

## Chapter 1

### *The Price of Salt as a Lesbian Narrative*

This study entitled “Resistance to Heterosexual non nativity in Patricia Highsmith’s *The Price of Salt*” fore-grounds the homosexual and unconventional relationship between female characters and their rejection of the traditional mode of heterosexual relationship in order to search for their lesbian self. The characters violate traditional hetero-sexual division of gender and sexuality by remaining genderless, nameless and ageless; and keeping relationships to both males as well as females. Carol and Therese celebrate lesbian body in its true form rather than as defined by the society and refuse to be written on body by the ideology of hetero-patriarchal discourse and challenge its so-called well-established norms and values (Highsmith 53). Highlighting the queer and deviant activities of the characters, this research attempts to show how Highsmith dismantles conventional concepts of gender and sexuality and dramatizes lesbian issues of homosexuality which was rejected by the Western thought.

The central story of *The Price of Salt* is woven under the rubric of queer hematology in general and lesbian narratology in particular in order to question the traditional heterosexual and patriarchal concepts of love, sex, marriage, family, gender and other male supporting ideals thereby highlighting the possibility of transgender, homosexual and bi-sexual relationship (Highsmith 88). Illustrating the perception of Carol, Therese, Abby, Richard and Harge, Highsmith shows the strategic use of bi-sexual relationship though Carol and Therese who take the front seat as the female narrators in the story. The notion of homosexual relation among the characters creates a debate about gender and sexuality. *The Price of Salt* as a lesbian narrative serves to oppose the established norms and values. It also raises question to

the system of patriarchy which is embedded question of this research such as why Carol and Therese go against court's decision and take the risk of living together? If their relation gives greater degree of freedom and happiness, why that is taken as illegal and also why Carol-Harge relation is necessary?

*The Price of Salt* is a lesbian novel that subverts the existing concept of equality and gender created by hetero-patriarchal discourse. It discards the idea that heterosexual relationship is the absolute and universal, and provides other possibilities. Moreover, socially queer, odd, deviant and restricted behaviors like homosexual, transsexual, bi-sexual, transgender and other sexually dysfunctional and perverse activities are highlighted bringing them into mainstream discourse of sexuality. In such situation, in order to dismantle conventional notions that prevail in gender and sexuality and other associated concepts including love, marriage, sex, family, morality, and so on, this research makes use of lesbianism as a primary critical apparatus. So, the researcher makes use of queer theory and Lesbianism to authenticate the claims made. Different notions of Lesbian feminism given by Adrienne Rich and Judith Butler are quoted to create the methodological basis of this research. Michel Foucault in *History of Sexuality* argues about the contribution of power in emerging of new concept of sexuality. In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler views the very creation of category "lesbian" as a subversive sexuality.

Monique Wittig concept of simple reversal from negative to positive values does not challenge the definition of woman as "the sex" from *The Lesbian Body*. The thorough analysis of the novel will be an integral part of this research project. Moreover, the concept of queer theory is necessary as lesbianism is grounded on its politics. Finally, to highlight diameters strong position in her both homosexual as well as heterosexual relationship, the 'butch-femme' concept of Helen Boyd is borrowed

on the bedrock of all the concepts; however, lesbianism is taken as pedestal and primary tool in order to deconstruct hetero-patriarchal concepts of gender and sexuality. The research relies on secondary data, since it is a library research which uses print as well as electronic information.

*The Price of Salt* by Patricia Highsmith was first published in 1952 and was taken as the novel of love society forbids. It is categorized under Classic literature and is a tale of sexual obsession toward a gender that was considered inappropriate in the society. This book is made up of two main characters, Carol and Therese. Other characters get introduced as the plot develops, but the story mainly surrounds these two women.

The inspiration behind this publication, as explained by Highsmith, was a woman she met in brief. Highsmith, then a 27 year old Bloomingdale employee, sold a doll to Kathleen Senn, a beautiful blonde lady. Despite the fact that the encounter was brief, Highsmith could not forget the lady. Soon after Highsmith got sick with chickenpox and in her bedridden state, the plot details of this novel played out in her mind. Highsmith retained Senn's credit card details and soon began spying on her. So the novel somehow reflects Highsmith's personal life when she was a young lady.

The novel begins with Carol, who is described as an elegant woman, walking into a store where Therese, then 19 years old, was working over Christmas. The writer describes Therese as a lonely young woman who had just moved to Manhattan, New York to pursue being a theatre set designer, the career of her dreams. The plot development in the novel revolves around these two main characters. After meeting in the departmental store, Therese gets Carol's address for shipping reasons and follows her impulse to send her a card. Carol responds and the two start spending time together. Carol gets described as "lonely" in the novel because she had got entangled

in a divorce process with her husband Harge (Highsmith 51). We get informed about Therese's love life too. She is going out with Richard despite the fact that she feels neither love nor attraction for him as depicted in the text. "She was never truly interested in any of the myriad of boys and men who showed interest in her" (86). As Therese spends time with Carol, she realizes that she loves her. Therese's attraction to Carol keeps growing, and she develops a strong liking for her. This is captured in the novel when the writer explores Therese's feelings towards Carol: "Was it love or not that she felt for Carol? How absurd was it that she did not even know. She had heard about girls falling in love and, she knew what kind of people they were and what they looked like. Neither she nor Carol looked like that. Yet the way she felt about Carol passed all the tests for love and fitted all the descriptions" (98).

Richard somewhat senses this but simply brushes it off as a schoolgirl Crush (Highsmith 89). Harge, Carol's husband gets suspicious of the relationship between the two ladies when he meets Therese at Carol's house briefly. His suspicions arose because of the previous knowledge he had regarding Carol's homosexual relationship with her friend, Abby. Harge later takes Rindy, their daughter, to live at his place, far away from Carol (103).

The simple line of the story can be interpreted in two different levels: on the surface level, the story is of love, marriage, divorce and separation between Carol and Therese who become the icons of homosexuality. On the other level, the story narrates the bitter reality of western thought regarding lesbian relationship. The western society could not accept this reality to give freedom and identity for homosexual relation.

Patricia Highsmith is the prominent author who produced a number of lesbian pulp fictions. Some of her novels have crossed the boundary of lesbian pulp fictions.

The subjects of romance, thriller and crimes occur recurrently in some of the popular works of Highsmith. Her choice of deviant and shocking subject matter is one of the most controversial choices of the author. Though she is adept in choosing shocking and scandalous subject matter in her novels, her chief purpose is not to sensationalize the public sentiments. Though this means, she likes to foster the rights of the excluded and marginalized groups of women. In this regard, it is fair to say that she is radical and progressive author. Regarding *The Price of Salt*, Victoria Hesford makes the following remarks:

If the Van Aliens' home is torn apart through an internal struggle between the desire. For domestic order and control and the desire for an outside to the home and family life, Carol's house, in *The Price of Salt*, becomes a hollow monument to middle-class heteronormativity. The size and impressiveness of the house is remarked on by Therese, the younger woman Carol meets in the city when she first comes to visit. The Interior of the house is similarly impressive in its carefully produced conventionality. (226)

Hesford argues that this novel is about a struggle between internal struggle and desire. This is about a conflict of self-desire not of social factor. Similarly, in *The Price of Salt* shows the house respectability built for the world outside, not the people within. Another critic Bonnie Mann states that this novel raises the postmodern issue. He argues:

This post modernism theme is also evident through the widespread acceptance of lesbianism and homosexual tendencies. No one get: caught aback by lesbians anymore. This newly found acceptance of lesbianism among women gets expressed in the book and could be

considered as the onset of modernism. People in modern societies, unlike the ancient ones, were free to engage in activities that not previously prohibited. Lesbianism was one such outlawed activity.

(149-150)

Bonnie Mann delineates that Patricia's *The Price of Salt* reveals the postmodern issue regarding lesbianism. This is a new issue that obviously breaks the orthodox belief regarding sexual freedom. The western metaphysics is deeply rooted by heterosexuality which ostracizes the sexual freedom for every gender and people therefore, lesbianism was one such outlawed activity. But Highsmith raised the latest issue of homosexuality in the sphere of post modernism.

Not the same issue but Carole Seajay presents different regarding capitalism.

This is not an issue of woman, but a vision of imperialism. He further opines:

As Therese in *The Price of Salt* suggests, there is a connection between "war and big business and Congressional witch-hunts" (125). That connection can be understood as the process of American empire building in the era of late capitalism. For Highsmith, writing at the height of the Cold War, that connection also produces the web that prevents people from being able to love each other (Carol, the older woman Therese is in love with, says in the same passage: "(I) t's getting to be a disease, isn't it, not being able to love?" And traps them in alienating, inhumane, and even violent relationships with each other.

(18-19)

Thus, Seajay presents a different perspective about the novel. He observes that the book is highly related to the cold war issue. Preventing people to love which traps them in inhuman condition. He explains stopping Carole and Therese from loving

each other, American culture exposes the violent and alienating post-cold war nature. Politicization of homosexuality was crucial to economic restructuring in post-cold War period, in that the homosexual male became a figure of containment and projection for feeling of anxiety and frustration at the domestication of masculinity.

In *The Price of Salt*, the issue of sex as a theme is never explicitly specified in the text so it has received most of its critical attention because of its failure for women sex. Regarding this idea Catherine Belsey points out:

The book should have sold sex as a theme as it falls under the category of Lesbian pulp. The book fails to do this as Highsmith only alludes to sexual tension and attraction between Carol and Therese. The two lesbians engage in sexual intercourse on several occasions. The writer quickly rushes through these scenes, and there is no vivid description of sexual activity between Therese and Carol. The theme of lesbianism and queer sexual orientation did not get captured enough. (7)

According to Belsey, the narration performed ambivalent role to reveal the homosexual relation between Carol and Therese. There is not a vivid description of sexual activity between these two ladies and the theme of lesbianism and queer sexual orientation did not get captured.

Whenever reality is presented by an art form, the realness of the reality must be called into question because it concerns a subject. It was believed that this book was written for women subjectivity. Christy L. Burns' judgment of Patricia is:

This book mainly focuses on one gender, women. This is so because it oscillates around the lives of two women, Carol and Therese. Whereas a few male characters like Barge and Richard get introduced in snippets in the book, the main characters in the book are females.

Some even think that the book was meant for a feminine audience due to its theme and setting. This could be thought of as confusing because in the 1952 when the book got published, women were clearly treated like the inferior gender, while men were domineering. (304)

Blending fantasy and reality, Highsmith's writing is colored with social touch. Her sexual inclination towards women of her own sex is the manifestation of her rebellious spirit; questioning women's identity lost in the labyrinth of hetero patriarchal discourses of the society.

Charles Lyons claims that the art of Highsmith's writing is not persuasive because of impermeable layers of detailed ordinariness. He further states:

Highsmith's writing is not beautiful; rather, it is fair to express it as being not only dense, but also plodding. One gets drawn off into the seething sea under the impermeable layer of detailed ordinariness. The normal happens to be just a blanket under which all these suppressed impulses, as well as compulsions of an arousing sexual identity become ceaselessly agitated. The outer realism of heterosexual supposition with its convictions is totally unremarkable, monotonous, as well as quotidian. (12)

According to Lyons, Highsmith's writing is not beautiful. The plot is very flat and is detail as an ordinary story. It lacks a vivid and strong performance of characters. The outer realism of heterosexual supposition with its convictions is totally unremarkable and monotonous.

Despite such critical opinion that exists to represent the different theoretical perspective in order to interpret this novel in the considerable height. Considering



above mentioned quotes, it becomes obvious that reviewers have read the novel from different perspectives. However, this novel is not analyzed from lesbian perspective yet. Therefore my attempt is to reveal the women issue from the lesbian perspective through the central characters Carole and Therese.

Lesbianism is defined as a female-female sexual-orientation or behavior or homosexual relationship between women. In other words, romantic and erotic attraction of females is considered as lesbianism. It also refers to the condition in which a woman identifies herself as a lesbian. Lesbianism can be understood as a tendency, principle and the way lesbian is advocated and supported. Some women who engage in homosexual behavior may reject the lesbian identity entirely, refusing to identify themselves as lesbian or bisexual. Lillian Faderman precisely defines lesbianism in an overview, "Surpassing the Love of Man: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present." Placing herself midway between the exclusive and inclusive approaches to lesbianism, she straightforwardly claims:

Lesbian describes a relationship in which two women's strongest emotion and affections are directed towards each other. Sexual contact may be part of the relationship to a greater or lesser degree, or it may be entirely absent. By preference the two women spend most of their time together and share most aspects of their lives with each other. ( 17- 18)

Women who adopt the lesbian identity, however, share experiences that form an outlook similar to ethnic identity as homosexuals; they are unified by the discrimination and potential rejection they face from their families, friends and others.

As women, they face concerns separation from men. Lesbians may encounter distinct health concerns. Political conditions and social attitudes also continue to affect the formation of lesbian relationship and families. Different ways in which lesbians have been portrayed in the media suggests that western society at large has been simultaneously intrigued and threatened by women who challenge feminine gender roles and fascinated and appalled with women who are romantically involved with other women.

The heterosexual domination of western metaphysics, which is guided by the strong principle of patriarchal social system, is extensively dramatized in Highsmith's novels. There is more emphasize on her own experiences of attraction towards females in her novel than fictionalized events. She rejects exploitation of male-dominated society and demands actual identity for females. Though she rejects her novels to be called lesbian novels, lesbianism is the life giving heart of her novels. Like her lesbian characters, she realizes that love for same sex is the part of her nature that cannot be separated. Through her experiences, Highsmith disclosed some strong characters like Carol and Therese whose identity is lost under the veil of patriarchal gender dichotomy and binary oppositions. Their position and relation in the society are buried within the dynamics of harsh and cruel heterosexual society.

Adrienne Rich mentions that sexuality is untouched area in human history which is taken as a separated issue by creating a lot of discrimination in women relation. She opines:

Sociologist de-naturalized religion, economic behavior, race gender: social class, the division of the social labor, bureaucracy, and so on. However, there is one aspect of human life that has resisted disenchantment: sexuality. Until recently, sociologists have viewed

sexuality as a part of nature. They have shared with popular opinion the view that sexuality is biologically structured into the human species and obeys natural laws. (1-2)

According to Rich, sexuality is perhaps the last human dimension that many of us refuse to grant is socially created, historically variable and therefore deeply political. However, this is changing. This orthodox perspective always brings the biasness to accept the unusual relation like homosexuality in the society which needs to be deconstructed to give the identity and power for all people. She further argues:

I have learnt more from some of those books than from others; but on this I am clear: each one might have been more accurate, more powerful, more truly a force for change, had the author felt impelled to deal with lesbian existence as a reality, and as a source of knowledge, and power available to women; or with the institution of heterosexuality itself as a beachhead of male dominance. (660-661)

Further Rich opines, lesbian existence is the bedrock to deconstruct the Western thought regarding sexuality. The Western metaphysics isolated homosexuality implementing the demarcation of orthodox religion. But the lesbian freedom has been a source of knowledge and power for lesbians to introduce themselves as equal as common people who practice heterosexuality.

In spite of Highsmith's strong denial of *The Price of Salt* as lesbian text, on the close reading of the novel, we can find queer subject matter dominating everywhere throughout the fiction. With the minute observation of the activities in which the protagonists of the novel are engaged against the firm blasphemy of the church and strong defiance to the rigid system of the orthodox community, this reverberation of queer issues in the text can be justifiable.

Highsmith finds homosexual and queer concerns as the best and most suitable means to challenge the prejudicial and discriminatory systems of religious and hetero-patriarchal discourse. In this condition, the research intends to show how she neutralizes the long established heterosexual systems supported by Western metaphysics in order to restructure the society and to make more adaptable, all inclusive, secular and non-normative. Eventually the research finds lesbianism and queer theories genuinely appropriate and contextual for dealing with these dominant subject matters as well as giving sincere ample space to the main thrust of the novel.

To analyze the issues, the study has been divided into three chapters. The first chapter presents the general introduction of this research including the background to the present study, hypothesis, literature review, objective of the study and research questions. In the same way, textual analysis has been made in the second chapter with theoretical tool of lesbianism and queer theories in embedded form and conclusion has been rendered in the third chapter that encapsulates the overall study.

## Chapter 2

### **Resistance to Heterosexual Normativity in *The Price of Salt***

This research attempts to contradict the conventional concepts of gender and sexuality which are based on the hetero-patriarchal discourse created by male thought. Highlighting the homosexual relationships of Carol and Therese, it explores the transgender and transsexual activities rejected, and discarded in the heterosexual male dominated society thereby adapting lesbian issues. The traditional concept of love, sexuality, gender and family are subverted; opening up the novel explores the boundaries of gender construction and desire. The characters challenge hetero-sexual discourse of the society involving in trans-sexual relationship with multiple partners including females Carol and Therese: and males include Harge, and Abby who challenge the morality of western society. Carol terminates heterosexual relationship with her husband Harge, enjoys homosexual relationship with Therese. Rather than being romanticized, she celebrates her diseased body and rejects being written on the body by the hetero-patriarchal ideology of the society.

Highsmith advocates that there are alternative ways to understand the sexual, emotional and intellectual self thereby disrupting patriarchal order such as our sense of self and its restrictive heterosexual model of love, thus defying the discursive concept of fixity within the totalizing binary pattern of Western thought. Through the story of the two women, Highsmith deconstructs narrative convention and shows how storytelling need not be subordinated to the constraints of the patriarchal grand narrative.

*The Price of Salt* explores the boundaries of gender construction and desire. By creating a protagonist who escapes any stereotypical gender identification, the novel subverts the traditional patriarchal binary discourse on gender identity. It is a

narrative which explores both the psychic and bodily spaces of the self, as well as the relationship between literature, language and desire. The relationship between Carol and Therese becomes lesbian on the basis of how readers identify the characters. But this research draws from the ideas of many critics, who do not opine heterosexual normativity as the only normal form of sexuality, in order to declare the narrator as homosexual female. Bi-sexual relationship of Carol and Therese are central to study, which directly challenge the monolithic heterosexual compulsion of western society.

*The Price of Salt* is a 1952 romance novel by Patricia Highsmith, first published under the pseudonym Claire Morgan. The author known as a suspense writer based on her own earlier novel, *Strangers on a Train*, used a pseudonym due to the story's lesbian content. Its relatively happy ending was unprecedented in gay fiction. The inspiration behind this publication, as explained by Highsmith, was a woman she met in brief. Highsmith, then a 27 year old Bloomingdale employee, sold a doll to Kathleen Senn, a beautiful blonde lady. Despite the fact that the encounter was brief, Highsmith could not forget the lady. Soon after Highsmith got sick with chickenpox, and in her bedridden state, the plot details of this novel played out in her mind. Highsmith retained Senn's credit card details and soon began spying on her. This informed the plot of the novel, *The Price of Salt*. This novel is viewed as a representation of what would have unfolded, had Highsmith pursued Senn during a time that was heading towards sexual liberalism in writing.

In the postwar era this queer-liberal reading style played a crucial role in the birth of a vibrant lesbian structure. Highsmith shows how lesbian pulp fiction, despite its general aim to gratify heterosexual male prurience and despite the era's oppressive policing of homosexuality, functioned to render queer female identity comprehensible. The pulps offered these readers a vocabulary of dress, language,

gesture, sexual practice, and public behavior from which they could both forge their own performance of sexual identity and read the performance of others.

Since the eighteenth century in the U. S., the pursuit of the happiness was the foremost goal as enshrined in the postwar era by the United States'. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized on the full development of the human personality. The Post -Holocaust era focused on self-realization about the equal dignity and worth of the human person. At once upholding and enabling, these abstract ideals formed the basis of mid-century liberalism's self-legitimizing project. They constituted a ethical framework within which a polity's specific social, cultural, and economic practices could evolve. This historical context alone might have invited consideration of Highsmith's strategies of legitimating homosexuality in light of this heightened human right consciousness. The novels celebrated ending suggested the sign under which the values of human worth and self-fulfillment operate is happiness. Highsmith defends homosexual pleasure and advocates personal discovery in the context of post-war society.

Highsmith presents a skillful handling of rather quiet story building on a suspense setting in *The Price of Salt*. She interwove the story with a road trip out west, a classic American trip. Carol and Therese go to Chicago for a trip. Similarly, she selects Waterloo, Colorado Springs, and Sioux Falls. New York which stands as an important character itself. Getting such a feel for the sparking setting of being young in New York at that moment in history was in fact their favorite part of the first half of the book, a feeling that's rewarded when Therese finally returns at the end, and has that one moment when she's recovering her own autonomy. And she takes a sudden delight and gratitude in the bustle of the side streets that she hardly pays attention months before. This is as much a New York novel as it is a road trip out

west novel. The novel ends with a note of a Carole and Thearse's happy life together. "But there was not a moment when she did not see Carol in her mind, and all she saw, she seemed to see through Carol. That evening, the dark flat streets of New York, the tomorrow of work, the milk bottle dropped and broken in her sink, because unimportant" Highsmith (41). These lines prove that there is no single moment that Therese didn't see Carol on her mind even though they are far apart from each other. We can also assume that how much intimate their relationship was from these lines.

With respect to the setting in the novel, Highsmith highlights New York where Carol and Therese return at the end. New York stands as such an important character herself. This is the place of freedom to discover every individual for self-exploration and personal discovery in the western society. Similarly, Carol and Therese's return to New York symbolizes the unification of both individual for their happiness, satisfaction and personal life. After the unlikely pair had toured Ohio, Minneapolis, Pennsylvania, Salt Lake City, Colorado Springs, Chicago, Denver and Sioux Falls, Carol's modernity instincts finally revived and she abandons Therese out west to go home to fight for Rindy's custody.

Many people were also confused about the significance of the title of the novel used by Highsmith. The title also represents the symbolic meaning that evokes the meaning of sacrifice of Carol and Therese for their identity and freedom. They strongly fight against western thought presenting sexual relation and phenomena to claim homosexuality is the part of a society. This stereotypical thought hegemonizes homosexuality is anatomical; therefore, Carol and Therese sacrifice love, marriage, family and children for the sake of personal discovery and identity, Highsmith reveals:

In the middle of the block, she opened the door of a coffee shop, but



they were playing one of the songs she had heard with Carol everywhere, and she let the door close and walked on. The music lived, but the world was dead. And the song would die one day, she thought, but how would the world come back? She felt shy with him, yet somehow close, closeness charged with something she had never felt with Richard. Something suspenseful, that she enjoyed. A little salt, she thought. (44)

While interpretation of all this can vary, salt seems to undoubtedly be something of value, something organic, and something that matters or something very fundamental like interpersonal relationship and sex in bare human life. Exactly, to evoke the “price” of something invariably brings up a feeling of loss, a sense of something that had to be given up for something else to exist. So, is the price of salt Carole losing Rindy? Or is the price of salt simply emblematic of love in general that you can’t love truly without pain, without some sort of sacrifice? Because while Carol loses many heartbreaking things like she has to face the court because of her husband Richard and she takes it lightly to have togetherness with Carol. Therese loses things as well, like her boyfriend left her because of her relationship with Carol.

Carol engages herself in multiple relationships but, Therese is her match. There is no age limit and gender limit to her. Therese is young but Carol is a mature woman. Carol involves in bisexual relation several times. She enlists many of her boyfriends as well as girlfriends. It seems that Carol is a play girl, who challenges not only the heterosexual relationship but also the morality set by the western society. Because around the mid-nineteenth century only hetero-sexual relationships were put in the centre and all other relations were rejected in the contemporary society. Her masculine character is contradicted with the feminine character. Therese is also

presented as rebellious. She is not satisfied with her heterosexual relationships

Adriene Rich points out:

It is not until the end of the seventeenth century that other kinds of information become available, and it is possible to move from speculations about individuals to descriptions of homosexual life. At this period references to homosexuals as a type and to a rudimentary homosexual subculture, mainly in London, begin to appear. But the earliest descriptions of homosexual do not coincide exactly with the modern conception. (38)

Lesbian issue was not studied and analyzed till the seventeenth century considering it as an unnatural process in human society. It was taken as a rudimentary homosexual subculture. After nineteenth century, the new subject was concerned with respect to lesbian as a self-articulation. Rich further restates:

The 'homosexual' on the other hand, belonged to a species, and it is this new concern with the homosexual person, both in legal practice in psychological and medical categorization, that marks the crucial change, both because it provided a new subject of social observation and speculation, and because it opened up the possibility of a new modes of self-articulation. (48)

In the history of homosexuality, it was taken as an anatomic or biological result of an individual in Western society. It was often assumed that some people were simply born homosexual. But after nineteenth century, the clear emergence of new conceptualization of homosexuality emerged in the Western metaphysics. Many theorists and sociologists analyzed and restated differently homosexuality as a cultural practice in any society. She further opines:

For much of this century, homosexuality was seen as a natural and biologically rooted. It was said to define an individual's biological, psychological, and even social nature. It was often assumed that some people were simply born homosexual or become homosexual at a very early age. (14)

In early days of human civilization, homosexuality was taken as natural, biological and psychological rooted nature. It was also believed that some people were simply born homosexual. However, with the so called civilization, it was given a derogatory tint and was looked down upon with condemnation in the societies:

The role of social factors was limited to controlling the expression of homosexuality through social, norms, laws, and customs. Although sociologist and others had begun to analyze the social life of homosexuals by the 1960s (for example, there were studies of the social life of hustlers or bar life), it was still assumed that homosexuality is natural and that 'the homosexual is a unique type of person. (14)

Owing to the social disregard homosexuality bore, the social, legal norms and customs also developed similar code of conduct towards it in their formal dealing of it. Criticizing these types of stereo-types regarding homosexuality, sociologists began to analyze the social life of homosexual by 1960 that deconstructed stereotypical images regarding lesbian in the society. They introduced a new concept for lesbianism.

Lesbianism refers to sexual preference of female to another female, which challenges the notion of normative sexuality that discards homosexual activities as deviant. Woman sexuality, emotionally and affectionately attracted to other woman is

known as lesbian. Some women prefer to be called gay rather than lesbian.

Lesbianism might have been a restricted female identity in earlier times at least “the woman was eager to get children. But since this is possible while generally leading a lesbian life, any attempt to anthologize lesbianism is absurd. However, radical lesbian feminist tries to deal with the question like-- “Why females should become a subject to male's physical pleasure?” As an articulate spokeswoman offering an inclusive definition of lesbianism Adrienne Rich states:

I mean the term lesbian continuum to include a range through each woman's life and throughout history of woman identified experience; not simply the fact that woman has had or consciously desired genital experience with another woman. If we expand it to embrace many more forms of primary intimacy between and among women, including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male tyranny, the giving and receiving of patriarchal and political support, we begin to grasp breadths of female history and psychology which have lain out of reach as a consequence of limited, mostly clinical, definition of lesbianism. (21)

Lesbianism is an avant-garde term that is developed challenging the heterosexual normative discourse that rejects all other options as deviant anti-social. It subverts politics of long-established and deep-rooted heterosexual ideology. It has its foundation feminism and helps females to release from the narrow concept of othering different voices.

The young and mature characters in *The Price of Salt* perform queer activities beyond the limitation of the society. This research relies on gender as female mainly based on her activities towards other characters and her performance to be genderless

in order to challenge patriarchal system. Carol and Therese involve in sexual attraction kissing and embracing firmly to satisfy their sexual desire. Highsmith narrates:

They had measured her with a tape in the living room, in the midst of all the signing and the present opening, and a couple of the men had tried to help, too. Mrs. Semco put her arm around Therese's waist, and suddenly. Therese embraced her and kissed her firmly on the cheek, her lips sinking into the soft powdered cheeks in that one second pouring out in the kiss, and in the convulsive clasp of her arm, the affection Therese really had for her that Carol looked down at the lap.

(53)

Carol and Therese dismantle patriarchal norms denying heterosexual practices. They involve in bisexual intercourse to challenge the stereotypes of lesbian. Presenting desire, sex, love and attitudes between females, they strongly show their dissatisfaction against the society and challenge the social norms and values which marginalize them for centuries othering them from mainstream social involvement.

The characters are females imbued with characteristics of males. Carol's activities are masculine directing against the patriarchal ideology. Her assumption of masculine role parodies many systems and traditions of patriarchal society. They conceal their sexual relation; it indicates that they are suppressed by the male dominated society. Such fact is supported even though her activities and her relationship with male and female characters in general and their lovers in particular. Their in-between position is her politics to dismantle the male orthodoxies and rigid monolithic systems favoring males. In *Heterosexual Plots and Lesbian Narratives*, the butch female (masculine and feminine) relation is described as a collection which

denies male and female gender categorization for instance by disrupting the boundaries of traditional clothing (Farewell 12). The genderless condition of the narrator is supported by butch-femine dynamics:

The titles “butch” and “femme” are most commonly assumed to be labels used in the lesbian community to distinguish the more masculine partner in a relationship from the more feminine partner. In reality, there is a lot more to it than that being a butch doesn’t only mean tough or strong, and it definitely does not mean in control in relationships.

Lesbian community believes that sex is not only determined only by physical body. Rather an individual’s own sexual inclination as well as experience establish and prove her identity:

Being a femme also does not mean feminine all the time and it definitely does not mean powerless. It is not about power; it is not about one partner being the “man” and one being the woman in the stereotypical heterosexual sense. But it is an amazing dynamic where two people who are at opposite ends of the spectrum balance each other out perfectly. (23)

The butch-female dynamics in lesbianism plays a vital role as there is not equal relationship and equal power between two partners. Between the two, the radical partner assumes the role of butch and takes other as femme. Carol and Therese in *The Price of Salt* play the role butch partner having multiple relationships with many of the partners both males and females. They are powerful in all of their relationships. Though she is a female biologically her relationship is targeted with females particularly with the married ones.

Carol presents herself as a player intending to play her game with many

people regardless of their gender, age and nature. Her confused state is triggered by the domination of patriarchal ideology. Though she is rigid, strong and extremist in her position; she still lacks space and respect in the male dominated society. These butch female dynamics also help us to diagnose her as female or a male with the mask of female in order to challenge the one and only heterosexual option created by the Western metaphysics discarding other-homosexuality, lesbian, gay, intersex and bi-sex as abnormal and anti-social.

Lesbians would be friendly towards bisexuality. They have sex with both man and woman to present their sexual identity. Lesbian reveals socially oppressed voice of homosexuality. Dismantling heterosexuality concept, they wanted to recreate their own personal discovery in the patriarchal society. Adrienne Rich opines:

We would expect then that lesbians would be friendly towards bisexuality. However, in her interview Anult found that many lesbians reject bisexuality and stigmatize bisexual women. Moreover, many bisexual women fashion discursive strategies that allow them to continue to maintain a lesbian sexual identity. In this way, Anult reveals the various ways socially deviant or oppressed sexual groups reinforce a binary heterosexual/homosexual social order. (21)

According to Rich, lesbian engages in bisexual relation to provoke their freedom and identity in the society where their deviant voice was suppressed in the mist of heterosexuality. They were always treated as align and abnormal, therefore, they used the bisexual lifestyle to deconstruct the western thought regarding sex and self-discovery.

In *The Price of Salt* the characters have multiple relationships with both male as well as females thereby challenging the traditional and patriarchal notion of

heterosexuality and subverting the single-headed heterosexual relationship and advocating the possibilities of other relationships. Therese presents herself as a character with multiple relationships:

In all her relationships the characters it was a strange relationship, she supposed, and who would believe it? Because from what she had seen in New York, everybody slept with everybody gone out with before I Richard Anglo and Harry—had certainly dropped her when they discovered she didn't care for an affair with them. (16)

Therese presents her experience regarding sexual relations which reveal a bisexual phenomenon. She precisely reveals her sexual relation with Anglo, Harry and Richard. However, she did not take her affair with them seriously. Similarly, she could not have and show deep concern and commitment to Richard too.

She had tried to have an affair with Richard three or four times in the year she had known him, though with negative results; Richard said he preferred to wait. He meant wait until she cared more for him. Richard wanted to marry her, and she was the first girl he had ever proposed to, he said. She knew he would ask her again before they left for Europe, but she didn't love him enough to marry him. (16)

Therese have affair with Richard more than three times but she wasn't having a pleasant physical relationship with him. She had seen in New York, everybody sleeps with everybody gone out with before Richard reveals that Therese had sex with many people in New Work. Therese shows bisexual lifestyle denying heterosexuality.

In *The Price of Salt*, Carol and Therese transgress the narrow concept of gender and assume genderless identity. The use of transgender is diplomatically used to critique the heterosexual marginalization of homosexual and bi-sexual activities.



Chris Beasley explains the practice of transgenering as “transgender refers to people adopting a sexed identity different from their assignment at birth” (52). The lines presuppose that certain gender roles are assigned to every individual at birth period. But if one goes beyond the boundary of this gender identity (man and woman), it is the practice of “transgenering.” A lesbian, in this context, does not fall under either of the category: masculine or feminine. Judith Butler in her *Gender Troubles* writes on this issue as follows:

Indeed, a lesbian . . . transcends the binary opposition between woman and man; a lesbian is neither a woman nor man. But further a lesbian has no sex; she is beyond the categories of sex . . . Indeed, the lesbian appears to be third gender, as I shall show, a category that radically problematizes both sex and gender as stable political categories of description. (144)

Butler ascertains that lesbianism in practice is embedded in trans- politics, especially transgenering and transexuality. To be a lesbian is surely to go beyond the discourse of sexuality. Moreover, having homosexual relation is the practice that makes the category men-women more problematic. In this sense, lesbian crosses this limit; they are neither men nor women since the position between men and women sees the heterosexuality the only option in normal discourse. Here in this situation there is a remark of Chris Beasley which seems relevant: “It used to distinguish those who wish to alter their gender a permanent but less literal sense, that is, those who live as the opposite gender or as ambiguous gender” (160). He means to say that gender is not permanent because it depends on the preference of the people’s desire. Some people are born as a boy but they enjoy living like a girl and vice-versa.

In this way, sexual intercourse in the traditional discourse is possible only

between the two gender or sexed categories of man and woman. Hence, if there is homosexual relation between the same sexes it definitely blurs the sexual boundary, it is transgenering. *The Price of Salt* blurs the strict boundary between male and female and presents inbetweenness of the female characters. Here, gender is determined not by biological criteria but by performance. The activities and performances of Carol and Therese go beyond the identification of any of the parameters set to determine gender.

### Chapter 3

#### Conclusion: Critique of Conventional Notion of Sexuality

Highsmith's *The Price of Salt* is the most significant lesbian novel to forward the issue of females' relationship. It is a lesbian novel advocating for the alternative ways to understand the sexual, intellectual self thereby disrupting patriarchal order such as our sense of self and its restrictive heterosexual model of love. Therese, a young girl, falls in love with Carol, a mature woman; there applies no age limit and gender limit to them. Though Carol was married, she involves in homosexual relationship. She sleeps with Abby, too. Carol enlists many of her boy-friends as well as girl-friends as her sexual partners. She challenges not only the heterosexual relationship but also the morality set by the Western society. Therese is also not satisfied with her heterosexual relationship with her boyfriend. Therefore Therese and Carol start spending time together and involve in homosexual relationship. In this way, this novel proves out to be a superb example of lesbian fiction that deconstructs the hegemonic importance of heterosexuality.

In this novel, the title also represents the symbolic meaning that evokes the meaning of sacrifice of Carol and Therese for their identity and freedom. They strongly fight against Western thought presenting sexual relation and phenomena to claim homosexuality is also the part of a society. Also, stereotypical thought which put heterosexual relation in the centre and all other relationships in the margin. Consequently, Carol and Therese sacrifice love, marriage, family and children for the sake of personal discovery and identity. *The Price of Salt* is undoubtedly something of value and something that matters i.e. the reclamation of lesbian self and identity. Carol and Therese do not care what the society thinks and what the court does. They go against the decision of the court and want to live happily forever. This was the crucial step taken by both of the major characters to challenge the contemporary society.

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