentionally gets her brother Stevie killed in the blast, her anger to her husband knows no bound. She breaks all her relationship with Verloc and disappears from his sight.

Following the murderous and conspiratorial end of Stevie, Winnie develops a sort of bold qualities. She comes to realize the harm which her submissive role did to her pure and sacred subjectivity. Verlock's civilized self gets fractured due to his exposure to the terrorist plan and activities. In his essential emptiness, Verloc becomes a wolf in sheep's clothing. She is bent upon taking revenge on her husband. She gradually comes to know how treacherous and deceptive males are for the sake

of the gratification.

In Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, Winnie's expectation of affection, trust, loyalty, security and mutual sense of responsibility from her husband, Verloc ultimately turns out to be source of betrayal and hatred. She expects that her husband will be affectionate towards her retarded brother. Thus, the traditional gender role is critiqued as Winnie decides to turn away from her husband out of rage, hatred and fear resulting from Verloc's strategy of getting Stevie killed in a terrorist blast.

The major thrust of this research is to examine what Verloc does under the banner of being a loyal husband. Outwardly he seems to be very affectionate to his wife. But inwardly he goes to the extent of getting his wife's brother killed in a terrorist blast. It is this deceptive and treacherous nature of Verloc to which Winnie resists vigorously. This research is strictly confined to how Verloc's arrogance and chauvinism embody both possessiveness and fragility. The protagonist is too callous to commit conspiracy against his own wife. At last, Winnie has no option other than revolting against him. Her challenge to the traditional gender role is the area around which this research moves.

Mr. Verloc is known as a very valuable secret agent. Mr. Verloc finds himself in a position that forces him to be more active. He faces the consequences of his prior activities as a secret agent. Mr. Verloc is a member of the Red Committee. He is aligned to a communist group committed to social change. Contrary to his expectation, Mr. Verloc finds it difficult to find someone to help him create the proactive situation.

Literature Review

Since publication, *The Secret Agent* has been interpreted in different perspectives. This thesis especially aims at exploring the paradigm shift of gender

roles in Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*. The main problem of the research is what cause the subversion of gender roles and how it is subvert? Consequently the objectives formulated were to explain the reasons behind the subversion of gender roles and the way it has subvert. The research come to the conclusion that males' unjust treatment and over exploitation upon females and growing awareness of females about their position and rights come out to be the main reasons behind this subversion. Mr. Verloc stands as the representative of unjust, exploiting male upon his wife Winne, and it is Winnie who become aware of her position and rights. The study has shown that conscious females' act of crossing the limits of patriarchal general rules even at the cost of violence are the steps of dismantling the traditional gender concept. Gender studies has been used as the tool of analysis in this study.

Edward Said mentions how the imperial attitude is captured in *The Secret Agent*. It is impossible to convey the life-sensation of any given epoch of one's existence. It makes its truth, its meaning, its subtle and penetrating essence. In this regard, Said makes the following remarks:

Conrad wants to demonstrate that Verloc is limited to his situation. At the time Conrad would probably not be able to have presented anything other than an imperialistic world-view. We live, as we dream alone. He further comments on how the narrative gives us a sense that there is no way out of the historical force of imperialism. (23)

Said explains how Verloc wants us to understand that Stevie is good for nothing fellow who must be used instrumentally to achieve a purpose no matter how dreadful the purpose might be.

Patrick Brantlinger is a noted critic of Joseph Conrad. He is keenly interested in the representation of terrorism in the novel. In the following extract, Brantlinger

gives expression to his view:

Conrad describes terrorism as a weapon used by the powerless people to take revenge on the powerful people. However, there are also times where Conrad describes terrorism as a purposeful activity. But even in these descriptions there are usually traces of evil or danger lurking such as a creeping mist and the jungle being so dark green it is almost black. (6)

However, it should be noted that even the stereotypes of power as the breeding ground of terrorism belong to the same discourse of exoticism. In the beginning they are indeed described as faceless brutes but as the quote demonstrates he does realize their humanity.

Paul Armstrong is fond of exploring Conrad's view on terrorism. To him, terrorism is the dreadful event that produces ruinous effect in society. It is far from being penetrated by the light of enlightenment and modernity. Armstrong makes the following observation:

Verloc considers the violence a part of the machinery just as much as the boiler is. However, he does show some affection for Stevie, he states the reader might find this as rather odd because after all he was just a savage who was no more account than a grain of sand in a black Sahara but because he had steered for him and been at his back for so long he had formed a kind bond with him like a claim of distant kinship. The key here is the kinship. (54)

Conrad does see a realistic cause behind the fallout of terrorism. These ties back to the discussion about how Conrad seems to suggest that the origins of justice are in Europe. He does not distance himself from them.

Although critics have examined *The Secret Agent* from different perspectives and arrived at different findings, none of them deals with the issue of the subversion of traditional gender roles. So long as Winnie believes in the affection and love of her husband, she cannot come out of the narrow cell of traditional gender role. But her husband does not treat her psychologically retarded brother as he should have done. In this case also she does not have any objection. But the moment she comes to know that her husband has an involvement in the disastrous end of her brother, she refuses to live with him. She suddenly turns out to be a rebellious woman who is incapable of forgiving her husband. She goes away from his life and renounces her relationship with him.

Theoretical insights of Judith Halberstam serve as the methodological basis of this research. According to Halberstam, masculinity is primarily prosthetic. It has little to do with biological maleness. It signifies as special effect which arises from a female's struggle to live assertive and undaunted life. From a woman's decision and determination to end injustice and oppression, an occasion for showing masculine side of their self comes. In conjunction with this aspect of masculinity, Halberstam makes the following arguments:

Because masculinity tends to manifest as natural gender itself the action flick, with its emphases on prosthetic extension, actually undermines the heterosexuality is linked not only to a profoundly unnatural form of masculine embodiment but also to gay masculinities. The masculinity of the white male, what we might call epic masculinity depends absolutely, as any bond flick demonstrates on a vast subterranean network of secret government groups, well-funded scientists, the army and an endless supply of both beautiful bad babes

and beautiful good babes. (357)

Within the brand of femininity lies certain degree of masculine trait. The notion of female masculinity undermines all the circulating myths that women are fragile, vulnerable and timid sex. The oppression of women does not form singular form. It has various forms and manifestation. This conception regarding the masculinity of female poses a jolt to the structure of hegemonic patriarchy. Halberstam moves from the appealing brand of universal masculinity to the variations on masculinity. It is always far more forward in dismantling the universalistic notion of masculinity to female masculinity.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. In the first chapter, the researcher introduces the topic, elaborates the hypothesis, and quotes different critics' views regarding the novel. In the same chapter, the researcher shows the departure also. In the second chapter the researcher makes a thorough analysis of the text by applying the theory of masculinity. The last chapter contains the conclusive ending of the research.

Chapter 2

Gender Roles in *The Secret Agent*

Traditional Concept of Gender Roles

It is universally established aspect of human hierarchy in matters of gender is that masculinity is superior to femininity. The concept bears the notion that females are weaker than males in matters of every human activity. However it is not clearly defined why females have been looked upon down. That is why Michael Ryan expresses her indignation towards prejudiced notion towards females as, "Either women think and act differently from men for biological reasons, or they are made different by the fact that human culture has always been male dominated" (131).

Masculinity is a set of qualities, characteristics, or roles generally considered typical or appropriate top of a man. The opposite can be expressed by terms such as unmanly. A near-synonym of masculinity is virility. Constructs of masculinity vary across historical and cultural contexts. Others have suggested that masculinity may be influenced by biological factors. It is also culturally constructed. As such, masculinity is not restricted to men. It can also relate to female when women display modes of behavior, traits, and physical attributes that are considered masculine in a given historical and social context. Proponents of this view argue that women can become men hormonally and physically. Many aspects that are assumed to be natural are linguistically and therefore culturally driven. On the other side of the debate, it is argued that masculinity does not have a single source of origin.

Subordinate masculinity is the cultural authority of heterosexual men and subordination of homosexual men. Homosexuality is viewed as the polar opposite of what masculinity entitles a man to be; therefore, it is associated with femininity and is politically, economically, and culturally attacked. Heterosexual men may view gay

men in the same light that they view women, meaning that there is an innate need for dominance. This leads to the subordination of gay men because they are seen as having a failed hegemonic masculinity.

Complicit masculinity is the categorization of men who connect with hegemony but do not fully represent hegemonic masculinity. A great many men draw the patriarchal dividend. They respect their wives and mothers. They are never violent towards women. They do their accustomed share of the housework. They bring home the family wage. They can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists. Men that fall into this category do not receive the same benefits and privileges as those who are seen as purely hegemonic.

Marginalized masculinity is the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity. Men who fall into this category benefit less from the hegemonic ideal because of traits other than their gender behavior. Race relations may also become integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. The hegemonic masculinity among whites maintains the oppression against the masculinity among blacks.

This research explores the extent to which heroic masculinity can become aggressive and fragile. Masculinity is incomplete without femininity. It exists in relation to the other. It exists due to reciprocal condition of relationship. Hence, it has no exclusive prerogative to assert its supremacy.

Female masculinity is a particularly fruitful site of investigation. It is a fruitful site of investigation because it has been vilified by heterosexist and feminist/womanist programs alike. Male femininity fulfills a kind of ritual function in male homo-social cultures whereas female masculinity has been situated as the place. In this place patriarchy goes to work on the female psyche and reproduces misogyny within femaleness. The following extract contains additional view of Halberstam on

the subject of female masculinity:

There have been to date remarkably few studies or theories about the inevitable effects of a fully articulated female masculinity on a seemingly fortified male masculinity. Sometimes female masculinity coincides with the excesses of male supremacy and sometimes it codifies a unique form of social rebellion; often female masculinity is the sign of sexual alterity, but occasionally it marks heterosexual variation; sometimes female masculinity marks the place of pathology, and every now and then it represents the healthful alternative to what are considered the histrionics of conventional femininities. (360)

Female masculinity is about women who feel them to be more masculine than feminine. In other words, female masculinity can be described as female born persons feeling more comfortable behaving or looking masculine. In this sense, female masculinity is a specific gender with its own cultural history rather than a derivative of male masculinity in which women embody qualities that are usually associated with maleness such as strength, authority and independence.

Woman as subject object position is noteworthy from the constructivist angle. It is difficult to guess if an object or an objective position determines self or vice versa. A self-constructs and reconstructs her subjectivity. Usually one is led to examine further the mother-daughter relationship and its meanings for the daughter. The focus is on the developing child as this development occurs or is (re)constructed. The extract cited below illustrates Nancy J. Chodorow's view on the formation of manhood or femininity from the psychoanalytical angle:

The father does threaten to castrate his son, whereas the mother simply sits passively as her imagined sexuality goes from phallic to castrate

and as she is and is not an object of attachment or sexual desire to son or daughter. At most, she seduces the child and awakens his or her sexuality through early caretaking ministrations. The mother-daughter relationship for the most part, however, is a relationship seen from the point of view of the daughter. (22)

This concept invokes a leading way of doing gender relations that implements the gender order status quo. It ensures the integrity of gender status quo by raising the general status of masculine qualities over feminine qualities. It is an expectation of what a real man should act and look like. But in reality, no one can successfully achieve hegemony. The idea of hegemonic masculinity in the context of young boys is used to re-create gender order.

R. W. Connell advocates for the existence of multiple masculinity. He always asserts and advises the readers to reject the notion of hegemonic masculinity. To him, singular masculinity no longer exists. On the contrary, masculinity is always plural or multiple. Connell maintains that “Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm), we need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives” (36). Masculinity, to the extent that it can be briefly defined at all, is simultaneously a place in gender relations. It consists of the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender. And the effects of these practices put under its grip bodily experience, personality, and culture.

Masculinity is not a coherent object about which a generalizing science can be produced. If people broaden the angle of vision, they can see masculinity, not as an isolated object, but as an aspect of a larger structure. This demands an account of the larger structure and how masculinities are located in it. Joseph Gelfer is another

supporter of multiple masculinities. He, like Connell offers the following stand on the crucial role of alternative masculinity. In the age of shifting social harmony and gender role, the definition of masculinity should be transformed. Gelfer says, “Rather than attempting to define masculinity as an object (a natural character type, a behavioral average, a norm), the critical mass need to focus on the processes and relationships through which men and women conduct gendered lives” (71).

Masculinity is simultaneously a place in gender relations. Men and women engage that place in gender through the practices. It makes room for the effects of these practices in bodily experience, personality, and culture. Masculinity can be seen as an enactment for one simple reason that masculinity is relational. It requires the other by which to define it. Masculinity of any kind does not exist without femininity. Masculinity arises out of its reciprocal relation with femininity.

Conrad also examines the way in which poverty forces women to sacrifice their independence and self-actualization. Conrad effectively illustrates her strength of character by allowing Winnie to describe with great poignancy the difficulty she experienced in turning away the young man who, despite strong parental objections, continued to reciprocate her affections.

A mounting discourse of masculinity in crisis has emerged arguing that masculinity is in a state of crisis. Men are really searching for a role in modern society. Others see the changing labor market as a source of the alleged crisis. Deindustrialization and the replacement of old smokestack industries with new technologies have allowed more women to enter the labor force. This trend has reduced the demand for great physical strength. The supposed crisis has also been frequently attributed to feminism.

Gender roles restrict what both males and females can do. In effect, these sex

roles confine people, forcing us to be what others want us to be. Gendered norms and behaviors are assimilated rather than being natural or genetic. While mass culture likes to assume that there is a fixed, true masculinity. In fact, each societal construct of masculinity varies over time and according to culture, age and position within society. All men, though, while unique individuals, share one thing in common gender privilege.

The socialization can lead boys and men to feeling justified in subordinating women and girls. Exclusive role that women play in this socialization process itself is confining. The privileging of boys begins early with differential child-rearing strategies and parental expectations. Such strategies are usually reinforced by the more-present mother. Women, therefore, also contribute to the perpetuation of male behavior and males' sense of superiority.

As a masculine figure, Verloc is far more callous and insensitive than Vladimir. Verloc is the most untrustworthy male. Even in the circle of other agents and spies, he is most illiberal, insensitive and untrustworthy man. His outer projection and professional exposure are both index to his volatile and unpredictable temperament.

Halberstam warns that female masculinity sometimes face the danger of being described as deviant norm. To abolish this fear, Halberstam says, "The frequency with which gender deviant women are mistaken for men in public bathrooms suggests that a large number of feminine women spend a large amount of time and energy policing masculine women" (Halberstam 368). Something very different happens of course in the policing masculine women. Something very different happens of course in the men's public toilet, where the space is more likely to become a sexual cruising zone than a site for gender repression. The institutional men's room constitutes "a site at

which the zones of public and private cross with a distinctive psychic charge. The men's room constitutes architecture of surveillance and an incitement to desire, a space of homo-social interaction and of homoerotic interaction" (368). Massive social change disrupts and reconfigures traditional, neocolonial, political and cultural arrangements. In so doing, currents of changing gender relations in broader level transform local articulations of both domestic and public patriarchy. There was no single continuum along which individual nations might be positioned.

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In his description of Winnie's youth Conrad implicitly comments on the abuse perpetrated by men on women and children. The violent husband and father who terrorize the childhood of Winnie and Stevie, testifies to the brutality of a society that experienced a level of domestic abuse both known and tolerated as a regular feature of British life. The bravery she displays in safeguarding her brother reinforces Winnie as a character for whom the reader feels a sympathy. She is one of Conrad's greatest characters.

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The interpretive possibilities of gender are in no sense exhausted by the alternatives suggested above. The problematic circularity of a feminist inquiry into gender is underscored by the presence of positions. Gender is a secondary characteristic of persons. The very notion of the person is a masculinist construction and prerogative which effectively excludes the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender. The consequence of such sharp disagreements about the meaning of gender establishes the need for a radical rethinking of the categories of identity within the context of relations of radical gender asymmetry, feminine men prefer feminine models in private. It also states a preference for the traditional masculine models. Feminine men endorsed traditional masculine models. The authors suggested this result reflected the social pressure on men to endorse traditional masculine norms. Women are seen as "utterly removed from this world, utterly elsewhere its queer how

out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it" (Butler 39). In the narrator's own words, "they the women I mean are out of it in that beautiful world of their own Women are 'they', as opposed to 'we men' (Conrad 39). Male selfhood is central in most of the decisive moments of the encounter between civilization and savagery.

Subversion of Gender Roles in *The Secret Agent*

In Conrad's novel, *The Secret Agent*, the masculinity of Vicky McClure's performance of Winne Verloc, aptly and subtly, asserts the female protagonist's role in narrative. Mr. Verloc, a man who runs a pornography shop and hangs out with a bunch of anarchists, is also a secret agent for a foreign government. One day, he is suddenly summoned to meet his new boss at the embassy, a guy named Mr. Vladimir who hatches a plan that'll force the police to start locking up political agitators without due process. Vladimir orders Verloc to make sure that a bomb is planted at the Greenwich Observatory. Verloc does not want to do it, but when Mr. Vladimir threatens his cushy life, he becomes very anxious and agrees to the plan.

The protagonist claims that he is sufficient and capable of surviving on his own. A man belonging gentry, he feels superior to those who are beneath him in terms of class and social standing. In addition, he is a man exposed to western European ideals. He takes Russian culture low and condescending in comparison to the European culture which he had assimilated and internalized during his decade long stay in different countries of Europe. Worst of all, he holds a condescending attitude towards women in general. He takes mischievous pride in his bodily shape and form. He wants to define his manhood in isolation from femininity. Any display of feminine quality and characteristic is anathema to him. His parents had also condescending attitude towards Russian culture and social life though they too are citizens of Russia.

Conrad's decision to portray a woman who kills her husband as a sympathetic character suggests that he understood how societal forces can push women to acts of desperation. Like a good defense lawyer, Conrad lays the groundwork to justify Winnie's act of violence. There are several other factors that precipitate Winnie's murdering Verloc, and an examination of these factors reveals Conrad's further commentary on the conditions of women who must endure marriage to men who are thoughtless and self-absorbed. For example, despite several years of living with Winnie and Stevie, Verloc has no insight into the love and protectiveness that Winnie feels for her brother. While explaining the circumstances of Stevie's death, Verloc is woeful and self-pitying, and displays blundering insensitivity:

It's lucky for you that I am not so easily put out ... by your dead-and-dumb sulks. I am fond of you. But don't you go too far ... And I can't let you go out to-night, galloping off to your mother with some crazy tale of other about me. I won't have it. Don't you make any mistake about it; if you will have it that I killed the boy, then you've killed him as much as I. (187)

Her knowledge that Stevie is dead results in Winnie's desperate wish to destroy any impediment that stands in the way of her freedom from her intolerable union with Verloc, "At that precise moment Mrs. Verloc began to look upon herself as released from all earthly ties. She had her freedomShe was a free woman" (183). Minutes before Winnie feels herself a free woman Conrad creates an analogy between Winnie and the charwoman, Mrs. Neale, by presenting Winnie in the posture of a slave kneeling before the door with her ear to the keyhole. The juxtaposition between this scene and the repetition of "freedom" emphasizes the repressed emotions let loose by Winnie's desperate action. Only a reader as insensitive as Verloc would experience

difficulty understanding the motive behind Winnie's action: Winnie is the victim of selfish and unscrupulous men.

Winnie's story provides Conrad a vehicle by which to comment on the life of drudgery experienced by poor women in patriarchal societies. Winnie's memories of her youth reveal the thin and dreary life of the daughter of a poor widowed mother who keeps a boarding house:

It was a crushing memory, an exhausting vision of countless breakfast trays carried up and down innumerable stairs, of endless haggling over pence, of the endless drudgery of sweeping, dusting, cleaning, from basement to attics; while the impotent mother, staggering on swollen legs, cooked in a grimy kitchen. (176)

Conrad strengthens his commentary on the lives of poor women with his portrayal of the charwoman, Mrs. Neale, who is always trying to extort money from Stevie.

Although Winnie intervenes and puts a stop to Mrs. Neale's begging, she understands the reasons behind it and is sympathetic: "Of course, what is she to do to keep up? In were like Mrs. Neale I expect I wouldn't act any different" (134).

Halberstam contends that female masculinity and male masculinity are similar. For her, masculinity can be located neither in male body nor in female body. For her female can be masculine if one inherits such traits. Affirming this fact, Halberstam claims:

Masculinity does not exist in isolation of femininity. In most societies, masculinity and femininity are mirror images of each other; if men are supposed to order, women have to take orders; if men are allowed to hot tempered; women have to be patient, and so on. Even though there are masculinities, masculinities normally means having qualities like

strength, assertiveness, fearlessness, independence, authoritarianism, ambition. (33)

Males favouring traditional concept about gender roles do not think that their masculinity is complementary to femininity. They take their gender much superior than their counterparts. Otherwise masculinity would not exist in the absence of femininity. The interpretive possibilities of gender are "in no sense exhausted by the alternatives suggested above.

Gender is a secondary characteristic of persons. The very notion of the person is a masculinist construction and prerogative which effectively excludes the structural and semantic possibility of a feminine gender. The consequence of such sharp disagreements about the meaning of gender establishes "the need for a radical rethinking of the categories of identity within the context of relations of radical gender asymmetry. The problematic circularity of a feminist inquiry into gender is underscored by the presence of positions" (55).

Feminine men preferred feminine models in private. It also states a preference for the traditional masculine models. Feminine men endorsed traditional masculine models. The authors suggested this result reflected the social pressure on men to endorse traditional masculine norms. Women are seen as "utterly removed from this world, utterly elsewhere its queer how out of touch with truth women are. They live in a world of their own, and there had never been anything like it" (Halberstam 39). In the narrator's own words, "they the women I mean are out of it in that beautiful world of their own Women are 'they', as opposed to 'we men' (39). Male selfhood is thus, central in most of the decisive moments of the encounter between civilization and savagery.

Mr. Verloc abandons the house quite early one morning. He normally enjoys

staying up until late at night. He sleeps until noon. Mr. Verloc walks through the streets of London. His manners are dictated by secrecy. He is fond of observing the people around him as he goes. Mr. Verloc feels that he looks like any other tradesman in London. It is difficult for him to harmonize his outer image and inner reality. He is outwardly a tradesman. But in reality, he is an agent involved in the politics of terrorism. Mr. Verloc also can be define as a modern man who makes lots of money by immoral activities. But he is fated to raise violence. His disposition reveals qualities of subtlety and reticence. The following extract is demonstrative of Verloc's preparation for intensification of the politics of terror:

Mr. Verloc is in the parlor behind his shop with three of his International Red Committee friends. Michaelis, a ticket of leave apostle (a paroled felon), is talking about the effects of Capitalism on social reform. However, Michaelis was in jail for so long that he is not accustomed to expressing his thoughts to other people any longer. Therefore, his logic tends to be scattered and difficult to follow. Finally, Karl Yundt breaks into Michaelis tirade and tells him how scattered he sounds. (87)

Michaelis is annoyed by ambivalent disposition of Verloc. He feels it is not his fault. His thoughts are difficult to organize. Ossipon's command poses another problem to the execution of terrorist plan. He breaks into the conversation without giving any clue. Both Michaelis and Verloc are annoyed by the nagging and interfering Ossipon. The responsibility to handle domestic life is wholly neglected by all agents who are involved in the politics of terrorism.

Verloc works as an incompetent secret agent in the late-nineteenth century London. He finds that he can no longer remain in his espionage duties. But the

prolonged history of his involvement compels him to get caught up in an ill-conceived anarchist plot to blow up the Greenwich Observatory. Verloc increasingly appears to be hypocritical. He lives a double life. Verloc lives in the home he shares with his wife, Winnie. Winnie has a mentally disabled brother named Stevie. Verloc does not have sufficient time to be with his wife and her retarded brother. This quiet domesticity comes to a halt when Verloc is summoned by his employer, Mr. Vladimir. For his espionage duty, Verloc does not care for domestic life. The following extract is a dramatic expression of how Verloc is dragged into the deep chaos of anarchy:

Vladimir is not happy with Verloc's subpar work disrupting the anarchists' activity. The Russians fear that if the anarchists are left to their own devices, they will eventually spread and become a greater threat. Vladimir lets him know that he is going to have to step up his game and invoke a proper response from the British. To this end, he demands that Verloc incite the local cell to blow up the Greenwich Observatory, reasoning that the British will have to respond to so public an attack. With little choice, Verloc meets with his fellow anarchists and gets them to agree to the plot. (67)

The bombing takes place. It is not the devastating attack Verloc and Vladimir had hoped for. The police get involved. To harmonize the strained relationship with his wife, Verloc tells his wife, Winnie, that he has sent Stevie to the countryside for a while. This is just a hoax to give continuity to his secret involvement in the politics of terror. His involvement in the politics of terror takes him away from his responsibility to home.

Traditional avenues for men to gain honor are that of providing adequately for

their families and exercising leadership. Connell has labeled the traditional male roles and privileges “hegemonic masculinity” (78). This term implies that men are expected to be dominant whereas women are discouraged from adopting aggressive nature and are expected to be subordinate. According to Connell:

Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice, which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. The military, top levels of businesses and government agencies provide leading examples of this facet of masculinity within society. (37)

Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity is often seen in adult males. In addition, it is also seen clearly among young children in schools as well. This concept invokes a leading way of doing gender relations that implements the gender order status quo. It ensures the integrity of gender status quo by raising the general status of masculine qualities over feminine qualities. It is an expectation of what a real man should act and look like. But in reality, no one can successfully achieve hegemony. The idea of hegemonic masculinity in the context of young boys is used to re-create gender order.

Internalization of cherished gender code, cultural practice and societal practice enable women to say yes to whatever things arise in society. Chodorow, with respect to this situation, puts forward the following view:

Such a practice does not mean direct transmission of what is objectively in the child's social world into the unconscious experience of self-in-relationship. Social experiences take on varied psychological meanings depending on the child's feelings of ease, helplessness, dependence, overwhelming love, conflict, and fear. Internalization

involves distortions, defenses, and transformations. It depends on the quality of affect in a relationship, on the setting of the relationship, on the physiological or erotic arena in which the relationship occurs, and on the child's maturational stage. (8)

The earliest internalizations are unquestionable. These norms cannot be embraced without exercising any grain of skepticism. These earliest self-representations and object-representations are recalled without any malice aforethought. Internalization is mediated by fantasy. It is also mediated by conflict. Many of which predate the women's movement and postindustrial societies. Gender roles limit what both males and females can do. In effect, these sex roles enslave the people. They force them to be what others want them to be. Gendered norms and behaviors are taught and learned rather than being natural or genetic. While mass culture likes to assume that there is a fixed, true masculinity.

Ossipon is badly haunted by the pressures of terrorist agents. He is clearly upset by the constant professional pressure. The compulsion to work underground exerts negative effect in the psyche of Verloc. He walks into a neighborhood bar to finalize the plan to destroy infrastructure of public importance. Ossipon has just "learned from a paperboy that a man was blown up in Greenwich Park that morning. Ossipon is doubly surprised and upset, sitting at the bar, he finds a man, called the professor" (98). This man is known to build bombs. Ossipon sits beside him. He asks if he has heard the news. As he is habituated to all types of similar hubbub, he is also not surprised by it. Ossipon wonders what would happen if the police connects the bomb. Ossipon is male by sex but he seems like feminine according to gender although this behaviour would be nice before Greenwich observatory because it would prevent the violence on Verlocs' family. The following extract intends to

highlight how underground terrorist acts produce labyrinthine plan:

The Professor observes the people he walks past, amazed at how secure they all feel, unaware that at any time a bomb could go off and kill all of them. The Professor then turns into an alley between two busy streets and runs into Chief Inspector Heat. The Professor's hand tightens on the detonator. Heat says that he is not interested in The Professor today. The Professor laughs and says he better be glad for that, because he will never succeed in arresting him. (77)

The role of the assistant commissioner is immense in getting underground plan fulfilled. He is very grateful to this great woman for teaching his wife how to be a proper wife. Each agent has specific role to play in the fulfillment of professional duty. Michael is very charming and articulate. The lady accepts Michaelis under her wing. She wants to take advantage of the situation. It is her home in which Michaelis now lives. His deceptive temperament puts destructive pressures on her. The lady will suffer irreparable damage to her reputation. She will never forgive him because he abused her.

Verloc makes plans to leave for Europe. He fears that the police might figure things out. His fears are correct. The police discover their first real clue. The chief investigator takes the "coat to the shop and Winnie recognizes it as Stevie's coat. Verloc arrives after the police leave. When Winnie confronts him about the coat, he confesses that he manipulated Stevie to carry out the bombing" (76). Stevie is not the best choice as a bomber. He only succeeded in blowing himself up. At this juncture, Winnie loses her mind. In the fit of aggression, she attacks Verloc with a kitchen knife and kills him. With her brother and husband now dead, Winnie flees with one of the anarchist members, Comrade Ossipon. Ironically, she also follows the same track

which Verloc had followed. Such callous murderous act puts pressures in her. It exerts on her burdensome pressures. Consequently, she becomes unstable.

Mr. Verloc is on an excursion to foreign embassy because he is called there. Various questions have come out in his minds when he is on this excursion. Verloc's outer appearance betrays his inner clandestine motive. He is how he appears to be.

Outwardly, there is no evidence to draw an inference that he is an agent. Mr. Verloc does not seem like the agent provocateur as far as his outer appearance is concerned. He keeps "an obscure and ill-patronized little shop, behind which are quarters for his family. There he often entertains a group of London anarchists from whom he carefully keeps the secret that he is an embassy agent" (13). He seems to be querulous. Though he is involved in the promotion of the cause of anarchy, he appears to be a peaceful and tranquil man. He seems as affected by social and cultural aspects.

In Butler's words, the body appears as a passive medium. Cultural meanings are inscribed on it. It is treated as the instrument. This instrument is used to appropriate and interpret what determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument or medium. It is viewed as a set of cultural meanings. These meanings are only externally related. The body is itself a construction. They are the myriad bodies. It constitutes the domain of gendered subjects. Explaining this asymmetrical view on body, Butler makes the following remarks:

Bodies cannot be said to have a signifying existence prior to the mark of their gender; the question then emerges: To what extent does the body come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will?

Whether gender or sex is fixed or free is a function of a discourse which, it will be suggested, seeks to set certain limits to analysis or to safeguard certain tenets of humanism as presupposition to any analysis of gender. (55)

Sex or gender provides a clue to various cultural possibilities. These possibilities can and cannot become mobilized through any further analysis. The limits of the discursive analysis of gender presuppose and preempt the possibilities of imaginable and realizable gender configurations within culture. The majority of gendered possibilities are open. The boundaries of analysis suggest the limits of a discursive experience. These limits are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse. Surprisingly enough, it is predicated on binary structures. Its structured position appears as the language of universal rationality.

At this point in the series of events leading to Verloc's stabbing, Conrad describes Winnie's gruesome memories of a terror-ridden childhood spent protecting her defenseless brother, and brings the reader to understand why Winnie has displayed "a temperament ... maternal and violent ... [when] stripped of its philosophical reserve" (176). Winnie comes to the appalling recognition that, by encouraging a relationship between Verloc and Stevie, she has played an inadvertent role in the death of her brother for whom "she had battled ... even against herself" By perpetuating the illusion that the two "might have been father and son," she created the opportunity for Verloc to take her "boy away from her to murder him" (177-79). Winnie's self-loathing over her foolish credulity is equaled only by the antipathy she feels toward Stevie's killer. Verloc's selfishness now drives Winnie to murder him. With an egoism that is breathtaking, he blames Winnie for Stevie's death while, at the same time, he initiates a campaign for the enjoyment of his conjugal rights. He admits

that he is "too fond" of her and reveals that it will not be long before he is with her in their bed. His voice is "husky" and "domestic" (182-87).

Conrad now provides the reader with the details Winnie imagines as she envisions Stevie's broken body, "A park -- smashed branches, tom leaves, gravel, bits of brotherly flesh and bone, all spouting up together ... They had to gather him up with the shovel ... a rain like fall of mangled limbs, the decapitated head" (189).

Winnie's vision of Stevie's death breaks when she suddenly hears Verloc, who, "with the accent of marital authority" calls out to her with the "note of wooing" (190). For Winnie -- and for the reader -- the mere suggestion of sexual desire on Verloc's part at this point is disgusting and perverse. A reader with any degree of empathy feels the revulsion and horror Winnie experiences in the moment before she plunges the knife into her husband.

Halberstam is well-known for her constructive view on the shifting notion of masculinity. Masculinity is no longer the privileged domain of the men. Nor is it exclusively concerned with the male body. Halberstam's view is somewhat influenced by the thoughts of the constructivist theorists of the postmodern period. Her statement that both femininity and masculinity are rooted not in the biological process but in the sociological process of learning, adaption, evolution, assimilation and upbringing is essential in the study of female masculinity. The following lines cited from Halberstam's essay throws spotlight on the shifting ground of old masculinity:

Femininity and masculinity or one's gender identity refers to the degree to which persons see themselves as masculine or feminine given what it means to be a man or woman in society. Femininity and masculinity are rooted in the social rather than the biological. Societal members decide what being male or female means, and males will generally

respond by defining themselves as masculine while females will generally define themselves as feminine. It is important to distinguish gender identity, as presented above, from other gender-related concepts such as gender roles which are shared expectations of behavior given one's gender. (87)

The notion of masculinity is fluid. It is no longer stable and static nor is it rooted in the biological inheritance. This sort of view on the question of masculinity paved the way for the emergence of female masculinity. The sociological viewpoint also makes contribution to the debate between hegemonic masculinity and female masculinity. The concept of female masculinity gives a deconstructive insight into the notion of masculinity since time immemorial. With this deconstructive insight, the researcher proceeds ahead in dealing with the rest of the analytical portion.

Political and economic power are valued and rewarded. Men view physically and financially powerful men as desirable by women and enviable. Men are also socialized to be sexually promiscuous. They are even sexually irresponsible. Amongst themselves, men often brag about their sexual prowess. Men are socialized into their gender roles and pressured to follow rules about how a man should think, feel, and act. The institutional organization of sport reinforces definite social relations.

The assistant commissioner walks to a public edifice. He speaks to the private secretary of the Secretary of State. The secretary of state is very tired because he has worked all day. He is "shown into the Secretary of State's private rooms to brief him on the bombing in Greenwich Park. The Assistant Commissioner tells the Secretary of State all he has just learned, minus unnecessary details" (88). He asks the Secretary of State to remove heat from the case. When pressed on his reasons, the Assistant Commissioner says that "he has reason to believe that Heat's opinion on the case is

jaded and that he, the Assistant Commissioner, will be able to get to the bottom of the plot quickly" (87). The following extract is a case in point:

Mrs. Verloc's mother, a few weeks before the bombing, has arranged to move into a charity home. Mrs. Verloc's mother worked for quite a time to convince the officials of the charity that she did deserve this home. This was difficult, because the charity homes were usually for widows without children. However, Mrs. Verloc's mother managed to cry every time an official pushed her for answers and was able to charm her way into one of the tiny houses. (97)

Mrs. Verloc's mother is intuitively aware of the clandestine activities of her son in law. But she has no audacity to speak her mind. She intends to understand the underground dealing in which Verloc is engaged.

Subordinate masculinity is the cultural authority of heterosexual men and subordination of homosexual men. Homosexuality is viewed as the polar opposite of what masculinity entitles a man to be. Therefore, it is associated with femininity and is economically, politically, and culturally attacked. Heterosexual men may view gay men in the same light that they view women. There is an innate need for dominance. This leads to the subordination of gay men because they are seen as having a failed hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is complicit with the politics of patriarchy. About this complicity of masculinity with patriarchy, David S. Cohen makes the following remarks:

Complicit masculinity is the categorization of men who connect with hegemony but do not fully represent hegemonic masculinity. A great many men who draw the patriarchal dividend also respect their wives and mothers. They are never violent towards women. They do their

accustomed share of the housework, bring home the family wage, and can easily convince themselves that feminists must be bra-burning extremists. (47)

Marginalized masculinity is the authorization of the hegemonic masculinity. Men who fall into this category benefit less from the hegemonic ideal because of traits other than their gender behavior. Race relations may also become integral part of the dynamic between masculinities. In a white-supremacist context, black masculinities play symbolic roles for white gender construction. Men that fall into this category do not receive the same benefits and privileges as those who are seen as purely hegemonic. In other words, the hegemonic masculinity among whites maintains the oppression against the masculinity among blacks.

But more than this he comes to know that there is something wrong in the prowling attitude of his mother in law. The following extract describes how much exhausted Verloc is in his trip to execute destructive plan:

Mr. Verloc comes back from his trip ten days later, still distracted by his troubles. Winnie is similarly distracted by Stevie's depression at his mother's sudden departure. At breakfast, the first day of Mr. Verloc's return, Stevie becomes agitated when the neighbor woman begins to complain about the difficulties of raising children on little money. That afternoon, Mr. Verloc decides to go for a walk, and Winnie requests that he take Stevie with him. This surprises Mr. Verloc, as Winnie has never made this request before. However, he agrees to do it. (91)

Winnie assures Mr. Verloc that his arrogant and conspiratorial temperament can be corrected. But no matter how she advises, he remains to be stubborn in the same spirit. At the slightest provocation, he explodes with anger. He does not reveal why he

comes late and why he is away from family responsibility. Winnie is irritated by the indifference on the part of her husband.

Verloc is en route to the Russian embassy. He intends to receive his instructions to bomb the Greenwich meridian. The following extract gives a glimpse of his involvement in various acts of terror:

Verloc marched now along a street which could be described as private. In its breadth, emptiness, and extent it had the majesty of inorganic nature, of matter that never dies. A guilty-looking cat issuing from under the stones ran for a while in front of Mr. Verloc, then dived into another basement; and a thick police constable, looking a stranger to every emotion, as if he, too, were part of inorganic nature, surging apparently out of a lamp-post, took not the slightest notice of Mr. Verloc. (59)

The policeman is an omniscient observer. The whole terrifying scenario is unpredictable in the direction of his gaze. He fails to notice Verloc. The surveillance element is repeated later. It gives him a publicly confessed standing in that sphere, and as Mr. Verloc has unconfused relations which made him familiar with yet careless of the police. There is a distinct advantage in such a situation. Men believe that they have little reason to relinquish their authority or share their position. Men believe gender equality means losing some of their advantage. It is seen as a win-lose situation. It is a finite pie being more equally divided with a resulting smaller piece for them. They rarely see how they suffer as a consequence of their privileged status nor do they see benefits for themselves in a more equitable world.

Nobody knows where Verloc goes, whom he meets and how he schedules his routine. As far as possible he aims at maintaining a harmonious balance between his

professional life and inner secret alliance. Mr. Verloc makes his way back to his shop in Soho and manages to resume his usual demeanor. He does not seem to be emotional, sympathetic and acutely aware of others' pathos and sufferings. His anarchist friends pay one of their calls. He is totally heedless of whom he has to pay heed and respect. He fears that some fatalistic mishap lurks behind his impassivity. He is successful neither in family environment nor in nonfamily circumstance. He is not so successful with his wife. She is able to keep her own counsel. Under the pressures of Verloc's crooked dealings, she misses those things that are dear to her.

Verloc does nothing special to figure out the nature of his relation with Winnie who was once his fiance. Actually, she had married him not out of love but out of the prospect of getting a secure life. The following extract reflects realities regarding the basis of marital relation between Verloc and Winnie:

Younger than her husband, Winnie Verloc married him for security rather than for love. It is not even her own security that she is concerned about but that of her unfortunate brother, whose passionate protector she is, ever since the days of their childhood. Now physically mature, Stevie remains childlike in other ways; he is easily excited and inarticulate, although generally softhearted and trusting. One of the people he trusts most is Mr. Verloc. (27)

Verloc's outward kindheartedness and support are just the trick to avoid others' eyes on his clandestine activities. Verloc's sister does a great deal to bring the desirable outcome. His mother is also being supported by Mr. Verloc. He assists Winnie. He claims that he is capable of understanding the sufferings of Stevie, Winnie's mentally retarded brother. But he really cannot love Stevie. He hates Stevie. Just to produce a good impression in his wife, he pretends that he is capable of understanding Stevie.

Butler is acutely aware of the distinctions among the above positions that are culturally constructed. The subject and gender within the context of socially instituted gender asymmetry are problematical.

Halberstam is of the opinion that various factors constitute the domain of masculinities. Explaining this asymmetrical view on masculinities, Halberstam makes the following remarks:

To what extent does the female masculinities come into being in and through the mark(s) of gender? How do we reconceive the body no longer as a passive medium or instrument awaiting the enlivening capacity of a distinctly immaterial will? Whether gender or sex is fixed or free is a function of a discourse which, it will be suggested, seeks to set certain limits to analysis. (55)

The limits of masculinity are always set within the terms of a hegemonic cultural discourse. Surprisingly enough, it is predicated on binary structures. Its structured position appears as the language of universal rationality. Males suffer as a result of current male gender roles and gender inequality. The male socialization process and social expectations can thus lead to "personal insecurities".

To console Winnie, Verloc says she need not worry about Stevie. She knows he will find his way home. Mr. Verloc continues to take Stevie on walks with him. Winnie is pleased by her husband's new interest in her brother. The following extract is expressive of the patronizing manner:

The Assistant Commissioner returns to the Secretary of State to report on his current progress. On the way inside, the Assistant Commissioner shares with the private secretary that a big fish in London political circles will soon be taken down. The Assistant Commissioner tells the

Secretary of State that Mr. Verloc has admitted that Mr. Vladimir of the Embassy is the one who masterminded the bombing in Greenwich Park. He also states that the Greenwich Observatory was the intended target. The Assistant Commissioner is confident that, with Mr. Verloc's testimony, they will be able to get Mr. Vladimir. (56)

The testimony also clearly absolves Michaelis of any involvement. Winnie is not easily persuaded by Mr. Verloc. She refuses to look at Mr. Verloc despite the persuasive rhetoric of her husband. Winnie tries to physically remove her hands from her face. Winnie "rises and runs into the kitchen. Mr. Verloc finds her there, with her head resting on the table. Mr. Verloc begins to talk to her, telling her about his life as a secret agent for the first time" (65). She does not hesitate to explain everything that has happened up to this point.

Masculinity affects everyone. Both men and women can benefit from or be oppressed by the expectations of masculinity. They create the idea of masculine stress. They find three mechanisms of masculinity that accompany masculine gender role which often result in emotional stress. They include the emphasis on prevailing situations requiring body and fitness. The need to feel adequate concerning sexual matters and financial status drives them. Cohen further elaborates dynamics of masculinity:

Because of social norms and pressures associated with masculinity, Men with spinal cord injuries have to adapt their self-identity to the losses associated with the feelings of decreased physical and sexual prowess with lowered self-esteem and a loss of male identity. Feelings of guilt and overall loss of control are also experienced. Masculinity is something that some fear is becoming increasingly challenged with the

emergence of women's rights and the development of the role of women in society. (57)

Research by Martin and Gnoth finds that feminine men prefer feminine models in private, but state a preference for the traditional masculine models. Feminine men endorse traditional masculine models. The authors suggest that this result reflects the social pressure on men to endorse traditional masculine norms. Research also suggests that men feel social pressure to endorse traditional masculine male models in advertising.

Winnie listens to each and every pathetic outcry of her brother. She is attentive to his pathetic lamentation. She always thinks of Stevie. She is made for him. Winnie thinks of how "she married this man and put up with his unpleasant friends for Stevie. All of that is now pointless. Mr. Verloc tries to convince his wife of how much he loves her, and how that should be enough for her now" (101). The following extract is a further example of how family life faces several jolts and hindrances due to the irresponsible and secret activities of husband:

Winnie runs from the house, unsure of what to do now. Winnie cannot go to her mother. Winnie's relationship with her mother was primarily about Stevie, and now that Stevie was gone, that bond was broken. Winnie is deathly afraid of hanging in the gallows. Winnie keeps thinking of the line she has read in the paper many times, the drop given is fourteen feet. Winnie does not want to fall fourteen feet. Winnie decides she must throw herself from the nearest bridge. However, emotional shock has made it impossible for Winnie to walk very far. (115)

In the dire moment of crisis, Winnie remembers Ossipon. The decision of her rash

and aggressive action to kill her husband arises from a vindictive desire. Ossipon is the vilest of all her husband's friends. But Winnie chooses her in a dire moment.

Passing through all types of ups and downs, finally Winnie is happy to see Ossipon.

John Beynon examines the discourse surrounding the notion of masculinity in crisis. He finds that masculinity and men are often confused. Beynon reveals some of the interesting ideas about the issue in the following ways:

They are conflated so that it remains unclear whether masculinity, men, or both are supposed to be in crisis. He further argues that the alleged crisis is not a recent phenomenon. He points out several periods of masculine crisis throughout history. Many of which predate the women's movement and postindustrial societies. He suggests that masculinity is always changing and redefined. (87)

Gender roles limit what both males and females can do. In effect, these sex roles enslave us, forcing us to be what others want us to be. Gendered norms and behaviors are taught and learned rather than being natural or genetic. While mass culture likes to assume that there is a fixed, true masculinity. In fact, each societal construct of masculinity varies over time and according to culture, age, and position within society. All men, though, while unique individuals, share one thing in common gender privilege.

Winnie's conversation with Ossipon reveals the fear that women experience when their behaviour does not match the expectations that patriarchal societies demand. Conrad uses the fourteen-foot drop of the gallows to symbolize patriarchal society's view that women who do not follow traditional rules of appropriate behaviour are fallen. For Winnie, the fourteen-foot drop of the gallows resonates with the connotation of the fallen woman, whose virtue has been sullied by questionable

sexual behaviour. She is horrified at the thought of death by hanging (194-97).

Winnie reveals that she has always been circumspect in her behavior. Throughout her conversation with Ossipon she repeatedly refers to herself as a woman of propriety. When he remarks on her aloofness to earlier indications of his passion for her, she answers: "What did you expect? ... I was a respectable woman" (200). Although Winnie does not love her husband, she feels that she is a good wife because in her marriage her conduct is that of a respectable woman. Winnie is loyal, devoted and obedient woman at first but the situation made compelled her to be violence after the unjust activities done by Mr. Verloc.

Conrad comments on the ways in which male-dominated societies force women to follow strictly prescribed rules at all stages of their lives. Winnie is "the respectable girl of the Belgravian mansion" (210) and, therefore, never allowed herself to appear too animated in front of the gentlemen lodgers (41). Traditionally, long, loose hair has symbolized a loose woman; Winnie's hair, always described as very neat, connotes both decorousness and decency. The air of "unfathomable indifference" (2) she exhibits in front of shop customers seems to be a facade constructed to suppress the discomfort and embarrassment she experiences selling its cheap, pornographic wares. Winnie's early years may have been fraught with unsolicited advances from men.

Michaelis is unknown to so much violence that takes place in Verloc's family. He is not even aware that Mr. Verloc "had come and collected Stevie on the day of the bombing. Ossipon suggest that they go out and get a drink. The Professor teases Ossipon about his new drinking habit" (118). The past few weeks Ossipon has been on a romantic spree. He is seen drinking more often than following his collection of beautiful girlfriends. The Professor wonders why this is so. There is certainly a high

grade of deviant taste and anomaly in his temperament. Ossipon carries a newspaper clip so that he can use it as a tip on dire moment to direct his confused life. The clipping is of an article about a woman who threw herself overboard of a steamer. Ossipon knows that the woman was Winnie Verloc, who is guilty of murdering her husband out of her irresistible vindictive will.

Women are not the innocent pawns in this game, however. They are all in the quagmire of strange gender interaction, and women lack masculinity refers to. They can sense that same lack in men, leading to a frustration that is nobody's fault but will not correct itself without conscious effort. The destructive friction between men and women a failure to attain a mature communion may underlie the various global political and socio-economic crises. Within the politically charged atmosphere, it would be troublesome to dwell upon the issue of masculinity and its underlying socio-economic dynamics.

Masculine characteristics can be defined in the context of just what makes a good adult human. It seems that the traditional dualism of masculine and feminine is more pressing. The discord between the sexes cannot easily be brushed aside. They remove the unconscious control the media has on our cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity. However, it is nice to think about a time in the future when men and women are secure enough in their psyches. They can interact in a solely human way.

Verloc's fondness for the male-heroic values arise from a desire to flee from something degraded and debased at the heart of man in particular. His devotion to practical work is worthwhile. His fellowship of other men is noticeable. He becomes uneasy as soon as he cannot work. He wants to define himself through work ethics. When the fog "descends and forces a stop, he is annoyed beyond expression, even

while recognizing that he feels this distress 'most unreasonably' (73). He puts both the theoretical and the practical on the balance of judgment and finds the former lacking. Only the practical can serve as a shelter and refuge to the deviant search. Hence, the masculinity of Verloc is rooted in the realization of the value of the practicality in the moment of dire crisis.

The practical is for him a refuge from the doubts and confusion surrounding his journey. In his own words, "what I really wanted was rivets and rivets were what really Mr. Vladimir wanted, if he had only known it" (58). Work is something solid. It is practical. It will hold things together. Work and its role in determining the role of masculinity is highlighted in the following extract:

I don't like work. I had rather laze about and think of all the fine things that can be done. I don't like work, - no man does - but I like what is in the work, the chance to find you. Your own reality is for yourself, not for others. The course of actions has to be chosen by oneself. One's own choice determines destiny one surmise. (59)

Male fellowship is equally flimsy. Verloc may refer to the black fellows of our crew. But he knows that this fellowship is no more than a figure of speech. One of the cannibals suggests his men be allowed to eat the jungle natives. Verloc makes a meaningless noise in response to a request that is patently utterly alien to him. He later indicates the real reason for the necessity of fellowship and it is far less glamorous and more specious than heroic tradition would suggest.

Fellowship is essential because if human beings are exposed to solitude for a prolonged period of time, they ultimately suffer. Vladimir has only taken a high "seat amongst the devils of the land' because he has been untrammelled in solitude.

Verloc's listeners are prevented from understanding this horrific process only because

they, unlike Vladimir, are safely surrounded by kind neighbors ready to cheer" (I45). This is close to outright mockery of fellowship. Verloc's choice of male fellowship reveals the fact that there is soft and feminized side to his masculinity.

Terms such as masculine and feminine are notoriously changeable. There are social histories for each term. Their meanings change radically depending upon geopolitical boundaries and cultural constraints on who is imagining whom and for what purpose. It is important when studying gender that social and historical context be always in our thinking. Structure and culture condition our understanding of gender and thus influence the construction of the gender order. The major social structure molding gender is patriarchy. Feminist scholars maintain that the understanding of gender in this time and location is shaped by the constraints of patriarchy. Patriarchy as the base from which our understanding of gender comes; the idea that men are more highly valued than women grows and shapes our current definitions of masculinity and femininity. Patriarchy also reinforces the constructed dichotomy of masculine and feminine.

Verloc's masculinity represents different brand of masculinity. It is a product of insensitivity towards his European intended. It is an offshoot of his failure to maintain the integrity of his civilized personality. In the same way, it is also the product of his moral failings. But the case of Verloc is somewhat different. He wants to rejoice in the impressions which occur to him on the journey. No fixed purpose or goal is set before him. He is driven by impact of surrounding.

Verloc's intelligence is fully focused, though he is full of himself. He is maddened by his own ambition. Such masculinity is not welcome in rational and harmonious society. But his soul is "mad. Being alone in the wilderness, it had looked within itself, and, by heavens! I tell you, it had gone mad. I had to go through the

ordeal of looking into it myself" (108). The essence of his manhood is impenetrable. He is unconsciously aware of the wrong and deviant path treaded by him. But the sluggish rational self is under the grip of insanity. So he suffers. The entire spectrum of his activities poses metonymically a threat to cultural icons of civilization. The following extract is illustrative of this point:

I had to deal with a being to which I could not appeal in the name of anything high or low. I had, even like the niggers, to invoke him himself his own exalted and incredible degradation. There was nothing either above or below him, and I knew it. He had kicked himself loose of the earth. Confound the man! He had kicked the very earth to pieces. He was alone. (107)

Anti-humanitarian approach which he advances turns out to be self-destructive. The whole surrounding in a hellhole of London is made ruthless, ghostly and formidable by Ossipon. Having been a man of power, he is not responsible to others. This is his chief mistake. Vladimir has not only done something to himself, but has also destroyed the earth for Ossipon.

Gender typically refers to the social process of dividing up people and social practices along the lines of sexed identities. The gendering process frequently involves creating hierarchies between the divisions it enacts. It bears close relation with masculinity. One or more categories of sexed identities are privileged or devalued. In modern western societies, gender divides into two. This is not necessarily the case in other times, places and colures. Regarding this, Halberstam makes the following remarks:

It is remarkably easy in this society not to look like a woman. It is relatively difficult, by comparison, not to look like a man: the threats

faced by men who do not gender conform are somewhat different than for women. Unless men are consciously trying to look like women, men are less likely than women to fail to pass in the rest room. So one question posed by the bathroom problem asks, what makes femininity so approximate and masculinity so precise? Or to pose the question with a different spin, why is femininity easily impersonated or performed while masculinity seems resilient to imitation? (371)

There is subordination and subjugation due to which women fail to acquire masculine self. So long as women are treated as other, they do not have stable and recognizable self. Self and agency arise and get strengthened when women are totally free from discrimination and domination. In the patriarchal society, man is the subject and women are the other. So long as women remain as other, they hardly acquire self.

Experiences teach Verloc plenty of things that are pragmatically significant in anyone's life. When he sees Winnie's innocence and charm, he adopts different types of strategies to woo and win her. She acts sentimentally and soberly as per the requirement of his budding romance. The following lines illustrate how much caring, anxious and sentimentally awkward he has become in bringing his romantic progress to the appropriate destination. The following lines cast light on how situation has compelled Verloc to inculcate feminine qualities in him:

O my child!' cried Verloc suddenly, and his voice was shaking, 'don't cheat yourself with sophistries, don't call weakness the cry of your heart, which is not ready to give itself without love. Do not take on yourself such a fearful responsibility to this man, whom you don't love, though you are ready to belong to him.' 'I'm obeying, I take nothing on myself,' Winnie was murmuring. 'Obey your heart; only

that will tell you the truth,' Verloc interrupted her. (70)

The above cited extract illuminates the possibility that the growing acquaintance of Verloc with Lisa will result in their marriage. Verloc's sentimental indulgence and Winnie's affectionate concern put them on the same footing. They take pleasure in having delightful conversation. They are so close to each other that they forget their difference and dissimilarity. Though there is apparent disparity and difference between them, the possibility of getting united in the deep bond of marriage increase by leaps and bounds. Experience and prudence do not deprive them of the best.

Halberstam's thought puts forward a view of female masculinity as a discursive construction. Her view in this regard is cited below:

The discursive intermingling of sex and gender, essentialist generalizations about men and women, and the tendency to view gender as fixed, binary, and determined at birth, rather than a fluid, mobile construct that allows for multiple gender expressions. The gender dichotomy of man/woman so pervasive in Western culture can be understood in terms of the cultural imperative to be heterosexual. (59)

Hegemonic masculinity rejects a dualistic view of gender, heterosexual normativity, and biological determinism. They point to the inseparability of the body from language and social norms. Theorists of masculinity argue against the assumption that all women share a common oppression.

Verloc seldom demonstrates sensible disposition. The prudential way of having a good and harmonious rapport with woman is by handling the troubled gender relation in an understandable way. It is customary for Winnie to meet different types of clients in the course of running her profession. He assumes that man is all in

all in society. From his grandfather and father he has learnt the fact that women are volatile, mercurial and temperamental creatures who need to be subdued under strict surveillance. The outward projection of his masculinity appears to be fragile and vulnerable. Though Winnie has requested him not to be rash and belligerent in the case of her alleged affair, he ruptures the marriage and vacations in Italy leaving her alone in Paris. Verloc's belligerent and aggressive manhood arises from his biased presumption that women are adjunct; they need to be possessed via surveillance or dire from coercion.

Verloc's masculinity is hostile and antagonistic to the idea of extending even a minimal sense of freedom, mobility and self-esteem. Verloc's belief in the politics of terror ultimately enslaves rather than frees an individual. It conveys a few maxims which can lead human life that is shipwrecked. It is out of his cynical understanding of life that abstract philosophy comes. Certain reflection on the private side of his life enables readers to ponder seriously on the limitations of his philosophy.

Halberstam is of the opinion that a masculine gender is formed from the refusal to grieve the masculine as a possibility of love. The contradiction and instability of any single person's gender act sets the stage for the inception of new brand of masculinity. This effect produces a narrative that is sustained by the tacit collective agreement to perform. The socially constructed aspect of gender performativity is most obvious in drag performance. What is chosen can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier within the domain of corporeal legibility. Verloc holds low and condescending attitude in his relation with woman. He takes his mother as just an adjunct and appendage of his existence. He boasts self-sufficiency and integrity of his manhood. The same sort of legacy produces effects in other agents also. The following lines cited from the text shows

how Verloc's masculinity is constructed:

Verloc certainly did not look like the victim of fate. His rosy-cheeked typical French-English face, with its large white brow, rather thick nose, and wide straight lips seemed breathing with the wild health of the steppes, with vigorous primeval energy. He was splendidly well-built, and his fair curly hair stood up on his head like a boy's. It was only in his blue eyes, with their overhanging brows and somewhat fixed look that one could trace an expression, not exactly of melancholy, nor exactly of weariness, and his voice had almost too measured a cadence. (26)

There are elements of arrogance and haughtiness in the character of Verloc. Because he has had the exposure and access to the life style, culture and viewpoint of Europeans, he considers himself far more superior to his relatives and brethren who are confined to the typical secret life of London. In addition, he comes from gentry. He feels exceedingly proud and superior to those who are beneath him in terms of social standing and sound financial. This kind of haughtiness is found in his attitude towards women also. He is under the influence that women are just fragile and emotionally vulnerable creature that needs good taming and domestic surveillance. His superior sense of belongingness, exposure to European ideals and the gender prejudice are all responsible for construction of his masculinity. The sort of masculinity which Verloc embodies is questionable.

Caution must be exercised in depicting women as being essentially peaceful and men as essentially violent. These depictions reinforce patriarchal models of masculinity and femininity. It also negates patterns of dominance and violence practiced by women. All societies and cultures have a variety of masculine norms and

behaviors that are positive and nonviolent. It is important to identify and promote the many positive values and norms. These norms are also a part of masculinities around the world. Men are as capable as women of being caring human beings.

Verloc could scarcely stand upright. His whole body was worn out. And he did not even feel fatigue, though fatigue began to do its work. He sat and gazed and comprehended nothing. No outer force is able to cause a huge damage to his manhood. Before the disastrous termination of his marriage, he is under the illusions that his manhood is indestructible. Now at the collapse of his marital tie, he is so enervated and exhausted that he could not have the chance to bring his shipwrecked life to the safe destination.

Masculinity affects everyone. Both men and women can benefit from or be oppressed by the expectations of masculinity. They created the idea of masculine stress. They found three mechanisms of masculinity that accompany masculine gender role often result in emotional stress. They include the emphasis on prevailing in situations requiring body and fitness. The need to feel adequate concerning sexual matters and financial status drives them. Cohen further elaborates dynamics of masculinity:

Because of social norms and pressures associated with masculinity, Men with spinal cord injuries have to adapt their self-identity to the losses associated with the feelings of decreased physical and sexual prowess with lowered self-esteem and a loss of male identity. Feelings of guilt and overall loss of control are also experienced. Masculinity is something that some fear is becoming increasingly challenged with the emergence of women's rights and the development of the role of women in society. (57)

Feminine men prefer feminine models in private, but state a preference for the traditional masculine models. Feminine men endorse traditional masculine models. The authors suggest that this result reflected the social pressure on men to endorse traditional masculine norms. Research also suggests that men feel social pressure to endorse traditional masculine male models in advertising.

The anxieties experienced by an attractive, chaste young woman living in a boarding house filled with males are alluded to when she imagines the scene of her hanging:

There, within four high walls of the jail, as if into a pit, at dawn of the day, the murderer was brought out to be executed ... With her eyes staring on the floor, her nostrils quivering with anguish and shame, she imagined herself all alone amongst a lot of strange gentlemen in silk hats who were calmly proceeding about the business of hanging her.
(195)

Conrad uses the gallows to represent more than the plight of the fallen woman in patriarchal societies. The gallows also symbolize the distrust and contempt that the poor and powerless feel toward the institutions that are supposed to guarantee law, order, and justice. Winnie feels deep antipathy towards the men who ignore their duty to bring Verloc to justice. Winnie's preference to take her death into her own hands rather than capitulate to "men's justice" (195) is completely understandable.

Verloc happens to be overpowered and overwhelmed by unrestrained zeal to tear her apart. This kind of murderous instinct wells up in his heart. He allows such an instinct to well up in his heart before finding out correct facts. He trembles all over and rushes away at the slightest provocation. He feels that at that instant he is capable of doing any type of damage. He is totally unable to allow even a smattering of

freedom to his wife. He is not rational enough to probe the matter and dig out the truth prior to jumping to a fatal conclusion.

The Secret Agent is a novel of investigation and exposure that Norman Holland describes as analogous to fishing. The murky depths of London's moral depravity are described in terms of a damp, greasy, slimy bog. The Assistant Commissioner is intent on catching a "sprat", Sir Ethelred is concerned with his Fisheries Bill, and Winnie is eventually thrown back into the sea (56-57). Winnie plays an important role in the novel's investigation, for although she states "that things do not stand much looking into," she brings to light the significant fact that when women's hard work, sacrifice and compassion prove futile, their reaction is symbolic of the potentially seismic backlash of their collective political capabilities.

A character who also plays a small but significant role in *The Secret Agent* is Winnie Verloc's mother. In a letter of October 1907, Conrad congratulates his friend Garnett on his perceptive review of the novel, "I am no end proud to see you've spotted my poor old woman. You've got a fiendishly penetrating eye for one's most secret intentions. She is the heroine" (Letters, III 487). These statements reveal Conrad's intention to dramatize the plight of a woman who, imprisoned by poverty, sacrifices her own comfort in order to assure the security of her children.

The obvious parallel between the mother and daughter is that each woman gives up her happiness to ensure a home for Stevie. Winnie performs this by marrying Verloc, while her mother, sensing future conflict over the economic burden of two extra mouths to feed, removes herself from the comfort of her home with Winnie and takes residence in an almshouse for the old and poor (110). Like Winnie, she is unsung but heroic in her concern for the well-being of the weak and defenseless.

Conrad, however, does not create Winnie's mother merely as the embodiment

of female selflessness. She represents Stevie's assertion that life is hard for poor people. Conrad reveals his commentary not only by means of her actions, but by way of her description. Winnie's mother has a "venerable placidity conferred upon her outward person by her triple chin, the floating amplexness of her ancient form, and the impotent conditions of her legs" (110). Her ample proportions represent the large number of people who live in poverty and its concomitant conditions of disease, ignorance, and oppression. Her crippled legs symbolize the powerlessness of the poor to ameliorate their state in the world. On the surface, this group appears apathetic and passive. However, eventually, like Winnie, they may let loose years of suppressed rage in the form of violent action.

To conclude, the notion of gender is problematic. Social changes in the broader level reconfigure and reshape the arena in which traditional masculinities are articulated. It transforms the shape of domestic and public patriarchies. Massive social change disrupts and reconfigures traditional, neocolonial, political and cultural arrangements. In so doing, currents of changing gender relations in broader level transform local articulations of both domestic and public patriarchy.

Chapter 3

Conrad's Concern for Gender Equality

This research concludes that gender biasness is very harmful to society. Women are being exploited in develop and developing countries on various way. After the feminist revolution gender equality is being practice a lot but the discrimination to female are still happening. The research focuses that gender inequality and trying to reduce gender biasness. Females are dominated by males on the support of patriarchal society.

Conrads' *The Secret Agent* also all protagonist severely affected by the gender issue. Gender inequality creates violence in the society. Masculinity is on superior position rather than femininity. Male dominates female on moral, socio-cultural, and economic aspect. Social discrimination, sexual objectification and majority of the patriarchy is depicted on this research.

The secret agent offers different reading of the gender roles and domestic structure that have produced distress in western middle class culture. Conrad resolves the conflict between Winnie and the patriarchal house of Mr. Verloc, the house we can say the fallen house because most of the event have got the fallen action. In the secret agent, the ruin of the house is first expressed through the explosion of the Stevie's body into pieces, in conspirational Greenwich observatory then murder of Mr. Verloc by his wife and finally suicide of Mrs. Verloc. The gender issue is metaphorically introduced on novel

On the novel we can see both physical and mental isolation between men and women. The novel has got very pathetic ending that is created by supremacy of the patriarchal society. The novel completes on the terror created by hegemonic masculinity, that creates the gender discrimination which is major cause of social and

familiar violence.

The core finding of this research is that the protagonist, Verloc, embodies that brand of masculinity which hardly acknowledges the reciprocal relationship between man and woman. In Conrad's *The Secret Agent* the protagonist seldom demonstrates sensible disposition. The prudential way of having a good and harmonious rapport with woman is by handling the troubled gender relation in an understandable way. The novel begins in Verloc's home, as he and his wife discuss the trivialities of everyday life, which introduces the reader to Verloc's family. Soon after, Verloc leaves to meet Mr. Vladimir, the new First Secretary in the embassy of a foreign country. Although a member of an anarchist cell, Verloc is also secretly employed by the Embassy as an agent provocateur. Vladimir informs Verloc that from reviewing his service history he is far from an exemplary model of a secret agent and, to redeem himself, must carry out an operation – the destruction of Greenwich Observatory by a bomb. Vladimir explains that Britain's lax attitude to anarchism endangers his own country, and he reasons that an attack on 'science', the current vogue amongst the public, will provide the necessary outrage for suppression. Verloc later meets his friends, who discuss politics and law, and the notion of a communist revolution. Unbeknownst to the group, Stevie, Verloc's brother-in-law, overhears the conversation, which greatly disturbs him.

The novel flashes forward to after the bombing has taken place. Comrade Ossipon meets The Professor, who discusses having given explosives to Verloc. The Professor describes the nature of the bomb he carries in his coat at all times: it allows him to press a button which will kill him and those nearest to him in twenty seconds. After the Professor leaves the meeting, he stumbles into Chief Inspector Heat, a policeman investigating a recent explosion at Greenwich, where one man was killed.

Heat informs the Professor that he is not a suspect in the case, but that he is being monitored due to his terrorist inclinations and anarchist background. Heat suspects Michaelis. Knowing that Michaelis has recently moved to the countryside to write a book, the Chief Inspector informs the Assistant Commissioner that he has a contact, Verloc, who may be able to assist in the case. The Assistant Commissioner shares some of the same high society acquaintances with Michaelis and is chiefly motivated by finding the extent of Michaelis's involvement in order to assess any possible embarrassment to his connections. He later speaks to his superior, Sir Ethelred, about his intentions to solve the case alone, rather than rely on the effort of Chief Inspector Heat.

The novel flashes back to before the explosion, taking the perspective of Winnie Verloc and her mother. At home, Mrs. Verloc's mother informs the family that she intends to move out of the house. Mrs. Verloc's mother and Stevie use a hansom driven by a man with a hook for a hand. The driver's tales of hardship, whipping of his horse, and menacing hook scare Stevie to the point where Mrs. Verloc must calm him. On Verloc's return from a business trip to the continent, his wife tells him of the high regard that Stevie has for him and she implores her husband to spend more time with Stevie. Verloc eventually agrees to go for a walk with Stevie. After this walk, Mrs. Verloc notes that her husband's relationship with her brother has improved. Verloc tells his wife that he has taken Stevie to go and visit Michaelis, and that Stevie would stay with him in the countryside for a few days.

As Verloc is talking to his wife about the possibility of emigrating to the continent, he is paid a visit by the Assistant Commissioner. Shortly thereafter, Chief Inspector Heat arrives to speak with Verloc, without knowing that the Assistant Commissioner had left with Verloc earlier that evening. The Chief Inspector tells Mrs.

Verloc that he had recovered an overcoat at the scene of the bombing which had the shop's address written on a label. Mrs. Verloc confirms that it was Stevie's overcoat, and that she had written the address. On Verloc's return, he realises that his wife knows her brother has been killed by Verloc's bomb, and confesses what truly happened. A stunned Mrs. Verloc, in her anguish, fatally stabs her husband.

After the murder, Mrs. Verloc flees her home, where she chances upon Comrade Ossipon, and begs him to help her. Ossipon assists her while confessing romantic feelings but secretly with a view to possess Mr. Verloc's bank account savings. They plan to run away and he aids her in taking a boat to the continent. However, her instability and the revelation of Verloc's murder increasingly worry him, and he abandons her, taking Mr. Verloc's savings with him. He later discovers in a newspaper that a woman matching Mrs. Verloc's description disappeared from the ferry, leaving behind her a wedding ring, before drowning herself in the English Channel.

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