

**REPUBLIC OF TURKEY**  
**INONU UNIVERSITY**  
**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE**



**The Subversion and Reformulation of Traditional  
Women Roles in Lessing's Short Stories**

**M.A. THESIS**

**ADVISOR**

**PREPARED BY**

Assoc. Prof. Dr. ZENNURE KOSEMAN Gonca AVSAR

Malatya-2023

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## ONUR SÖZÜ SAYFASI

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İNÖNÜ ÜNİVERSİTESİ,

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Lessing'in Kısa Öykülerinde Geleneksel Kadın Rollerinin Yıkılması ve Yeniden Tasvir Edilmesi

## ÖZET

Geçmişten günümüze süregelen kadınlar üzerindeki toplum baskısı sonucu, kadınların özgürlükleri ellerinden alınıp, onlara geleneksel diye adlandırılan roller verilmiştir. Doris Lessing bu geleneksel rollerin kadınları mutsuz ettiğini öte yandan kadınların toplum tarafından belirlenen rollerin aksine özgürleştiği, kendi yollarını kendilerinin çizdiği, hayatlarında farkındalık yaşayarak geleneksel rollerin yıkılması gerektiği fikrini vurgulamıştır. Feminist bir bakış açısıyla kısa hikâyelerinin incelenmesi sonucu, Lessing geleneksel kadın rollerinin yıkılıp yeniden formüle edilmesi üzerinde durmuştur. Erkek egemen toplumun kadınları nasıl sınırlandırdığı eleştirilirken, Lessing kısa hikâyelerindeki kadın karakterlerin değişimleri ise ataerkil topluma karşı adeta bir başkaldırı niteliğindedir. Ataerkil toplumdaki ahlaki beklentilerin aksine, Lessing sadece kadınları belirli ahlaki standartlarda tutmanın onları sınırlandırdıklarını ifade eder. Hikâyelerinde kadın-erkek eşitsizliğine karşı kadınların bu eşitsizliklere başkaldırıp, kendi benliklerinin keşfine bir yolculuk anlatılır. Bu yolculuk sonunda kendi keşfini yaşayan kadın karakterler, toplumun kendilerine biçtiği rollere göre değil, kendi iradeleriyle seçtikleri hayatlarını sürdürmekte ve erkek egemen toplumun baskısından sıyrılarak, kendi özgür iradeleriyle ilgili farkındalık yaşamaktadırlar.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Feminizm, yıkım, Doris Lessing, geleneksel, kadın rolleri, yeniden anlamlandırma

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**ABSTRACT**

As a result of the social pressure on women from the past to the present, freedom of women have been taken away and they have been given traditional roles. Doris Lessing emphasizes the idea that these traditional roles make women unhappy, on the other hand, women are liberated contrary to the roles determined by society, that they draw their own path, and that traditional roles should be demolished by experiencing awareness in their lives. As a result of examining her short stories from a feminist perspective, Lessing focused on the subversion and reformulation of traditional women's roles. While criticizing how the male-dominated society limits women, the changes in the female characters in Lessing's short stories are almost like a revolt against the patriarchal society. Contrary to the moral expectations in a patriarchal society, Lessing only states that holding women to certain moral standards limits them. In their stories, a journey is told about women's revolt against these inequalities and the discovery of their own selves. At the end of this journey, the female characters, who experience their own discovery, continue their lives chosen by their own will, not according to the roles that society has given them, and they experience awareness of their own free will by getting rid of the pressure of the male-dominated society.

Keywords: Feminism, subversion, Doris Lessing, traditional, women roles, reformulation

Quantity of Page: 92

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**The Subversion and Reformulation of Traditional Women Roles in Lessing's  
Stories (Lessing'in Öykülerinde Geleneksel Kadın Rollerinin Yıkılması ve  
Yeniden Formüle Edilmesi)**

**Gonca GÜLTEKİN AVŞAR**

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## INTRODUCTION

This study consists of four chapters. In the first, a general framework is indicated with purpose, the importance of the research, and the method for this study. A brief information about Doris Lessing's fiction and feminism as a theoretical framework is depicted. There are ten stories selected for this study and there is a comparison of them.

The second chapter deals with five traditional women roles in *To Room Nineteen, Pleasure, He, A man, and two women, Debbie and Julie* stories in which stereotyped women roles have tragic or frustrating endings for the protagonists of the stories as a criticism of the Feminist perspective.

The third chapter deals with the subversion of stereotyped women roles into marginalized ones in *Our Friend Judith, The Other Woman, An Old Woman and her Cat, and A Woman on a Roof, Between Men*. They are the stories that the protagonists find their own way by disregarding social norms of patriarchal authority in terms of feminist aspects with the help of close reading.

The last chapter makes a comparison between traditional women roles and nontraditional ones to make a criticism for stereotyped women roles in the eye of feminist lenses.

## **PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH**

Doris Lessing criticizes the injustice and inequality toward women in male-dominated societies where women's rights are disregarded. Although patriarchal societies try to suppress and destroy women's rights and wish to have equality. The women in the stories chosen from a feminist perspective emphasize that the material and moral support of men is not the only way to survive. The women in the stories do not live to please men, they live for their own needs and desires. These realizations show the awakening of female characters who reconstruct their lives as a feature of feminism, not conforming to social boundaries and norms. In the end, the female characters, seeing the difficult conditions of life as a woman, regain their freedom without any support from men, which is a necessity from a feminist perspective. Because, the feminist perspective adopts the principle that the rights provided to men should also be provided to women, while doing this, equality between women and men should be ensured.

## **PROBLEMATIC STATEMENT AND SUB-PROBLEMS**

- 1) What are the traditional female roles?
- 2) What negative effects does the male-dominated society have on women?
- 3) If the pressures on women are lifted, what will be the results if women live their lives the way they want knowing what they want?

## **QUOTATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

What society expects is that women who stand on their own feet are happier instead of doing their duties.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE RESEARCH**

Research is limited to Doris Lessing's short stories.

## **DEFINITIONS**

Definition of Sisterhood; Supporting each other under all circumstances and empowering women against the male-dominated society.

Definition of the Other Woman: It is a concept used against women who are described as mistresses.

## **METHOD**

Since text analysis data collection methods were used, the qualitative research method was used.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Literature research, primary and secondary sources.

## The Subversion and Reformulation of Traditional Women Roles in Lessing's Short Stories

Imagine being old. Imagine when no one will turn to look at me. I'll be like the old woman there—an old grey sheep in a hair-net. It must be like being a ghost, moving among other people, and no one noticing you at all. Perhaps there is no one to care when she comes in and goes out. She lives in a room by herself and if she died, no one should even notice it. Perhaps she doesn't know herself that she is alive.

Doris Lessing, *Retreat to Innocence*

Doris May Lessing (1919-2013) is an award-winning female writer as she uses her pen mostly against restrictions on women by writing novels, novellas including many stories in them. She was born in Kermanshah today's Iran and died in London (Sprague12) where she has her inspiration as a writer. The settings of most of the stories are London where Lessing lives for the rest of her life. London is a place of conservativeness, especially in the Victorian Era. After that period especially during World War II (1939-1945), women's rights against inequality appear as a reaction to patriarchy which is a term that refers to a "male-dominated" society (Walby, 1989: 214). The postwar period affect women and children as they feel lonely in their families and fear the ambition of patriarchal world as a result of wars that Lessing reflects in her fiction (Lessing 1991). Lessing who lives in different parts of the world due to his father's profession has the opportunity to observe women in different parts of the world. She reflects this diversity and her feminist side in her characters such as a mistress, a prostitute, an actress, and a gipsy against traditional gender roles to criticize the oppression of certain roles of women. Drawing attention as a female writer, Lessing demolished the stereotypical female image in the face of patriarchal society by exemplifying stereotypical female characters who should be *The Angel in the House* (1854), having tragic endings. Doris Lessing considers "The other woman" as a significant field of study, because of their being disregarded in social history. Lessing concerns about those females who become either a whore or a mistress. Lessing cares for them as isolated females and regards them as reawakening and revolting individuals. Traditional women's

roles have a transformation into marginalized ones and this subversion results in resistance against inequality and injustice in women's rights. Doris Lessing reformulates the conventional women roles in her short stories. Opposing traditional ethical norms that subject women to certain moral standards, Lessing portrays females who revolt against patriarchal stereotyped women roles by subverting them in different characteristics of life. Lessing highlights the rise of isolated females that are generally represented as mistresses, gypsies, or whore against the passivity of traditional women roles. Thus, she subverts the traditional roles at the end of the stories to depict the resistance against male-dominated society. However, Lessing's feminism emerges inevitably in her fiction (Sprague 240). Feminist criticism is significant in terms of focusing on the subject of the otherhood which is the isolation and alienation of women as Sprague depicts through the lenses of Lessing. For this reason, this study aims to underline the concept of subverting traditional women roles in Doris Lessing's short stories from a Feminist perspective.

## **Chapter I. Theoretical Framework**

Feminism is started in Britain by suffragists (Miller 5). They defend women's right to vote and want to be considered equal citizens with men. It is first-wave feminism. "The first wave of feminism takes place, emerging out of an environment of urban industrialism and liberal, socialist politics. The goal of this wave is to open up opportunities for women, with a focus on suffrage" (Rampton 2015). Then, Simone de Beauvoir writes *The Second Sex* (1949). She says "One is not born a woman; rather one becomes a woman." (De Beauvoir 14). It means that female identity is not natural, but it is adopted to be a woman. It is constructed with different expectations in society. For instance, women should have children, become good mothers; and serve their husbands. However, women do not get education or they do not have a right to vote or talk about serious topics in society, because women are fragile and need to be protected by their husbands. Because patriarchy is dominant (Butler 36). What the man says is true and whatever the man does is right. Women lack suffrage, unfair working conditions, and payment inequality between genders forces women to stay at home within the borders of ethical norms (Walby, 2011: 228). These led women to second-wave feminism and Lessing's selected stories date

back to those years. Those are the times when women writers start to get involved in literature.

The female gaze in literature also changes the perspective from acceptable social roles to activation of women's needs and Doris Lessing is one of these writers to captivate women's needs and freedom against fragmented male authority:

The feminist literary criticism of today is the direct product of the 'women's movement' of the 1960s. "(Barry 116)" ... in feminist criticism in the 1970s the major effort went into exposing what might be called the mechanisms of patriarchy, that is, the cultural 'mindset' in men and women which perpetuated sexual inequality (Barry 117) .

Feminism is a renovation both in life and literature as it is an awakening of women's power and inequality between two genders. *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) who was very much interested in the French Revolution during the Enlightenment period. She was the mother of the feminism that we know today. She complained about woman's perceptions. She had some recommendations about woman rights. Women and men were not equal in that era. She said women's abilities were ignored by men. She supported that women are not only bodily but also mentally important. Besides, the education system differentiates according to gender. For women, education means how to play the piano, sing, draw and do needlework (sew). Namely, they were educated to be good servants to men. Yet uneducated women mean a hopeless future, because when these women raise children they become uneducated children. If a society wants to have stronger families, it should educate women first.

First and foremost, "The Women's Movement"(Barry 116) takes place in the 1960s when Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) is published that is about resisting certain women's roles restricted in houses. Showalter states that it is the time of: "entering a new stage of self-awareness around 1960" (Showalter, 1999: 13) against the traditional women roles in society. Almost all of the writers are males and the canon of literature consists of male writers and their works. That's why gynocriticism shows up. It is the study of literature authored by women (Barry 118). With all those things and thoughts one of the female writers, Doris Lessing is familiar with women's restrictions and in her three short story books *To Room Nineteen* (2002), *The Temptation of Jack Orney* (1994), and *The Real Thing: Stories*

*and Sketches* (1993), she states the social boundaries of women. Her females demonstrate that women become more isolated and they largely realize the inequalities between the genders, and, therefore, this leads to self-recognition. Consequently, this alienation causes a reawakening for them. They are called the “other woman”, experiencing isolation and alienation from social norms. Doris Lessing has many short stories depicting the inferiority of women in patriarchal societies. She focuses on mistresses in *Our Friend Judith* (Lessing 1966), *The Other Woman*, and *Between Men*.

There is a rise in female alienation who do not accept themselves as mistresses in social life. For Lessing, their becoming mistresses derive not because of economic reasons but of sexual desires. In Lessing’s short stories, some women prefer their isolation whereas in some others, female characters have a rebellion against patriarchy. “In her short stories set in the 1950s and 1960s, readers can observe how Lessing’s heroines seek freedom during the age of sexual revolution” (Mamoto 1) as in *Debbie and Julie*, *To Room Nineteen*, *A Man and Two Women*, *An Old woman and Her Cat*, *A woman on a Roof*, *Pleasure* stories. However, when women have sexual desires, they are treated abnormally in society as in these stories. Therefore, this signifies sexism. “We define sexism as individuals' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, and organizational, institutional, and cultural practices that either reflect negative evaluations of individuals based on their gender or support unequal status of women and men” (Swim 407). That quotation shows that sexism causes passivity because of the pressure on women. Men, on the other hand, feel more liberated because they are interested in all fields of life, such as education and politics. A female may have many social boundaries. However, men are free to do whatever they desire. Isolation and alienation cause many psychological disorders and they are the basic reasons to disregard women in society. Social norms are exemplified in Doris Lessing's short stories: Her characters are rebellious ones against social norms.

In the course of history, women's rights have been ignored and they have been given traditional roles due to social pressure. Doris Lessing emphasizes that these traditional roles make women unhappy, and women should be liberated

contrary to the roles identified by society. They should draw their own path and traditional roles should be transformed by raising awareness of the social order. When her short stories are examined from a feminist perspective, Lessing focuses on the demolitions and transformation of traditional roles of women. For this reason, in her short stories, Lessing criticizes how the male-dominated society limits women, and the changes in the female characters can be considered a revolt against the patriarchal society. Contrary to the moral expectations in a patriarchal society, Lessing also mentions that women are limited according to specific moral standards. In her stories, women's revolt against these gender inequalities is indicated and a journey to the discovery of their womanhood is narrated. At the end of this journey, the female characters, who experience their discoveries, do not obey the roles identified by society and lead their lives with their own wills and desires. Consequently, they have an awareness of their free will by getting rid of the pressure of the male-dominated society (Howe 426).

Doris Lessing criticizes the gender injustice and inequality in male-dominated societies where women's rights are ignored. Although it is attempted to suppress and control women in patriarchal societies, they also have rights and wishes as a human. The female characters in her stories selected from a feminist perspective emphasize that the financial and moral support of men is not the only way to lead a life. Therefore, these characters do not solely aim to please men; they live for their needs and desires. This shows the awakening of female characters. Moreover, these characters do not obey social boundaries and norms and reconstruct their lives as a characteristic of feminism. In the end, the female characters, seeing the difficult conditions of life as a woman, regain their freedom without any support from men, which is the essential element of the feminist perspective. This is because the feminist point of view admits the principle that the rights of men should also be given to women. While doing this, equality and justice between women and men should be balanced.

In this study, some terms are used to emphasize the Feminist aspects of Lessing's short stories. The first one is the term "sisterhood" in Lessing's short stories to depict that "sisterhood is powerful" as entitled with *Sisterhood is Powerful*

against a male-dominated world (Morgan 77). That is a term used for women who support women against patriarchy. The second one is "gynocriticism" which is a term that belongs to Elaine Showalter. " The aims of gynocritics are " to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than to adopt male models and theories" ( Showalter, 1979: 28). That means women should be active in all fields as men do. Otherwise, they cannot have the same opportunities as men have in all fields. The last one is sexism:

Sexism is prejudice or discrimination based on a person's sex or gender. Sexism can affect anyone, but it primarily affects women and girls. It has been linked to stereotypes and gender roles and may include the belief that one sex or gender is intrinsically superior to another (Gajewski 39).

Sexism causes passivity because of the pressure on women. On the other hand, men feel freer as they are active in all fields such as education and politics which are vital subjects for their improvement of themselves.

This study consists of two parts and aims to demonstrate the comparison between women who obey social norms and those who do not obey these norms but lead their lives for their rights and will according to Lessing's perspective.

## **Chapter II. The Traditional Women Roles**

### *2.1 To Room Nineteen*

Lessing's *To Room Nineteen* (1963) includes a female character named Susan who thinks that an ideal marriage ends with happiness but she commits suicide to be free. On the other hand, Susan's husband Matthew Rawlings betrays her wife and behaves as if it is something normal that causes Susan to question ideal marriage. Susan has a good position and earns her own money but after her marriage, she leaves her job as this is what she has to do since her husband earns a lot of money. Thus, Susan turns out a housewife and brings up her four healthy children. The title demonstrates an admiration for *A Room of one's own* (1929) written by Virginia Woolf whose life also ends with the same tragic end as Susan. Room symbolizes freedom as a space.

They had avoided the pitfall so many of their friends had fallen into-of buying a house in the country for the sake of the children so that the husband became a weekend husband, a weekend father, and the wife was always careful not to ask what went on in the town flat

which they called (in joke) a bachelor flat. No, Matthew was a full-time husband, a full-time father, and at night, in the big married bed in the big married bedroom (which had an attractive view of the river), they lay beside each other talking and he told her about his day, and what he had done, and whom he had met; and she told him about her day (not as interesting, but that was not her fault), for both knew of the hidden resentments and deprivations of the woman who has lived her own life-and above all, has earned her own living-and is now dependent on a husband for outside interests and money (Lessing, 2002: 354).

This quotation summarizes the limitation of a woman causing division. She cannot live her life but has to live what society expects from her. Social epithets harm women, whether it is good or bad. Motherhood does not necessitate quitting your job and being addicted to your husband's money. This is not the nature of motherhood; it turns into a role formed as a result of the pressure of the male-dominated society, motherhood, and marriages; "Once, near Victoria, she found herself outside a newsagent that had Rooms to Let advertised. "... took the train to Victoria, searched until she found a small quiet hotel, and asked for a room for the day.... she needed a shelter at Victoria" ( Lessing, 2002: 368). The name Victoria is not a coincidence of course. The Victorian period which has very strict rules for women and it is concurrently a conservative era. Victorian Age takes its name from Queen Victoria whose monarchy lasts for sixty-four years and this is a very long period for the throne. In the Victorian period, women do not have the right to vote or have their property. "Feminist ideas spread among the educated middle classes, discriminatory laws were repealed, and the women's suffrage movement gained momentum in the last years of the Victorian era" (Dixon191). Besides Queen Victoria's political side, she has nine children and tries to show her people that family life is so important. She emphasizes the moral effects on life. In the Victorian era, *The Angel in the House* (1854) as Coventry Patmore wrote is a term used to be a good servant, a good mother, and a slave to husbands. Therefore, young girls are educated for the housework to become better servants. Their only duty is to grow up their children and get married whether they love their husbands or not. The only role of a woman is to dedicate herself to their husbands. Instead of this term, our women characters are changing the previously accepted model of *the Angel in the House* as it is depicted in *Killing the Angel in the House* (1931). Virginia Woolf says that "Killing the Angel in the House was part of the occupation of a woman"(Woolf 339) which shows that women should have their rights in patriarchal societies. Women want to be equal to

men. They should have the right to vote, to be well educated and they should have the freedom to find jobs in society. Here, Susan shows the tragic end of “the angel in the house” as Lessing depicts that being *the Angel in the House* term does not work here as Susan commits suicide although she is *the Angel in the House*:

It was banal, too, when one night Matthew came home late and confessed he had been to a party, taken a girl home, and slept with her. Susan forgave him, of course. Except that forgiveness is hardly the world. Understanding yes. But if you understand something, you don't forgive it, you are the thing itself: forgiveness is for what you don't understand. Nor had he confessed-what sort of word is that? The whole thing was not important. After all, years ago they had joked: Of course, I'm not going to be faithful to you, no one can be faithful to one other person for a whole lifetime. (And there was the word faithful-stupid, all these words, stupid, belonging to a savage old world.) (Lessing, 2002: 356).

This quotation above depicts that Susan is the victim of patriarchy. To survive in this male-dominated world firstly she quits her job and later on her pride because being betrayed is the destiny of women in a patriarchal society. It is seen that women obey social norms and be the victim of that system day by day; on the other hand, the ones that do not obey the social norms whether they have a bad epithet or not becomes stronger and becomes happier than ever.

Matthew Rawlings should be at times tempted (oh, what a word!) by the attractive girls at parties she could not attend because of the four children; and that sometimes he would succumb (a word even more repulsive, if possible) and that she, a good looking woman in the big well-tended garden at Richmond, would sometimes be pierced as by an arrow from the sky with bitterness ( Lessing, 2002: 357).

Fatherhood has got less responsibility compared to motherhood as in this story. Because, Matthew has to work and earn money and can go to parties. However, Susan has to stay at home with the children as this is what society expects from every mother. This normalization is due to certain roles that society oppresses. Although the role of “father” in a male-dominated world is not all about earning money, children need their care. Children need both mother and father’s responsibility. Yet, bringing up a child should be in equal conditions. Male domination should also be in fatherhood.

They were now both fortyish. The older children, boy, and girl, were ten and eight, at school. The twins, six, were still at home. Susan did not have nurses or girls to help her: childhood is short, and; she did not regret the hard work. Often enough she was bored since small children can be boring; she was often very tired, but she regretted nothing. In another decade, she would turn herself back into being a woman with a life of her own ( Lessing, 2002: 358).

Susan lives a mortgaged life. When her duty is over, she misses her freedom which causes madness day by day. That mask of motherhood is not natural because it is dependent on cultural expectations. “He is lurking in the garden and sometimes

even in the house, and he wants to get into me and to take me over ( Lessing, 2002: 367). Day by day, she hallucinates many sounds and a devil person. That devil is patriarchy who steals Susan's dreams and life for the sake of social norms. When she looks in the mirror, she sees a mad woman with black hair as a reflection of herself.

First, I spent twelve years of my adult life working and living my own life. Then I married, and from the moment I became pregnant for the first time I signed myself over, so to speak, to other people. To the children. Not for one moment in twelve years have I been alone, had time to myself. So now I have to learn to be myself again. That's all ( Lessing, 2002: 360).

Everybody needs a space of her own. Being addicted to someone else's needs and not focusing on her happiness cause a life in prison. The limitation of Susan causes a reawakening as she wants isolation and alienation (Sprague 155).

Then she returned to the family, wife, and mother, smiling and responsible, feeling as if the pressure of these people-four lively children and her husband were a painful pressure on the surface of her skin, a hand pressing on her brain. She did not once break down into irritation during these holidays, but it was like living out a prison sentence, and when the children went back to school, she sat on a white stone near the flowing river, and she thought: It is not even a year since the twins went to school, since they were off my hands (What on earth did I think I meant when I used that stupid phrase?) and yet I'm a different person. I'm simply not myself. I don't understand it (Lessing, 2002: 364).

Susan acts all the time for the patriarchy. She doesn't know what she wants as she never focuses on her feelings and needs for ages. She feels empty, because she always lives for others' expectations. She hasn't got her own life. She has got many duties such as bringing up children and dealing with the housework and after completing those missions she forgets how to live and what to do in her own space. *To Room Nineteen's* story starts with Rawling's marriage's failure. The story hints that, their marriage is based on intelligence, yet, intelligence doesn't work this time. This intelligence is based on a male-dominated world; it ignores women, so it doesn't work. The river symbol is mentioned five times. When it is first mentioned, river is so attractive at night. Their houses has a big garden, yet, day by day the river becomes dirtier as it becomes brown and full of mud. The last time when Susan is committing suicide, she feels free although she is on the edge of life and death. She hears the "hiss" sound as she hears beforehand. In her monstrous garden, she sees a red jacketed man who resembles a snake. This gas sound is the sound of her key for her solitude when she reaches her freedom. "He did his duty, perfunctorily; she did

not even pretend to do hers. And he had become like other husbands, with his real life in his work and the people he met there, and very likely a serious affair. All this was her fault” ( Lessing, 2002: 373). Susan made a lot of sacrifices while raising her children. However, that is not enough: she has to do more such as forgetting her freedom. If she is betrayed, that is the woman’s fault for society. The role of a woman is to make a man happy. Yet, a woman is not a servant of a child or her husband. Marriage should consist of equal responsibilities and equal needs. A fault is not only for women but all the burden is on women in patriarchy and this is what feminist ideas are against. The keyword for this story is “*loyal*” it is only used for a woman, not for a man. Yet, loyalty should be for both genders. The other word is “*clever husband*” model that causes wife to be fool. As women live in a good house and bring up their children alone. They give up their social life and work. The next word is freedom hours. Susan waits for “*free hours*” as she has a realization that she doesn’t live what she wants but what society and her husband expect. The “*Enemy*” is another word that is used for Susan’s house for patriarchy. She has so many rooms but she hasn’t got her own life, so she escapes and becomes mad. She commits suicide because of all these pressures. The “*empty*” and “*prisoner*” words show that she wears a mask but she doesn’t get that identity because that is not real. The real thing is she is alienated in that house as nobody asks her what she wants. She wants to live her own life and that motherhood and being a good wife’s responsibilities kill her day by day. “*Bondage*” (Lessing 365) and “*pressure*” words show the repression of Susan as she hallucinates a man with the red jacket that shows her sexual desires and needs to be pressured by her husband. She is betrayed many times and her husband goes on with her own life without thinking about Susan’s emotions and feelings. The madness is important here. Susan firstly wants her own room. It is called a mother’s room and this toom resembles Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar’s *the Madwoman in the Attic* (1979) . Yet, her children are just fun of it. Susan wants to escape from her responsibilities and she wants money from his husband regularly. She rents a room and it is far away from her home. She starts to see hallucinations and she wants to escape herself. Susan keeps a servant first, but this is not enough for her. Later, she hires a nanny to take the children and keep them until she comes back home. She has a great house, but she is as if in a cage there. She needs her own room

as Virginia Woolf says her own space provides a breath for her (Woolf 338). Susan goes to her own room every day and just sleeps in the same room, room 19. Her husband hires a detective because he is suspicious whether Susan is with another man. Susan tells a lie that she is betraying her husband with a writer. She commits suicide in that room to become free.

I now record the one act for which I take some credit to myself. . . . I turned upon her and caught her by the throat. I did my best to kill her. My excuse, if I were to be had up in a court of law, would be that I acted in self-defense. Had I not killed her she would have killed me. She would have plucked the heart out of my writing (Woolf 59).

As Virginia Woolf states in her book *Professions for Women* (1942), death is the only solution for Susan. Susan is bodily alive but she lives a prison life. Death is the only way to escape from the pressures of being a good mother and a good wife although being betrayed is not the normal life condition of a woman. Susan doesn't know how to survive without freedom. The only thing that belongs to herself is the hired room, but Matthew doesn't let her take a breath. This tragic end depicts life conditions that the moral standards and expectations of a woman are completely different. Being a good mother should be something natural and a woman shouldn't quit her job or give up herself just to get married. Finding a rich husband is not the only way to survive. Susan is regretful to abandon herself. The epithets of society cause tragic endings for a woman such as becoming a prostitute, mistresses. All these epithets are derived from patriarchy and have so many burdens on women. All these roles come from men's needs and women become a servant of men. This is the unequal world and double standard criticized by feminism.

## 2.2 *Pleasure*

“Pleasure” is a story based on a stereotyped married couple whose names are Mary Rogers and Tommy Rogers. The story's title is based on Mary Rogers' two pleasures: one of them is Christmas and the other is the summer holiday. The setting is London where most of Lessing's stories take place and it is raining. Mary Rogers is an old woman and she has got grandchildren, yet, both physically and mentally she is not happy because of aging. When a beautiful woman gets older, she feels deficient in many ways such as a lack of appetite for sex. On the other hand, when a

man gets older, he feels better as he can find a young girl. These unequal physical changes for both genders cause inferiority for older women. The main problem in this story is the aging of our protagonist Mary who is good at sewing and being a great mother. Motherhood term is important here, because all these responsibilities are for females and trifles no for men. That makes an unequal world and prepares unhappiness for women.

“Dreaming of the sun, old girl?”(Lessing, 2002: 50). That quotation shows insulting as the old girl is a cruel word here. Age is not for women but also for men. When Mr. Rogers says “old” for his wife that means she is not capable of many things. She is not an attractive woman and that term means that a husband may say darling or my beautiful wife, yet, here Mr. Rogers humiliates Mrs. Rogers that shows patriarchy is dominant in their marriage.

“But a week later she was fitting a white linen sunsuit before the mirror when he said, ‘ I say, old girl, that shows quite a bit of leg, you know...’” (Lessing, 2002: 51).  
... shoulders before the glass, and thought they might very well be exposed. ( Lessing, 2002: 51) March, April, May, June. She was a good needlewoman. Also, for a few happy months before she married, she had studied fashion design in London (Lessing, 2002: 51).

The above-mentioned quotations are evidence of being the slave of men and it is the destiny of nearly every married woman in a male-dominated world. The mentality of men is to looks at women as a piece of meat making women dull. It is seen that before getting married Mary was happy as she can decide what she wanted. Yet, after her marriage, she cannot even decide what to wear. Traditional ethical norms are not the written ones but most married women know that they cannot wear what patriarchy necessitates (Beechey 66). Dedication to a man and the expectation of society ruin a woman’s hopes. After marriage, she has to dedicate herself to her husband and her children and by doing this she abandons her dreams. “Ah well, we none of us know what’s in store for us when we’re young.” (Lessing, 2002: 51). This quotation shows the hopes of a young woman before getting married. Yet after marriage, all these responsibilities make everything harder. Hopes turn into obedience for the sake of being accepted in society.

She was revealed to be wearing a heavy black bathing suit, and; she did not miss the relieved glance her husband gave her. She felt it to be unfair. There he stood, a tall, very thin, fair man, quite presentable in an absurd bathing slip that consisted of six inches of

material held on by a string around his hips. And there she was, a heavy firm woman, with clear white flesh - but middle-aged and in a black bathing suit (Lessing 2002: 55).

The main bondage of the married woman is clothing. As a married woman, it is unethical to wear attractive clothes. The problem is that if a man can seduce easily, that's his problem. It's not women's problem because they should be free to wear what they want. While man can wear undershirt working, women cannot wear what she wants. This is not fair.

She saw Tommy looking at them, too. Then she noticed eighteen inches to the other side, a vast grey-haired lady, bulging weary pallid flesh out of a white cotton playsuit. Mary gave her a look of happy superiority and lay down flat on the sand, congratulating herself (Lessing, 2002: 55).

Mary's husband Tommy is looking for a young girl, yet, Mary cannot wear what she wants. This double standard is normalized in patriarchy, however, this only causes loyal married women but not loyal married men. While these ethical pressures cause women to be inadequate in marriages, they make it necessary to remain silent against betrayals by men who are accepted in society in every condition. This silence makes women die not physically but mentally day by day. As Lessing states being "... away from any chance of contact with each other." (Lessing, 2002: 56). This quotation indicates there are many reasons for disengagement in relationships for a woman. After being a mother, all motherhood responsibilities change the focal point from husband to babies. Besides all these, the aging makes great pressure on women. Marriage necessitates a prison life in patriarchy so this causes woman to have many psychological disorders. While men are in search of excitement outside, women are waiting inside the house for cleaning, raise children, and cook. So day by day, contact between married couples lessens as there are no common points while talking and flirting.

They watched the children screaming and laughing in the unvarying blue waves. They watched the groups of French adolescents flirt and roll each other over on the sand in a way that Mary, at least, thought appallingly free. Thank heavens her daughter had married young and was safely out of harm's way! Nothing could have persuaded Mary Rogers of the extreme respectability of these youngsters (Lessing, 2002: 56).

Mary is unhappy with her marriage and being an old woman nowadays. However, she raised her daughter in the same ethical norms as she does. Being safe is being restricted, yet, to be acceptable in society, she thinks her daughter is lucky to be respectable. French people are more relaxed to express their feelings than British people as British women are more conservative because of their ancestor Queen Victoria (1819-1901). Lessing states:

They watched the groups of French adolescents flirt and roll each other over on the sand in a way that Mary, at least, thought appallingly free. She suspected them all of shocking and complicated vices. Incredible that, in so few years, they would be sorted by some powerful and comforting social process into these decent, well-fed French couples, each so anxiously absorbed in the welfare of one, or perhaps two small children ( Lessing, 2002: 56).

This quotation above summarizes the pressure of society that makes couples less energetic and that takes all life happiness away on behalf of children. Yet, the real problem is not to have children but to have less freedom that derives from ethics and morality as if someone is married that couples have to be more careful about ethical norms. Those expectations make couples' behaving not naturally but artificially as the only way to survive according to social expectations is to live what society wants but not yours. Otherwise, the otherhood of people especially, a woman's is indispensable that causes psychological disturbance for females.

“Mary remained silent” ( Lessing, 2002: 61). Mary feels “alone” on that vacation, and “Mary struggled with temptation, then fell.” (Lessing, 2002: 61). Being silent is voiceless resistance to Mary, on the other hand, she always has an effort to obey the rules of her husband. Although being an old woman, she has to obey his husband as if a child asks everything to her mother. “Tommy gave his wife an alarmed and warning look, and said, “ I wish to God they wouldn't use so much garlic.” (Lessing, 2002: 61). That quotation shows a woman who lives in patriarchy should be obedient whether she is right or not. As if a child, a woman should not reply to anything the authority says.

Mary was alone all day. She also doesn't size the day as she is not hopeful for today and for her future. She only has a few moments that make her happy in the past before getting married. “Betty Clarke, apparently, was only a beach widow

when it suited her, for she much preferred the red-rock island to staying with Mary.” (Lessing, 2002: 59). During Rogers’ vacation they meet a nice young couple. While Betty Clarke is a nice young girl, she can get in touch with Mr. Rogers and Betty’s husband. Yet, Mary’s destiny is waiting for her husband while he is getting fun. “Beach widow” term is used how Mary is isolated and alienated although younger Betty is shining like a star. Yet, the destiny of Betty will be the same when she gets older. Lessing criticizes that women lose their importance when they get older when women lose their femininity at a certain age. This is only a cover for a man to find a new attractive girl and make this betrayal normalized. In addition, aging is something natural but it might not be the reason to blame their old wife but themselves for betrayals.

Tommy offered his wife an entirely disloyal, sarcastic grin. “A woman should think of her husband’s career,” said Betty. “It’s true, isn’t it? (Lessing, 2002: 62). Thus, above-mentioned quotation shows a woman should be dependent economically on her husband and the best way to be successful in this is to make her husband richer and richer. While men are developing themselves economically and socially, women become more dependent on their husbands than before. This addiction makes them weak and creates clever husbands to create a lifestyle for women who are addicted to their husbands to survive.

As married women are not free economically, they could not decide what to wear or where to go. So, husbands think instead of wives. In that case, it signifies the criticism of dependent and brainless women without questioning that life leads them to passivity as patriarchy wants (Kent 252). “She’s cracked, said Francis, good-humouredly, nodding to indicate his wife. She spends half the year making clothes for three weeks’ holiday at the sea. Then the other half made Christmas presents out of bits and pieces. That’s all she ever does” ( Lessing, 2002: 63). There is a portrait of unfairness as it is criticized that the rights of women are inadequate. The passivity of women reflects the inequality between the two genders. We see that there is no point in humiliating a woman for an injustice in this world. That shows there is a great burden and responsibility for women’s roles at that time. They couldn't have the opportunity to educate themselves, they only deal with trifles. So they have not

got any chance to have a voice in society. Women just resemble one of the objects in the house that are not alive. The woman's role in society should not be just being the "angel in the house" and being good servants to men. Mary hasn't got a chance to deal with politics or education: She can only deal with trifles as her husband pressures herself in every detail of life such as clothing. She cannot decide what to wear, so in the case of such pressures Mary only can decide what to buy or how to decorate somewhere as patriarchy orders. Thus, Mary is a victim of a male-dominated society since she lost her freedom: "That big bowl, she exclaimed, her voice newly alive, that big red one, there—it would be just right for the Christmas tree. So it would. Go ahead and buy it, old girl, he agreed at once, with infinite relief" (Lessing, 2002: 64). This quotation is the end of the story. While she has a nightmare vacation, she focuses on Christmas, because she has just two routines to survive. During her vacation, her husband never says a good phrase except for "old girl" which both shows her wife's "age" (De Beauvoir 705) and shows how outmoded she is. She has some strict rules such as staying in the same place on holidays and going to the same places. That is, she doesn't want to change to become acceptable in society. If she changes just a small detail in her wifeness, she is also afraid that she also changes herself. That ruins everything as she is so helpless and she doesn't know what will happen if she changes herself or revolts against her husband or society. That empire of fear makes Mary insensitive. "But Mary was regretting nothing" (Lessing, 2002: 64). As in this quotation, she behaves as if nothing makes her unhappy in this life anymore as she stopped thinking about the unfairness of it. Mary only has got duties as being ready for Christmas or summer holidays and these are her only pleasures as in the title of the story because she is so desperate in life.

## 2.2 *He*

The third selected story is *He* (Lessing 1978). This story is about a "failed marriage" (Sargent 10) because of patriarchal rules and pressures on marriage. The effects of patriarchal authority and psychological disorders on certain roles of women such as cleaning, and bringing up children cause psychological disorders, and these

unequal gender roles for women cause a revolt in this story. Although its title is short enough, it is long enough to interpret. The title; *He* shows the patriarchal society's inequality and the pressure of a male-dominated world. The protagonist Annie is the portrait of an abandoned woman and Mary is her best friend who wants to support her. In this short story, Annie is desolated because her husband has another relationship with a younger woman. There is a dialogue between Annie and her best friend Mary defining their sisterhood as Mary feels sympathy for her best friend. These two friends support each other in every condition without hesitating and becoming a great example of sisterhood. The story starts with the dialogue between Annie and Mary: "There was an unwashed dish in the sink, a cloth over a chair. Everything's in such a mess' (Lessing, 2002: 84). This mess indicates that something goes wrong. Because of traditional women roles, a woman had better be the cleanest one that shows she is a successful housewife. Annie devotes her way of living to a cleaning addict because of the psychological disorders of betrayal. Her husband left her alone with their children and he just goes away without taking any responsibility. Yet, the problem is that Annie misses her husband Rob as she loves him. In addition to that, for Simone De Beauvoir adornment has two characteristics it is like the jewelry of a woman. Adornment not only reflects the social position of a woman but also the importance that she considers for herself (Beauvoir 167). Yet in this story, before meeting her husband, Annie firstly cleans the house, later, she wears her clothes without even thinking about it.

Adornment is important not for a man but for a woman to honor her inner world. Besides, knitting is a symbol of the domestic life of a woman in this story: "Shouting and banging until nearly morning—we all heard it." She counted purl, plain, purl, and added: "Don't last long, do it? Six months he's been with her now?"(Lessing, 2002: 84). While talking these "plain, purl" words reflect the faith of woman as "knitting woman" reflects the passivity of a woman with their silence. That is a role model of a male-dominated society instead of giving women creative roles, they deal with knitting. A woman stays at home to pass the time in vain (Okumura 181) The sudden words "plain, purl" breaks the dialogues between Annie and Mary that reflects Annie's confused mind. She cannot decide what to do with

that betrayal. Her life goes on as in this knitting motif. On one side, Annie thinks she does everything for her children and her husband but on the other side she realizes that she does nothing for herself and she is alone now. Free time activities for women are knitting, cleaning, and serving at home. There is a production but there is an unfairness especially financially when we compare the occupations that men do it. All these trifles give a portrait of a woman in society for their passivity in traditional roles for women. Instead of these traditional roles, “Nontraditional Work and Family Roles for Women and Men” (Perrone 04) create a “balance” for the positions of both genders such as raising the children together, women dealing with trade instead of staying at home results in justice and equality. While their wives are working outside husbands deal with housework and children at home. All those bring equality both for the social position of women and economically she feels freer economically.

In addition to all of these, Rob is fed up with the pressures of his girlfriend. Annie does not need her husband economically, yet, she entirely misses him as she loves her exhusband. She expresses that: “I’d have the kids and cleaning and the cooking, and working all day sometimes when he was unemployed I’d bring in all the money... and he wouldn’t even put the kettle on for me. Women’s work, he said” (Lessing, 2002: 85). This quotation indicates that it may not be physical violence but women particularly experience psychological violence at home. This quotation also refers to the existence of patriarchal authority. The inequality of women’s life standards results from the oppression of the patriarchal world as an example in this short story (Acker 02).

“I’m forty-five, and I might as well be on the dust heap. And then, after a pause, in a remote, cold voice: We’ve been together twenty-five years. Three kids. And then he goes off with that... with that ...” ( Lessing, 2002: 89).

Moreover, as in this quotation, dedication of women’s lives to the traditional roles of society is criticized by Doris Lessing as she is against women’s suffering for the expectations of social norms. With the repetition of “that” word, Annie expresses a resistance against the normalization of betrayal for men:

The first twenty years of a woman’s life are extraordinarily rich; she experiences menstruation, sexuality, marriage, and motherhood; she discovers the world and her destiny. She is the mistress of a home at twenty, linked from then on to one man, a child in her arms, now her life is finished forever. Real activity, and real work, are the privilege of

man: her only occupations are sometimes exhausting but never fulfill her. Renunciation and devotion have been extolled, but it often seems highly futile to devote herself to “the upkeep of any two beings until the end of their lives.” It is all very grand to forget oneself, but one must know for whom and what (Beauvoir 588).

Lessing gives two kinds of women as an example in her selected stories. As in this quotation, one of them dedicates herself to society and obeys traditional ethical norms without questioning and becomes unhappy or even commits suicide as Susan does in *To Room Nineteen*. She does not live her life according to her wishes and desires, on the other hand, Lessing expresses her characters such as mistresses or gypsies show that being not acceptable in society causes isolation and alienation but it also causes a rebellion against male-dominated world:

It's all very well, she cried out to herself, it's not right, it just isn't right... A terrible feeling of injustice was gripping her; and it was just this feeling she must push down, keep under if she wanted him. For she knew finally-- and this was stronger than anything else—that without him there would be no meaning in her life at all ( Lessing, 2002: 90).

From Annie's words such as “injustice” and “not right”, the existence of patriarchy is criticized in terms of its inequality between genders. When looking from a feminist perspective, Annie has a traditional woman role and she is acceptable in society, yet, she is hopeless although she dedicates herself to her husband and children. This is what Lessing implies in her short stories. Obeying the rules of society does not mean that makes women happy. On the contrary, living to the expectations of society causes inequality for women because of male authority's needs and expectations. This is the criticism of women who live by social norms and give up their own lives. For example, Annie lives by the social norms through devoting herself for cleaning job. The man wants to go back home even though he cheated his wife, his wife is against the patriarchal husband role, which is defined as only giving money to wife as a husband's duty. Being the ideal woman, Annie is unhappy, but she acted through the social norms. She is a housewife who raises her children and cleans her house, but she was abandoned for a young woman. Why Annie is so angry with herself as the man tries to come back? Her anger towards him declines by her willingness to forgive her husband even though she has economic independence she cannot resist her husband. Society makes women dependent on men and without the protection of a man, a woman does not know how to live. Simone De Beauvoir states that

“Marriage facilitates the wife’s abandonment” (Beauvoir 530) due to the woman getting domestic roles to make a happy marriage instead of a loved one in this story. Annie’s husband finds a girl who makes her happy instead of housework. Although Annie is betrayed, she hates him and says “I’d see him dead first,” (Lessing, 2002: 89). Afterwards, she says Mary will you please go and say to him I want to talk with him? (Lessing, 2002: 89). These contradictions are the feelings of Annie that she both wants to get rid of her husband but also misses him. “I ‘m forty-five, and I might as well be on the dust heap.” (Lessing, 2002: 89). This quotation indicates that Annie feels herself unattractive anymore not because of her age but because she is not aware of her husband’s desires because she cannot focus on her own desires while obeying social expectation and certain roles of women. “Unhappy marriage metaphor” from a feminist perspective indicates that traditional woman roles are “hierarchically arranged” that results in unhappy women and unhappy marriages as the marriages are formulated by social norms and needs of men without thinking about the needs of women (Alexander 976). Lastly, Lessing criticizes the patriarchal marriages that ignore the desires of women as a reflection of inequality in gender roles in a happy house atmosphere. Instead of happiness for the traditional domestic women, Lessing creates nightmare marriages that are based on the unfaithful male characters instead of loving their own wives.

#### *2.4 A Man and Two Women*

The story is about two stereotyped married couples that have children. Stella and her husband, Paul, are the older ones and Dorothy and Jack are the younger ones who have a newborn baby. Stella visits these new mother and father to help them in their village house. Being a new mother, Dorothy has postpartum sexual reluctance. She also feels as if she betrays her husband because of her son and mother relationship. Motherhood is an important term in this story for Dorothy. On the other hand, Stella observes Jacks and Dorothy’s marriage in the eye of Dorothy to think about her own marriage. The aging of a woman is also mentioned as Stella is an old woman. However, she is not faithful as she has a sexual relationship with Jack who is one of her best friend’s husband. Thus, Lessing depicts female fidelity in

marriages as a usual subject for traditional and conservative families in male-dominated societies.

“Having a baby’s killed everything creative in me—quite different from being pregnant,” said Dorothy, but not complaining of it. She had worked like a demon while she was pregnant (Lessing, 2002: 268). Dorothy and her husband are artists, yet, after her pregnancy, she has got some emotional problems such as she does not feel herself enough in motherhood and her marriage after baby. She works hard before motherhood but she cannot adapt to her new life easily as in the following quotation.

Well, I don’t care, said Dorothy. That’s the funny thing, I don’t care. She said this flat, indifferent. She seemed to be looking at them both again from a small troubled distance. You two look good together, she said, and again there was the small jar ( Lessing, 2002: 268).

Dorothy feels jealousy for Stella here. Although she says you two look good together, she feels there is sexual intimacy between her best friend and her husband. She seems not caring but she feels inferior. After baby, she has some sexual regression and this makes her depressed. Both of the couples have difficulty in marriage. So in that story unsuccessful marriages result in unfaithfulness as Stella’s husband betrays her many times. So probably Stella wants to take revenge from her husband. After her sexual relationship with Jack, she turns to her own husband.

“There was a strain here, in the marriage, nothing much; it was kept in check by their scorn for their arbitrary rewards of “the racket.” But it was there, nevertheless.” (Lessing, 2002: 262).

The quotation shows both the couples are nervous in their marriages. They don’t want to live like that and Stella has an awakening in her marriage. So, she tries to find a solution for her unhappiness. Not betraying her husband but trying to find ways for her happiness show there is still hope for Stella but not Dorothy. By observing Dorothy Stella goes back to her younger ages and tries to find herself to make everything better. “Both marriages were those of strong, passionate, talented individuals; they shared a battling quality that strengthened them, not weakened them.” (Lessing, 2002: 263).

Unlike conservative families, these couples try to make each other strong. In conservative families, women are most of the time not talented and they are on the weak side but in this story, women and men have equal rights to strengthen each other. Passion is important here as Stella seduces Jack because she has a sexual and emotional awareness of herself. “No marital miseries; nothing of (what they saw so often in friends) one partner in a marriage is a victim to the other, resenting the other; no claiming of outsiders as sympathizers or allies in an unequal battle” (Lessing, 2002: 263). The abovementioned depicts females are normally victims because of inequality in marriages. Enemies are social norms that pressure women and cause their passivity. But in this story, men and women have equal standards as both of them are educative ones and none of them try to victimize the other one. Then what is the reason behind their unhappiness? The wrong choice of spouse and expectations from a marriage with certain roles for women and men cause them to be unable to be themselves, and women like Stella try to idealize their inner journey by recognizing their own selves.

“If I were not married to my husband, if you were not married to your wife, how delightful it would be to be married to you. These moments were not the least of the pleasures of this four-sided friendship.” ( Lessing, 2002: 264). In this story, marriages cause their own selves to die. So four sides try to escape from their own marriages as they can talk to their friends and everything they say in marriages are on the wrong side. This means they feel isolation and alienation in their own marriages. As their marriage is deriving from unfaithfulness and sexual desires, couples try to find new ways to get rid of this crisis of unhappiness. “Perhaps I don’t really want a baby at all? Perhaps I’m not fitted to be a mother?” (Lessing, 2002: 265). As Dorothy says in the story social pressure rather than maternal instinct causes questioning because for motherhood there are so many certain roles that derive from patriarchy (Neyer 165).

“She lit a cigarette, took herself in hand; set herself to enjoy the other woman’s love affair with her baby instead of envying her.” ( Lessing, 2002: 271). Stella represents older women’s problems here. Lessing likes to compare older and younger women in terms of their feelings. When women get older they have problems such as sexual desires and they feel not adequate in seducing men as they

feel not so beautiful. Thus, Lessing compare older and younger women in her short stories and depicts ignorance and beauty against wisdom.

“Do you know what happened?” said Dorothy. “I was feeding the baby, it was terribly early. Jack sat straight up in bed and said: ‘Jesus, Dorothy, I’ve just remembered, I screwed that silly bitch Lady Edith on her brocade sofa.” (Lessing, 2002: 272). Having as a newborn baby and not feeling herself so unattractive enough, Dorothy feels emotionally a collapse as she couldn’t adopt her new life being a mother and she learns that his husband betrays her. While men can say that betraying is so normal, they cannot predict that women feel insufficient as a woman. Nearly all Lessing stories explain that after betraying, husbands feel more self-conscious, on the other hand, women feel unworthy of themselves. As in *To Room Nineteen*, being betrayed causes Susan to become mad and this leads her to commit suicide.

“Dorothy’s guilty because she feels unfaithful to you.”

“What?”

“No, I mean, with the baby, and that’s what it’s all about.” (Lessing, 2002: 275). Dorothy has new responsibilities being a mother. She takes nearly all the responsibilities while her husband betrays her. She feels unfaithful not to her husband because Dorothy’s center of her life changes from her husband to her baby.

“A man and two women living together—here, in England.” (Lessing, 2002: 277). Dorothy sees a newspaper title and it says a man and two of her wives live together. Also, the story’s title comes from this newspaper. Although this story is about two couples, we have limited information about Stella’s husband except she is an unfaithful man. This quotation depicts patriarchal society’s polygamy and normalization of unfaithfulness of men as a male-dominated society is based on the desires of men not women.

“No, I’d like it,” insisted Dorothy. “I think our marriages are silly. Africans and people like that, they know better, they’ve got some sense.” ( Lessing, 2002: 277). This quotation shows there is a comparison between British marriages and African ones as Lessing lives in both places. Although in the story our couples are from London, they are far from living the standards of society. Marriage has only a burden for couples as it is not something natural like African people have, British

people have traditional marriages which causes unhappiness because it has male-dominated rules coming from their ancestors such as Queen Victoria (1819-1901).

“I can just see you if I did make love to Stella,” said Jack. “But I wouldn’t mind,” said Dorothy, and burst into tears (Lessing, 2002: 277). After having been betrayed Dorothy loses her confidence as a woman. She feels less attractive and blames herself as her baby needs her protection all the time so she cannot “make her husband happy.” This causes men freer as they feel innocent because if women cannot make their man happy they can find a new one.

Their faces were at a foot’s distance from each other, their eyes staring hostility. She thought that if she had not the vision of the helpless baby they would now be in each other’s arms— generating tenderness and desire like a couple of dynamos, she said to herself, trembling with dry anger (Lessing, 2002: 279).

Stella is not also unfaithful to her husband but also to Dorothy. As Dorothy needs her friends’ help both Jack and Stella hit Dorothy from back. This is the destiny of traditional marriages. Yet, unlike Dorothy, Stella has a self-recognition for her own sexual desires. For the sake of baby, she leaves that place to live in her own way. Loyalty is a requirement not only for women but also for men because there must be equality. Jack goes on this sexual relationship if Stella does not stop.

Jack’s mouth was moving along her cheek towards her mouth, dissolving her whole self in delight. She saw, against closed lids, the bundled baby upstairs, and pulled back from the situation, exclaiming energetically: “Damn Dorothy, damn her, damn her, I’d like to kill her....”(279). It really was a lovely night (Lessing, 2002: 280).

The ambiguity of the ending shows that Stella’s visiting her friends changes her a lot. She observes her marriage in the eye of Dorothy who is younger than herself. Stella and Jack have a sexual relationship at the end which helps Stella to have a portrait of her sexual desires and self-recognition. Stella’s reawakening depicts that she turns to her husband but this time she feels differently as this visit to her friends is in her inner trip. Although Dorothy is younger, she feels stereotyped passive woman in the condition of patriarchy. Stella is the rebellious one against social norms. While Dorothy normalizes betraying her husband and she represents passivity here, Stella gives up her sexual desires for the sake of a new baby, not for her best friend or husband. This baby represents hopes for new world. Stella has hopes for her new life.

Lessing chooses some words such as unfaithful, strain, victim, and battle to indicate that marriages that are suitable for social norms kill the desires of women by giving all the burden to women and making them victims of patriarchy.

### *2.5 Debbie and Julie*

I chose that story because it includes two characters that are stereotyped ones and cannot change their destiny and do not resist patriarchy. One of them is a prostitute and the other one is an innocent girl who is raped by her school friend. The title gives two names Debbie, the evil side as she is a prostitute, and Julie, the angel side as she has a conservative family, yet, the story shows its vice versa. Being a prostitute Debbie is the angel character in the story. Patriarchal effects cause a nonintimate relationship in Julie's house as her parents never touch each other but go on their marriage in a loveless atmosphere. Julie symbolizes an ideal and round character for a male-dominated society who escapes a sexual relationship and chooses to be an obedient woman although she is raped, she remains silent as this is what male authority expects. Julie shows that an ideal woman should not have curiosity. Debbie always supports her friend as she saves her during her pregnancy although left her alone in the end for a man. On the other hand; Debbie symbolizes an unideal character as she does not live a conservative life in the traditional society. According to patriarchal norms, a fallen woman should be the disregarded one but Debbie is the heroine without wings in the story as Lessing wants to give her a chance to change her destiny to become freer. Yet, Debbie wants her salvation with the help of a man, not on her own. Julie has been raped by her school friend and after her five months pregnancy, she escaped her home and Debbie helps Julie when she sees her in a railway station in a desperate position. Debbie protects Julie as if she was her mother and Julie was her baby. Debbie had an abortion and if she had that baby she/he was nearly the same age as Julie. Abortion is an important issue in terms of the "Sexual Revolution" (the 1960s) as women start to take birth control pills and abortion becomes legal which is the fragmentation of conservativeness related to morality. Although men are free while having sexual relationships, women are not

because of moral life standards for the benefit of males. With birth control pills, women start to protect themselves from unwanted pregnancies that make them decide for their own bodies. In addition to that, women start to activate their sexual desires rather than patriarchal oppressions (Willis 07).

She told herself she was stealing from Debbie but knew Debbie wouldn't mind. She never did, would say only, 'Just take it, love, if you want it.' Then she might laugh and say, 'Take what you want and don't pay for it!' (Lessing, 1993:05).

Debbie has no expectations and she helps Julie whenever she needs help. Although Debbie's job is not acceptable to society, she earns her money with her body and this is a kind of trade for her. Nevertheless, Debbie helps Julie voluntarily which shows a contrast between her life standards and expectation for people. *Debbie and Julie* is an example of gynocriticism as it is the study of literature authored by a woman writer, Lessing. Whilst looking at the characters the readers have limited information about male characters which is Lessing's style to write mostly about female characters in detail. Because Lessing wants to raise awareness of the harsh conditions of life as a woman in a society that is designed for the passivity of a woman from cradle to grave to supply the needs of men. Besides, Lessing wants the reader to focus on the female characters' voyages in the patriarchal world to show some of them are successful and some of them are not. This is related to the salvaged ones who resist the patriarchal norms and want to change their destiny while the others are obedient enough although it may result in the loss of a baby's life. As Julie's baby Rose dies, the death of Susan in *To Room Nineteen* implies that obedience to male-authority may result in the loss of women character's lives in patriarchal life. So, she ends her life as this is her only chance. In addition to these, Julie is so illiterate as she learns everything about pregnancy and she learns stages of it with a book that Debbie gives her. This is because motherhood should be something natural (Neyer 165) but society makes it harder and for females, motherhood becomes a burden to make it easier for fathers. That book symbolizes patriarchy here. "Why didn't the book say?" (Lessing 1993: 09). Because, something natural cannot be learned by a book. She is illiterate because she doesn't recognize she has been raped by her school friend which shows conservativeness and makes young girls ignorant. So, they cannot protect themselves against a male-dominated world this is what society wants to make an easier life for

men. Lessing depicts Julie's feelings clearly in the birth scene where Julie is alone with a street dog in an abandoned cottage. Julie wants nobody to see her. Although she comes to that cottage, Julie thinks nobody realizes her as she is so young. The people outside may guess what happened to that girl as in those times (1960s and 1970s) raping rates are high (Shorter 479) for the young girls, yet, society keeps silent to protect men's needs and desires to victimize young girls for the sake of patriarchy. Women's needs and lifestyles are pressured by male-dominated society to have a better life condition by victimized women.

That an iron-clad set of prohibitions against sleeping around meant that young unmarried women who did dare to experiment sexually would be struck by all kinds of "fornication" penalties. Few women, therefore, risked intercourse before marriage, and few men had sexual access of any kind outside marriage. (Remember that prostitutes were normally confined to cities such as London or Dijon, where only a small proportion of the population) (Shorter 473).

The setting of the story is London and Debbie's whorehouse is in London to find customers easily. Debbie helps Julie because she knows that the punishment of pregnancy without marriage is Julie's fault in a patriarchal world although being raped isn't Julie's fault. Thus Julie has to keep this a secret and has to get rid of that baby to go on with her life if she does not want to work in a whorehouse to have the same destiny as Debbie. All punishments are given to women although she is the victim of that ethical norms. This is what Lessing wants to take attention and satire. Besides that after giving birth, Julie does not have a chance to feel motherhood emotionally and she does not even look at the eyes of the baby girl as Julie is afraid of the harsh results of adultery penalties.

"A large dog stood in the door, a great black threatening beast, and it was growling. She could see the gleam of its teeth and eyes. But she knew she had to get into the shed, and quickly." (Lessing, 1993: 06). This quotation shows an animal and her close friend Debbie are the most reliable ones in the story. The dog has physical needs to be fed, giving birth is also something natural. Thus in a crowded society, the most loyal one is a dog to help Julie.

"Unexpectedly she was full of pleasure and pride. The baby's perfectly all right, she thought, looking in the torchlight at hands, feet... what else should she look for? Oh, yes, it was a girl." (Lessing, 1993: 09). When Julie realizes her baby is

a girl, she feels so proud and strong. She leaves her baby and goes her home. As if she was Virgin Mary, she feels so innocent never a sinful woman. She has a panda toy and sleeps with her "... a virgin birth. He hardly got it in, she had said. I didn't think anything had really happened." (Lessing, 1993: 17). She is raped and she resists but she is so fragile that cannot protect herself. Julie could not tell her parents that she is innocent so she runs away. As in that condition, the woman is sinful not the man.

That can't be him, that can't be my father-for he had shrunk and become grey and ordinary, and... what on earth had she been afraid of? She could just hear what Debbie would say about him! Why he was nothing at all. He called out in a sharp barking voice, 'Anne, Anne, she's here.' He was a man waiting for his wife to take command, crying as he went stumbling down the hall ( Lessing, 1993: 13).

After giving birth in a cottage, Julie turns back home. Her parents ask nothing deliberately as they are afraid of their daughter's fate would resemble her aunt's destiny. Her aunt is raped and has a child. They just wonder whether she will go to her school or not. Normally, Julie is afraid of her father, yet, this time she thinks he is so weak that Julie tells a lie that she is with one of her friends and nothing bad happens to her. She says I am hungry, however, she just eats sandwiches at her parent's home, on the other hand, in Debbie's home, she eats exotic meals that show forbidden fruit as in Eve's apple. "He was a sharp clever man, handsome she supposed, in a flashy Arab way. He was from Lebanon, and she must make allowances because there was a war there." (Lessing, 1993: 04). This quotation is a portrait of Debbie's house as a whorehouse. The men in Debbie's house are so many, however, Debbie only wants one man to be loved. She does not want to be protected, yet, she wants to be loved not to be seen only as a body for physical needs. The only way to earn money for a woman shouldn't be only with her body, but a woman should be well-educated. Maybe, this is what Julie wants at the end of the story and to achieve her dreams: her baby is the victim. Nonetheless, the gender of that baby is again a girl for the patriarchal society's conservative norms. A mother with a baby has a bad reputation if the mother hasn't got a husband. Men have physical pleasures and these women serve them. Nobody asks women what they want. Their only duty for them is to make men happy. To do this women can give up their education,

reputation even their baby to survive in a male-dominated society that Lessing criticizes harshly.

The fat girl in the sky-blue coat again took herself to the mirror. She could not keep away from it. Why did the others not comment on her scarlet cheeks, just like when she got measles and the way her hair was stuck down with sweat? But they didn't notice her; she thought they did not see her. This was because of Debbie who protected her, so they got nothing out of noticing her ( Lessing, 1993: 03).

This quotation states the importance of sisterhood. A sister is the only friend in every condition in the story. Because, women know women and women support women to survive and to have a right in society. Debbie knows Julie may have the same destiny if Julie raises that baby as a lonely mother. Debbie has an abortion because she does not dare to raise her child without marriage as the result of adultery has many burdens in a patriarchal world. Thus, Debbie leaves Julie alone although Debbie knows that Julie needs her help during birth. Debbie finds a man that she believes this man saves her for the rest of her life. Debbie again thinks her salvation will be with the help of a man and she does not believe in herself or her potential as a woman. This means women in those times thought that men are brave and stronger than women. So, females need male's protection to survive. The story starts with a mirror scene where Julie thinks she is a fat girl both to make a sensation and to show Julie is unaware of her pregnancy as she is so innocent. Even she thinks nobody realizes her giving birth, she gets started despite her water blowout. This hints society is silent about this kind of adultery as people are afraid of the result penalties. The only person that may help an adulterer although being raped is not Julie's fault but, is only Debbie's. As she earns her money in whorehouse. Yet, Debbie does not allow anybody else to touch Julie as Debbie does not want Julie to have the same destiny as her. Thus, she escapes at the end as she knows the result of having a baby without marriage is either working in a whorehouse or abandoning that baby.

Julie thinks Debbie protects her in every condition although at the end of the story she is not with Julie to help her to give birth. She goes with a man as for her plans. The story finishes with Julie's dream that she decides not to take her baby although one of her aunts has the same destiny and waits for an older husband to accept her. She makes an unhappy marriage just to be accepted in society. Julie thinks she overcomes everything and she keeps her secret instead of being a good

mother: She leaves her baby in a telephone box. She criticizes her mother as she does not realize her daughter's needs, yet, she does the same thing for her baby. The story starts with Julie's realization, however, ends with her deceptions. There are some keywords such as proudly, and blue coat to show Julie's innocence. She just threw her blue coat into the garbage when it becomes dirty. She wears innocent pink pyjamas with her panda toy. The words innocent and silly are also used to show patriarchal society's role plans for females. Julie is proud that Debbie is with her (Lessing, 1993: 03). Julie thinks she is so "silly" (Lessing, 1993:05). Debbie is Julie's mentor to teach everything. Isn't it ironic that instead of Julie's mother Debbie is a prostitute teaching everything about the harsh conditions of life such as how to protect herself from men as Julie's real mother has so many taboos derived from male-dominated society?

A large dog helps Julie, although Julie is afraid of it first, later on, she is happy that the dog is with her. She feels so lonely: nobody is with her even Debbie, her angel, isn't with her only that dog helps her. Debbie finds her real man and she leaves her. Yet, Julie doesn't blame her. When Julie goes back home, she tells her mother that she wants a dog. This is because she feels alone again. She needs to be protected in a brutal male-dominated society. Nobody cares and loves Julie without any expectations. Julie thinks the street dogs and Julie's destiny are the same as both of them need to be protected from the rain and harsh conditions of life. That dog symbolizes loyalty and innocence against the loneliness of Julie. The dog's eating afterbirth bloody pieces helps Julie to keep her sin a secret. Rain also washes the sin of patriarchy. This sin has to disappear for the sake of Julie and the patriarchy. Julie thinks that life in outside is not a safe place as nobody protects her from being raped. She could not protect herself also as she is so fragile and ignorant and this is what male authority wants. Besides, her house is not safe as she needs a dog to protect her as she is afraid of the repetition of being raped. Her panda toy and pink pyjamas represent Julie's deception for her family and herself that she is innocent enough to survive in a patriarchal world without taking any penalty for being raped and having a baby. Her silence and keeping all her memories as well as her baby are to show both Julie and Debbie are not courageous enough to combat against abuse. This is

why male authority wants to stop the freedom of women as they have to be voiceless and their fear is necessary for the abuse of women easily.

For baby, Julie says she never looks back and never promises herself she loves that baby (Lessing, 1993: 09). What is the reason for this judgement? Because, she is so selfish or she disobeys patriarchal motherhood rules or she just resembles her own mother. That baby is sinful as Julie is raped. Julie behaves as if everything is so normal and she doesn't feel motherhood emotions. She behaves as if she is a robot and lives the patriarchal norms that Debbie teaches her. Julie leaves her baby in a telephone box and when she goes back home while his father watches TV, the news says a baby is found a telephone box. The nurses love her baby a lot and her name is Rossie. She is jealous of the nurses as Julie wishes she had a chance to change her destiny. Julie's father prays to God that her daughter is not as sinful as in the news on TV. Her father says we won't ask you awkward questions. Maybe, he doesn't know what really happens to her daughter. Only Debbie and the dog help Julie. Both of them are in the streets not in their warm house. On the other hand, these two sisters support each other in every condition without hesitating which is a great example of sisterhood. Although in the end Debbie leaves Julie alone because, Debbie wants Julie not to work in whorehouses. Maybe, the baby has a chance to survive in another house.

Besides, " Fallen woman" is an important term here. The psychological disorders of being a fallen woman signify isolation and alienation from society, and this causes many problems for the women. Thus, with the maturity process of Julie, it seems she overcomes every difficulty with the help of her friend, which shows that being a fallen woman is not a woman's destiny. Julie finally manages to resist fate with the support of her friend Debbie. That is an example of sisterhood. Therefore, we can see how female characters are portrayed by a woman writer. However, there is a limited role for the woman as being seduced or not this is the only question and position of women again. Thus this can be a critique of the women's perception. Julie made her own choices in the end by deciding to live alone without a man. But, for Debbie the problem is that these choices are for the sake of male authority. Instead of being a fallen woman, they turned out common people as Debbie finds her ideal man and Julie goes on with her school life.

The maturation process of our characters shows that morality should not be something only for women. The morality term should not be used for women, but it should be used for men too. The maturation process of our characters can be significant for Feminist Literature and *Debbie and Julie* is a great example of this: Because, women's perception has different versions in the story and it is mainly written for the female readers to think about their choices. Being voiceless to abusements cause borders for the life of women however resistance to patriarchal authority brings freedom for women. Inequality between gender roles causes pressure on society and women begin to hide physical and psychological violence as in the story. That causes so many psychologic disorders for relationships and duplicity in society.. In a patriarchal world, there is a great burden and responsibility on women as they are only dealing with unimportant things and cannot educate themselves. So, they have not got any chance to have a voice in society. Laure Bell declares that:

... it is the definition of feminism that must change good girls and bad girls, not they who must conform to a considered feminist. Sex trade workers claim, in effect, to be feminists in exile, excluded from a rightful place in the feminist movement, they demand to be recognized as members of the women's community. As one prostitute remarked, "Feminism is incomplete without us" ( Bell 17).

Prostitution is a controversial issue from a Feminist perspective as some Feminists declare. Women are the victims of the male dominated society. Others depict that it is related to the limited economical conditions of women that derives from patriarchy although women are logical enough to protect their own body (Robinson 35). Lessing portrays Debbie as a mentor and heroine of Julie to criticize the position of prostitutes as a victim of male-dominated society. Prostitutes' bad circumstances are because of the inequality of the education system and insufficiency in the economic system. At the end of the story, obeying social norms result in the abandonment of a baby who is pure but sinful for patriarchy. For the sake of not being disregarded by her family and society, Julie chooses to leave her baby as she wants to live in this male-dominated world and obey its rules. Although Julie is raped, she does not tell this anybody else except Debbie. She does not resist the violence of patriarchy and normalizes this situation. Both Debbie and Julie do not combat the male authority. Debbie chooses her freedom with the help of a rich man to escape her prostitute life, and Julie

abandons her baby to become acceptable in society. She wants to obey the social rules instead of protesting her virginity which is stolen by a man. Being silent to her own body and not protecting herself causes Julie's motherhood right taken away willingly by herself. Although Julie pays a great price for the rest of her life, she does not be regretful as she only wants to be an acceptable person in society. Lessing criticizes Julie and Debbie's choices as Julie wants to finish her school because she is so illiterate. Maybe, this is because she does not want to be like Debbie. After her pregnancy, she does not want to recognize herself. Julie does not want to remember that raping situation and its results. Besides this, she thinks when birth begins nobody realizes her. Raping or adultery are sinful for women in terms of morality perception in society. Julie's best friend Debbie lives her alone and Julie and Debbie do not want to change their destiny and resist the patriarchy. Lessing criticizes the social positions of women that both of the female characters do not resist the male-dominated world. Yet being raped Julie may struggle for her baby and her daughter's destiny and other women's fate. Being silent means Julie accepts the traditional rules of society and the baby, Rossie, is so innocent in the brutal world. As that baby leaves away from that sinful life, she may be the hope for the future of women as Lessing desires. That baby symbolizes purity for the future of women.

### **Chapter III. The Subversion of stereotyped women roles**

#### *3.1 Our Friend Judith*

For the subversion of stereotyped women roles, the first short story is Lessing's *Our Friend Judith* (Lessing 1966) that has three women characters story. A nameless female character narrates Judith's story who is her friend. The second one is Judith, an idealized woman, and the third one is Betty who is Judith's friend. Betty is a married woman and Judith is a mistress. Judith is a strong character and follows her desires without consulting anyone. She symbolizes freedom for her friends in *Our Friend Judith* (Lessing 1966). "She is, of course, one of your typical English spinsters." (Lessing, 1994: 01). Judith is in her forties and the single lady who earns

her own money is an independent woman. She is not a hopeless woman, on the contrary, she denies living for the expectation of society. Judith is a poet, she is well-educative in biology and she has got her own poet book as a writer:

There are my aunts, for instance: aged seventy-odd, both unmarried, one an ex-missionary from China, one a retired matron of a famous London hospital. These two old ladies live together under the shadow of the cathedral in a country town. They devote much time to the Church, to good causes, to letter writing with friends all over the world, to the grandchildren and the great-grandchildren of relatives ( Lessing, 1994: 01).

This quotation shows that the narrator's aunts, Emily and Rose, are admirable characters who build themselves a utopian world without men as Judith resembles them. Emily and Rose discuss politics and books besides music and daily events. This makes a narrator who instead of pitying those aunts admires them. This admiration shows that the narrator is regretful about her status in society. As she thinks these feelings of jealousy for the "spinster women" show that these women live for themselves not for the expectation of society. Instead of dedication to men, they live happily discussing daily events, politics, and music:

A mutual friend, Betty, had been given a cast-off Dior dress. She was too short for it. Also, she said: "It's not a dress for a married woman with three children and a talent for cooking. I don't know why not, but it isn't." Judith was the right build. Therefore one evening the three of us met by appointment in Judith's bedroom, with the dress. Neither Betty nor I was surprised at the renewed discovery that Judith was beautiful. We had both often caught each other, and ourselves, in moments of envy when Judith's calm and severe face, her undemonstratively perfect body, succeeded in making everyone else in a room or a street look cheap ( Lessing, 1994: 02).

This quotation shows a comparison between Judith and Betty in terms of their status in society. Betty is a traditional woman who is married and has children as well as is talented in cooking. She has to wear as a married woman. On the other hand, Judith is an idealized character who is a "modern woman" (Abrams,2016) and has her own Utopian world rather than male authority. She is an ideal character as a reaction to male dominance in society as she is Lessing's masterpiece in which female character who transforms male roles into female. As Judith says I have to 'stay in character" (Lessing, 1994: 03) that Lessing gives a mission to her as a second-wave feminist writer. Although Judith is a beautiful woman, she has a wearing style not to seduce a man as her body is not for a vehicle to meet the needs of men.

Betty is addicted to her husband as she cannot sleep without him. Betty thinks she hasn't got her self-esteem as she cannot survive without a man's protection (Lessing, 1994: 09). This quotation shows Betty is questioning herself as she is not happy with her addiction to her husband. In a patriarchal world she is so fragile to sleep alone this is what society tries to create for every woman: Creating unquestioning women dependent on their husbands both economically and emotionally is what patriarchy wants. Traditional ethical norms create great pressure on women that causing passivity among them. Being a good housewife and a good mother are the basic roles for that to make them great servants in an unequal world between genders.

A second event is that Judith has got a cat. "Finally the landlord said that either the cat or Judith must go unless she was prepared to have the cat "fixed" (Lessing, 1994: 03). Instead of fixing the cat Judith kills the cat. The narrator thinks that if the cat has a choice, he can probably want to fix to survive. However, Judith thinks, "It's nature of a male cat to rampage lustfully about, and, therefore, it would be morally wrong for Judith to have the cat fixed, simply to suit her own convenience." ( Lessing, 1994: 04). Judith respects nature and she thinks cats belong to nature, not society. Fixing a male cat is abnormal for Judith, on the other hand, passivity of women's desires causes an unfair world between genders.

'Can you see me married to an Italian barber?' (Not being snobbish, but stating the position, so to speak.) 'Well yes,' I said, 'you're the only woman I know who I can see married to an Italian barber.' Because it wouldn't matter who she married, she'd always be her own person. 'At any rate, for a time,' I said. At which she said, asperously: 'You can use phrases like for a time in England but not in Italy.' Did you ever see England, at least London, as the home of license, liberty, and free love? No, neither did I, but of course, she's right ( Lessing, 1994: 10).

Above quotation shows that while marrying a man's status and richness of him is more important than love, especially for Londoners. Yet, for Judith, the status of a man is not important if there is a love relationship. She doesn't need a man's protection to survive. She is always the same person on the contrary to a classical married woman. Because, Judith doesn't sacrifice herself for the patriarchy, she doesn't need to change herself for the social-ethical norms. Judith thinks of herself as an individual, and has own characteristics. She separates herself from other women

and doesn't think marriage as an immortal guarantee to devote a man to meet her needs.

One kitten was very big. It was a nice fat black kitten. It must have hurt her. But she suddenly bit out-snapped, don't you know, like a reflex action, at the back of the kitten's head. It died, just like that. Extraordinary, isn't it?" she said, blinking hard, her lips quivering. "She was its mother, but she killed it ( Lessing, 1994: 17).

This is a reaction to motherhood in patriarchy. As naturally, mothers have instincts as in nature. Naturally, women are not born to serve men and, this motherhood doesn't mean dedication to children and addiction to husbands (De Beauvoir 597). Both women and men have natural desires such as sexual desires and emotional desires. Yet, society makes a great burden on mothers to have them plenty of responsibilities such as dedication whole life for children. Judith is not a mother but she observes motherhood through the eye of a cat to show that nature creates its own rules for mothers which are created by instincts. Thus, giving birth is natural but bringing up a child is both mother's and father's responsibility:

Then Luigi told me not to look. But I followed him. He held the kitten by the tail and he banged it against the wall twice. Then he dropped it into the rubbish heap. He moved aside some rubbish with his toe, put the kitten there, and pushed rubbish over it. Then Luigi said the cat should be destroyed. He said she was badly hurt and it would always hurt her to have kittens ( Lessing, 1994: 18).

Judith thinks to get married to Luigi, a barber, in Italy as she always has a mission in life. She changes her out looking for Italy; cuts her hair and changes her clothing style as she feels different this time. Judith has a cat, but Judith considers it too young to give birth. Because, for Judith nature has got some rules and no one should ruin the rules of nature. Yet, Luigi breaks the rule of nature by deciding for the sake of the cat and killing her babies. No one can decide for someone as nature has got its own system in it. Respecting the rules of nature is an indispensable necessity for Judith, thus, she decides to escape from Italy and her lover who breaks the rules of nature by deciding in the name of her cat.

This story is a great example of a rebellious woman against ethical norms, and she is so free that patriarchy does not have a meaning for her. The title symbolizes that people sometimes desire to do something, yet, they are not courageous enough, therefore, they criticize their friends to disobey ethical norms. Judith, an idealized character, is a mistress. Yet, she escapes from her professor lover

just because he asks her for marriage (Lessing, 1994: 8). At that point, motherhood becomes an important issue. Lessing has a symbolic cat in the story. The cat has many kittens, but she desires to get rid of them by throwing them on the wall. That is a symbol for protesting against social norms. The cat kills the kitten because the kitten is too fat and the mother has difficulty giving birth. Our character, Judith, does not have any children, yet, she solely observes motherhood from the cat's perspective. Instead of labelling Judith as a fallen woman, Lessing depicts her as a strong character. She earns her own money and her only desire is to be free. All her friends admire her freedom in life. Because she does what she desires and goes where she would like to go. She can just leave everybody alone and she does not consider the social norms. She explains, "I asked about marriage, but she said, on the whole, the role of a mistress suited her better" (Lessing, 1994: 7). Instead of the restrictions on women, Lessing focuses on Judith's freedom which is a characteristic of feminism. "Feminism has been presented and widely received as a liberating force, a new view of the relations between the sexes emphasizing openness and freedom from oppressive stereotypes" (Levin 16). As in Michael Levin's book on the link between *Feminism and Freedom* (1987), Judith is not "the other woman," but rather admirable since she symbolizes the freedom aspect of society. Ethics damage the individuality of women, and, therefore, Judith is a great example of the argumentation of this study. Judith's self-determination in life helps her salvation and becomes a means for sexism. In this story, Lessing depicts motherhood, freedom, and self-awareness terms from a different perspective. The story ends up with ambiguity as the narrator and Judith has a conflict with each other. Betty and the narrator are always curious about Judith's life. Judith thinks it is illogical to debate with them whether her emotions or thoughts are important. Judith knows that they represent society who is "blind, deaf and dumb" for the needs of a questioning woman.

### 3.2 *The Other Woman*

The second short story is *The Other Woman* (Lessing 1978). Our protagonist Rose is parentless and instead of having an idealized marriage, she prefers to make a

love marriage. The story starts with an accident in which Rose's mother dies in a truck crash. The problem is that instead of mourning for her mother, Rose feels independent as she prepares tea for her father, Mr. Johnson, and changes the house objects immediately:

Now I can take that picture down. Now she's gone I can do what I like. She felt a little guilty, but almost at once she briskly rose and took the picture down. It was of a battleship in a stormy sea, and she hated it. She put it away in a cupboard. Then the white empty square on the wall troubled her, and she replaced it with a calendar with yellow roses on it. Then she made herself a cup of tea and began cooking her father's supper, thinking: I'll wake him up and make him eat, do him good to have a bite of something hot (Lessing, 2002: 92).

This quotation above shows that instead of mourning, Rose immediately changes the house for her own pleasures. What is the reason behind this? This can both derive from hatred for her mother or Rose wants to delete her memories. Rose opens a white page in life and the next step she does is to get rid of her fiancée. She was engaged to George, yet, she separated from him because she thinks she does not want to have a traditional marriage. "Women should be independent," she said. And now Rose was saying: "I like to be independent" (Lessing, 2002: 99). Later on George and Rose's father died from the bombs because of World War II. The war kills her father and her ex-fiance and her mother dies in a traffic accident. All these tragedies make Rose stronger than before. She mourns only for her father because she dedicates her life to her father's self-care. Jimmie realizes Rose is in the ruins of bombs motionlessly, and tries to help Rose although she refuses any support. At this point, Lessing portrays Rose not as a fragile or crying woman, but Rose "rebuilds" her life against all the difficulties of her life. Day by day Jimmie comes and tries to get out of Rose in the house that is about to collapse and Rose accepts this offer. However, the difference is that Jimmie is without money and Rose hires a house without knowing that Jimmie is married and Rose is a mistress. Rose insists on getting married to Jimmie although he gets divorced many years ago. He does not want to get married and tells a lie that he is married and her wife does not want to get divorced. Rose shows a transmission between women at home and outside. She is both working and earning her own money, besides, she has domestic duties, such as cleaning the house and dedicating herself to her father and lover. This study deals with this short story since our protagonist is rebellious. Instead of being an

idealized mistress, she hires a flat for her lover and earns her own money. As in the title of the short story, she thinks that she is “the other woman”:

This unscrupulous woman broke up a happy marriage and again... Again the paper dropped while Rose frowned and thought. That meant herself. She was The Other Woman. She might even be that ugly thing, A Co-Respondent... But she didn't feel like that. It didn't make sense. So she stopped reading newspapers, she simply gave up trying to understand (Lessing, 2002: 127).

This quotation indicates that she considers her a self-conscious mistress because she does not realize that her lover got divorced many years ago. Instead of portraying Rose as a stereotyped mistress, Lessing depicts her with an awareness of the position of being the other woman. Before Jimmie, Rose is a virgin girl which astonishes Jimmie a lot. Because the sexual desires of Rose are of secondary importance since she has other priorities such as protecting her father, working hard, and saving money for her future.

While a girl's virginity before marriage and a wife's fidelity within marriage are given the highest value in patriarchal societies, neither is required of boys and men. The reason for this is not simply that boys and men have more freedom and power in patriarchal societies (Chris 219).

In the name of patriarchy, the male authority restricts women for ages. Moral attitudes toward women have pressured for years and one of these restrictions is women's sexuality. Loyalty is mutual for both genders not only for women. While unfaithfulness is normalized for men as their nature necessitate this is what feminist idea oppose (Chris 216).

But life was terrible, there was no justice...And now there was a war, and all sorts of people were going to be hurt, all for nothing-that proved it too, if it needed any proof. Life was frightening and dangerous-therefore, put money into the post office; hold on to your job, work, and put money into the post office.” ( Lessing, 2002: 101).

As in this quotation “no justice, war, frightening” words are used against the male-dominated world (Christ 216). For feminist ideas, justice should be equal for both genders not only for men (Arneson 313). Rose saves money regularly in a post office to have a guarantee in the future. Lessing gives Rose both traditional roles such as cleaning, cooking, and looking after her father, as he is old. In addition to these, Rose is working hard and she does not like to talk politics because wars are illogical for her

and kill people. For Rose, all these mixtures of traditional and nontraditional roles indicate that there is a transmission from stereotyped women roles to nontraditional roles. She refuses to be a mistress and does not accept that men naturally betray their spouses. Moreover, the only obsession of Rose is becoming a mother. When Rose realizes that Jimmie does not want a baby, Rose finds another solution for her motherhood. She tells that she is ready to adopt a child to show the self-confidence of a woman. The term “motherhood” is again important. However, Lessing demonstrates that her protagonist does not need a man to have a baby, but she just adopts a child who is her ex-fiance’s child whose parents died. Rose thinks that the child is her right not anybody else’s. Rose is against being a mistress because she just goes on her life and creates her life standards without needing a man. She writes an invitation letter for Jimmie’s wife, Mrs. Pearson, to clarify the situation about their marriage because Rose is aging and she wants to become a mother immediately otherwise she will adopt that child:

Dear Mrs. Pearson, I am writing to you on a matter which is personal to us both, and I hope it gives no offence, because I am not writing in that spirit. I am Rose Johnson, and your husband has been courting me two years since before the war stopped. He says you live separate and you won’t divorce him. I want things to be straight and proper now, and I’ve been thinking perhaps if we have a little talk, things will be straight. If this meets with your approval, Jimmie will be home tomorrow night, ten or so, and we could all three have a talk. Believing me, I mean no trouble or offence (Lessing, 2002: 140).

Although she considers her a mistress, she learns that her lover got divorced many years ago. She realizes that she can raise her adopted child alone without masculine protection. ... “it had been instilled into her ever since she could remember, that women must look after themselves”. (Lessing, 2002: 100) Furthermore, she is economically free and earns her own money by working hard. In addition to that, Lessing focuses on how she considers women's requirements. “Men: They’re more trouble than they’re worth when all is said. Women have to look after themselves these days because if they don’t, no one will” (Lessing, 2002: 149). This quotation indicates the significance of the independence of a woman. Rose becomes a rebellious woman as she decides to grow up a child without the protection of a man. “Men! I’ve never asked you what you did before me. And I’m not interested either if you want to know. And what I did if I did anything doesn’t interest you neither.” (Lessing, 2002: 193). There is an awareness of her individuality and she shows her

escape from the other women's life as her lover has another girlfriend. Rose just brings up her child, as she is independent and earns her living. Being a mistress, Rose does not want to continue that life. Self-recognition and awareness of her femininity help Rose to achieve her dream:

Why is it different? she asked, reasonably. I don't like to go to pubs myself, but if I did I don't see why not, I don't see why men should do one thing and women another. These sudden lapses into feminism always baffled him. They seemed so inconsistent with her character. He left that point and said you are jealous of Pearl, that's what it is (Lessing, 2002: 134).

This emphasizes how a depraved woman becomes a salvaged one in her life and she is, thereby, against sexism (Thompson 341). Men think to have the right to go to a pub, but women have no right to go there. When Rose questions this inequality, Jimmie merely says that she is a jealous person. At the end of the story, Jimmie's ex-wife and Rose decide to live together. They mention that they can share their new life without a man, which is again a good example of how women should support each other in every condition of life, which is a good example of Feminism (Aydin 36).

At this point, instead of traditional roles those society pressure women, Rose rejects to have an idealized marriage with George who is her ex-fiancee. But, she thinks her child Jill is her right, thus, she adopts that child. Besides, she doesn't want to be a mistress and she only wants to become a mother but she doesn't need a man for this, so, she brings up Jill with his lover's ex-wife. Lessing deliberately chooses ex-wives as in *Between Men's* story to show that women are not each other's enemies. They should support each other against patriarchy.

The contemporary Other Woman is likely to be our neighbor, our sister, our daughter, our mother, ourselves: regular, normal, everyday single woman... Many are woman who, in an earlier era, would have recoiled at the murmur of an entanglement with a married man, but who, today find a relationship with a married man acceptable... (Richardson 02) The married man solution is thinkable, however, for a large number of women's and sexual liberation movements have had a major impact on the consciousness of single women. The feminist women of the seventies have changed the attitudes of contemporary women concerning their place in society and economy (Richardson 05).

This quotation indicates the stereotyped mistresses' features. Being the other woman as in *The Other Woman* causes isolation and disregarding in society. As in the title of

the story, they are regarded as not a woman but other woman. That means they are not acceptable in society. Unlike other stereotyped mistresses, Lessing depicts her mistress characters as who earn their own money not being as a mistress but in other ways such as working in a patisserie to show that women ought not be addicted to men financially but they ought to be independent. That shows that Lessing subverts the stereotyped mistress characters as in *Our Friend Judith*, *Between Men*, and *The Other Woman* stories to idealize the resistance of women against pressures deriving from male authority. Rose subverted the mistress role, as she wants to live her own life without a man at the end of the story. Rose wants to design her utopian world without a man even if her child is a girl as in *Debbie and Judith's* story. Rose always repeats that "I'm getting older", so, her desire for motherhood shows women's restrictions in life besides her freedom and strength against the difficulties of a male-dominated society. She wants to be a mother, so she adopts a child and does not need a man anymore. The story gives a portrait of men's life such as wars, and betrayal, on the other hand, women have passivity in patriarchy. Instead of being a fragile character, Rose "rises from the ashes" against the side effects of patriarchy. She resists wars, bombs, and betrayals as all of them are male authority's choices.

### 3.3 *Between Men*

The third short story is *Between Men* (Lessing 1963) which deals with the frustration of two women. In the story, one of them is a mistress whose name is Maureen Jeffries, and the other is the old wife whose name is Peggy Bayley. The destinies of women are that men desire to get rid of them when they get older. Both women have financial issues because they are dependent on the Professor and they have no economic power.

I want to focus on this story, because the other woman, Maureen, wants to change her life and she thinks that freedom is more important than making a man happy. Instead of being a mistress, she wants to earn her own money. She realizes those talents and her sexual desires are more important than her lover.

"Come and meet the new me!" (Lessing, 2002: 321). This is an invitation card from mistress Maureen to ex-wife Peggy. Professor Bayley finds a younger girl

and she is pregnant. Thus, he divorces her wife Peggy and separates from his mistress Maureen. Maureen wants to improve Peggy so that she is still more beautiful than Peggy. Maureen is addicted to Professor financially and she needs help from ex-wife to find a rich man again. Maureen is disappointed as her lover finds a younger one and Professor wants to get married to this new girl. This invitation card is an internal conflict for Maureen as she wants to change her life as a mistress. To express the position of life as a mistress there is a metaphor using the colors of chairs: "... and sat less dramatically in the corner of a yellow settee." ( Lessing, 2002: 321). Maureen sits on two chairs one of them is brown and the other one is yellow. For Maureen, the colors of the chairs show her sexual desires. When she sits on brown chair, she feels more passionate about her role as a mistress. This color suits her perfectly. On the other hand, she cannot decide to sit on yellow or brown chair as the yellow chair changes her role in life as being less passionate. There, she focuses on her real identity better:

Professor Bayley (whose mistress she, Maureen, had been for four years)—nevertheless there was no need to rub in her, Maureen's, renewed and indeed incredible attractiveness, even though it had been announced by the words: "the new me ( Lessing, 2002: 321).

Thus, from the above-mentioned quotation, the reader deduces that Maureen wants to change her lifestyle. From the onset of the story, Maureen is introduced as she has many contradictions pertaining to her not being chosen by the Professor for the rest of his life. She has an awakening that she cannot go on with her life as a mistress and she has to find a way to survive independently. "At this point, Maureen left the brown chair for the third time, found the yellow settee obvious, and sat on the floor, in the grip of self-disgust."( Lessing, 2002: 322). Maureen wants to change her position in life. Instead of being addicted to a man to survive and make a man happy, she wants to stop acting to find what she wants. She realizes that a man is not her guarantee to have a better life as she is placed in front of the door when her lover finds a younger one. She hates herself being a mistress as she uses her own body to earn money instead of her brain or talents.

—she had never calculated the consequences to herself, had taken money from no man, save what she considered she had earned, had remained herself always (In her time with Jack she had expressed opinions not her own to please him: he was a man who disliked women disagreeing with him.) ( Lessing, 2002: 323).

This quotation demonstrates that Maureen thinks that she earns this money as she deserves it. To make a man happy, she may behave not like herself, so she can earn more money. Being a mistress is her job as she earns her money from her femininity. Besides that, she does not express her thoughts as male authority requires women's passivity:

Since she had left home, she had devoted her talents, her warmth, and her imagination to an art teacher (her first lover), two actors (then unknown, now world-famous), a choreographer; a writer; another writer; then, crossing the Atlantic to Europe, a film director (Italy), an actor (France), a writer (London), Professor Tom Bayley (London), Jack Boles, film director (London). Who could say how much of her offered self, her continually poured-forth devotion to their work, was responsible for their success? (As she demanded of herself fiercely, weeping, in the dark hours.) ( Lessing, 2002: 325).

Lessing has marginalized characters in her short stories to demonstrate that traditional roles do not make women happy as they are based on social expectations. Instead of that, Lessing has mistresses in her stories to show that these characters are not disregarded ones, on the contrary, they are dedicated ones for patriarchy and have a revolt against this male authority. To express protagonist Maureen's inner world, Lessing uses parenthesis. Thanks to that readers may understand reality instead of artificial emotions of Maureen. As she is acting as a mistress this is not her real feelings. Maureen is disappointed because instead of focusing on her own talents, she supports her lovers's talents, therefore, all these eleven men become successful owing to Maureen's encouragement:

... after being the mistress of eleven men, all of them eminent or at least potentially eminent, she had her sex and her courage. But—since she had never put her own talent, painting, first, but always the career of whichever man she was living with, and out of an instinct of generosity which was probably the best thing in her—she now could not earn a living. At least, not in the style she had been used to (Lessing, 2002: 324).

The story tackles Maureen's frustrations in her career as she never focuses on her talents. The generosity of her lovers shows that earning money is the duty of men and spending it is the duty of women in patriarchal societies. This is a criticism of inequality in living standards for women because of their dependence on men's power to survive (Walby, 1989: 07).

“No, her only hope was to find another man as eminent and lustrous as the others, for she could no longer afford the unknown geniuses, the potential artists.” (Lessing, 2002: 324). Maureen hires a flat in a luxurious place to be in the center of the city to find richer men. Instead of demonstrating Maureen as a fallen woman, Lessing depicts her as if she was a business woman who wears her mask to make men happy and gives up her own talents as an artist on behalf of men’s desires. This quotation shows that Maureen is full of frustration.

“She needed to bolster herself up by seeing this woman, whose career (as the mistress of well-known men)” (Lessing, 2002: 324). Maureen invites Peggy to feel better owing to her “inferiority complex” (Ajiboye 01) against Professor’s new lover. Being an unelected woman for the rest of any men causes humiliating feelings for Maureen. Therefore, she invites Professor’s ex-wife to improve that she is more beautiful than her as Professor chooses Maureen for sexual relationships rather than her wife. “And I’m still living on him now and that’s what’s so horrible.” ( Lessing, 2002: 327). The economical addiction to a man starts to bother Maureen as she is not an immortal lover of any men, thus, she always has to find a new man to survive. She wants her own dependence on male dominance:

All right, but I’ll take a guess that Tom Bayley’s the first man you’ve taken a settlement from or alimony—isn’t that so? And that’s because you were married to him. “I suppose so. I told myself I wouldn’t, but I have.” And you don’t really feel bad about it, just because of that marriage certificate? ( Lessing, 2002: 328).

This quotation above depicts that Peggy was married to her ex-husband to become a formal mistress. Because, both Peggy and Maureen have the same reasons to have a relationship with Professor. “But the point is, taking money when you’re married doesn’t make you feel like a tart.” (Lessing, 2002: 328). Maureen thinks that Professor’s old wife and mistress are the same as Peggy was married to Professor to survive economically, on the other hand, Maureen does the same to have better conditions in life. Thus, patriarchal marriage only guarantees economic power for a woman that makes a woman dependent on a man forever economically.

“Well, how much would he have to pay for what I do for him —cooking and the housekeeping and the interior decoration and the advice? A fortune!” (Lessing, 2002: 328). Maureen thinks that not legally as she is not married but in reality, she

deserves this money from her lovers as a mistress. Although her real occupation is an artist, she chooses to be a talented housewife and she is boasting about being a great cook and servant for her bosses, “No, I haven’t,” said Peggy. “Because I said: ‘You can have your divorce, but you’ve got to give me so much money, or else I’ll sue you for infidelity—I’ve got the evidence a thousand times over. “How much?” (Lessing, 2002: 329). Peggy has some prerequisites like getting more money for a divorce. As women are dependent financially on men to survive without the protection of men, they need more money. Peggy is an actress, she is a talented woman, yet, instead of doing her real job she dedicates herself for a man this is what Lessing criticizes for both Peggy and Maureen. Lessing states that, “I agree with Virginia Woolf that everybody should have a private income” (Howe 434). Maureen is a painter and Peggy is an actress both of them are artists. However, they victimize their careers for the sake of a man’s need to earn money. Maureen has a sexual relationship with a professor without marriage, on the other hand, the only difference between Peggy and Maureen is Peggy is married but both of them are dependent financially to Professor and give up their own jobs for a male-dominated society. “I hope she has the sense not to throw up her job.” (Lessing, 2002: 330). Peggy and Maureen are sorrowful for the new victim of Professor as they know the new girl may give up her job as a writer. “Ability” of a woman is pressured by a male-dominated world. This is what Lessing wants to take attention to as in most of the stories: To illustrate, the women characters are talented in *Our Friend Judith*. The protagonist Judith is a poet, and Susan quits her job in an advertising firm in *To Room Nineteen*. In *One Man and Two Women* and *Between Men* stories the female characters are artists. Thus Lessing depicts that financially women need to recognize their own talents to earn money. Instead of quitting their jobs or sacrificing their talents for the sake of motherhood or their marriage, women have to focus on their abilities not on their husband’s economic power.

Maureen tells that Professor Bayley does not respect her while she is painting;

Every time I said I wanted a morning to paint, he made gibes about Sunday painters. I’d serve him his breakfast, and go up to the studio—well, it’s the spare room. First, he’d shout up and say he was hungry. He’d start being hungry at eleven in the morning. Then if I didn’t come down and cook, he’d make love. Then we’d talk about his work. We’d talk about his body films all day and half the night (Lessing, 2002: 331).

This quotation demonstrates that Maureen desires to have her own life and she does not even have her sexual desires. She does not want to be a disregarded woman. Furthermore, she does not want to be the servant of her lover. She is a talented painter, yet, Professor humiliates her to make Maureen addicted to meet his needs. They are talking about Professor's work and Maureen's obligation is to live Professor's demands. Professor's making love alone means that Maureen only serves for Professor bodily not emotionally.

I'm not saying I'd have been a great painter, but I might have been something. Something of my own.... Not one of those men did anything but make fun, or patronize me... all of them, in one way or another. And of course, one always gives in, because one cares more for ...” ( Lessing, 2002: 331).

▶ This quotation depicts that women haven't got right in society. The humiliation of women-authority causes passivity for women (Kent 249). Thus, women haven't got their own needs, feelings, and belongings. Their only role is to make a man happy. They are the captives of patriarchy without passion. Maureen desires to live her own life without the pressures of a man.

“Next time, we don't give up our jobs, we stick with the dress shop.” ( Lessing, 2002: 333). At the end of the story, Peggy and Maureen decide to work in their own dress shop. At first, they seem to be enemies, but later on, both women support each other to start a new life which is a good sample of sisterhood. Besides that, both women realize their own needs and without protection of men, they earn their own money to be economically free. Maureen gives up being a mistress and Peggy supports her to become stronger against patriarchy. In a nutshell, they decide to hire a house together and find a job. They think of being lesbian, yet, both of their sexual preferences are masculine. Peggy tells, “God knows why one loses one's sex when one's settled with a man” (Lessing, 2002: 327). Dedication of a woman's life for a man causes the loss of a woman's desires. Therefore, women gradually forget their identity and their sexual desires. Maureen solely considers her own passions and desires. Morality is also an important issue. Morality is a subjective thing and changes according to the eras and expectations of society. At that point, the term “morality” indicates inequality and injustice because morality is not the only role of women, but it is also of men (Chisholm 170). Accordingly, this short story is a good

example of the otherhood of women. For sexual desires, women should be free to think about whatever they desire.

Although they seem to be enemies, women's support brings to mind the term "sisterhood". That is a term used for women supporting them against patriarchy. Both women are strong as they look forward to live their own life that they feel existence with their own decisions ultimately. Eventually, the women reach their freedom by experiencing the harsh conditions of life as a woman. They have the women solidarity with their sisterhood as a result of feminist ideas (Thompson 346).

### *3.4 An Old Woman and Her Cat*

This story is not about an upper-class lady who lives lonely with her cat in her big house with prosperity, yet, it is about a marginalized woman and her marginalized cat who lives in the streets as homeless ones to escape humankind cruelty. "Women have sat indoors all these millions of years" (Woolf, 1929: 91). Similar to Virginia Woolf's criticism, Lessing chooses different places for her female characters as she wants to cross the borders or wants her female characters not to live in cages that are built by patriarchy. She wants her female characters to be free and most of her female characters are rebellious ones against domestic norms in male-dominated world. Hetty is one of these rebellious characters who wants to live to her own standard in the streets. Normally streets are not safe places to live especially for a woman, however, Hetty is a combative one like her ancestors. The story starts with Hetty's death. She is nearly seventy and the reason for her death is not her age but the cold weather and her malnutrition. After her husband died in the Second World War, Hetty is alone with her four kids. While this story goes on traditionally for a woman, it turns into a marginal one. Having kids and grandchildren as an old woman, Hetty has got some social roles derived from society such as bringing up her grandchildren, sewing or knitting peacefully. However, her children do not like their mother, they say she is a bit odd. She wears odd clothes and behaves as if she was a savage one. The family is rich and prestigious, yet, their mother is not. When her husband, Fred Pennfather was alive, his family lived in normal standards as they rented a house and her husband was a building worker. He was so proud of himself for his hardworking side. He fell in love with his Gipsy Wife. Hetty's mother was a

gipsy, yet, she chose to leave her society and live in a house with her husband. Unlike her mother, Hetty feels that she does not belong to houses; she belongs to the streets like her ancestors.

Her husband teased her, calling her a gipsy. She was in fact part-gipsy, for her mother had been one, but had chosen to leave her people and marry a man who lived in a house. Fred Pennefather liked his wife for being different from the run of the women he knew, and had married her because of it; but her children were fearful that her gipsy blood might show itself in worse ways than haunting railway stations. She was a tall woman with a lot of glossy black hair, skin that tanned easily, and dark strong eyes. She wore bright colours, and enjoyed quick tempers and sudden reconciliations. In her prime, she attracted attention, was proud and handsome. All this made it inevitable that the people in those streets should refer to her as 'that gipsy woman'. When she heard them, she shouted back that she was none the worse for that (Lessing, 1994: 148).

Hetty does not abandon her identity like the classic married woman, on the contrary, she returns to her roots and becomes more liberated. She does not become a mother to her children and does not sacrifice herself to them, she lives and hunts on the street with her cat. Because, it's not a woman's nature to stay at home. Not only men but also women can live in houses without walls. Despite the perception that the street is not dangerous for women, Hetty does not fall into the whores. She doesn't need a man's protection; she doesn't need to use her beauty to lean on a man. Hetty is one of these marginalized and idealized women.

“There seem to be traditional occupations for middle-aged women living alone, the busy and responsible part of their lives being over. Drink. Gambling. Looking for another husband. A wistful affair or two” (Lessing, 1994: 148). Lessing criticizes certain female roles in society. Furthermore, Lessing chooses a character as a gipsy one who is homeless, so, she does not need a man's protection. She is a beautiful woman but she likes railway stations to visit, as she likes the rush hour of that place. Hetty doesn't like borders or walls. After getting married, she tried to live in a house and after four children and her husband's death, she feels she doesn't belong to that place. Unlike a married woman, she doesn't deny her identity. Passivity in life is a necessity for women to make them obey the rules of patriarchy, but Hetty is a rebellious character as she chooses not to addict her life to her children but to live by her own standards in the streets:

Once she had realized that her children were hoping that she would leave them alone because the old rage-trader was an embarrassment to them, she accepted it, and the bitterness that always had wild humor in it welled up only at times like Christmas. She sang

or chanted to the cat: 'You nasty old beast, filthy old cat, nobody wants you, do they Tibby, no, you are just an alley tom, just an old stealing cat, hey Tibs, Tibs, Tibs.' (Lessing, 1994: 149).

There is no patriarchal society's pressure on Hetty's motherhood as she doesn't devote herself to her children. As Simone de Beauvoir states in her *the Second Sex* book "it was fraudulent to maintain that through maternity woman becomes concretely man's equal" (De Beauvoir 525). The cat actually identifies with herself. After her husband's death, she starts to sell her stuff in a baby car. She finds a kitten living in the streets and refuses to eat cat food but to eat alive pigeons as he is a warrior cat. After Hetty's beggary, her neighbours and children refuse to talk with her. She accepts this loneliness except for Noels. She goes on to live in her old flat. Hetty likes alienation and isolation which makes her freer:

It was a warm autumn. For the first time in her life, she lived like her gipsy forbears, and did not go to bed in a room in a house like respectable people. She spent several nights, with Tibby, sitting crouched in a doorway of an empty house two doors from her own. She knew exactly when the police would come around, and where to hide herself in the bushes of the overgrown shrubby garden (Lessing, 1994: 154).

This part depicts that the season autumn means Hetty's death is coming soon. The police are coming to evacuate the old houses as the people who live there move to safer places, yet, Hetty prefers to hide in that ruin with her best friend Tibby. Like Hetty, Lessing also has cats and in her last days, she prefers to live with her cat instead of her children (Lessing, 1919-2013). Hetty denies respectable life as this restricts herself. Besides, her soul belongs to nature as gipsies live in nature. She is not a fragile woman.

Once she scrambled up and rummaged in her rags for an old Christmas card she had got four years before from her good daughter. In a hard harsh angry grumbling voice, she said to her four children that she needed a room of her own now that she was getting on. 'I've been a good mother to you.' She shouted to them before invisible witnesses- former neighbours, welfare workers, a doctor. 'I never let you want for anything, never! When you were little you always had the best of everything! You can ask anybody, go on, ask them then!' (Lessing, 1994: 161).

This flashback depicts that Hetty is questioning her motherhood and she thinks she is a good mother, but her children are ungrateful. She only takes some Christmas Cards but nothing more. She raises her children, but she only needs *A Room of One's Own* (1929) as Virginia Woolf says that means her own area to survive. Hetty starts to eat

alive pigeons with her cat and she stops to cook them. Her cat is a hunter and he helps Hetty to eat something, as she is too old to feed herself. Hetty becomes to be savage as her cat Tibby does. Women have certain rules in society, their clothing and life standards are full of limitations for themselves. She wears colourful clothes as her ancestors do. Hetty resists all this borders and instead of having a comfortable life with her children as all women do, she is a rebellious savage woman, as she prefers to live in a hangar with her cat. Police start for urban transportation and Hetty's house is one of the Police officers' help to old people to go safer places during that process, but Hetty hides from those officers as if she goes with these officers. She cannot take her best friend with her because, there is no place for animals. Hetty has to survive for her cat, Tibby. He likes to fight with the other street animals and he cannot hunt any pigeons anymore, because he is full of injuries. Hetty has to survive for her cat, but she dies because of poor living conditions. The weather is cold and she is old without money. She escapes from officers to help her cat, Tibby as he is loyal to her family, unlike her children. Thus, she dies because of cold weather and malnutrition. After her death, officers find Tibby and as he loves people unlike Hetty, people deceive him because Tibby is a domestic animal because of Hetty.

“So they gave him an injection and, as we say, ‘put him to sleep.’ (Lessing, 1994: 162). After Hetty's death, the cat is a domestic cat so he can believe human being is good. An officer killed the cat. This is the end of the story. The reason for Hetty's death is not humankind, but poor health conditions. However, her cat Tibby is killed by humankind. Hetty resists dying day by day. Because of social pressures in family life, she escapes from who are in the humankind and the children. She chooses to become free as she resists dying as a passive woman. She lives a savage life with her cat in nature. She escapes from certain women roles and patriarchal life standards of a woman. After marriage, she doesn't deny her gipsy ancestors and she resists living indoors. Although she is a beautiful old woman, she hunts with her cat and eats pigeons alive without cooking. Her brutality comes from her nature, which could not be pressured by ethical norms as she tries everything to survive except the protection of a man. Her resistance to patriarchy makes her peaceful and she is loyal

to her best friend, Tibby that never lets Hetty alone unlike her children. The seasons in the story depict the harsh conditions for Hetty in her loneliness. Marginalization of her shows that she denies humankind's rules such as being respectable and being a good mother, but she obeys the rules of nature. "During the 1970s, particularly, feminists articulated several different concepts of "safe space" (Enke 642). Her loneliness shows her protection against the norms of society to have her own area to survive. Her inner trip for justice and rebellion against the system of patriarchy by rejecting to live in a safer place to protect her cat from death shows a realization of humankind's cruelty. However, Hetty is denied by her children and Tibby is killed by humankind. This part shows that nobody is innocent in life and nature teaches us everything. Hetty lives in nature but in contrast to Hetty, being an animal, Tibby trusts humankind. It is seen that nature is the place where Hetty feels freer, because the pressure and the burden of responsibilities go away. Hetty starts to heal with the power of nature. Hetty is alienated from society and finds peace in nature. Even her homeless life from society shows that she feels better in that isolation.

### *3.6 A Woman on a Roof (1963)*

The story starts with weather conditions. It is a hot June day. A group of men is working on a roof and the weather is so hot. Their names are Stanley, Tom, and Harry. Tom is the youngest one and single. Stanley and Harry are married. Harry is the oldest of all. They work their voyeurism toward the people, they see on the top of the apartment, each of the men represents a period of the men and their reaction to what they see. While working they see a woman sunbathing and she is naked. Those men start to bother that woman by whistling and shouting doesn't look at those men. She doesn't move either.

"She's stark naked," said Stanley, sounding annoyed  
Harry, the oldest, a man of about forty-five, said: "Looks like it."  
Young Tom, seventeen, said nothing, but he was excited and grinning.  
Stanley said: "Someone'll report her if she doesn't watch out."  
"She thinks no one can see," said Tom, craning his head all ways to see more.

At this point, the woman, still lying prone, brought her two hands up behind her shoulders with the ends of her scarf in them, tied it behind her back, and sat up. She wore a red scarf tied around her breasts and brief red bikini pants (Lessing, 2002: 239).

This quotation depicts that Harry represents the logical side here as he criticizes his friends for bothering that woman. Stanley represents animal instincts here, as he cannot control his sexual desires for that woman. Tom represents innocence as he goes and tells his feelings to that woman. The woman is nameless as she has fewer words, and the most important reason is that she represents the woman who is oppressed by men's sexual desires and resists in a voiceless way. Stanley is the angriest one to that woman as he wants to call the police not for his bothering that woman but for that woman bothers them as she is naked. Stanley questions his marriage. Some of the workers are married, some of them are single. The problems for men are that woman is so free and courageous enough to sunbathe in a naked position on her own roof. However, the problem should be that those men are bothering that woman and some of them are also married. If there is a problem with ethics, the real problem derives from men, not the woman. As that woman does nothing just waits silently to protest those men in a voiceless position (Ucar 1129). The reason for Lessing's choosing a roof for the setting is that a woman should be free as a bird and she can do whatever she wants everywhere. The real problem should be those men haven't got a right to bother a woman as men are nearly naked while working but nobody thinks this is something strange.

In addition to that, Harry recovered himself and reminded Stanley: "If she's married, her old man wouldn't like that" (Lessing, 2002: 241). That woman can be a single one or married but those men criticize that woman's husband. Those men also symbolize patriarchy here. This woman is not a stereotyped woman and that bothers those men. Because her body belongs to herself nobody can comment on it. This protesting in a voiceless way bothers those men as that woman resists those workers for her freedom. That women wear red underwear only to represent her power and sexuality. She likes reading books all the time. Unlike stereotyped women characters, that woman is educative, passionate and rebellious. Also, there is a class distinction; men are workers that woman is in a higher position. She has her own area; her roof. She protested men without saying anything:

They whistled. She looked up at them, cool and remote, then went on reading. Again, they were furious. Or, rather, Stanley was. His sun-heated face was screwed into a rage as he whistled, again and again, trying to make her look up. Young Tom stopped whistling. He stood beside Stanley, excited, grinning; but he felt as if he were saying to the woman: Don't associate me with him, for his grin was apologetic. Last night he had thought of the unknown woman before he slept, and she had been tender with him. This tenderness he was remembering as he shifted his feet by the jeering, whistling Stanley, and watched the indifferent, healthy brown woman a few feet off, with the gap that plunged to the street between them. Tom thought it was romantic, it was like being high on two hilltops. But there was a shout from Harry, and they clambered back. Stanley's face was hard, really angry. The boy kept looking at him and wondered why he hated the woman so much, for by now he loved her (Lessing, 2002: 242).

The quotation above indicates that “misogyny which is the hatred of woman” (Wrisley 03) does not lead oppression of a woman in this story. The nameless woman silently combats these workers. This woman is reading to show upper position and male characters are working to indicate lower class in Lessing's tone. Clothes are the basic theme in this misogyny. The workers are nearly naked while working, because it is very hot but the problem is that the silent woman may not wear what she wants. The protagonist is on her own roof and this roof is deliberately chosen by Lessing, because it is publicly enough that anybody may see her. On the other hand, it is private enough that nobody may bother the woman character as it is her own area. The problem of wearing style is the result of patriarchy for women. Women may not wear what they want not to seduce men. This oppression restricts women's freedom for wearing style and the decision of their own bodies: (Kesselman 508).

She raised her head, set her chin on two small fists. "Go away," she said. He did not move. "Listen," she said, in a slow reasonable voice, where anger was kept in check, though with difficulty; looking at him, her face weary with anger, "if you get a kick out of seeing women in bikinis, why don't you take a six penny bus ride to the Lido? ( Lessing, 2002: 247).

She controls herself without getting angry and says don't bother me and if you want to watch naked women you can go to the seaside. A woman can wear what she wants as this life belongs to herself. Doris Lessing highlights the rise of the isolated female characters in her short stories as they oppose sexism and the marginalization of woman. Lessing's basic topics in her stories shows her feminist side. Gender discrimination is everywhere such as in masculine laws, and job selections. A

woman can be white or black, and she can be Christian or Muslim, she can be single or married, yet, the only common theme in a woman's life is to be marginalized. Her women characters show that the more women get isolated, the more they realize the inequalities between the genders. So this starts a self-recognition. Doris Lessing has got many short stories and many of them are against the inferiority of women because of the patriarchal society. Ethics and social boundaries cause restrictions and Doris Lessing deliberately uses rebellious characters in many of her short stories to show the awakening of women against the male-dominated world. In her short stories, some women prefer their isolation but in some others, the characters show a rebellion against this unequal world. *A Woman on a Roof* is one of them. Tom has got many fantasies for the woman as he daydreams her while making love. Besides, Tom gets angry with Stanley as he cannot share his fantasies with him. Tom is refused and this makes him confused as his fantasies are so real he is shocked when that passionate red underwearing woman refused her. That woman alienated herself and doesn't talk to anybody else. She is lying and sunbathed while reading her books. Not only she represents her educative side, but also she is so passionate about her red underwear. "Not like Lady Godiva, said Stanley" (Lessing, 2002: 245). That woman resembles *Lady Godiva* (Donogue 1950) legend as she protests naked and in a voiceless way expresses taxes are so high. There is a woman named Lady Godiva, yet, there is no proof that she really protested in that way. Also in the legend, there is Tom while peeping at that woman, he becomes blind. Thus peeping part for Tom shows that Lessing is affected by that legend while writing that story. "The bronze statue of the famous lady, who 900 years ago rode naked through the streets of Coventry, gave up her veils of British and American flags in an impressive public unveiling ceremony (Godiva 77)". As in *Lady Godiva* our unnamed woman protests woman's rights and inequality in a voiceless way and shows that her body belongs to herself. Nobody has a right to comment on it. Women should not be seen as a piece of meat. Men should change their point of view to solve this unfairness:

The three men were at work early on the cool leads, surrounded by damp drizzling roofs where no one came to sun themselves, black roofs, slimy with rain. Because it was cool now, they would finish the job that day, if they hurried ( Lessing, 2002: 248).

The weather is important here because they are working in summer and the weather is getting hot while they are daydreaming about that beautiful woman, yet, now the weather is cooler even raining and they can focus on working because woman resists them and their hormones start to work normally. The workers work six days and each day the weather gets hotter and hotter except the last day as they are refused. While working they cannot focus on working only Harry deserves his money. The other ones watch the scenery of *A Woman on a Roof*. The sixth day is the most difficult day because of their fantasies are at the top of the days as Harry says to their boss that workers cannot work because sunstroke. The weather is parallelized to workers' sexual desires. When they are refused by that woman the weather is rainy at the end. The problem is that if they cannot control their hormones, this is their problem, not the women's. If they live in a crowded society they have the ability to control themselves as this is the border between man and animal. On the seventh-day, men hope to finish the work as the weather is cool now. Those men get crazy because patriarchy does not work on that roof. That silent woman does not obey the norms of society. The male-dominated world is not meant for that woman as she is a lonely protester in this patriarchal world. The female gaze is dominant in the story as Lessing depicts her protesting by using a silent woman.

However, 1960s was also an era that ushered in a new sexual freedom which was the inspiration of many female novelists. Lessing's woman does not just occupy a literally specific position on that roof which is regarded as totally unacceptable for many, but she also manages to obtain a valuable and promising position in society as she rejects a universal value that allows men to see women as objects of display and possession (Ucar 1136).

The roof is important here. The roof symbolizes freedom and instead of a domestic place, it is a marginalized setting for a woman. She is not cleaning or cooking, yet, she is sunbathing because that body belongs to herself and she is free for her sexual desires. She resisted the men without saying anything while they are shouting and whistling. That woman is superior to men as she is reading and they are shouting. Clothes are an important issue here because that woman is in her own area and she has got the freedom to wear what she wants as there is equality for both genders.

#### **Chapter IV. A comparison between traditional and nontraditional women's roles**

When Lessing's selected stories are separated into two groups, the comparison of them demonstrates that five of them have lonely women who have typical gender roles to show the limitation of women against social norms. Susan in *To Room Nineteen*, Mary in *Pleasure*, Annie in *He*, Dorothy and Stella in *A Man and Two Women*, and the last one in *Debbie and Julie* have traditional woman roles. They are either housewives or they quit their jobs for their spouses. Therefore, these characters do not have any idea related to their desires or happiness. These five characters are economically dependent on their husbands to survive. Besides that, their wearing styles and lifestyles are too restricted to feel their femininity and sexuality. Mary in *Pleasure*, for instance, could not wear a sexy swimming suit while sunbathing, and Julie in *Debbie and Julie* wears childish pyjamas to symbolize innocence (Lessing, 1993: 03). In addition to that, Julie takes off her coat while going home to pretend that she is still childish (Lessing, 1993: 03). In addition to that, in *Debbie and Julie*'s story "patriarchal marriages" (Dreyer 3) is criticized harshly as it focuses on men's needs and happiness as in *To Room Nineteen*. Lessing states:

Here I am, she thought, after all these years of being married and having children and playing those roles of responsibility—and I'm just the same. Yet there have been times I thought that nothing existed of me except the roles that went with being Mrs. Matthew Rawlings. Yes, here I am, and if I never saw any of my family again, here I would still be ... how very strange that is ( Lessing, 2002: 276)!

The above-mentioned quotation clarifies that Susan in *To Room Nineteen* thinks that she dedicated her life in vain. She wants to get rid of all the responsibilities that make her forget who she is and what she wants without the pressures of motherhood and marriage. Susan isolates herself to focus on her needs and desires to keep away from the patriarchal marriage. In addition to Susan, Julie's mother in *Debbie and Julie*'s story also has not got a love marriage with her father as all the married women in the stories have patriarchal marriages. This affects Julie a lot as she has not got a good role model mother. Their mother-and-daughter relationship is not confident. Thus, Julie could not tell anybody that she is raped.

A whore helps Julie to turn back her house. Instead of her mother, this time, a whore helps her and this also causes Julie's baby's abandonment as Julie feels isolated and alienated in a patriarchal society. On the other hand, women have certain roles that are based on victimizing themselves. In *To Room Nineteen* Susan goes crazy day by day, Annie in *He* is a cleaning addict, and Stella has to give up her school after being raped and has to give up her newborn baby to become acceptable in her family and society. In addition to these, Mary in *Pleasure* is pacified as her husband criticizes her wearing style and age. That humiliates Mary and she feels powerless against her husband. She dreams of her creativity before getting married like all the characters in selected stories. Dorothy in *A Man and Two Women* is a great artist but she confirms that her baby kills all her creativity and also her marriage. These characters feel so weak and at the end of all stories, women characters are sacrificed for patriarchal marriages.

All stereotyped unhappy characters who want to escape from their marriages and their children to find who they are and how they feel without all these responsibilities are driven by patriarchal marriages. The traditional characters only care about their social expectations and their male characters' expectations. At the end of the stories, all of these female characters' ends become tragic. They are a means to show Lessing's tendency to write through feminist lenses of moral and social roles. Lessing criticizes that marriages are material as women kill their creativity and become addicted financially, and even after divorce, they only think of alimony instead of love.

On the other hand, the other nontraditional five characters are strong against ethical norms and patriarchy to reveal the differentiations of women in society. Judith in *Our Friend Judith*, Rose in *The Other Woman*, Maureen and Peggy in *Between Men*, a nameless woman in *A Woman on a Roof*, and the last one Hetty in *An Old Woman and Her Cat* have a realization of life and have their economic independence. They change their roles in life instead of being good mothers or a mistress to be independent. Lessing mentions in *Our Friend Judith* that:

Married to Luigi it would be the family, the neighbours, and the church. All the same, she's thinking about it, believe it or not. Here she's quite different, all relaxed and free. She's

melting in the attention she gets. The widow mothers her and makes her coffee all the time, and listens to a lot of good advice about how to bring up that nasty brat of hers ( Lessing, 1994: 18).

Judith deliberately escapes from marriage. She wants to discover herself by traveling and writing poems instead of raising children. She is a free woman and her friends admire her as she has self-awareness of her talents unlike traditional married women, Judith is against patriarchal pressures as all nontraditional female characters in the stories such as Rose, Maureen and Peggy, and Hetty. All these characters are talented and, therefore, Lessing deliberately chooses artists or poets to reveal women's creativity in a male-dominated society.

There is a comparison between the selected two groups of stories in terms of the characters' lifestyles in life, especially their status in society. It is seen that the character choices of Lessing are extraordinary and contain contradictions. For instance, a whore Debbie is a good example of the angelic aspect of a woman; on the other hand, Judith is a mistress and does not want to get married as she thinks being a mistress suits her better to verify that epithets in life limit women as Judith symbolizes a free woman in the story. A nameless character sunbaths nearly in a naked position in *A Woman on a Roof*.

Being nameless symbolizes that she represents other women. In this way, she symbolizes all the abused women. This nameless woman is an awareness of traditional characters who obey their husbands' rules while wearing and also criticism of women's restrictions. Instead of choosing usual settings for the reader, Lessing chooses roofs for sunbathing in *A Woman on A Roof* and streets to live safely in *An Old Woman and Her Cat*. Hetty in *An Old Woman and Her Cat* refuses to live in her comfortable house, her children, and also her old pension (Lessing, 1994: 148). To give a good example, instead of her safe house, Hetty hunts pigeons in the streets with her cat. She thinks that houses restrict women's lifestyles and she wants to live like her gypsy ancestors. These choices are the results of a rebellion against the patriarchal pressures on women to make them believe that houses are safer places and they should only stay there and wait for their husbands. These pressures force women to be passive in society. In addition, the dresses of women reflect a harsh criticism of husbands as they decide what their wives wear although the bodies of

their wives do not belong to husbands but they belong to wives. In the *Pleasure* story, while Mary wants to wear a low-cut swimsuit, her husband does not like even its color and wants his wife to change from a white swimsuit to a black one. On the other hand, a nameless woman in *A Woman on A Roof* is nearly naked while sunbathing and she does not answer while workers bother her. The workers scream and whistle yet the nameless woman keeps on her silence to resist them. This reveals that a woman has to decide what to wear for herself but not what society or her husband wants.

Moreover, the differentiations in women's status result in a great burden on them. Being a mother, a wife, and even a whore or a mistress results in the emergence of traumas for women in their social lives. All nontraditional characters are against traditional marriages and they focus on their talents and creativity to have equal rights in a male-dominated society. "Feminist Perspectives on Marriages" (Finlay 418) questions marriages as Lessing considers in mistress characters' refusing to get married. Women have to be powerful and free while married. Besides, patriarchal societies should not be murderers of women's sexual desires and limit them to reveal the potential of femininity of women. Besides, the psychological effects of aging and sexual passivity are the results of social expectations for a woman. After getting older, women feel unattractive when their husbands humiliate them or their spouses find a younger woman. This is also criticized in nontraditional characters. Although the female characters are beautiful, they do not take attention to their wearing styles, and resist being seduced ones. Instead of that, they wear casual clothes even gypsy costumes as in Hetty in *An Old Woman and Her Cat*. Women characters have economic independence and power in subverted women roles. In contrast to traditional characters, the nontraditional five characters are talented enough to survive, even hiring a flat for her lover such as Rose in *the Other Woman*. This is a critique of women, because the duty of men in a male-dominated society is to earn money.

In the course of history, men have had certain roles deriving from the type of family roles in a patriarchal society. This patriarchal society causes men the necessity of earning money and educating themselves outside their houses. Being away from

their houses means that men have not got any restrictions like women. “Breadwinning and masculinity” (Thébaud 334) represent their traditional male roles that lack emotional feelings ( Heald 466). As the quotation below states male character status in life restricts women’s solidarity:

They paint a bleak picture of male beings incapable of change, beings who must be simply opposed or written off, rather than beings who must be challenged to change and whose change must be facilitated. Anti-male images must be resisted, precisely in the name of feminism. Such images, no matter the intentions of those who present them, ultimately situate themselves on deeply conservative terrain, and I do not believe any progressive movement can successfully move on this terrain (Digby 10).

When the reader looks at the male character’s status in women’s lives, all of them have got the same characterization as the husbands: Rob in *He*, Professor Bayley in *Between Men*, Jimmie in *The Other Woman*, Jack in *A Man and Two Women*, Matthew Rawlings in *To Room Nineteen*. All of these husbands are unfaithful and represent patriarchy. Additionally, the workers in *A Woman on a Roof*, *The Other Woman*, *He*, *A Man and Two Woman*, and also *Between Men* exemplify that while unfaithful men in these stories are not punished in society, women have alteration because of being a mistress or a whore. Consequently, being in many relationships concurrently results in only being unfaithful to their spouses on men's side. However, for the women's side, being unfaithful causes immorality and exclusion in society.

“What sort of marriage do men and women contemplate in the era of women's liberation?” (Simon 267). This is the question for marriages in the feminist era. With the feminist ideas, women change and their expectations also transform. Thereby, marriages are being affected:

First, there is a striving for knowledge or understanding based on experience, especially personal experience of traditional male roles and activities. Second, there is a critical reflection on that experience in light of the possible harm to women, as well as men, by assuming traditional male roles and engaging in traditionally male activities. Third, there is a moral motivation to change at least some aspects of traditional male roles and activities. And finally, there are practical proposals for changes in traditionally male roles that are regarded as believable by other men (Digby 14).

Instead of traditional male roles, women want helpful spouses who raise a child and help with chores (Cohen 469) which means the "husband's ego must adapt to competition for the breadwinning role” (Heald 468). Breadwinning’s role is not only for men but also for women as in *Our Friend Judith*, *The Other Woman*, *An Old*

*Woman and Her Cat*. Judith earns her own money by writing poems and she rejects getting married. The other woman, Rose, works the whole day and her lover needs Rose's money to hire a flat. Moreover, old woman Hetty rejects her old pension and lives on the streets hunting pigeons with her cat. This reveals that Hetty does not deny her roots after getting married. Also, the quotation below indicates spouses' needs and expectations for a love marriage instead of a male-dominated marriage type:

Neither queen nor slave, in our time [a wife], keeps in her heart all the reasons to devote and sacrifice herself that have been developed little by little over time. But she inhabits them with a new dignity. Her husband's associate, reciprocal love is the very bond of this relationship (Mesch 89).

As in this quotation, a tragic end for Susan, committing suicide, and Julie, giving up her baby for ethical norms, are examples of being slaves in patriarchy as they sacrifice themselves for the sake of male-dominated world. Without living dependent on their husbands economically and having marriages for economic reasons to survive, women need emotional feelings as well as their husbands. Sexual needs are necessary not only for husbands but also for wives. Morality is not only for women but also for men. A woman may have many epithets such as mistress as in *The Other Woman*, *Between Men*, or *Our Friend Judith*. She may be labeled as a whore as in *Debbie and Julie*. As in *A Woman on A Roof*, a woman may wear what she wants, however, she may be bothered by workers. All these epithets cause harsh criticism in Lessing's stories.

In addition, Lessing criticizes traditional women's roles as being *The Angel in the House*, (1854) making women passive by quitting their jobs for motherhood and losing economic independence in their marriages in the selected stories. Nonetheless, staying at home and looking after their children until they grow up restricts women a lot. Susan in *To Room Nineteen* stays at home until her children's school age. This makes her mad as she lives an unsocial life. Hence, she has psychological problems:

Feminism, too, is based on disequilibrium - the mental state women experience when they face oppression and can no longer live with it. This is often described as the "click" phenomenon - for example, "a way of describing that instant of recognizing the sexual politics of a situation; any moment of feminist truth (Franks 33).

The disequilibrium in the stories causes a transmission in the characters. Susan's madness causes her life to end as she wants to stop the sounds in her mind. She

wants silence as a reaction to the awareness that she does not want to live a perfect life as she designs according to an expectation of society. The silence of women is a reaction to patriarchy, just as it leads to the passivity of women in this story. Women's psychology is an important issue in feminist views as their social roles force them to become silent in society.

Another example is Hetty who raised her children, although none of her children cares about her and she dies alone with her cat. Additionally, Julie is a great example as she has to leave her newborn baby because of ethical norms. In *Between Men's* story, Dorothy has to stop painting because she says the baby kills all her creativity. Not motherhood but the social responsibility of it causes psychological effects for women. As a matter of fact, psychological problems of women are exemplified in many different ways in the selected short stories one of which is the silence of a woman in *A Woman on a Roof*. A nameless woman in the story keeps her silence and becomes nearly naked against the disturbance of workers which is a "silent resistance" (Ucar 1128). "Just as women's voices are as multiple and diverse as our cultural and personal histories, so the meaning of silence-being unwilling or unable to speak-can be seen as complex and multidimensional" (Mahoney 603). It is complex and multidimensional because of pressures that passivate women during ages. What makes women voiceless is the question that has to be asked after reading Debbie and Julie's story. Julie is raped, nevertheless, she keeps her silence even after giving birth. After being raped, Julie needs a whore's help as whorehouses are the places for such conditions.

Whore is an epithet for a fallen woman: that word causes a bad reputation although in our story there is a contrast that Debbie represents the angel side. "Whore means prostitute. And a prostitute is a woman who offers to hire her body for indiscriminate sexual intercourse" (Pheterson 02). The importance of male authority's sexual needs and economic reasons cause prostitutes to be victimized by society for women. *Whores and Other Feminists* (Nagle 2013) criticizes stigma and sexism. "Feminists seek to be supportive of sex workers while deploring the work itself as inherently wrong" (Bromberg 01). *The Whore Stigma* (Pheterson 2023) is the corruption of morality but the victim of this are prostitutes. Rather than portraying a

woman's body as a prostitute, Lessing emphasizes Debbie's personality as an angel. Lessing focuses on women's creativity, such as writing poetry or painting, rather than their bodily beauty in her stories. In addition, Susan in *To Room Nineteen* earns her own money before getting married and she has a good position at work yet she quits her job, Mary in *Pleasure* design clothes, Dorothy and Stella are artists in *A Man and Two Women*. The mistress characters are also all talented and they do not want money from their lovers they earn their own money by working.

Realization of the needs of women causes relaxation for the characters in the stories. As these characters focus on their inner world, they become aware of their status in life. Changing is an important issue in the feminist perspective (Franks 30). For instance, mistress characters change their life by focusing on their talents and improving themselves instead of making men happy with their bodies. On the contrary, the obedience and the acceptance of the status of women in the stories result in regrets in the stories because the stereotyped women characters think of their husbands' career instead of focusing on their abilities.

Change means a realization as in *Pleasure*. Instead of keeping routines in life, a woman needs to change for herself as Hetty does in *An Old Woman and Cats*. Hetty lives on the streets for the rest of her life and struggles with hunger and coldness to be free on the streets like her gypsy ancestors.

Obedience to patriarchy as in the traditional roles in our stories results in big losses. Instead of this, nontraditional characters renovate their life by working and having their economic power and protesting men's abuse whether in a silent way or not. For instance, in *A Woman on a Roof*, the nameless character resist the male characters insulting silently. However, in *The Other Woman*, *An Old Woman and Her Cat* the female characters resist patriarchal life by refusing marriage and motherhood.

By "identifying themselves" (Parlee 121) as re-creating their needs, non-traditional women characters focus on what they want and how they can survive without men's protection. They concentrate on their body and their bodily needs. For instance, Maureen and Peggy question lesbianism and they concentrate on their own body and sexual needs. Instead of making their spouses happy, the women characters start a new

life without having social expectations and ethical norms. That is, women have to stay at home and make her children and husband happy until the end of her life without questioning her desires and needs. As men have superior rights, women have equal rights to improve their skills, wear what they want, and live away from the borders of houses that put them in prison life and limit their creativity. In the stories, all these awarenesses enable the nontraditional characters to discover themselves. Contrarily, traditional characters go on with their life without changing. There is obedience to that patriarchal world by accepting the ethical norms.

Regarding the otherization of a woman related to taboos in society besides morality and social expectations drags women into a world that is only based on men's needs. The five characters in the selected stories try to adapt their life by forgetting their sexual needs and their life to make their husbands happy. On the contrary, the other five characters who are not stereotypes, question their life and subvert their roles in life by exploring their femininity and their expectations for equality. A division in life as a mother and a sexual object for her partner may cause women to lose their own existence. Even though clothes may be chosen by society, women lose their decision mechanisms in patriarchy.

Moreover, Lessing subverts stereotyped women characters to take attention by contrasting. A mistress and an old wife may become a friend as marriage is something material instead of a love relationship as in *The Other Woman* and *Between Men* stories. Debbie, a prostitute, portrays her angelic side rather than being a disregarded one. Housewives commit suicide and mistresses and whores change their destiny by living a life without men. For example, Rose adopts her fiancé's child and lives with her lover's ex-wife, and Maureen and Peggy do the same. Maureen is the mistress and Peggy is the ex-wife of Professor, however, they get on well with each other instead of feeling jealous. The relationship between Peggy the ex-wife and Maureen the mistress reminds us sisterhood term. The sisterhood term is important here as F. Gul Kocsoy deals with. Kocsoy states in her study '*Sisterhood*' in Doris Lessing's "*The Other Woman*" that;

Sisterhood' is a term that finds an essential place in feminist discourses. Apart from resisting against the oppressive practices, this idea encourages women to come together in

defending their rights as human beings. Women's developing friendship, support and solidarity among themselves can be the simple definition of sisterhood. It disregards race, class, religion and political ideas; only to be a woman is enough. The 'sisters' are respectful to the other's private life, goals and identity. They allow one another to live their own personal lives freely, without questioning their pasts. (Kocsoy 59)

The quotation above depicts the contradiction between being enemies and supporting each other. On one side a wife is full of pain as being betrayed. This affects her a lot, on the other side there is a mistress. They get on well with each other. The question is how they can support each other after all these. The answer is sisterhood. As in this quotation, women have to support themselves in every condition. Instead of being at opposite poles, women should be close to each other, not hostility works. Similar to *The Other Woman* story, *Between Men* story has the same. In the stories, wives and mistresses support each other and bring up their children together to start their new life without husbands as they do not question their past while starting their new feminist life.

Moreover, "blaming women" (Duncan 505) and labeling them as a mistress, a whore only limits women's potential and pacifies them for the sake of male rights instead of equal rights. This is what Lessing depicts by subverting her characters from despised ones to admirable ones by using contradictions such as an angel whore and a talented mistress. It should be the duties of women to support each other for economic power, to focus on realizing their talents, and to live and produce without being dependent on men in Lessing's non-traditional characters. The five stereotyped characters are economically dependent on their husbands to survive. On the other hand, the other reformulated nontraditional five characters are dependent on their own sexual desires and needs. Economically they can survive with their talents by writing poems and painting without waiting for the right rich man to get married. Men are disloyal and like wars which causes the patriarchal world uninhabitable for surviving women.

Finally, the collapse of tradition and social norms, and limitations for women are highlighted in the selected stories. There is a contrast between housewives' hopelessness who live their lives suitable for patriarchal marriage and being

mistresses who may be disregarded ones according to the male-dominated world. On one side, mistresses create their own lives without men's support by focusing on their needs and talents depicting the epithets that only limit women and passivate them. On the other side, housewives are considered to be fragile and weak to rebuild their life without the support of men. Instead of labels such as whores or mistresses which are victimizing words in male-dominated words, women have to be free. The needs and talents of women should be the core of women to activate them in social lives as men live for justice. The sexual needs of women and the decision on their own bodies are the rights of women.

After comparing stereotyped and nonstereotyped characters through feminist lenses, Lessing creates tragic endings for traditional characters who want to obey the patriarchal life. On the contrary, the nontraditional characters are born from the ashes at the end of the stories. In general, characters lose their creativity after they get married or become mothers. This is what Lessing criticizes in the stories. However, non-traditional characters are aware of their abilities, and instead of being economically dependent on men, these characters earn their own money through creativity and talent, not using physical beauty. For example, Judith writes poems and Maureen realizes her talent for painting (Lessing, 2002: 324). Yet the traditional characters have unequal life standards with their husbands as they obey social norms and have patriarchal marriages. The freedom of women and activation in society is only possible by getting rid of the houses that patriarchy builds for them. In addition, women should have self-recognition to gain their rights in society. Lessing focuses on females' economic independence and supporting their gender against injustice and the unequal male-dominated world in her selected stories. This indicates an awareness of feminist ideas that needs to be widespread among females when subverting traditional and non-traditional stories with contradictions to get rid of sexism.

## V. CONCLUSION

Women have certain roles during ages and feminism concern about the inequalities between gender roles. That inequality causes injustice between men and women as social attributes for both genders are very different. Men mean power for ages and women mean just a beautiful object without brains and thinking. There are some social roles for women; being a beautiful woman, a good servant, and a good mother. Women have a social position and the expectations of society make great pressure on them during all their lives. Contrary to all expectations, women want the same rights as men have such as education and voting instead of being a servant for a man. Females cannot have a good education in politics or maths they can only be educated in sewing or knitting and cooking. At this point, feminists started to improve themselves to show women are more than what men or society think. Females start to be more active everywhere such as in Literature.

Female writers show their influence against the male gaze with the help of the feminist perspective. Feminist criticism supports women's lives and experiences and takes consideration of them in society. Women should be in canon literally and they should be accepted for their class, sexuality, race, and disability to them. Whilst the reader looks at the *Language and Sexism*, (Mills 2008) there are also certain roles and professions for both genders in Literature. Even though fictional work is mostly based on the writers' imagination, it concurrently reflects real-life characters. "One is restricted to women like *pregnant* the other restricted to men like *virile...*" (Lakoff 74). This quotation depicts that for women, there are certain occupations such as "*mistress or prostitute*", on the other hand, for men "*certain business activities*" (Lakoff 74) are the impact of *Man-Made Language* (Spender 1985) even in Literature. Those impacts show that if women get out of borders for these certain roles, they may either be marginalized or pressured by society for obeying certain patriarchal rules. Lessing criticizes these certain women roles such as housewives or patriarchal motherhood roles. She heroizes the mistresses or prostitutes to make clear that certain classification of women roles only restricts women's abilities and

lifestyles as the passivity of women cause fragmentation in their life. The male authority deliberately gives certain professions to women only to make the male-dominated world's lifestyle more comfortable. Cleaning roles and raising children alone in a patriarchal society are women's responsibilities as men have to work outside all day. In addition, mistresses are important for sexual desires, because men are polygamous, due to their natural presence in patriarchy. Yet, all these are not natural gender roles. They are all man-made to victimize women for patriarchy. Thus being a female writer, Lessing exemplify her female characters as disregarded ones to show that for the sake of epithets based on social ethical norms, restricting women's lifestyles such as dressing, and profession forcing them into prison life in their houses causes losing their abilities and freedom. Kate Millet states that "the socialization process of temperament and role differentiation" (Millet 178) is vital to have equal rights in society, Lessing's characters are parallel to that idea. As if women are kept in houses with borders, they may never be free in life. The rules in those houses consist of patriarchal rules that never consider women's rights, so the resistance to the injustice system is revolting that Lessing's characters maintain throughout the stories.

Doris Lessing particularly depicts that females embrace themselves wholeheartedly while she portrays them who adopt the roles of mistress or a whore despite their alienation from society. In contrast to conventional ethical expectations in a patriarchal society, such an embracing signifies holding women to certain moral standards. Moreover, for them, having a sexual relationship with a married man causes ethical exclusion in society. Contrary to ethical norms, the characters are not "the other woman", but are admirable because they reflect the free part of society as in Michael Levin's book concerning the relationship between *Feminism and Freedom* (1987).

When the selected short stories are analyzed through the perspective of feminism, it can be concluded that, the economic independence and sexual desires of women should be equal for both genders. Sexuality is not the only need of men, but women also have desires pressured by the male-dominated society. By disregarding social norms of patriarchal authority, Lessing's characters demonstrate a comparison

between women who obey traditional social norms and those who do not obey these norms and lead their lives for their rights and will. The silence of women in a male-dominated world is also criticized harshly as Lessing writes about the death of Susan in *To Room Nineteen*. Both means the death of patriarchy and the silence of women in that patriarchal world. Besides, in *A Woman on a Roof*, the nameless women character both symbolizes the women that cannot dare to oppose harassment and criticizes that victimized women should not be afraid of abusing men but resist them to become freer.

When it is looked through the lenses of feminism, the rebellious female characters show that men are not the only means to survive. Women also have desires and they not only live to make men happy but they are also human beings and have sexual and other desires. This emphasizes the awakening of women in society. It is seen that as the world turns around, men are not labeled when they have affairs with their other lovers, but women are labelled as mistresses. Yet, women are self-conscious and have the awareness of their talents to survive. To illustrate, Judith earns money by writing, and Rose hires a flat because her lover does not have money. She just wants a baby. Judith is a strong character: She loves being a mistress and she is a rebellious person. She wants to be a mistress. In this case, selected short stories exemplify the patriarchal labelling, as a mistress or as a whore, restricts women in terms of moral perspective. As the characters disobey social boundaries and norms, they reconstruct their life as a characteristic of feminism. Eventually, the women characters reach their freedom by learning about the harsh conditions of life as a woman. In addition, there is a great satire for the perception of marriages, as logic-based ones are not successful ones, here logic means finding a higher-positioned husband and being a servant for him to have a better standard in life. As an example in *To Room Nineteen*, Lessing starts with the words “intelligence” (Lessing, 2002: 352) that does not work this time. Susan’s trip from intelligence to madness causes her suicide against “the ideal marriage” expectation for a woman so that it tragically ends her life.

To sum up, the characters’ resistance indicates that women do not deserve the mistress or other epithets. Lessing reflects a reawakening against the constructed

sexual identity. Maureen, for example, says professionally that she is a mistress and she decides to start a new life without a man. Judith wants to live without her Professor lover. Rose wants to live with her adopted child. With the reawakening of their femininity, they should have the same rights as men. In this case, “He” and “She” genders should be equally treated. Therefore, Annie is a self-determined person. Thanks to the round characters, the readers see that the destiny of a woman whether fallen or not can be different as at the end the characters change their lifestyles themselves. Debbie and Julie completed their maturation process against labelling women as fallen ones showing how hard to live in a patriarchal society as a woman. Using the "fallen woman" epithet and dismissing someone from the opportunities of society is the worst punishment and it is something so cruel. Being a "fallen woman" is not the destiny of Julie as she overcomes this labeling after being an ideal woman for society. This shows that the basic role of a woman is not being a domestic one but being combative as men.

Women look forward to living their own life they feel existence with their own decisions at the end. Eventually, the women characters reach their freedom by learning about the harsh conditions of life as a woman. She and the other Lessing characters are struggling for their salvation against sexism and otherhood in a male-dominated society. As a result, all the characters find a solution to feminine awakening with the help of self-consciousness at the end of their alienation and isolation in society.

Women disobey social-ethical norms that are important features of feminism. All the female characters have a confrontation with themselves against patriarchy; some of them want to change their destiny against passivity, on the other hand, others accept the traditional social roles of women as a duty to become acceptable in a society. The aging of women causes inferiority for them as getting older means women are less attractive than before as in *Pleasure for Mary*. “Free woman” physical appearance is not so important as she focuses on her own talents and self-improvement. On the other hand, for stereotyped women addicted to a man to survive beauty is important as this is their only way to survive in a male-dominated world. Besides, these motherhood terms are important in Lessing’s fiction. Lessing

uses a cat's perspective for Judith's character to criticize not natural motherhood but pressured motherhood by patriarchy. Rose in *The Other Woman* depicts that a woman may live motherhood without needing a man. If a woman does not give birth, she may adopt a child and become a mother. In *To Room Nineteen*, Susan dedicates herself to her children but dies alone as in *A Woman and Her Cat*. As in *One Man and Two Women* and *Debbie and Julie*, it is normal to be regretful for becoming a mother. Especially, for Julie she is raped and she does not want to take responsibility to bring up that unwanted child, because this abuse is not her own fault. In terms of clothes, women are free to wear what they want as in *A Woman on a Roof* but should not be restricted as for Mary in *Pleasure*. A woman should not be addicted to a man economically to survive in life because women should be independent. Moreover, in Lessing's selected short stories, the sisterhood is also important. *Between Men*, *Debbie and Julie*, "He", "One Man and Two Women", *The Other Woman*, sisterhood is important against patriarchy as women should not be enemies of each other, but support themselves against male-dominated. This is because women have women solidarity to support each other and have a right to continue their living. In addition to all these, sexism means unequal rights for females and injustice portrait for them that cause passivity for women. Not to restrict women's life, both genders should have equal rights not to put women in the borders of houses. For their freedom, women have to revolt patriarchy. Instead of being addicted to men to survive, women have to improve their abilities to become freer as in Lessing's fiction, otherwise, being victims of ethical norms is inevitable.

To conclude, feminist criticism supports women's lives and experiences and takes consideration of them in society. Women should be represented literally in the canon and they have to be accepted in their class, sexuality, race, and ability. Comparing passive women characters that obey traditional roles against rebellious ones leads to the positions of women in male authority. Lessing subverted women's roles of motherhood, housewives, and angels for their husbands as females who are free and self-aware of their needs and rights. The tragic ending for the characters as in *To Room Nineteen* highlights the idea of dedication to men. It results not only killing of a woman bodily but also emotionally. In *Debbie and Julie*, a prostitute may

protect better than her own mother who fragmented traditional motherhood role. Furthermore, in *A Woman on a Roof*, a woman's body belongs to herself and nobody may abuse her as a woman has got the power to resist the brutality of interrupting the male-dominated authority. On that basis, as in *An Old Woman and Her Cat*, a woman should not forget or deny her roots after getting married. Overall, in *Pleasure* and *A Man and Two Women*, aging is not a problem for women but the problem is the unfaithfulness of men. In a nutshell, Lessing transmits traditional women's roles into otherhood to depict the free parts of women's roles and needs because, women should not be victimized by a patriarchal society.

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