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Gender Discrimination in Edward Allan Baker's *Dolores* (1920) and William Somerset Maugham's *The Constant Wife* (1989)

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Dedications

To my beloved parents, Ouanes Ali and OuchaouGhania, who supported me all along my studies.

To my brothers, Rafik and Toufik.

To my grandmother Fatma

To my family in law and my beloved husband, Samir.

To all my friends and teachers and those who love me, especially Mbarka

AMEL

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Abstract

The aim of this present study was to examine the issue of gender discrimination in Edward Allan Baker's *Dolores* (1989) and William Somerset Maugham *The Constant Wife* (1920). To highlight the crucial reality in which women lived, focusing on the American and British ones, we have borrowed some theoretical concepts from Simone De Beauvoir's theory **The Second Sex** (1949) to demonstrate the subordinate position that women occupied in both societies, and we have also made reference to Bell Hooks' theory **From Margin to Center** to investigate women's struggle for liberation from old cultural beliefs. As a conclusion, we have noticed that the two playwrights shared the same views despite their different backgrounds and periods of life.

Introduction

This research is an attempt to explore the issue of gender discrimination in the American and British society. We intend to examine the way in which women are portrayed by the modernist playwright William Somerset Maugham in *The Constant Wife* (1920) and the post-modernist Edward Allan Baker in *Dolores* (1989).

Indeed, women have been, throughout history, subject of legal discrimination based on their gender. In patriarchal society, men have the right to dominate and practice all the forms of violence on their wives because of the stereotypes which argue that women are viewed as “the weaker sex” who need protection throughout their lives. In fact, gender discrimination as a term is also known as sexism, is defined as:

A prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. It can affect any gender but it is particularly documented as affecting women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles and many include the belief that one sex or gender intrinsically superior to another. Furthermore, extreme sexism may foster sexual harassment, rape and another form of sexual violence.¹

It is significant to mention that the twentieth century witnesses a shift from realistic traditions to a modernist one which brings upheavals to the world in general and to the Western society in particular. Feminist movements rise to stress gender discrimination to be not an individual matter, but it is embedded in the structure of societies. It has also developed more complex views about gender, sex and sexuality. Gender is considered as a social status and a set of relationships between men and women. Many playwrights use their voice to depict women's situation in their societies. Maugham's and Baker's works are concerned with the real life of women in Western society.

Maugham's *The Constant Wife* is one of the most significant plays in the British drama which depicts the oppression of women in relation to their social class. Besides, Baker's *Dolores*, an American play, does not seem to be different from that of Somerset in

terms of social classes and women issues. But it is also a kind of progression of women's situation in two different periods.

Review of Literature

Maugham's *The Constant Wife* has been considered as one of the best comedies of manners that have come from England for a long time. Therefore, it has received much attention and literary criticism from different perspectives.

One of the critiques is made by John Marson Brown which is quoted by Ruthel Hale in his work entitled *An Analysis of The Constant Wife by William Somerset Maugham*. He states that *The Constant Wife* is a play by a man who is both a playwright and a writer. For him, Mr. Maugham is a realist who succeeds to show the standard morality of marriage which is an important subject that not all the dramatists would dare to summon. The wife Constance in the play goes off on a trip with her lover, assured by her unfaithful husband that he will take her back. John Marson claims that the play is a kind of less audacious author would write today. In many respects, the brightness, the sophistication, and the gaiety of Mr. Maugham's comedy are carried over to the present time².

Susan Carlson comments in her work *Women and Comedy* that:

The Constant Wife is a little known play that is extraordinary since it takes as its subject the ordinary role of women in comedy. In its extremely self-conscious play, Maugham takes on the subject matter of all comedy- social codes and manners, stereotypes of women and men, and socially affirmative endings like marriage.³

She also comments on the production of the drama which plays a major role in predicting its reception. For her, Maugham does not speak on the issue of women in his play directly, but in his commentary on the preferences, class, and temporality of theatrical audiences. He offers reasons for the variable reading.

Another critique was made by Ruthel Hale who has quoted L.H. Wenning that the constant wife has limited driving power as a modern-age vehicle, but it supports more wit and perception than a carload of Broadway's recent tries at high comedy.⁴

The American Conservatory Theatre has quoted in the work *Words on Plays*, Benedict Nightingale from his journal *London Times* that it was evident and surely the period when English drama broke with its prurient Victorian past. When Maugham wrote *The Constant Wife*, Coward was in his theatrical infancy. Shaw had suggested that orthodox marriage was a fraud, but then Shaw was a maverick who wrote plays for socialists, bluestockings and cads. Here was a mainstream dramatist not merely justifying adultery, but doing it through a woman's mouth and for a woman's benefit⁵.

It is important to note that the American playwright Edward Allan Baker received many critiques all over his career thanks to his works that were of great interest especially his plays *North of Providence* and *Dolores*. Lawrence Van Gelder is one of the critics that had stated in *New York Times* in June 1999 that:

Edward Allan Baker tells a wrenching story of loves found and lost, of broken hearts and betrayal. Mr. Baker's play inflames the scarred tissue of family relationships already torn and raw from the chaos of life⁶.

According to the critic, Baker discusses through his plays the families' relationship and their issues.

It is worth to note that *Dolores* as a performed play has attracted much attention. Baker has presented a slice of life as a conversation between the two sisters. He constructed the script so adroitly and the play is so telling that the spectator gets the sensation of being in a room with the two women. The director Dominic Ottersbach's expert guidance argues that the actors are involved in their characters and establishing a sense of their sisterhood under the tension that interpenetrates the atmosphere. Both have banded the regional accent, and each is an apparent counterpoint to the other⁷.

Edward Albee is one among the best known playwrights who comments Edward Allan Baker's works especially his plays *Dolores* and *North of Providence*. He asserts that

Edward Allan Baker has always a good ear and his characters live and breathe right on the page. He quotes that: you breathe fire into the smoking embers of naturalism.⁸

Issue and Working Hypothesis

From our review of some of the literature and critical reception of Maugham's *The Constant Wife*, one can argue that this play has received much attention and different interpretations from several perspectives whereas Baker's *Dolores*, in general, gained less critical attention. This supports our belief that the two plays used in our research have never been undertaken as a subject matter of study.

It is clear that even though the two plays are from different periods of time (1920-1989), this fact does not prevent them to be studied together. Therefore, we propose a study of the two authors on the basis that both of them share a common concern with women's status in the Western society.

We intend to adopt some theoretical concepts by Simon De Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex* which is published in 1949, to understand the lived experiences of women throughout history. Then, we will rely on Bell Hooks' book *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center* to explore the way in which the two plays reflect the playwright's thought about gender and how women are portrayed in the British and American society?

As for the methodological outline to implement our research, our dissertation will be composed of a general introduction in which we define the term gender in relation to women and review some of the critiques produced on Maugham's *The Constant Wife* and Baker's *Dolores*. Then, we build our topic emphasis and working hypotheses. As far as the method and material sections are concerned, we provide a brief summary of the two theories starting with Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* then Bell Hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center*. Add to this, some biographical elements about the two authors and an overall synopsis of the two plays. Our result section will shed light on the general findings of

our research whereas the discussion will be dedicated to the understanding of women's oppression from different side, the social, economic and even biological issues taking into consideration the significant period of time between the two plays. The conclusion of our dissertation will be concerned with the restatement of the main issues explored in our piece of work.

Endnotes

1. <http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/sexism> viewed on April 16, 2016.
2. Ruthell Hale, *An Analysis of The Constant Wife by William Somerset Maugham* quoted John Marson (Arkadelphia, Arkansas: a graduate course paper submitted to Mr. James E. Durham for English 338G-modern drama, Henderson state teachers college, p 33).
3. Carlson Susan, *“Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition”*. The University of Michigan Press, 1991 p23.
4. Ruthell Hale, *an Analysis of The Constant Wife by William Somerset Maugham* quoted L.H Wenning (Arkadelphia, Arkansas: a graduate course paper submitted to Mr. James E. Durham for English 338G-modern drama, Henderson state teachers college, p 33).
5. The American Conservatory Theatre, *“Words On Plays”*, Editor Elizabeth Broderson, 2003 p 6.
6. <http://www.backstage.com/review/la-theater/dolores/> viewed on April, 2016.
7. <http://www.Edwardallanbaker.com/html/reviews.html> viewed on April, 2016.
8. Ibid.

Methods and materials

1. Methods

This part of our dissertation sheds light on the theories relied on in our study. We borrowed some concepts which are relevant to our work from Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and Bell Hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*.

a) Simone De Beauvoir's Theory: The Second Sex

Simone de Beauvoir is a French Feminist intellectual theorist and existentialist of her era. She has been a prolific writer producing more than seven books. *The Second Sex* (1949) is one of her famous books, which is considered one of the major feminist works that has dealt with the experience of women throughout history; it is known to be the feminist bible. Simone de Beauvoir bases her ideas on the relation between men and women in different perspectives of life such as the cultural, social and even the biological one. She was very inspired by the French philosopher John Paul Sartre and the French writer Albert Camus and even the feminist theorist Virginia Wolf. Through her feminist revolution, she aimed at exploring the issues of gender differences and women rights and interests.

In *the Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir draws the story of women and their position as a human being. According to her, women ,being always forced to occupy the secondary place in the world in relation to men. She quotes that the whole feminine history have been manmade.⁹ She divides this book into several chapters to touch all the perspectives that have relation with the existence of women in the world and how they are viewed by society in general and man in special. She starts with a very famous quotation where she claims that one is not born, but becomes a woman.¹⁰ this means that the roles that the patriarchal society has associated to women are not given to them by birth, or by virtue of their biology but rather they are socially constructed.

De Beauvoir starts her first volume with an explanation of the relationship between ovum and sperm in several creatures to link them with the human being. She describes women and men's connection to the other species in term of reproduction; through this comparison, she argues that norm and values cannot be based on the physiology, and the fact of biology must be seen on the economic, social and the physiological context. Furthermore, de Beauvoir sheds light on the evolution of women' condition participation in production and freedom from reproductive slavery.

The examination of the problem of motherhood left women stagnated to their body like animals, what gives men the opportunity to dominate them. She expands her explanation by showing how women were dominated by men gradually beginning with the status of female by referring to the great goddess found in Susa and the opinion of the ancient Greek like Pythagoras who stated there are good principle that created order, light and man and a bad principle that created chaos, darkness and women¹¹. In other words, all the good features are attributed to men like light, order... and the bad ones are coined to women such as darkness, chaos...

Transcendence and immanence are distinct dichotomies that are determined to both sexes; men and women. Transcendence which is positive refers to men as the norm/ virtues, freedom, authenticity, whereas immanence which is negative appropriate to women as stagnation, deviation, objectivity.

Inheritance and patrimony are other terms that are referred to men rather than to women. She explains the thinking of patriarchy which is the fact of men rather than of women because women through employing their erotic attraction can take property away from its owners and put it into circulation. As the case of thieves, swindlers, this belief gave men the opportunity to oppress women when they seek to keep patrimony.

Abortion is another subject that is treated by Simone De Beauvoir in this book. For her, abortion is something not bad except some risks which can happen for the mother. She highlights the plight of families and children born to unsuitable homes. She rejects the fact that the Catholic Church declares that the unborn children would not end up in heaven because of their lack of baptism. What made it for her contradictory to the other church teaching which argues that the soul who was not unpured without baptises would still with god. This pushed De Beauvoir to show her negative thought about marriage by saying that to ask two spouses bound by patriarchal social and moral ties to satisfy each other sexually for their whole lives is pure absurdity¹². She states that marriage oppressed women and caused their destruction. De Beauvoir quotes Sophia Kalstoy: “you are stuck there forever and there you must sit”¹³. For her, wives and husbands have a lot of inequalities. Instead of passing their time in love of each other, they pass it in conjugal love.

Moreover, what is perhaps the most famous line of *The Second Sex* which is translated in 1952 is “one is not born but becomes a woman”.¹⁴ De Beauvoir sees women as a myth which is the case of everybody. In her famous quotation, she states that no biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figures that the human female presents in society. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and female.

In her conclusion of this book, Simone de Beauvoir traces a future where the human being will be equal. Her final words in this book:

It is for man to establish the reign of liberty in the midst of the world of the given, to gain the supreme victory, it is necessary for one thing that by and through their natural differentiation men and women unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.¹⁵

In this quotation, Simone De Beauvoir incites men and women to respect and accept each other although the differences.

b) Bell Hooks’ Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center (1984)

Bell Hooks is an American social activist feminist intellectual poet author and cultural critic. She writes in a postmodern way and focused on race, gender, class, culture and sexuality.

Her theory about feminism is well explained in her *Feminist Theory: From Margins to Center*, where she explains that women are marginalized in society. In fact, she states that she lives in the margins of society as she says being a part of the whole but outside the main body¹⁶. She gives a definition to the concept feminism as it is a movement or a struggle to end sexism, sexist exploitation and oppression¹⁷. She presents the feminist struggle against domination, whether it is patriarchal violence in the home as a tool of control of romantic partners or children, the imposition of sexual morality upon others, the limitation of women's ability to control their own bodies.

She rejects, as well as, the thinking of others that feminism seeks to make men and women equal and that feminism is anti-male. Those people think that women's freedom is linked to abortion, to be lesbians, and to be rapped... even the Christians think that god has ordained that women are subordinate to men in the domestic household¹⁸. From this quotation, we understand that Bell Hooks is against people who think that women's freedom is to be lesbian and by abortions... and rejects the Christian thought that god has created women to be subservient to men.

She argues that the Western society sees that men are unequal, and all women do not share a common social status. For this, she advocates for women to accept each other whatever the differences which exist between them.

According to Bell Hooks, The feminist movement comes with the claim of civil rights and the sexual liberation which seek for free love that means having as much sex as one wanted with whomever one desired. Women suffer from forced marriages and unwanted pregnancies and seek for safe contraceptives and the right to a legal abortion. Indeed, the appearance of birth control pills has saved many women from the unwanted pregnancies but

this was seen by others as challenging the idea that the only reason of the existence of women is to bear children¹⁹. This movement makes female feel themselves and their bodies no longer the property of men.

Hooks insists on men's inclusion in the feminist movement. In fact, she states that men are not exploited or oppressed by sexism, but there are ways in which they suffer as a result of it²⁰.

2. Materials

This chapter will offer some biographical elements on Maugham and Baker that we think are of great importance to examine our work. In addition to this, we will provide a brief summary on the two plays, *The Constant Wife* and *Dolores*.

a) Biographical Background on William Somerset Maugham

William Somerset Maugham is an English novelist, short story writer, playwright, and essayist. He was born in the British Embassy in Paris on January 25, 1874. After the death of his parents, he was raised from the age of ten by a clergyman uncle in England. He studied at King's school then moved to Heidelberg in Germany where he had his homosexual experience in 1890 which he refuses to admit until the end of his life. When he saw Ibsen's play, he began to imitate the playwright's style in his writings. After returning to London, his working as a physician and surgeon at St. Thomas Hospital medical school gave him the inspiration for his first novel, *Liza of Lambeth* (1897). During World War I, Maugham joined the Red Cross ambulance unit in France, where he met one of the great loves of his life, Gerald Hoxton, but this marriage was not a success.

The period between 1915 and 1930 was Maugham's most fruitful and productive. The plays he wrote such as *Of Human Bondage* 1918, *the Circle* 1919, *the Constant wife* 1926, *the Letter* 1927, were well received. He wrote also many short stories and novels such as *Cakes*

and Ale 1930, *the Razor's Edge* 1944. He was viewed as the most productive and highest-paid British writer of his era.

Biographical Background on Edward Allen Baker:

Edward Allan Baker is an American self-taught playwright. He was born at Providence, Rhode Island. He was inspired by the Trinity square repertory company. He studied theatre at the University of Rhode Island where his first and best known full-length play, *Prairie Avenue*, was developed and staged. Baker was “an artist in residence”, teaching theatre in prisons, halfway houses, and on the reservation of the Narragansett Indians.

Edward Allan Baker wrote many plays including; *Lady of Fadima*, *Public Street Marriage*, *the Buffer*, *North of Providence*. In 1989, he wrote *Dolores* one act- play where he employs a black comedy genre approach to the serious problem of an abused wife.

c). Synopsis of *the Constant Wife*

The Constant Wife is a three act comedy of manners. It is set in the Middleton's house, and it deals with a fragile balance of love, marriage and infidelity. Constance Middleton seems to be the victim of her husband's infidelity with her best friend, Marie Louise. She is aware about the affair all along but tries to avoid its exposure in order not to humiliate herself and the others. Even when the truth is revealed by her husband Mortimer and Marie Louise, Constance denies it and defends the two lovers. Constance' illogical behaviour toward her husband's betrayal reinforces her moral position of being a proper constant wife. Later, she decides to join her friend's business, to gain her economic freedom. She also decides to take a vacation to Europe with her old beau, Bernard. At the end, John was constant toward his wife's decision despite all his attempts to stop her plans.

d). Synopsis of *Dolores*

Dolores is one act melodramatic play. It is set in a kitchen. It deals with sisterhood and family ties. The story is about two sisters brought up together under the domestic violence of

their father, who beats their mother, who in return beats Dolores. This has had a great impact on their lives. Dolores searches for help and refuge at her sister's house. Sandra does not want to get involved with Dolores's sufferings because of being afraid of her abusive and aggressive husband. These two sisters seem to search unsuccessfully for love, affection and family comfort.

Endnotes:

9. Simone De Beauvoir viewed on <http://m.sparknotes.com/lit/secondsex/quotes.html> [25/12/2015](#).
10. Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* Tran. Constance Borde, Sheila Malovany-Chevallier.(Ed Guallimard, Paris: 1949; reprint, New York: Vintage books, 1st edition, 2010, 330).
11. Ibid, 5.
12. Ibid, 530.
13. Ibid, 586.
14. Ibid, 330.
15. Ibid, 862-863.
16. Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From the Margin to Center*(United States, South End Press, 1984. Preface).
17. Ibid, 24
18. Bell Hooks, *Feminism is For Everybody: Passionate Politics* (Cambridge, South End Press, 2000, 2).
19. Ibid, 25.
20. Bell Hooks, *Feminist Theory: From the Margin to Center*(United States, South End Press, 1984. Preface).

Results and Discussion

Results

Throughout our dissertation, we tried to explore the issue of gender discrimination in the American and the British society taking Baker's *Dolores* (1989) and Maugham's *The Constant Wife* (1920) as a case study. Our investigation has fully demonstrated the harsh living situation of women in a patriarchal society. To prove this discrimination, we have borrowed some theoretical concepts from Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* and relied on Bell Hooks' *Feminist Theory; From Margin to Center*.

Our study of the issue of gender discrimination in both plays has revealed that women have been oppressed and marginalized throughout history similarly in the American and British societies despite the different periods during which the two plays were written. Through the analysis of the actions and the conversation between the characters in both plays, we have noticed that the immanent roles predestined to women have created negative attributes to them and forced them to remain in a constant state rather than to search for transcendence and be equal to men who have been viewed for a long time as the dominant, the norm and the whole.

Moreover, this study has demonstrated that women have been treated in relation to their social class, race and gender. In fact, the bourgeois women have gained some respect and importance in the patriarchal society in relation to their way of living as wives and mothers contrary to women from lower class who are categorized as the other and regarded as inessential and condemned to the domestic spheres such as childbearing and family caretaking. Indeed, women sought to liberate themselves from the social and cultural domination which violated their rights and used their body as object to satisfy men's desires. For this reason, women must come out from their long hibernation to revise the accepted cultural beliefs which positioned them in a subordinate place and prevent them to resist,

confront white supremacy. Women ought to transgress and take part in the public spheres starting by education to be active and equal to men.

Discussion

In this part of our dissertation, we will discuss the position of women as highlighted in Baker's *Dolores* and Maugham's *The Constant Wife*. The first chapter of the discussion section deals with **women's search for equality** in the two plays. It includes an analysis of immanence and its negative attributes to women and transcendence to men. The second chapter discusses **power and gender** in *Dolores* and *The Constant Wife* focusing on criticism of white capitalist patriarchy in relation to race, gender and class. It also sheds light on a general revision and question of accepted cultural beliefs and hierarchies through acknowledgement of cultural contradictions and transgressive education.

Chapter One: Women's Search for Equality in *The Constant Wife* and

Dolores

We will shed light on the significance of the dichotomy, transcendence versus immanence in an attempt to trace its negative attributes to woman.

1- Immanence and its Negative Attributes to Women:

Many indictments have been drawn against women from Greeks to our times. Their situation which has been imposed by patriarchal society has almost remained the same. Many stereotypes are created by men to keep control of women by referring to them as illogical, emotional, and vulgar. However, these references are done to position them at the subordinate part of the whole. In this respect, Joy Mosier-Dubinsky quoted Simone de Beauvoir in his article entitled *Other: Beauvoir's Existentialist Feminism* that: It is men, who, desirous of maintaining masculine prerogatives, have invented that divergence. Men have pretended to create a feminine domain the principle of life of immanence only in order to lock up women therein.²¹ Women are born free by nature like man, but they find themselves confined in a patriarchal society in which she wallows in immanence²². Unfortunately, these stereotypes

have been internalized by women, which relegate them to stagnation, deviation and objectification.

1-a. Stagnation

Simone de Beauvoir has related immanence to stagnation by saying that immanence is the state of stagnation within a situation.²³ In fact, the ones imprisoned within domestic spheres are those who see themselves happy because for them the meaning of happiness is centered on rest. In this respect, Simone de Beauvoir states that We declare happy those condemned to stagnation, under the pretext that happiness is immobility²⁴. Yet, this life has no goal, it is centered on futilities, and it is not very different from animal's life. Women's happiness resides in the utility to family, which weighs more than freedom and beauty. De Beauvoir associates immanence with repetition of the past by arguing that:

It is easy to understand why she is ruled by routine; time has no dimension of novelty for her, it is not a creative spring; because she is doomed to repetition, she does not see in the future anything but a duplication of the past.²⁵

As mentioned above, women's lives turn around the same roles. Their future is a reproduction of their past. Some works are designated to them such as child bearing, taking care of their family. Man condemns them not to escape from his oppression; they accept their displeased lives without rising to change it. Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir, in this respect, claims that:

A woman is shut up in a kitchen, and one is surprised her horizon is limited; her wings are cut, and then she is blamed for not knowing how to fly. Let a future be open to her and she will no longer be obliged to settle in the present.²⁶

Furthermore, even the bourgeois women experience the same situation as that of an ordinary one. They are wives, mothers and entertainers which led to immanence and incompleteness. Their status does not help them to free themselves from immanence and to go beyond it to reach transcendence as man.

In addition, Baker depicts the female characters, especially Sandra in *Dolores*, as passive, submissive and stagnated without any motivation to show how women depend on

man who is seen as saviors, a source of their happiness and comfort. Sandra is the best image of a passive woman who stays at home fulfilling gender roles as a wife and a mother. Her only occupation is running after her husband's desires. In this respect, Sandra claims in her words:

no! Vinnie would never have you stay here, an' me an' him been getting' along pretty good lately an' I don't wanna break it. I don't need 'imseein' you here' cause he'll turn right around an' split, an' I don't need that shit on top a' everything else! I got my little house with my little kitchen where I feed my little kids an' Vinnie brings home his little payback an' if there's a little extra on Friydays we go out to Valle's by the Airport for a little steak and salad, then to a show.²⁷

At the beginning of the play, Dolores, the eponymous protagonist, has witnessed the same stagnation and passivity to change her living situation despite the harsh treatment and violence which her husband, Jerry, exerts on her. He hits her as an animal without paying any attention to her feelings as a human being. All of her experiences with men have failed to find the ideal that could understand and give her what she deserves as a human. This is illustrated when Dolores says: he's out there! He's chasin' me since this mornin'!²⁸

Each time Jerry beats her, she escapes to her sister asking for help. Sandra is not much different from Dolores. She cannot offer a help for her because she is under the authority of her husband, Vinnie. She does not dare to disappoint him and disturb her family's stability. In fact, Sandra accepts the ethical behavior of the patriarchal society which determined its bearing and mothering roles as fundamental to her. This is explained through Sandra's conversation with Dolores:

SANDRA: I'm sick a' this shit, Dolores! Out!

DOLORES: He's afta' me!

SANDRA: I don't care!

DOLORES: I'm ya' fucken' sista' !

SANDRA: I don't care!

DOLORES: What is wrong with you?!

SANDRA: Me?! What's wrong with me?!

DOLORES: He wants ta' kill me!

SANDRA: You got alotta' nerve, girl!

DOLORES: You think I'm kiddin'?!

SANDRA: I don't want to get involved!²⁹

And when she says: if Vinnie comes home an' catches you here, my ass is grass!³⁰

Sandra wanted to help her sister but her fear of her husband stops her. She does not want to disobey Vinnie's orders.

On the other hand, Maugham has portrayed his protagonist, Constance, as a typical woman of the patriarchal society. She is a stagnated woman without any occupation that can free her from the financial and moral dependency of her husband. Belonging to a bourgeois class does not differentiate her from other women of her society. To affirm this, Constance plainly admits to Barbara that:

CONSTANCE: Oh, my dear, I'm not a business woman.

BARBARA: you've got marvelous taste and you have ideas. You could do all the decorating and I'd confine myself to buying and selling furniture.

CONSTANCE: I have got no capital.

BARBARA: I've got all the capital I want. I must have help and I know no one more suitable than you.... Fifteen hundred a year.

CONSTANCE: I've been an idle woman so long. I think I'd find it dreadfully hard to work eight hours a day.³¹

Even Constance is a bourgeois women, she has witnessed men's oppression but differently. She represents also the image of a stagnated woman.

Indeed, Routine and repetition are the main aspects of her daily life; she is always silent, voiceless, and without any ability to take decisions. She does not even react against things that touch her honor as a wife and her position as a woman. This is clearly illustrated through the betrayal of her husband, John. She has always been aware of the adulterous relation between John and Marie Louise, her best friend. This is expressed throughout Constance and Marie Louise' conversation:

CONSTANCE: and you want me to make a scene. I know and I sympathize. But the fact is that Mortimer told me nothing I didn't know before.

MARIE-LOUISE: do you mean to say that you've known all along?

CONSTANCE: all along, darling, I've been spending the last six months in a desperate effort to prevent my friends and relations from telling me your ghastly secret. It's been very difficult sometimes. Often mother's profound understanding of life, Martha's passion for truth at any price, and Barbara's silent sympathy, have

almost worn me down. But until today the t's were not definitely crossed nor the I's distinctly dotted, and I was able to ignore the facts that were starting at me- rather rudely, I must say- in the face³².

Constance' silence is due to the fact of the internalizing belief of the society which perceives men's betrayal as something normal. This conventional feminine thought urges her to accept John's treason to keep the image of a successful marriage. This is shown when Bernard says to Martha that:

BERNARD: Constance is perfectly happy with her husband. You must think me a damned swine if you think I'm going to butt in and try to smash up a perfectly wonderful union.

BERNARD: that certainly isn't true. Mrs. Durham told me when I met her at dinner two or three days ago that John and Constance were the most devoted couple she'd ever known³³.

The patriarchal society allows men's betrayal of their wives, for this reason Constance remain silent without judging her husband.

1-b. Deviation

In human existence, the masculine world has always been favored to be the authority while the feminine one is the oppressed. Indeed, many negative internalized features have been related to women to keep control on them. Deviation is one of these negative attitudes.

However, women's ambition to go beyond their constant state, by using their body as an outcome to their desires to break the old conventional patriarchal society, causes them to be considered as deviant and abnormal. Indeed, this negative association restricts their success to fulfill freedom. The patriarchal society states that if they are submitted women, it is due to their female body having some characteristics and tasks. Women think to use their bodies to improve their status and the condition of their living. Employing erotic attraction, abortion and several marriages are some negative deeds that women do and that make them be viewed as deviation.

In *Dolores*, the behavior of the protagonist condemns her to fall into deviation. She does not keep with the convention of her society as a good and obedient woman. In fact, she was instable through her several experiences with men, without paying any attention to how she is perceived by the society in general and by her family in particular. In this regard, Sandra claims that:

an' whose fault is it, Dolores? You pick these fucken' nuts ta marry an' afta' six months you come runin' to everybody! We all try to tell you not to marry these douche bags, but you never listened. Then we go to your stupid weddings an' listen to the same song you pick out as you're walkin' down the asle... "We'veonly just begun"³⁴.

Her way of wearing and making up seduces men to look and desire her. She used to go to bars to look for men because of her loneliness and emptiness. In this respect, Simone De Beauvoir affirms that she will also take refuge in comfort and well-being; moreover, if she avidly pursues sexual pleasure, it is often because she is frustrated.³⁵ Dolores admits doing this before Sandra:

Goin' to the fucken' bars lookin' around at other thirty-year old woman....I was duyin' for somebody to just touch my fucken' hand and I'd look at some guy, you know.... And I would just pray he could pick it up in my eyes, but too many times nothin'.... I looked over an' so Jerry lookin' at me.well, one eye ...was anyway, an' the other was pointin' up at the ceiling an' I thought.³⁶

Sandra, in return, asserts that:

yeah, well we're goin'to have to say it if Vinnie comes home an' catches me with you! Vinnie likes things in a straight line, no waves an' you... you freak him out with-with your clothes an' perfume an' makeup an' the husbands he never likes an'.³⁷

The Constant Wife, on the other hand, used to depict women's deviation through the female characters. Constance's decision to spend a holiday with her friend Bernard without taking into consideration the fact that she is under the authority of her husband whom she dares not to be obedient makes her a deviant. In this regard, Constance and John's conversation clarifies this:

CONSTANCE: my dear, I can't put it any plainer. I'm going away for six weeks' holiday and Bernard has very kindly offer to come with me.

JOHN: what makes you think that I am going to allow you to go?

CONSTANCE: chiefly, the fact that you cannot prevent me³⁸.

Marie-Louise is another female character who is a deviant through her adultery. She has an affair with Constance's husband, John, and even with others to satisfy her sexual and financial pleasures. In this context, Martha and Bernard's dialogue claims that:

MARTHA: the nerve. Marie- Louise. Oh, my poor Bernard. Marie- Louise is John's mistress.

BERNARD: Marie- Louise is Constance's greatest friend. But Marie-Louise has got a husband.

MARTHA: his only ambition in life is to make a million. He's a sort of fool who thinks that woman loves him just because he loves her. Marie- Louise can turn him round her little finger³⁹.

Marie-Louise has an affair with her best friend's husband, even though she is a married woman, to order to please both her sexual and financial desires.

1-c. Objectification

As a crucial reality, women have always been subject to discrimination by the patriarchal society which considers them as object for man. Yet, men's oppression and marginalization are reflected through the betrayal and infidelity of man toward women. A husband can betray his wife under the justification which claims that his wife is always late. However, women cannot betray their husbands, otherwise they will be accused of adultery. Indeed, Simone de Beauvoir has fully demonstrated the objectification and the otherness of women and how their bodies affect them to be a thing of flesh on which others have a hold⁴⁰. In this quotation, Simone De Beauvoir thinks that women are a body that the others, men, can possess as a property.

In *Dolores*, the protagonist has suffered from men's oppression. She witnesses harsh situations and moments throughout several marriages. She meets types of tyrant and oppressor men. She has been sexually abused by her husband, Tommy, who uses her body not

only for his pleasures but also to satisfy his greediness for money. As clearly shown through Sandra's words:

Is that all? Tommy the mailman used to tie you to trees an' took nude pictures a' you which he sold to porno magazines!⁴¹

Through our reading of *Dolores*, we can notice how harshly she is treated by her last husband, Jerry who dares to hit her as he hits a dog, and abuses her sexually. In this respect, Dolores states that:

DOLORES: I'm talkin' about whacked, kicked, pushed down stairs, hair pulled back, woken up in the middle of the night for hard sex, insulted in a restaurant, pushed outta' a car...

SANDRA: this all happened last night?

DOLORES: no. he hit me this mornin' at, uh, breakfast' cause... well...he's a bra fanatic and...⁴²

Dolores is not only the victim of men's oppression but also a victim of the patriarchal society where she lived. In fact, from her infancy she grows in an atmosphere of violence, quarrel and obedience. In this context, Sandra and Dolores claim that:

SANDRA: I was just thinkin' a' that crazy night when Dad busted in on Ma's tupp'a' ware party all shitfaced, an' I'm pretty sure that was on Richard Street.

DOLORES: yes, it was! An' he went into the bedroom an' came out with Ma' s girdle on and...cause I knew I was goin' too long, but I just couldn't help it, an' then... I felt my hair bein' pulled an' before I knew, my head was on the fucken' seat, an' I was bein' punched in the face! Not slapped, but punched! Same way he used to hit the dog and I... I could hear the motorcycle way off in the distance... something went away with that guy... what am I talkin' about?! What the fuck is goin'on? This all seems so stupid now... hearin' it out, it all sounds silly or somethin'! I was yellin' at you to get away' cause my husband might be...be mad at me...Oh, Dolores, I...⁴³

Through analyzing the other female character Sandra in *Dolores*, one can observe that all of the female characters have the same living conditions under the authority of men. Sandra is the best example of how women must be in a patriarchal society. Her role is limited to fulfill the domestic duties as having children, satisfying husband's desires and being a good wife. Sandra states: I'll take care a' Vinnie. I'll take care a' him⁴⁴

Betrayal and infidelity are the major aspects of objectification which are highlighted in the second play of our study. The protagonist Constance is the silent victim of her husband's betrayal. In a patriarchal society, women must accept the mistreatment of their husbands which dishonor their existence, and must preserve the norms of society in general, as well as, those of the family in particular.

Constance does not react even though she is aware of her husband's betrayal with her best friend, Marie-Louise. She does not denounce him just to preserve the image of her marriage which is mainly based on bearing children and taking care of her husband. In this context, Constance records in her words to her friend Barbara that: I think my career is looking after John, running a house for him, entertaining his freedom and making happy and comfortable⁴⁵ This quotation shows how woman is dependent and submissive. The only role she has is to please her man.

Moreover, Mrs. Culver's internalization of the convention and the norms of the patriarchal society allows her to think that the only source of women's happiness is man and his ability to offer a comfortable life which is based on eating, dressing... without paying any attention to her existence as a woman, to what she thinks and or what she wants. In this respect, Mrs. Culver and Martha say in their conversation:

MARTHA: Mother, Constance is a very unhappy person.

MRS CULVER: nonsense. She eats well, sleeps well, dresses well and she's losing weight. No woman can be unhappy in those circumstances⁴⁶.

John represents the patriarchal society where man is the authority and the subject to the object which is woman. His sexual instability pushes him to have an affair with a mistress without taking into consideration his wife. As it is explained in Martha's words with Bernard:

MARTHA: did Marie-Louise tell you that?

BERNARD: she did.

MARTHA: the nerve. Marie-Louise. Oh, my poor Bernard. Marie-Louise is John's mistress⁴⁷.

From this conversation, we understand that John is committing adultery with his wife's best friend, and Bernard and Martha are aware but did not inform Constance.

2. Transcendence of Man

Man has always occupied the first position in society. He is seen as the absolute, the essential, the subject while women are reduced to be inessential and an object for the subject. His power as being a man has paved the way to him to dominate and keep control of the world where women are part of. In fact, the prejudices and stereotypes that are drawn by the patriarchal society about women position them as immanent and man as transcendent. Simone de Beauvoir, in this context, argues that there is an absolute human type, the masculine.⁴⁸ Transcendence, which is a masculine project, it paves to man ways to invent, create and even produce without limits. His freedom and authenticity is the result of the social distinction that has been created by patriarchal society. It reinforces man's status, and designs women to be under control and to be the other. In this respect, Simone de Beauvoir asserts that ...Women as other still plays a role inasmuch as even to transcend himself, each man still needs to take consciousness of himself.⁴⁹

2-a. Norm

In the patriarchal society, people had learnt that God has created man to rule the world and everything in it, and that it was the work of women to help man to perform these tasks, to obey and to assume always a subordinate role. This teaching has reinforced the domination and the oppression of man over women. Man is associated with all the positive behaviors and values such as norm, essential, transcendence, creativity, invention, and production. Man is the norm whereas women are the deviation. Simone de Beauvoir, following this idea, has stated that:

Men have always held all the concrete powers; from patriarchy's earliest times they have deemed it useful to keep woman in a state of dependence; their codes were set up against her; she was thus concretely established as the Other⁵⁰

On the other hand, women are complicit in their own oppression. In other terms, women have internalized the male gaze. They are conscious of how they are perceived, but they attempt to live as they are expected to be. Women's internalizing of the masculine position as being normal and absolute is viewed in the conversation between Mrs Culver and Barbara:

BARBARA: are you very much upset, Mrs. Culver?

MRS. CULVER: not a bit. I was brought up by a very strict mother to believe that men were naturally wicked. I am seldom surprised at what they do and never upset.⁵¹

In this conversation, Mrs. Culver used to be a typical submissive woman who accepting the fact that man is the norm. Despite his deeds, John's image does not change in society. Mrs. Culver manages to hide the truth because of man's infidelity, for her, is something ordinary whereas that of a woman is an object of ridicule. In this regard, Mrs Culver states that:

MRS CULVER: Constance and John have been married for fifteen years. John is a very agreeable man. I've sometimes wondered whether he was any more faithful to his wife than most husbands, but as it was really no concern of mine I didn't let my mind dwell on it⁵²

And that,

MRS CULVER: if women were ridiculous because their husbands are unfaithful to them, there would surely be a great deal more merriment in the world than there is⁵³.

In *Dolores*, the male characters are depicted as oppressors and dominators. Sandra is used to accept her life as a submissive woman. Nevertheless, her husband treats her so unfairly. In this regard, Sandra claims that: An' I lied before about when I said that, uh, Vinnie only shoved me. He's hit me..... I'll take care a' Vinnie I'll take care a' him.⁵⁴ Jerry, despite his mistreatment of his wife, is still perceived as good. Sandra states that I don't

know. Talk it out with him. He doesn't seem that bad. Except for his crooked eye, he seems normal so just figure it out for ya'self!⁵⁵

Sandra accepts her lot to be a subservient woman who obeys Vinnie's orders and take care of him.

2-b. Freedom:

Freedom is another aspect which is related to man rather than to women. Indeed, man's inclusion of transcendence has allowed him to possess the ability of going beyond his body and be free of any domination that can prevent him from reaching his goals in the world.

Simone De Beauvoir quoted Raymond Aron's essay called *Sartre and the Marxist-Leninists*:

The recognition and reflexive primacy of subjectivity, the fact that consciousness is perpetually unsatisfied and in a single movement discovers reality and wants to transcend it; thought is "in situation", contingent man has no *raison d'être*, but is simply "there", values are historical, man is free.⁵⁶

Through this quotation, we can notice that freedom of man goes back to history when he finds himself engaged in a war of creation and production in the patriarchal society. According to the existentialist Sartre, man is condemned to be free."⁵⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, starting from Sartre's argument about freedom, has built her view about the notion of freedom and its importance to gain transcendence. Man has gained freedom thanks to his body because the body has a power to shape or determine man's life. Indeed, man has more choice in reaching freedom because of his biological sex whereas women's reproduction role has been an obstacle for their freedom, and discourages their attempt to reach liberty. In this regard, Beauvoir wrote, physiological destiny is very complex; she herself endures to it as a foreign story; her body is not for her a clear expression of herself; she feels alienated from it.⁵⁸

Moreover, Beauvoir, who impinges upon Hegel's master and slave relation, has looked deeply on the notion of freedom and how it is acquired. Hegel's notion of fighting to gain

recognition and freedom has been adopted differently because, for her, violence is important to acquire one's freedom, sovereignty and self-defense. As it is illustrated in her words that:

Violence is the authentic test of every person's attachment to himself, to his passion, and his own will; to radically reject it is all objective truth. It is to isolate one's self in an abstract subjectivity; an anger or a revolt that does not exert itself in muscles remains imaginary⁵⁹

In *Constant Wife*, Maugham has succeeded to reveal the notion of freedom through the male character, John who is portrayed as a transcend man; he participates in the evolution of the world through his job as a doctor. John's position in society allows him to act freely. He is driven by his sexual desires, but this fact does not blame and judge him because he is a man. This is illustrated in Mrs. Culver's words:

It may be that with advancing years my arteries have hardened. I am unable to attach any great importance to the philandering of men. I think it's their nature. John is a very hard-working surgeon. If he likes to lunch and dine with a pretty woman now and then I don't think he's much to blame...⁶⁰

As we have mentioned before, according to Simone de Beauvoir, through violence man can gain his freedom and self-defense. In *the Constant Wife*, John has commented on violence saying that: I flatter myself I'm a sensible man. I'm not going to fly into a passion. Many men would stamp and rave or break the furniture.....⁶¹

In *Dolores*, Jerry is a very violent man as Simone de Beauvoir claims. Violence is a source of freedom. He always beats Dolores to keep control on her; this violence creates a kind of fear in her. Dolores remarks that He hit me too many times, and 'he won't let me outta his sight'⁶²

2-c. Inheritance and Patrimony:

Women have always been dependent on man. The two sexes have never shared the world in equality. The Patriarchal society has deposed women from owning a patrimony and inheriting from their fathers. When they marry, their properties will be transmitted to their husbands. Man's power has spread to include women to his private property. Simone de

Beauvoir has explained the issue of man's inheritance and patrimony, and why women are excluded and alienated. For her, they are first be guarded by their father and when they marry, it is by their husbands. In this regard, Simone de Beauvoir asserts that:

She spends her whole life as a minor; she is under the control of her guardian: either her father; her husband or state.....the guardian's control extending over both her person and her property...⁶³

Man justifies a conservation of patrimony by women's weakness and erotic attraction. Simon De Beauvoir explains that for man attractive women take property away from its owners and put it into circulation [...] the women employing their erotic attraction, can induce young men and even fathers of families to scatter their patrimonies.⁶⁴ And that man will not, therefore, agree to share his property or his children with woman.⁶⁵

In *Constant Wife*, Marie-Louise has reinforced the idea of Simone de Beauvoir who states that women are spoiling the patrimony by inducing fathers of families to scatter their property. Marie-Louise' affair with John, Constance' husband causes the ruin of the patrimony.

In *Dolores*, Sandra has been under the authority of her husband Vinnie; she is minor because of her financial dependency. She notices: I got my little house with my little kitchen where I feed my little kids an 'Vinnie brings home his paycheck.....⁶⁶

3. From Differentiation to Equality and Brotherhood:

According to Simone De Beauvoir, women in general have been forced to occupy a secondary place in the world of man. They also have been taught to accept masculine authority. So, they give up investigating, judging for themselves and leave all this to the superior caste. This makes women financially and intellectually dependent on man regardless of whatever they are wives, mothers. Women learn to be in the state of otherness and objectiveness what makes them the second sex.

The patriarchal society disempowered women. Man mistreats his wife and considers her as a slave, an object which feeds his desires and obeys his orders. They are neglected and feel empty and worthless. Man uses women's body as a justification to marginalize and throw them in immanence and in a stagnated state whereas he transcends and expands his freedom to be active and makes more achievements in the world. In fact, myths are created by man to imprison women and keep them under their control. The myth of women seems to tell the story of their real existence. This disguised reality is drawn and shaped by the oppressor to achieve his purpose. Balzac's statement in *Physiology of Marriage* proves this when he says:

Pay no attention to women's murmurs, her cries, her pains. Nature has made her for our use and for hearing everything: children, sorrows, blows and pains inflicted by man. Don't accuse yourself for hardness. In all codes of so-called civilized nations, man has written the laws that ranged women's destiny under bloody epigraph⁶⁷

In *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir stresses on sex and gender differences. She has explained that:

No biological, psychic, or economic destiny defines the figure that the human female takes in society; it is civilization as a whole that elaborates this intermediary product between male and eunuch that is called feminine⁶⁸

Women are born free like all human creatures, but they find themselves in a world where society obliges them to accept living as the other. However, the differentiation which is between the sexes is not innate but a social product. Women must recognize themselves as persons who have the right to think, to react and to question. They must go beyond their bodies to achieve the social equality. Through self-reliance, women can get rid of the financial dependency to men and must accept them to succeed in constructing their position.

For a long time, Women have been enslaved to their reproductive function. Their lives are succession of pregnancies which determine them to be passive at home and prevent them from liberation and entering the work place as equal to men. Abortion, according to Simone De Beauvoir, is an action that can free women from their bodies and their domestic roles. She also emphasizes the idea that man rejects all the responsibilities on women and he takes a

stand against abortion while he always seduces them and enjoys sexual pleasures. In this respect, Simone De Beauvoir argues that legalization of abortion ensured woman's liberty relative to men⁶⁹

Man's and women's relationship which is of a great importance for women's liberation must be founded on truth rather than on myth, on sincerity rather than mystery. Both must be a subject as well as an object. Furthermore, Simone De Beauvoir calls for establishing relation of brotherhood and equality which can happen only if men and women work together to build one world, and they should accept each other as equal although the differences which exist. At this moment, the two sexes can live happily. She focuses on this idea by arguing that:

This could not be better said within the giving world. It is up to men to make the reign of freedom, triumph to carry of this supreme victory, men and women must among other things and beyond their natural differentiations, unequivocally affirm their brotherhood.⁷⁰

Baker's protagonist Dolores has acted against the convention of her society. This is exemplified through her instability and several marriages. She is not an ideal woman in her society. In fact, Dolores is a self-decisive woman. This can be noticed in her reactions to violence that she undergoes from her husband, Jerry. She dares to complain to the police but unfortunately they have not helped her because she is a woman and her husband is safe because he is a man. In this regard, Sandra and Dolores's conversation clarify this:

SANDRA: Oh stop, will you please! Go to the police!

DOLORES: Forget that cop shit! They don't do nothin'! I been through it before, an' they come an' usually stick up for the guy. Unless there's a knife comin' outta your heart, they don't do shit an' what am I gonna do when they get there? Show them the bite marks on my bra?!⁷¹

Since society and justice do not protect her, she manages to protect herself without the help of the others. Dolores finds shouting her husband is the only solution to put an end to her suffering and discrimination. This is well illustrated through Sandra and Dolores's conversation:

DOLORES: I ...I shot him, Sandra. This mornin' I shot him. he hit me too many times, an' he won't let me outta his sight...

SANDRA: no, you didn't ... tell me ya' didn't...

DOLORES: I couldn't take it no more an' 'Jerry was readin' the paper at the table an' I had his gun that I took from his coat an' I aimed it at a picture of Reagan that was on the front page, and I shot through the picture an' Jerry went flying' back onto the floor an' he...he was laughin'... his shoulder was bleedin' and I ran out an' heard him say that he could kill me now...⁷²

Dolores as a female character who reflects the suffering of women from the patriarchal society and men's oppression creates and increases her spirit of rebellious and the desire to free herself from the bonds of the old beliefs and stereotypes. Despite men's domination and society's ignorance, she comes to build her self-consciousness and to be recognized as a human being. The actions that show the subversion and resistance are the three abortions which are considered as an act of courage for women in society where abortion is seen as a crime and illegal. In this respect, Dolores says that I didn't think about my three abortions anymore...⁷³

As far as Sandra is concerned, with the help of her sister Dolores, she expresses freely her feelings about her situation as a submissive and voiceless wife who accepts stereotypes attributed to women. She states that:

I lied before about when I said that, uh, Vinnie only shoved me. He's hit me it started with the dog. He really used to go bullshit on the dog an' sometimes for no reason. Just start beltin' it an' gettin' mean. I figured out that the dog is man's best friend 'cause it doesn't say "go fuck ya'self" afta' it gets hit!⁷⁴

The main female characters in Maugham's *The Constant Wife* succeed to impose themselves as free women by overthrowing and stepping on the constructed values in the society, which keep women different from men. Constance as an example at the beginning obeys to what society dictates to her, a good wife and a careful mother. Her aim is limited to satisfy her husband and preserve a best image of her marriage to the extent of even accepting her husband's betrayal. But through time, she recognizes the meaninglessness of being what

she must not be. She comes to know that happiness no longer depends on men, but it is something that she can realize by herself. At the end, Constance allows herself to do things that are permitted only to men. Indeed, what marks her self-recognition and liberation is her courage to break the established order and the constructed meaning of betrayal that is called adultery which is a crime for women and legacy to men. In this regard, Constance and John's speech assert this:

CONSTANCE: why? you did. Don't you remember? You were getting rather flat and stale then you had an affair with Marie-Louise and you were quite another man. Gay and amusing, full of life and much more agreeable to live with. The moral effect on you was quite remarkable.

JOHN: it's different for a man than for a woman.

CONSTANCE: are you thinking of the possible consequences? We have long passed Victorian era when asterisks were followed after a certain interval by a baby.

JOHN: that never occurred to me. What I meant was that if a man's unfaithful to his wife she's an object of sympathy, whereas if woman's unfaithful to her husband he's merely an object of ridicule.

CONSTANCE: that is one of those conventional prejudices that sensible people must strive to ignore⁷⁵.

In addition, after freeing herself from the bondage of her marriage, she frees herself from economic dependency by engaging herself in a business affair with her friend, Barbara. This idea echoes Beauvoir's assumptions in *The Second Sex*: It is through work that has been able, to a large extent, to close the gap separating her from the male: work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom.⁷⁶ Constance has come to a Beauvoirian conclusion that:

Precisely. I own you nothing. I am able to keep myself. For the last year I have paid my way. There is only one freedom that is really important and that is economic freedom, for in the long run the man who pays the pepper calls the tune. Well, I have that freedom, and upon my soul it's the most enjoyable sensation I can remember since I ate my first strawberry ice.⁷⁷

In this quotation, Constance has reinforced Simon de Beauvoir's view about the right source for women to be free which is work.

Our study of the first chapter has shown that women has been for a centuries a subject of discrimination. Man has never allowed her to occupy an important position in the society as

him. Many negative attributes such as deviation, stagnation have been drawn to women to keep them immanent whereas man has portrayed as the norm .Bell Hooks is another feminist who used to look for solution to sort out women from her stagnation by showing how man has gained his position.

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Chapter Two: Power and Gender in *The Constant Wife* and *Dolores*

In this chapter, we will focus on examining the views of the white supremacist men in relation to race, gender as well as to class that have an immense influence on women's treatment by man. This section also deals with the revision and the questioning of the accepted cultural beliefs through education.

1-Criticism of White Capitalist Patriarchy:

The term "white capitalist patriarchy" is seen as a concept which describes a set of values. Indeed, it is identified this term as a system which does not refer to any specific individual or groups regardless of race, gender or class but it is a question of values.

Women have been predestined to possess the secondary place in the male-made world. In fact, many stereotypes have been drawn by the white capitalist patriarchy system which

restricts women's roles in public spheres. However, this marginalization has put them in a prison where they accept to internalize the cultural prejudices unconsciously and to become complicit with the dominant masculine view. In this regard, Bell Hooks argues in *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* that a mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organized protest.⁷⁹

In fact, mass media has been used as a vehicle of oppression by the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy to reinforce their position in the world. In general, people have been influenced by every means of communication such as magazines, articles, and television. Women's image, which is designed in advertisements, and movies for the benefit of the patriarchal society, has colonized their minds to accept these depictions. Women consume ideas about how they should be, how they should look like, because mass media affirms the marginalization of the oppressed women. These representations are controlled by the patriarchal system. According to the cult of true womanhood that accompanied the traditional

family ideal, True women possessed four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity⁸⁰

In *Dolores*, the playwright has fully demonstrated how women are depicted through mass media. The protagonist Dolores has been a victim of her body through her husband Tommy who uses her as a means to satisfy his desires. Her pictures in porno magazines show the over control of the patriarchal society on women. Sandra has confirmed that Dolores has suffered much from her husband: Is that all? Tommy the mailman used to tie you to trees an' took nude pictures a' you which he sold to porno magazines.⁸¹

Educational system was very biased by the whites, so the blacks were alienated in schools. Teachers used to teach the whites how to keep their racist prejudices toward the blacks. In fact, girls have been a subject of oppression in schools not only by boys and society but also by their peers who have gained some respect. In this respect, Bell Hooks asserts that All black schools to white schools where black students were always seen as interlopers, as not belonging⁸²

In *Dolores*, the female characters have been deprived of having access to learning. Their preoccupation is centered on men's obedience and housekeeping. The stagnated mood of their life has affected negatively their attitudes and identities. On the other hand, *The Constant Wife*, Barbara gains a status in society due to the opportunity of being educated. This fact empowers her to overthrow man's control on her. Being an educated woman has allowed and helped her to have access to the work field to gain her economic freedom.

1-a. Race in *The Constant Wife* and *Dolores*

By the Nineteenth century, race is seen as a norm to whether to discriminate an individual or not. The white supremacists pay attention to the race of the individual. Racism has been usually related to prejudices against black people. In this respect, Bell Hooks asserts

in *Where we stand* that White supremacist exploits at home and abroad to do dirty work for little pay⁸³. Their lives have been governed by whites who had absolute power and authority over them. In this respect, Hooks argues that Racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries⁸⁴

Indeed, the consideration of whiteness as a perfect and privileged race provides white women opportunity to gain more respect in society rather than the blacks. White Western women who are the superior race can keep control and oppress the inferior one. Black women are victims not only of their color but also of their white peers. They are taught from their childhood that the reason of their marginalization and invisibility is due to the fact that they are nonwhite. According to Bell Hooks, Racism teaches an inflated sense of importance and value ...gives whites a sense of entitled leadership.⁸⁵

In Baker's play, the protagonist, Dolores, has witnessed a harsh oppression. She is like a doll between the hands of men, in order to satisfy their desires. All her experiences with men have failed; they mistreat her. In this regard, Dolores states that:

I mean, okay, Frankie pushed me around, an' I knew we was goin' nowhere, an' Tommy was just a plain out-an-out crook who fucked up my head more than my body, an' Jerry...Jerry's just mean an' I put up with the beatin's 'cause I ...I knew what all you would say...⁸⁶

Maugham has portrayed Constance's oppression as moral rather than physical. This fact is favored by her belongingness to a bourgeois family. Unfortunately, even if her husband treats her well and loves her, this does not prevent him to be unfaithful through having an affair with his wife's best friend. This is illustrated by the conversation of John and Constance:

CONSTANCE: I want to know that I'm eloquent and witty... four ten years I've been very happy in your affection...but now just for a little while I hanker for something else.

JOHN: come, darling, have a heart. I gave up Marie-Louise....⁸⁷

Constance, the bourgeois woman, has also witnessed men's oppression but differently which is a moral one; her husband's unfaithfulness

1-b. Gender Inequality:

Gender differences are rooted back to the earliest civilizations. Indeed, gender oppression is considered as the basis of all forms of domination and discrimination. The status of women is deeply influenced by gender inequality, for they have been oppressed throughout history by the patriarchal customs and traditions.

For a long time, the patriarchal society has socialized the male to assume the role of the oppressor, dominator and exploiter. This reality condemned women to bear the worst position in society. Many stereotypes have been drawn to justify the gender inequality and women's fate to be the other. Bell Hooks affirms that they reflect the dominant tendency in Western patriarchal minds to mystify woman's reality by insisting that gender is the sole determinant of woman's fate⁸⁸

Women's roles in society are limited to the domestic sphere. Their only duty is to be obedient and subservient to male's desires. Women's acceptance of the value system of culture has driven them to be unconsciously complicit with old gender beliefs and willingly assume a pre-destined sex role. In fact, Women were different from men, they had been socialized to accept a sexist prejudices that focused on such difference. For more illustration, Bell Hooks quoted in *Women, Money, Power* written by Phyllis Chesler and Emily Jane Goodman that: whatever the values women have pursued- have been allowed to pursue-they are not the same as men's⁸⁹.

In *Dolores*, the female characters are obedient and stagnated. Their everyday life centers on housekeeping and running after men's desires. Gender inequality is shown through Sandra who used to live under the control of her husband, Vinnie. In this respect, she asserts that:

SANDRA: I love my brats even though it's tougher bringin' up kids than I thought 'cause they want an' want an' get sick an'... I, uh, try not to let them bother Vinnie too much. They know they have to be quiet when he's here.⁹⁰

Dolores takes care of her physical appearance to attract men's attention unlike Sandra who wants to preserve her husband from Dolores' charm. This is illustrated in Sandra's words: ...You freak him out with your clothes an' perfume an' make-up...⁹¹

In *The Constant Wife*, Maugham makes Mrs. Culver assert the necessity of taking care of women's appearance to keep their husband faithful by saying that:

Mrs Culver: I told my little friend that if her husband was unfaithful to her it was because he found other women more attractive. Why should she be angry with him for that? Her business was to be more attractive than they⁹².

Constant can be considered a true and typical reflection of the life reality of women in a patriarchal society. She withdraws into silence, passivity, and acceptance of her husband's infidelity and betrayal. In this respect, she claims that:

CONSTANCE: all along, darling, I've been spending the last six months in a desperate effort to prevent my friends and relations from telling me your ghastly secret. It's been very difficult sometimes. Often mother's profound understanding of life, Martha's passion for truth at any price, and Barbara's silent sympathy, have almost worn me down. But until today the t's were not definitely crossed nor the I's distinctly dotted, and I was able to ignore the facts that were starting at me- rather rudely, I must say- in the face⁹³

Constance is considered as a silent and submissive woman who accepts her husband's unfaithfulness. To protect the image of her marriage, she keeps silence for six months without any revolt.

1-c.Class

Class differentiation is an important issue since the creation of the economic systems such as Capitalism. This creation has divided society into different strata; the upper or

bourgeois class, the middle one, and the lower or working class. In fact, this division gives birth to domination and discrimination. Women from the lower class have been subject of double victimization and exploitation from both class and man who resort to violence to avenge leaders' control and his loss in life. Bell Hooks has affirmed that we live in a society where the poor have no public voice⁹⁴.

Women's occupation of the bottom of the class hierarchy has made them witness man's mistreatment. Even upper class women suffer from male's discrimination. Women's poverty has provoked their marginalized place in society. Black women also have resisted to the patriarchal male domination in the domestic household. They worked hard for little wages. Whereas bourgeois women have had more opportunities to be well paid and well treated in the workplace. Bell Hooks reinforces this idea by asserting that:

Yet the fact that privileged women gained in class power while masses of women still do not receive wage equity ...efforts to change the workforce so that women would receive equal pay for equal work.⁹⁵

The Postmodernist Baker puts emphasis on middle class women to feature postmodern issues. *Dolores* is set in small apartments with ordinary kitchens, and wives listening to songs, running after children and their husbands' pleasure. However, this bloomy atmosphere affects negatively their life. Men resort to violence toward their wives to forget their pain. Women, in their turn, witness a double deception, outside and in homestead.

William Somerset Maugham has depicted the bourgeois' living in the society through his characters. The protagonist Constance has been well-treated thanks to her belonging to the upper class. Effectively, this latter has opened to her the doors for the workplace and for achieving an economic independence.

2. Ongoing Questioning of Accepted Cultural Beliefs and Hierarchies

Many cultural stereotypes and practices have been implemented to keep control over women, they are taught from their childhood that men are supreme and cannot accept

disobedience. In addition, women must be faithful, voiceless, and their main fate is childbearing and housekeeping. In this light, Bell Hooks argues that:

Women who are most victimized by sexist oppression, women who are daily beaten down, mentally, physically, and spiritually, women who are powerless to change their condition in life... A mark of their victimization is that they accept their lot in life without visible question, without organized protest, without collective anger or rage.⁹⁶

Women's revolt and protest should be an urge for the revision of those prejudices and the beginning of an independent career far from the domestic spheres. In this respect, Betty Friedan states in her work entitled *The Feminine Mystique* that we can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: I want something more than my husband and my children and my house.⁹⁷

Hooks stresses on destroying the cultural beliefs and all kinds of forms of oppression and discrimination which are based on race, class and gender and to be free from the man-dictated restraints by transgressing education, living and acknowledging the cultural differences. In *Dolores*, the protagonist has rebelled after a long suffering and domination. Dolores has managed to resist the established order of the society through her several abortions. In addition, Dolores' rebellion has expanded to reach her goal by shooting her violent husband to make an end to his persecution.

However, *The Constant Wife*'s Constance dares to break the convention by achieving her economic independence which is hardly borne by society. First, Constance has been submissive and voiceless but her revolt comes as an answer to her husband's betrayal. She manages to exceed family laws which prohibit unfaithfulness to women by planning a holiday with her friend Bernard, without the permission of John.

2-a. Acknowledgement of Cultural Contradictions

Men and women are taught from their childhood that their inter-relation takes into account some cultural beliefs. As it is mentioned by Hooks, We must learn and work in

solidarity.⁹⁸ it is necessary to overcome the cultural basis of male domination which is based on gender, classism, and racism. Hooks calls for a union and sisterhood between women in order to fulfill their goals by arguing that: We must learn the true meaning and value of Sisterhood.⁹⁹ Despite the differences which exist between black and white women, accepting each other would give result to a living serenity. In this respect, Bell Hooks has quoted SookieStambler in her *Introduction to Women's Liberation: Blueprint for the Future* that: We are not struggling for the benefit of the one woman or for one group of women. We are dealing with issues that concern all women.¹⁰⁰ From this quotation, we can understand that this struggle aims at changing the situation of all women in a significant way rather than to serve a specific group of women or any special race or class of women.

Baker discusses in *Dolores* the issue of sisterhood throughout the female characters: Dolores and Sandra. At the beginning of the play, when Dolores comes to ask for help from her sister; Sandra refuses to help her because she was afraid of her husband though at the end she accepts. This is explained when Sandra affirms:

Uh...so listen...if Vinnie does come home...I'm going to tell him that, uh... you're here an' that I talked you into getting' help at a, you know...a head hospital, all right? If he comes in, all right? That way there'll be no trouble or yellin' an' he'll understand.¹⁰¹

Despite her suffering, Sandra accepts her situation

DOLORES: if you got a problem with Vinnie, say he did some disgustin' thing that pissed you off, do you sit down with him to discuss it? Do you say "Gee, Vin...you look so ugly in ya' boxer shorts an' ya' getting fat an' I think it's kinda sick you got tits now an' how ya' think I feel bein' on the bottom all the time?

SANDRA: look...we... I don't have the problems you have, Dolores. The kidsyake up a lotta time and...¹⁰²

As for Maugham, he has also well portrayed man and woman relationship through Constance and John. This latter has recognized his mistake and promises his wife to change and be the ideal man. This is illustrated in John's conversation with Constance.

JOHN: I know how badly I've treated you. I had a wife who was good, loving, and faithful...if I'd had the smallest spark of decency I couldn't have treated you like this. I haven't a word to say for myself.

CONSTANCE: for five years we adored each other. That's much longer than most people do. Our honeymoon lasted five years and then we had a most extraordinary stroke of luck: we ceased to be in love with one another simultaneously¹⁰³.

Sisterhood is well shown through the character of Barbara who comes to offer a shared business to Constance to help her change her stagnated situation and to have a financial freedom. This is explained in Barbara's dialogue with Constance by saying that:

BARBARA: Constance, I've got a suggestion to make to you. You know that my business has been growing by leaps and bounds and I simply cannot get along alone any more. I was wondering if you'd like to come in with me¹⁰⁴.

Constance's negative response to Barbara's offer has changed to a positive one after a long reflection. This is viewed through her words by saying: No, I'm not going to leave him. John, you remember that Barbara offered to take me into her business? I refused. Well, I've changed my mind and I'm going to accept.¹⁰⁵

2-b. Transgressive Education

Education is another part of transgressing these cultural beliefs. In this light, Bell Hooks incites women to struggle to improve their situation, to be free from the restraints dictated by men by educating themselves. Education is considered to be an implicit source of liberation. Indeed, she stresses the importance of education as a goal of feminism and advocates, the development of an educational methodology that addresses the needs of all women.¹⁰⁶ it is necessary to bridge the educational gap between men and women. In this light, Bell Hooks states that we learned early that our devotion to learning, to a life of the mind, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization.¹⁰⁷ Throughout this quotation, Bell Hooks has stressed the importance of learning in women's life in order to get released from all forms of oppression and domination.

According to the male discourse, education is seen as dangerous because it changes women's ways of thinking. In fact, learning and education empower women and push them to

gain their liberation and to live in a world beyond male domination. By education, women can think, question, search and criticize their situation, and take the responsibility of their choices and actions. Bell Hooks writes that:

Reading and writing are valuable in and of themselves and women.....beyond that, they are vital to change for several reasons; first, they provide a means of conveying ideas and information that may not be readily available in the popular media. For example, the idea of women's liberation first spread through mimeographed articles...Second, reading and writing help develop an individual's imagination and ability to think... Third, an individual's access, through reading a variety of interpretations of reality, increases that person's capacity to think for herself, to go against the norms of the culture, and to conceive of alternatives for society- all of which are fundamental to acting politically. Fourth, reading and writing aid each woman's individual survival and success in the world¹⁰⁸

In *The Constant Wife*, Constance has assumed the responsibility of her choice when she goes with Bernard on a holiday without her husband's permission, because she thought that a working woman deserves a rest. Constance claims that:

CONSTANCE: ...now I come to look at you I confess that you are more than usually red in the face.

JOHN: what makes think that I am going to allow you to go?

CONSTANCE (good-humouredly): chiefly the fact that you can't prevent me.

JOHN: I can't bring myself to believe that you mean what you say. I don't know what ever put such an idea into your head.

CONSTANCE: I thought a change might do me good³¹

In *Dolores*, the female characters have never gained the opportunity to be educated women

Endnotes

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Conclusion

Throughout our dissertation entitled “Gender Discrimination” in Edward Allan Baker’s *Dolores* and William Somerset Maugham’s *The Constant Wife*, we have tried to explore the issue of women’s oppression in Western society. The two plays have been written by playwrights from different societies and cultures. We have read the two works in the light of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* and Bell Hooks’ *Feminist Theory; from Margin to Center*. We realized that women have been subject to discrimination in patriarchal society and were positioned to the immanent roles. The study revealed that both Edward Allan Baker and William Somerset Maugham have portrayed the way in which women are unfairly perceived in the American and British societies in different periods of time.

From the first chapter of our dissertation, we have come to conclude that men’s inclusion to the transcendence state allows them to occupy an essential position in society, keeping control on women who are imprisoned in immanence and marginalized. For long centuries, women have faced all kinds of oppression, whether moral or physical. William Somerset Maugham’s in *The Constant Wife* (1920) depicts woman’s reaction to infidelity and betrayal of a husband through the protagonist, Constance. On the other hand, Edward Allan Baker’s *Dolores* (1989) highlights the manner in which Dolores is mistreated by her husbands.

In the second chapter, we deduced that women are discriminated through the internalization of some cultural and social beliefs and prejudices which came to judge them in terms of their body, class and gender. Bell Hooks and Simone De Beauvoir call for the necessity to struggle against male’s domination through education and work.

The scope of our research has not permitted us to cover all the issues related to women and their status in the American and British society. We have tried to trace some social similarities in both societies relying on *Dolores* and *The Constant Wife*. Therefore, we invite

other students to examine other similarities from other perspectives such as religion and politics.

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