

## **Reading Gender: Negotiating the Subverted Feminine Self and Gender in *Moth Smoke***

### ***Abstract***

*This study negotiates the subversion of the hegemony of the feminine gender construction through analysis of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* by arguing that Mumtaz, the protagonist, does not come up to her culturally conferred feminine gender role since she is an untraditional character in the novel. Contextually, the dominant masculine traits of Mumtaz' personality have been negotiated. This research analyses how Mumtaz resists patriarchal norms by adopting the opposite gender role and her performance as a male in the light of Butler's views. Judith Butler has talked about the destabilization of the concept of fixed gender identities by emphasizing the concepts of non-fixed gender and 'gender performativity' in her book. The analysis presents the crux that marginalization of the women has been responded to by women in post-modern scenario through rejection of gender performativity. This research is qualitative and descriptive in design and is based on textual analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Femininity, Masculinity, Subversion, Gender, Performativity, Marginalization,*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The researcher in this research study has focused on the analysis of Mumtaz' character from Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke*. The crux of the argument is the de-stabilization of Mumtaz' feminine gender and the masculine traits in her personality. This research would bring into focus those aspects of her personality which highlight the lack of femininity in her personality, hence, supporting the argument that she subverts her feminine self. Her character seems powerful because of masculine inclinations and traits. Hence, this research is a feminist critique which intends to present the subverted gender role of Mumtaz. To argue this notion, Judith Butler's stance from her

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### **Hina Rafique**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Govt. P. G. College (w) Satellite Town.  
Gujranwala

E mail: [hinarafique43@yahoo.com](mailto:hinarafique43@yahoo.com)

### **Summaira Mukhtar**

Senior Lecturer in Department of English, Garrison University, Lahore

book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (1990) has been taken. She has talked about the de-stabilization of fixed gender identities. She writes in the preface of her book that:

“If one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the “reality” of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks “reality,” and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance.(xx11)

The feminists argue that the adoption of masculine ways of living by women, as the feminist literature presents them, is, in fact, an articulation of their revolt in the wake of denial of their basic rights from patriarchal society. Their liberal selves and the spirit of freedom symbolically contextualize their confinement in a patriarchal society. Traditionally, women are subjugated and suppressed by men in patriarchal societies and their adopted masculine identities by women give vent to their rebellious selves. The text shows that the patriarchal structure is reversed because Mumtaz appears as a powerful independent female who is ready to stand against the so called norms of the patriarchal society. In this regard, the ‘non -performativity’ of Mumtaz’ actions are argued to subvert the fixed identity inscribed in her gender. The research presents the subversion of the grand narratives of the ‘positioning’ of feminine gender in Pakistani patriarchal society by presenting the subverted feminine self of Mumtaz.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Judith Butler the American philosopher, gender theorist and feminist, quotes the powerful gender discourse and body politic theories of Monique Wittig (French feminist), Julia Kristeva (French philosopher and Semiotician) and Michel Foucault. In her book *Gender Trouble*, she has presented the notion that gender identity is not specific for one particular sex. Being a man or a woman is not a fixed condition of being; the body is not a fixed thing since it does not fix into a particular discourse but subverts and negates any efforts to fix it within a limited discourse. She negotiates against the traditional notion about female bodies and their engagements in political periphery by socially constructed patriarchy. She opines that destabilization of fixed gender identities has occurred in present time.

Butler’s theory of gender as ‘performative act’ has been the center of attention since the publication of her book *Gender Trouble* that presents a fluid and non-fixed gender identity concept. She has presented a series of arguments regarding her view about gender. She states, “consider gender as a corporeal style, an act, as it were, which is both intentional and performative, suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of

meaning” (2001, p. 2551) and “gendered bodies are so many “styles of the flesh” (Butler, 1990. p.139) meaning that gender is nothing but an adopted style by the body and the body can adopt as many styles as it desires. She further asks: “what performance will compel a reconsideration of a place and stability of the masculine and the feminine? What kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity and desire?” (2001, p.2551). Butler thinks that the performativity of gender is required to acquire a gender. Butler further states about “gender as the working of “sex”( 2000,p.139). Another perspective has been given by categorizing gender through sex. She conveys the idea that sex is operated through gender since sex is a biological reality which leads a body towards gender allotment. In one of her interviews, Butler says that gender is also an agency of freedom since the disguised identities refer to the domain of freedom people adopt for themselves to experience the taste of freedom.

Michel Foucault’s views on the body articulated in his *History of Sexuality* (1976) also need to be incorporated here. In both Sartre’s and Beauvoir’s work, “the body” is figured as a “mute facticity”. The word “facticity” means the impossibility of providing an ultimate ground for the existence of a being: the quality or condition of being fact. It means that body is the mute entity. Foucault argues: “How are the contours of the body clearly marked as the taken for-granted ground or surface upon which gender significations are inscribed, a mere ‘facticity’ devoid of value, prior to significance?” (1990,p .129). Foucault seems to share Butler’s stance regarding the feminine body as a sign of cultural inscriptions. Butler states that even in Foucault’s essay on the theme of genealogy, “the body is figured as a surface and the scene of a cultural inscription” (1990,p 129) as he articulates:

“The body is always under siege, suffering destruction by the very terms of history. And history is the creation of values and meanings by a signifying practice that requires the subjection of the body. This corporeal destruction is necessary to produce the speaking subject and its significations. This is a body, described through the language of surface and force, weakened through a “single drama” of domination, inscription, and creation”( Foucault 1990,p.150).

According to Foucault, the body appears as a blank slate where culturally confirmed codes and inscriptions are written to project gender roles and then these body inscriptions foster the ideologies of domination and subjugation. Then, he goes to the length of saying that the body emerges as a stage where cultural drama concerning gender roles is enacted as Butler voices it: “He nevertheless points to the constancy of cultural inscription as a “single drama” that acts on the body” (1990, p.130). Douglas

remarks that “the body is a model that can stand for any bounded system. Its boundaries can represent any boundaries which are threatened or precarious.” And she asks a question which one might have expected to read in Foucault: “Why should bodily margins be thought to be specifically invested with power and danger?” (qtd in 1990,p.132). Which boundaries? They are the boundries of sexual role: heterosexual, transgender or homosexual and social gender roles defined by society: feminine attributes and masculine attributes. “One such view prescribes and condones the sexual ordering of gender, maintaining that men who are men will be straight, women who are women will be straight”( Butler,1990,p.x111).

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is descriptive in nature and qualitative in design. Textual analysis has been used as method and the text serves here as primary data. To contest the hypothesis, the dialogues of the protagonists have been taken from the text as units of analysis. Apart from this, Butler’s theory of gender as ‘performative act’ has been taken as theoretical framework of this study. The dialogues of Mumtaz and other instances from the text have been analyzed under Butler’s views to negotiate non performativity of her feminine gender.

## **RESULTS & ANALYSIS**

### **Negotiating Subverted Feminine Gender in *Moth Smoke* by Mohsin Hamid**

This paper focuses on analysis of femininity and the subverted feminine self of the protagonist in the selected text *Moth Smoke* in the light of Judith Butler’s views. The contested argument of this paper is that Mumtaz, the female protagonist of the text *Moth Smoke*, is not a traditional female as she has masculine traits in her personality. The researcher argues that de-stereotyping of fixed gender occurs in the character of Mumtaz. The text presents instances which highlight the subversion of her feminine self, because of which her role and self as a female, a mother and a wife can be negotiated. Before discussing the subverted gender role of Mumtaz, it is pertinent to discuss Judith Butler’s views about gender and its performance in the society since:

Gender is the project which has cultural survival as its ends. The term strategy better suggests the situation of duress under which gender of performance always and variously occurs. Gender is performance with clearly punitive consequences...we regularly punish those, who fail to do their gender rights... because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. (Butler, 2001, p. 2551)

The above statement gives the readers an insight into what gender actually is. It is actually an ideological construction, socially constructed and associated with

culturally inscribed acts, the absence of which negates the essence of gender. In the perspective of Butler's arguments, I present the argument that Mumtaz does not fit into the ideological gender concept because she does not perform those acts which are associated with her socially and culturally constructed gender: the female gender. Butler argues further that: "a sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a natural sex or a real woman or any number of prevalent and compelling social functions" (2001,p. 2551). She has given a proper definition of being a real woman if one has to be labeled as a specific gender. The re-visitation of her arguments has been done to strengthen the notion that Mumtaz does not come up to the requirement of her gender role. To talk about gender, to talk about the notion of body under discussion is indispensable. In the chapter *Subversive Bodily Acts: Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions* Butler opines about the body and, specifically, the female body:

What circumscribes that sits as "the female body"? Is "the body" or "the sexed body" the firm foundation on which gender and systems of compulsory sexuality operate? Or is 'the body' itself shaped by political forces with strategic interests in keeping that body bounded and constituted by the markers of sex? (Butler, 1990.p.129).

For Butler, the body is the medium to operate gender; it is the site of political and social competitions. She further states that "this "body" often appears to be a passive medium that is signified by an inscription from a cultural source figured as "external" to that body" (Butler,1990.p.129). She reconnects her thoughts by stating that "body is synecdochal for the social system" (Butler, 1990.p.132). The term "synecdochal" is the class of metonymy: a part representing the whole, as such it conveys the meaning of a body representing the social system: the body as an emblem of society. The next idea contributing to this notion presented by her is that "the body is signified through its inscription on the body."(Butler, 1990.p.135). Thus, the body in itself is not sufficient; it bears within it the cultural inscriptions: the signs of cultural phenomenon. In other words, the body appears as a cultural sign which has been allocated gender roles and performances. Built on this theoretical stance, this study is a feministic critique in the context which negotiates the de- fragmentation in feminine gender roles. By her rejection of the stereotypical female role, psyche and self, Mumtaz appears as a feministic stance adopted by feminists to negotiate patriarchal norms and their gender supremacy.

Mumtaz' quest for power and dominance lies in the fact that she is in search of her feminine identity. She challenges the prevalent cultural norms in Pakistani patriarchal society by trying to eliminate gender discrimination. At the outset of the the novel, the readers find that she is the narrator who, in her narrative role, sheds light on

various aspects, of Daru's personality, his life and her own personality. The researcher's argument that she appears as subverted female gender is supported by different facts. Mumtaz is unable to fulfill the role of a traditional wife and mother. Her life in America has been described vividly by Mumtaz herself. It was a life full of fun and frolic, of dance and drink. Her status, class and tastes lend an element of elegance to her personality and her actions. Her charismatic personality overshadows the dominating male characters in the text. She had adjusted to life in America and its culture since it matched her bent of mind and her temperament. Her role as a mother and wife can be analyzed as proof of her non-traditional feminine self. The marriage between Mumtaz and Aurangzaib was a failure from the start because of their opposing temperaments and Mumtaz' uncompromising nature due to which she is unable to adjust after returning from America. The following discussion throws light on her dilemma.

Daru: What makes you think she is unhappy?

Ozi: Little things. She never wants to talk. She is always tired.

Daru: Lahore isn't New York, maybe she does not like the city" (Hamid, 2000, p. 110)

Mumtaz is liberal and does not think that she is the type of girl who is suitable for being a housewife because the chores and duties of a wife do not suit her. She herself acknowledges this: "I was not the marrying sort. Besides I was in love... Still I should not have married him. I had no idea what marriage really meant and I didn't know myself yet" (Hamid, 2000, p. 154). Butler argues that a gender has to perform a role, "the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established" (2001, p.2552). Mumtaz does not fall into the culturally conferred gender role because she does not want to perform and reenact the feminine roles. Mumtaz has also enumerated various reasons why she married Ozi. She was afraid of being called a spinster and broods over the future of girls who do not marry at the suitable time. She thinks that marriage has restricted her by imposing wifely duties on her. The sentence "I was not the marrying sort" (Hamid, 2000, p.154) throws light on her temperament which the latter part of the narration exposes to the readers. Being a wife she is not willing to show a cooperative and compromising attitude towards her husband. She smokes, drinks and commits adultery with her husband's best friend Ozi and enjoys power over Daru, who is the externalization of her male self.

The researcher's argument that she is a subverted gender is also supported by the fact that she was unable to fulfill the role of a traditional mother. Mumtaz is not the type of mother she should be. She does not have maternal feelings toward her son and gives vent to her feelings when she is pregnant with Muazzam: "I resigned myself to

it. Or maybe I saw it as a kind of martyrdom” (Hamid, 2000, p. 151). This sentence truly expresses her feelings because she did not want to be pregnant and give birth to a child. It was because of persistence and repeated requests of Ozi that she succumbed although she feels frightened and strange throughout her pregnancy. Hamid presents Mumtaz saying that, “most mothers glow when they are pregnant, I sweated” (Hamid, 2000, p.151). Such negation of her maternity is an important point and supports the researcher’s hypothesis that Mumtaz has masculine traits in her personality. Her masculine self-negates her feminine gender; her manner of living, her habits, her priorities and her thinking patterns; all differ from her biological female self. Butler opines in this regard, that:

Gender is the project which has cultural survival as its ends. Gender is performance with clearly punitive consequences...we regularly punish those, who fail to do their gender rights...because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender and without those acts, there would be no gender at all (2001, p. 2551).

Thus Mumtaz does not want to be ‘performative’ within her culturally defined gender as Butler voices it. That is why she continuously negates her gender roles of being a wife and a mother and does not want her cultural survival encoded into her feminine gender. Even giving birth does not satisfy her sense of selfhood (her gender role) and the sight of her son does not evoke any motherly feelings in her. She says: “at first the baby was like a science class. I learned how to use new equipment, how to pump, sterilize, clean, burp, wrap, powder” (Hamid, 2000, p.151). It was not a spiritually uplifting experience for her “My son my baby my little janu, my one and only, I felt nothing for him” (Hamid, 2000, p.162). Mumtaz does not fit into the culturally conferred gender role because she does not want to perform and reenact her feminine roles. There are various shades of Mumtaz’ ‘self’. She cries in front of Daru and upon his asking she told him, “I’m a bad mother. You do not know. Muazzam told me I do not love him” (Hamid, 2000, p.173). Her son wanted her to read a story, but she had gone to meet her lover Daru, who also is unable to understand her relationship with her son. Sometimes she is ready to do everything for him but at other times she seems least concerned. Her life style matches that of Daru rather than that of her own husband. She is very much concerned with consumption of electricity considering it wastage as, “the entire country suffers because of the wastefulness of a privilege few” (Hamid, 2000, p.106).

Mohsin Hamid states: “Aurangzeb loved ACs with a passion unrivaled by his love for any other species of inanimate object” (Hamid, 2000, p.105). But it is interesting to note that Daru, being Mumtaz’ lover, has the same ideology as that of Aurangzeb for air conditioned rooms because his mother died because of lack of electricity, when

she was sleeping on the roof of their home one night. This is the first important clue in tracing the bond between Daru and Mumtaz, who has unusual power over Daru. Mumtaz and her latent desires are exposed to the readers in those moments with Daru. In their courtship, it is Mumtaz who takes initiative in establishing a bond between them since Daru, being a friend of Ozi, her husband, is always guilty of betraying his friend. It is in intimate moments with Daru, that multidimensional aspects of Mumtaz' personality are exposed before the reader. The desperate self of Mumtaz finds solace in the arms of Daru in Lahore. She presents her excuse: "I tried to restart my marriage to rediscover everything that had made me love Ozi in the first place" (Hamid, 2000, p.156). Butler states in this regard that the gendered body has no ontological reality to possess.

Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality (Hamid, 2000, p.136).

There are no such 'performative acts, gestures and enactments' from Mumtaz to be labeled as feminine. The performance of Mumtaz as a male lover, by reversing her gender role compels the readers to fit her conceptually in the propagated notion of 'gender performed', where according to Butler, a kind of performance is needed to negate fixed gender roles. Therefore, in her intimate scenes, during kissing and her lovemaking with Daru, she seems to be in command of their courtship. Not even once do we find Daru taking the lead of their romantic endeavour. After going through these sentences articulated by her as "he seemed the perfect partner for my first extramarital affair. He was smart and sexy and since he was one of Ozi's best friends I knew he'd keep his mouth shut" (Hamid, 2000, p.158). The readers feel as if they are listening to these dialogues from a male lover. Mumtaz leads Daru in their romantic affair. Her confession, "My affair with Daru was the most liberating experience I have ever had. I also felt good" (Hamid, 2000, p.158) gives the readers an opportunity to peep into her powerful and unconventional self. In their love relation, sometimes Daru feels hesitation and becomes nervous, but Mumtaz does not. Her relation with Daru is of spiritual nature. She thinks that her agonised soul has started healing after her alliance with him. Whenever she meets Daru, she treats him in a very frank and free manner. Nevertheless, she has performed the gender role of a male possessing a female gender body. Chaudhary, F, and Ahmed, Z(2019) argue regarding their relation:

Sexual encounters with Mumtaz allow Daru to temporarily forget his miserable conditions and to feel as if he is replacing Ozi in Mumtaz' life. The more time he spends with Mumtaz, the more disillusioned he becomes and the further he drifts away from his roots. He clings to Mumtaz in a similar desperation as exhibited by Changez. But Mumtaz fails to offer a permanent companionship to Daru and remains entangled in her own troubles (26).

Khatoon,S et al(2019) commenting on Mumtaz' character state:

Mumtaz' character stands for the very few people of indigenous society who raise their voice for the rights of the minority but ironically much like Daru she also loses her strength at the end because of the coercive structure of spiral of silence. This coercive silence results from the conflict that a figure like Mumtaz faces from a sense of incompatibility. She becomes a bad mother, a disobedient wife, an immoral friend.... This shows how the socio-political situation suppresses any deviant voice- be it minority voice, or a voice of revolutionary thinking that Mumtaz signifies (52).

It is important to turn back to Butler's words regarding gender and performance contextualizing Mumtaz' case as Butler states:

We are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: Anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, both of them are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance but sex and gender, gender and performance (Butler,2001,p.2549-2550).

Butler states that there is dissonance between 'gender and performance', there is also difference between the concepts of gender performed and gender performance. The notion of gender performed means we act opposite to the gender we are. This Butler states to be: "the distinction between the anatomy of the performer and the gender that is being performed" (Hamid, 2000, p.137). This statement clearly shows that in gender performed the body of the concerned gender is opposite to the actions that gender is performing. On the other hand, is the notion of gender performance: a phenomenon produced and reproduced all the time; we talk, act, walk and behave as man or woman and the female gender or male gender takes delight in acting and performing what they actually are. The concern here is related to the notion of the gender performed since Mumtaz performs the role of a male lover quite opposite to her own gender, while negating her gender requirements. Hence, this idea can also be supported on this ground that there is no feminine gender performativity in Mumtaz.

Acting like a male partner, Mumtaz acts the notion of destabilization of the fixed gender identity rooted in her female body. Butler opines; “If one thinks that one sees a man dressed as a woman or a woman dressed as a man, then one takes the first term of each of those perceptions as the “reality” of gender: the gender that is introduced through the simile lacks “reality,” and is taken to constitute an illusory appearance (1999,p.xx11). The terms, ‘sex, gender and performance’ (Butler, 2001, p.2549-2550) and their interplay by Butler, is important to cite here since the connotation, is that Mumtaz possesses another ‘gender’ (female) but her ‘performance’ (as a male partner or lover) contextually fits her into another ‘gender role’ (male) which in other words is her gender performed role: the performance she adopts to subvert her feminine self by blurring the boundaries of fixed gender roles. Mumtaz shares a drink with Daru, smokes cigarettes and heroin with him, experiences lapses of electricity and pangs of poverty stricken atmosphere with him. In Daru’s words “I’m used to sweating all the time, so it does not bother me and Mumtaz does not seem to mind” (Hamid, 2000, p.167). Daru knows she has a powerful personality and states, “I think Mumtaz is already at least a tenth mine” (Hamid, 2000, p.171). In the text, we go through such sentences repeatedly in which Hamid tells us that she is smoking cigarettes. For example in one instance the readers are told that, “She drops her cigarette on the floor. I’m leaving” (Hamid, 2000, p.210). Her indulgence in sex, cigarettes and heroine with him is to give vent to her feelings of depression, loneliness and aggression. They are considered as tonics for her desperate self and when she gets hold of her depression and tortured self, she leaves everyone, including Daru.

Mumtaz exerts psychological and masculine control over Daru as usually males have over their wives and beloveds. When Daru tells her that he has tried heroin, she forbids him from taking it again “that’s bad, do not do it again” (Hamid, 2000, p.171). Daru’s affirming answer, “I won’t do it again” (Hamid, 2000, p.171) proves Mumtaz’ power over him. Her masculine lover power can also be noted when Daru states “She holds my hand between gear shifts, between third and second” (Hamid, 2000, p.131). Later in the text, Ozi came to know about their affair, but he was also under the effect of her magnetic personality and his question ‘but what can I say?’ shows his complete reliance and dependence on Mumtaz. Mumtaz’ masculine self can also be negotiated on another ground since she was writing articles for a newspaper under the male pseudonym of Zulfikar Mantoo, hiding her feminine identity under the name of a male journalist, when she returns to Lahore. The reason for choosing this name as she tells Daru is that Zulfikar is the name of a sword while Mantoo is the name of a South Asian author known for writing about sexual issues: When she was asked, “Why Zulfikar Mantoo?” she responds, “Mantoo was my favourite short story writer, and he wrote about prostitutes, alcohol, sex, Lahore’s underbelly” (Hamid, 2000, p.129). Through this adopted identity, she strives to negate patriarchal control imposed on her gender and body. According to Butler: “The female body....perhaps

the only gender oppression that exercises itself, although to different degrees and in different forms, across age, race, class and sexual orientation...has to be acknowledged as an amazingly durable and flexible strategy of social control" (Butler,1990,p.166). Mumtaz strives to negate 'this strategy of social control'.

Daru is astonished at Mumtaz' bravery and daring self as she was not afraid to be in such a dangerous place as Heera Mandi in the middle of the night and interview the madam of a brothel (Dilaram) there. Mumtaz states; "that's a little complicated. Life is much easier if I am not working as a journalist and Zulfikar Mantoo is" (Hamid, 2000,p.46). No one knows the real identity of Mumtaz except the director of the newspaper. Her first article was a hit. Her adoption of a male name is indicative of not only her disguised identity but also her quest for power and dominance which is given mostly to males in Pakistani patriarchal society. But writing gives her a powerful self while erasing the memories of her disturbed former self; and gives her power to rule the hearts of the people by exposing truth. By pointing out the masculine traits in Mumtaz' personality, the researcher intends to negotiate the struggle of women who are considered as 'other' in this culture-bound society. Susan Bordo opines in this regard:

Feminism imagined the human body as itself a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped by histories and practices of containment and control...from foot binding and corseting to rape and battling to compulsory heterosexuality, forced sterilization, unwanted pregnancy, and explicit commodification (1993,p.21).

When feminism as a movement started, the feminists strove hard to give women writers their due place in the literary scenario. The fight was fought for their literary rights and recognition and male supremacy was challenged by feminist critics by pointing out the literary phenomenon of giving major importance to male heroes and protagonists and marginalizing female protagonists. In the third wave of feminism, to give voice to injustice done to females, a body of literature was produced where adoption of male ideology, habits and ways of living was done by female protagonists to revolt against patriarchy. In this respect, Butler states:

If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal (1999, p. 09).

*Moth Smoke* falls into the same category of feminist literature since Hamid wants to highlight the strong personality of Mumtaz. It is in her relationship with Daru that another aspect of Mumtaz' personality comes into our view, that is, her masculine habits and hobbies which further subvert her feminine gender. While watching Daru practicing boxing, her immediate reaction is that she too wants to practice it. She asks, "Can you teach me?" and when Daru asks, "What do you mean?" Mumtaz eagerly replies, "I need a good workout" (Hamid, 2000, p.114). All her interests and habits are masculine in nature and she likes to discuss politics, which for a long time considered the domain of males. This notion links to the primary debate that she is performing the role of the other gender and her own gender is destabilized. In Butler's words "I usually use "normative" in a way that is synonymous with "pertaining to the norms that govern gender. But the term "normative" also pertains to ethical justification, how it is established, and what concrete consequences proceed therefrom"(xx). Mumtaz' driving is also an externalization of her masculine self and non- performative gender. She drives with aggression and controlled power. During Daru's visit with Mumtaz, he observes her magnetic personality. She drives fast shifting through gears – unlike the timid and confused driving of her feminine self. An element of elegance can be noted in her personality and driving. Her manner of driving refers to the de-stabilization of her gender; as Butler states "it showed that what we take to be an "internal" feature of ourselves is one that we anticipate and produce through certain bodily acts, at an extreme, an hallucinatory effect of naturalized gestures"(xv).

Being a professional journalist, Mumtaz is committed to her profession; she is Zulfikar Mantoo, searching for truth - a naked truth which is hidden from the eyes of a common layman. In search of truth, she goes to prostitutes, and policemen etc since it satisfies her adventurous self to search for truth. She takes Daru to Heera Mandi to interview a prostitute. Daru asks her: "So who is Zulfikar Mantoo?" and her answer was "Me, I am Zulfikar Mantoo" (46). Previously, she says to Daru when she meets him, "I'm pretty stoned myself... I feel completely empty (Hamid, 2000, p.33) but she acknowledges her transformation after her writing spree as "but as soon as I began, wings that had been growing for years, stretched and pushed and I found myself flying" (157). Her becoming Mantoo is de-stabilization of her gender and according to Butler "taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders" (1999, p.10). At the end of the novel, Daru is found guilty of murder. She writes about Daru also as a journalist even though she was his beloved. At the start of the novel we find her interviewing Professor Julius Superb, and introducing herself as Zulfikar Mantoo. The professor tells her that he can discuss literature, economics and development, etc. and she asks different questions like how he met Daru, Daru's subject of dissertation, and the kind of man he actually was.

Sex is also a dominating word in the text which characterizes the personality of the feminine self of Mumtaz. She always maintains her sexual power over him through the impact of her body. Mumtaz wants a partner in sex because she does not feel sensual attraction towards her husband, but she feels that passion for Daru. The time comes when she becomes bored with him and leaves him as her amorous relationship starts losing its charm. Mumtaz prompts the male rivalry between her lover Daru and her husband Ozi, the two being close friends. She seems to be dominated by her passion and desire: two dominant codes in her personality. She is the woman who wants to experience the heights of passions. The indifferent nature of Mumtaz can be analyzed from the ending of her affair with Daru and is another masculine trait of her personality. She says to Daru at one point in the text, "Do not do this." Daru asks, "What?" then, she repeats, "Don't make it something it isn't". He again asks, "What isn't this?" then, she replies, "this isn't courtship" (Hamid, 2000, p. 207). This dialogue does not show lack of sincerity on Mumtaz' part as the beloved of Daru, but the sheer lack of spirit of love and warmth. In response to Daru's declaration, "I love you" (208) her response is, "stop saying that" (Hamid, 2000, p. 208). Finding herself entangled in this courtship, she starts blaming him for this relationship. When Daru says you are the one who made this happen, she answers, "I just got over my guilt first" (Hamid,2000,p.208). Mumtaz appears here more powerful, dramatic and realistic than Daru. Chaudhary, F, and Ahmed, Z (2019) state that Hamid "shows the readers how young men like Daru often ruin their lives in a mad perusal of American inspired life style" (24).

Mumtaz' masculine self is evident when she says, "Daru I am married I have a son. I am not looking to mate. I am looking to be with a man for me because it makes me happy" (Hamid, 2000, p.208). These dialogues show the practical approach of Mumtaz. She is neither sincere with her husband Ozi nor with Daru. But, at least, she has the credit of being honest with him here because she straightforwardly confesses her weakness and utters, "I am being honest for you. If you are looking for a wife, you need to look somewhere else. I am an awful wife. And I am already married" (Hamid, 2000, p.208). Her speech speaks of her true feminine self. Mumtaz' action can be viewed against the backdrop of Butler's statement: "What kind of gender performance will enact and reveal the performativity of gender itself in a way that destabilizes the naturalized categories of identity"( Butler,2001,p. 2551). Mumtaz' initiation of the love affair, her practical approach and eventually ending her infatuation-based relation subvert the notion of fixed gender identities in patriarchal societies. If she acted like a female, she would probably have been weeping and emotionally blackmailing Daru, but she acts otherwise. Reversing the situation, Daru behaves like the stereotypical female here, providing further evidence of non-performativity of her actions.

Daru accuses Mumtaz for not loving her son by saying “he is going to grow up wondering why his mother never really talks to him, why she is always so distant. He will be miserable” (Hamid, 2000, p.210). Her response to these accusations is, “Simply I don’t love you” (Hamid, 2000, p.210). This dictates the final verdict of her self-esteem and feminine honour. She is straightforward enough to tell him, “I am sorry Daru, we can’t be lovers anymore. I am not going to come to see you anymore” (Hamid, 2000, p.228). Never once does the reader find Mumtaz confronting harsh and naked reality with the approach of an idealist. On the other hand, Daru is shown to be disillusioned and directionless, being caught in a web of crimes in the poverty stricken atmosphere. Daru has a timid and stereotypical female approach, although he should have had a more masculine approach showing the reversal of gender roles. Butler, voicing this phenomenon states:

It does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies. Further, even if the sexes appear to be un-problematically binary in their morphology and constitution (which will become a question), there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two (11).

Butler’s view that “the relation between the “imitation” and the “original” is... more complicated “(1990, p.137) also throws light on the reversed gender roles Mumtaz and Daru enact in this episode.

Hamid’s feminist leaning is shown in the depiction of the strong character of Mumtaz who has disowned her own community in Pakistani patriarchal society. By lending strong masculine traits to Mumtaz’ personality, Hamid subverts the established code of gender roles. Mumtaz emerges on the literary canvas as a nonchalant being waving off the notion of her feminine gender by posing a challenge to gender and body politics critics. With the projection of gender performed (her role as male) and non-performativity of her gender, she negates the fixed gender ideology. As it is opined:

When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine as male body as easily as a female one.( Butler,1999,p.10)

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the researcher has tried to prove her hypothesis that Mumtaz lacks traditional femininity. She has masculine traits in her personality because her

interests, hobbies and ideology are masculine in nature. She even writes under the pseudo name of Zulfikar Mantoo, hiding her identity. Her struggle to maintain her feminine identity leads her to challenge established norms of Pakistani patriarchal society which gives rights and authority to males only. Feminists argue that the adoption of masculine ways of living on the part of women is in fact feminine rebellion against patriarchal ideology and society. Butler also argues that the concept of destabilization of fixed gender has occurred in gender studies because of the non-performative acts that gender plays. Her views about gender have been taken as a supportive pillar to ground the hypothesis negotiated in this research paper. Mumtaz' gender non- performativity has been negotiated in this context by pointing out her subverted feminine self and feminine gender role in Pakistani patriarchal society. Mumtaz' subverted feminine self appears to the readers in her intimate moments with Darashikhov (Daru) and in her role as wife, mother, lover and professional writer. Butler's view that "true gender is a fantasy" and that a person can also perform contrary to his gender has strongly been supported as she states:

If the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that genders can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. (1990, p.136)

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