

# THE OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN H.E. BATES' SHORT FICTION

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**ABSTRACT:** This article is concerned with the analysis of selected short stories by H. E. Bates from a feminist point of view with a particular focus on Simone de Beauvoir's principle of sexual objectification. It has been shown how a woman's body is defined by men and is objectified and experienced as object in those stories. In *The Enchantress*, Bertha is objectified by presenting her as a woman who is enslaved to her body and the role that it plays to make her the absolute sex to men. In *The Good Corn*, although Elsie is eighteen years old, she is used as an instrument to satisfy the desires of Mr. Mortimer. In *The Wild Cherry Tree*, Mrs. Boorman is an example of a lady who is treated to be an absolute sex, the Other, to be exploited, and viewed as inferior, mere body, and an instrument during her relationship with her lover, Jack. The final findings of the article assert that though most of the stories discussed are taken from different periods of time in Bates' career as a writer (1926-1974), nothing changes about his view of his female characters in which they have been continuously misrepresented. Through examining women's treatment as sexual objects, one can observe that all the features that Simone Beauvoir criticizes as being responsible for the women's subordinated position are clearly reflected in Bates' stories. The article ends up proving that H. E. Bates is one of those authors who fall into the trap of depicting their female characters negatively. His female characters embody the type of woman that Simone de Beauvoir struggled to eradicate in favor of an independent and free woman.

**KEYWORDS:** The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir, H. E. Bates, the Other, Sexual Objectification

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the first volume of *The Second Sex* entitled *Facts and Myths*, Simone de Beauvoir describes her principle of the objectification of women. Here, she discusses the relationship between man and woman in which the man represents both the positive and the neutral, as it is indicated by the common use of man to designate human beings in general; whereas the woman represents only the negative, defined by limiting criteria, without reciprocity (25). In other words, women are subordinated to the man, taking on an inferior role in which they are man's object; therefore, they cannot have any sense of identity beyond their inferior relationship to him, whereas he is autonomous, and essential.

Women are always seen as objects to fulfill men's desires. They are nothing but what men want to do with, and merely a sexed being, not a whole and complex human being. While men can stand on their own without being in relation to women, women are determined to be in relation to men. In other words, women are seen to be incapable without men (26).

## II. REVIEW OF THE PUBLISHED LITERATURE

Herbert Ernest Bates, best known as H. E. Bates, is one of the most prolific British writers of the twentieth century. Bates has published over a hundred titles between 1926 and his death in 1974. His literary works include novels, plays, short stories, novellas, literary criticism books, autobiographies, children's books, and books celebrating England and the English landscape. His reputation rests primarily on his first love, the short story in which he has published more than twenty short story anthologies in his lifetime. Therefore, "no students of [modern] literature of the present day could think of the English short story without thinking of this writer as one of its principle exponents" (Blakwill 375).

In spite of the overproduction of Bates' literary works, little has been examined by researchers. One of them is Abhik Maiti who tries to examine the psychology of Bates' characters through her article entitled "The Psychology of Suffering: A Critical Evaluation of H. E. Bates's Short Stories with Special Reference to The

Ox." Through this article, Maiti analyzes the psychology of suffering of the main characters of *The Ox* namely Mrs. Thurlow, her brother, and her husband.

Maiti talks about "the transcendental vision of life" in which the name of the story *The Ox* reflects on the characters as they suffer from life and carry their "burdens of agony, of dreams and hope and of the self" in a way that resembles an ox suffering day and night without complaining (2).

Lea Salminen is another researcher who examines the male-female relationship in H. E. Bates' Larkin novels, which comprise five books written from 1958 to 1970, through her thesis entitled *Oh, to Be a Man: Women, Sexuality, and Male Fantasy in H. E. Bates' Larkin Novels*.

In this thesis, Lea explores the portrayal of the female characters both in relation to historical aspects and the male characters within the novels themselves. She aims to examine whether the relationships in the Larkin novels conform or oppose the societal norms of the 1950s and 1960s; the portrayal of sexuality especially that of women; the ways the novels have manifested male fantasy; the treatment of women in those novels (2-3).

Lea Salminen comes up to the conclusion that the Larkin novels oppose the societal norms of the 1950s and the 1960s by being very open about sexuality and relationships, showing women being sexually assertive, and treating sex as a natural part of life. However, they also conform to the norms of their time by supporting traditional gender roles and in some ways family values, and by not truly giving the female characters the right to be as sexually open as men (83).

Although the previous works have examined different aspects in Bates' literary works, none of them is authored with the intention to investigate the traits of the female characters in H. E. Bates' short stories with respect to the concept of sexual objectification, especially in the context of Simone de Beauvoir's theory in *The Second Sex*. Thus this article shows how Beauvoir's principle regarding the view of woman as the Other through her sexual desire and activity especially through being reduced to the body and being an instrument in men's hands finds its own expression in Bates' short stories *The Enchantress*, *The Good Corn* and *The Wild Cherry Tree*.

### III. BEAUVOIR'S OBJECTIFICATION OF WOMEN IN BATES' SHORT STORIES:

#### 3.1. Sexual Objectification: Woman as the Other

Simone de Beauvoir defines a woman in terms of her objectification as Other which is the main idea that revolves throughout *The Second Sex*. In a patriarchal society, to be a good woman is to be feminine, which is to function excellently in the assigned social role for women; at least part of this social role is to be a sexual object for men to satisfy their sexual desires. Simone de Beauvoir declares:

[Woman] is nothing other than what man decides; she is thus called 'the sex', meaning that the male sees her essentially as a sexed being; for him she is sex, so she is it in the absolute. She is determined and differentiated in relation to man, while he is not in relation to her; she is the inessential in front of the essential. He is the Subject; he is the Absolute. She is the Other. (26)

Irrespective of all classes, races, religions and societies, a woman has always been confined to particular roles sanctioned by the male-dominated society. The patriarchal ideologies regard a woman as a "sexual object" (480) that is meant for reproduction and carnal satisfaction or mere an "inessential object" (319) owned by men.

The woman is treated as an objectified sexual body and is exhorted to be a real woman and remains a woman. To patriarchal society, "Woman's body seems devoid of meaning without reference to the male. Man thinks himself without woman. Woman does not think herself without man" (26).

This parasitic treatment of a woman has robbed her of her individuality and independence, and rendered her powerless and dispensable. To get acceptance in the established order and avoid abnegation, a woman too has consciously or unconsciously incorporated these servile attitudes and paradigmatic norms endorsed by males and remodeled herself as a lesser being or the second sex.

From another perspective, a woman fails to identify herself as a human being. Instead, she sees herself as nothing more than a "sexual object" (480). What is ironic is Beauvoir's declaration that "the most mediocre of males believes himself a demigod next to women" (33). He considers "woman's body an obstacle, a prison, burdened by everything that particularizes it" (25) and dooms her by turning her into an Other, a sex toy for men. For him, a woman is "a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object, an Other through whom he seeks himself" (93).

Man has projects, activities, accomplishments; woman just has man. In this sense, objectification is a form of reduction, "a state of less-than-ness." The subject, a transcendent being, belittles the object to immanence since the object is to always be overshadowed by the subject, who is essential and sovereign. Beauvoir has offered the process by which woman, the Other, has attained such status. She writes:

Indeed, beside every individual's claim to assert himself as subject—and ethical claim—lies the temptation to flee freedom and to make himself into a thing [...] the individual, passive, alienated, and lost, is prey to a foreign will, cut off from his transcendence, robbed of all worth. But it is an easy path: the anguish and stress of authentically assumed existence are thus avoided [...] Hence woman makes no claims for herself as subject because she lacks the concrete means, because she senses the necessary link connecting her to man [...] she often derives satisfaction from her role as Other. (30)

An intuitive reaction might be one of suspicion in response to the fact that a woman objectifies herself. However, why would a woman want to be reduced to a passive state? According to Beauvoir, a woman acquires this sense of how to objectify herself during adolescence. It is during this time in a girl's life that she accepts her femininity and engages in "erotic transcendence." In other words, she realizes what it is to be wanted, to be an object of desire. This occurrence "consists in making herself prey in order to make a catch. She [willingly] becomes an object; and she grasps herself as an object" (404).

A woman has learned to view herself from the outside in order to become something to be gazed at. This notion of consenting to objectification can be viewed as power that society holds over a woman to prevent her from acquiring her identity. A woman is treated as a living doll and denied her freedom; "thus a vicious circle is closed; for the less she exercises her freedom to understand, grasp and discover the world around her, the less she will find its resources, and the less she will dare to affirm herself as subject" (342).

Adolescence involves a crisis for a woman in which she realizes the importance of renouncing any claim to being a Subject in order to be desired as an Object/Other. Beauvoir notes that it is partially through the act of looking that objectification occurs, pointing out that the male Subject's gaze "insidiously takes hold of the perceived image" (420).

Beauvoir firmly states that a woman, just like a man, is born with an intrinsic freedom, but she is deprived of this freedom by a patriarchal society that hides the individuality of a woman under the wife and mother archetypes. To patriarchal societies, the idea that a woman is born as free individual is seen in the fact that her roles as wives and mothers lead her to live an isolated life of nonconformity that brings to light the deepest instincts of freedom inherent to women. Moreover, although she has always been under the male figure of her father, it is not until she gets married that she totally renounces her own independence.

In order to show how a woman is forced to progressively abandon her personal development as a free individual to conform to the image of femininity, and eventually reach her imposed destiny, Beauvoir begins the first section of Book II of *The Second Sex* with those early childhood experiences through which girls learn to feel that they are inferior to boys, and continues through accounts of sexual initiation, marriage, motherhood to reveal how a woman acquires a sense of inferiority to men and frequently comes to accept her situation of oppression rather than assert freedom (Code 57).

It is through her famous statement "One is not born, but rather becomes, woman" (Beauvoir 330) that Beauvoir rejects the wrong belief that a woman is born feminine because femininity is the constructed ideal that society imposes on her, and not the way she is actually born (Tidd 51). In other words, there is nothing in a woman's biological condition leads her to behave or aspire to the things that society expects her to do.

A woman has always been treated as Other, either in history, literature, philosophy or in the actual world. She has been denied individuality, selfhood, power and agency. Her existence has always been evaluated in relation to men. She has been obliged to conform to the roles assigned to her by the patriarchal society. Even then, she has not been granted respectable places in society after assuming these prescribed roles; she has been mandated to perform these roles in the paradigmatic fashion as well.

To be just a daughter, wife, mother or lover is not enough; a woman has to be servile, self-abasing, submissive, useful, uncomplaining, apologetic, and, above all, has a functional womb to be acknowledged as a real woman. If a woman fails to embody the mandated feminine features in her, she will be disgraced as a lesser woman and shunned from society as an abominable object.

In this article, it has been shown that the aim of feminism as a literary theory is to expose sexist attitudes in literary works. Its interest is also in the presentation of the heroines and the archetypes found in literature. The literary theory maintains that feminists attest that an image of a woman is an image created by men to suit their own needs. Thus, this article will look at the female characters of H. E. Bates' selected short stories entitled *The Enchantress*, *The Good Corn* and *The Wild Cherry Tree* from the standpoints provided by Simone de Beauvoir's landmark book *The Second Sex*.

### **3.1.1. Objectification as Reduction to the Body**

One type of sexual objectification that ruins women's status in society is reducing her so that she is identified only in relation to her body (Langton 228-229). Bertha the character in Bates' *The Enchantress* is a good example here. The aspects of reducing Bertha into a mere body is examined in two parts. The first part examines Bertha's life during her childhood while the second one examines her life during adulthood.

#### **3.1.1.1. The Woman as Body in *The Enchantress***

##### **3.1.1.1.1. Bertha in her Childhood**

As an only child for the Jacksons, Bertha lives with her parents who are "the poorest of the poor" in "The Pit." This place:

was a place of loafers playing crown-and-anchor under smoky walls, of yelling women in perpetual curling rags and men's caps who leered down to The Waterloo with beer jugs in their hands and made twice-weekly visits, with rattling prams, to pop-shops.

One of those "loafers" is Bertha's father who is an "ex-pug grown coarse and fat [...] worked little, [and] boozed a lot." Mr. Jackson spends most of his time in a pub called The Waterloo not only to drink but also to re-tell the story of how incredibly he had won "impermanent fame" and a silver belt as a champion twenty years ago as a "light-weight" boxer.

Compared to her husband, Mrs. Jackson is "a gaunt, hungry faced, prematurely aged woman, with sickly yellow eyes sunk far into her head behind steel-rimmed spectacles." She also goes to the pop-shop, but only on Mondays and spends all her time "treadled feverishly all day and half the night at a sewing machine" "in the dirty window of [her] little house in one of the narrow yards [that is] used as short cuts at the railway end of the town."

Throughout the above description of Bertha's parents, it is clear that her mother suffers a lot in her marriage because of her husband for these reasons. First, it is Mr. Jackson who is physically in power since one day he used to be a "pug" while Mrs. Jackson is physically weak with bad health and that is clear in depicting her as "gaunt" with "yellow eyes" which indicates her sickness. Therefore, such "lack of physical power expresses itself as a more general timidity" which is clear in the case of Mrs. Jackson who, in Beauvoir's words, "does not dare to be enterprising [or] to revolt" against such inequality (398). As a result, she resigns to live with her husband and act passively toward his actions and behavior. Furthermore, being "coarse" indicates that Mrs. Jackson suffers from her husband's rudeness and violence. Moreover, due to their lack of money and being "the poorest of the poor," Mrs. Jackson is described as a woman with a "hungry faced" whereas her husband is "fat." Finally, while Mr. Jackson works a little, drinks a lot, Mrs. Jackson works hard day and night at a sewing machine (Bates, *The Enchantress* 372).

However, living such a miserable life in a dirty environment with a drunk and an irresponsible husband sinking in his dreams and illusions of his past glory does not stop Mrs. Jackson from raising her daughter as a princess. In order not to live a life like hers, Mrs. Jackson works very hard to raise Bertha in a lifestyle that resembles the standards of her patriarchal society. Therefore, it is clear to Mrs. Jackson that in order to change her daughter's fate in living a miserable life in The Pit, she has to be feminine since it is the core standard of a patriarchal society and because the vast majority of men are naturally attracted and driven sexually to women who are feminine, i.e., those who own the physical aspects of femininity such as an attractive physical body, a unique feminine style of clothing, and a softer and more sensual voice (qtd. in Carson 95).

An important principle that plays a role in women's reduction to body is patriarchal myths. Beauvoir states that "myths [were] created by men's pride and desires" about women and used to deny them their freedom and independence and put them in the status of the Other for the rest of their lives (350). As a matter of fact, the myth of femininity or as Beauvoir calls it "the Eternal Feminine" is the main myth through which women were caged in the Otherness throughout history.

Additionally, Beauvoir notes that the concept of an "Eternal Feminine" (256) is "irrefutable since it is largely comprised of what is immutable aspect of the human condition" (315). She believes that the fantasy of the "perfect woman" (800) would exist there, as well; this standard is what both men and women envision as the "Eternal Feminine." Therefore, while the details and characterization of women's beauty might change over time and between cultures, "Eternal Feminine" (256) is the "yardstick" that used to judge women (229).

One of the conditions of becoming a feminine is taking care of one's appearance which in fact is missing in Mrs. Jackson. She wears "a black dress [and] an old black straw hat without trimmings and black button boots worn badly down at the heel." What emphasizes her horrible look is her boots because:

In a town like Evensford, where boots and shoes are made, even the poor have no way of acquiring public derision more swiftly than to be seen in boots or shoes that need heeling badly. It is not merely a point of honour not to do such things; it incurs a sharp communal scorn.

People "did [not] seem to know the cause of her state of perpetual mourning, but as the years went past" the narrator comes up with the conclusion that "it was not mourning at all," but "She was merely saving for Bertha" (Bates 372).

Instead of putting the blame on Mrs. Jackson's husband for her sorrow, people in the society and the narrator of the story, put the blame on her daughter, Bertha.

Through portraying Mrs. Jackson's horrible appearance and links it to her suffering, the story is highlighting the impression that not being a true feminine will be the reason of women's misery because they miss one of the main aspects of being a true woman; thus, they do not deserve to live a good life. This is a fact that Mrs. Jackson comes across lately and causes her to work very hard to save money to buy fancy clothes for Bertha.

In contrast, throughout the events of *The Enchantress*, Bertha is depicted as an "Eternal Feminine" (Beauvoir 256) that depends completely on men. The narrator begins the story with a physical description of Bertha's beauty as "a rather plump, fair-skinned child with eyes of brilliant hyacinth blue and long ribbonless blonde hair that hung half way down her back in curls" (Bates 372) who "was always beautifully dressed" (373).

In spite of living in "The Pit," Bertha "had come, so golden and impeccable and pleasant, from that sordid rat-hole" (380). She is raised as a princess wearing unique and special clothes which are designed especially for her from a very good class dress shop at the other end of the town and always paid for. Thanks to her mother who works too hard to raise her as a noble lady from an upper class.

As a child, Bertha's true feminine features goes through three phases. First, at the age of ten, Bertha "had already a clean, splendid sumptuous bloom about her" and everyone "started calling [her] the Princess" (373).

As a matter of fact, society is always considered to be the mirror of the self. In a patriarchal society, this mirror is men's points of view which could build or destroy a girl's life as indicates by Beauvoir:

Through compliments and admonishments, through images and words, [a girl] discovers the meaning of the words 'pretty' and 'ugly'; she soon knows that to please, she has to be 'pretty as a picture'; she tries to resemble an image, she disguises herself, she looks at herself in the mirror, she compares herself to princesses and fairies from tales. (340)

In Bertha's case, calling her a princess proves that she has succeeded in reaching men's beauty standards at an early age.

Likewise, compared to the other girls, Bertha's beauty is unique. For instance, it is quite common to see young girls with hair of "palest bleached yellow and of extraordinary lightness in texture;" however, she "was the only child [the narrator] ever saw whose hair was the colour of thistle-down and of exactly the same lovely insubstantial airy quality" (Bates 373). In addition, using Beauvoir's words, since "the little girl discovers the world and reads her destiny through the eyes of men," such features add to her confidence and conform to the formula of being an idol feminine in order to live in and acquire the acceptance of a patriarchal society (350).

When Bertha becomes thirteen, the narrator has kept on emphasizing that she "was [...] big for her age" that she looks more like "a girl of sixteen or seventeen (373)." As "an object that others look at and see," (Beauvoir 369) Bertha:

was tall, with full sloping shoulders and a firm high bust. Her legs were the sort of legs that make men turn round in the street, at least once if not twice, and she had a certain languid way of swinging her arms, with a backward graceful pull, as she walked. (Bates 373)

The narrator in the above description makes it clear that men do not differentiate between a child and a woman on the basis of their age, but through their physical features. Therefore, in spite of being only thirteen years old, Bertha's body makes her the idol image of a true woman.

The fact that men judge a girl through her body approves Beauvoir's argument that girls who suffer from being adults do not feel comfortable walking down the street because their bodies are not theirs anymore. They belong to men in which "she is grasped by [men] as a thing: on the street, eyes follow her, her body is subject to comments; she would like to become invisible; she is afraid of becoming flesh and afraid to show her flesh" (369-370). Yet, Bertha does not show any sign of discomfort for being treated as flesh because she is convinced that to be an object and to acquire the secondary status of the Other is her duty if she wants to live her life with no worries.

To end her childhood's stage, the narrator describes Bertha at the age of fourteen. Emphasizing Beauvoir's myth of womanhood and how woman is no more than "flesh" (370) and seeing her existence through her body, Bertha "looked like a young woman of twenty and already, people began to say, you could see all the old, eternal danger signs" (Bates 374).

What happens to Bertha is what Beauvoir describes as "the troubled period in which the child's body is becoming a woman's body and being made flesh" (368). The narrator comments on this transformation and puts the blame on the girls themselves in which "Girls of fourteen who went out of their way to look like women of twenty, dealing in the deliberate coinage of voluptuous attractions, had only themselves to blame if they bought what they asked for." Instead of blaming men in particular and the society in general for making women feel they are no more than a physical body without respecting their souls, personalities, feelings, and dreams, girls are the ones to be blamed because it is their choice to go stray of the folk and look like women just to be a source of attraction.

In other words, it is "only a question of time before girls of sensational early maturity found themselves in trouble, disgraced and tasting the fruits of bitter unlearned lessons." It is the girls' fault because they want to be recognized in society and want men to notice them to secure a good life for themselves. Thus, men have the right to judge them and teach them the "unlearned lessons."

What is ironic is the impression that girls can reject such "old, eternal danger signs," (Bates 374) and they are the ones who are so eager to obtain them to attract men around them; thus, they have to accept the consequences with no sorrow.

### 3.1.1.1.2. Bertha in her Adulthood

As it is explained in the previous section, Bertha is lucky to be beautiful because she follows the womanhood's standards of her society. In her childhood, she is the one who attracts everyone who sees her. The same happens during her adulthood with the exaggeration of picturing her as a woman who only has her body to exist and secure a happy life for her. The aspects of her objectification are clarified through a number of events that captivate her to be looked at as a body without any respect for her soul, feelings, interests, and dreams.

Starting with her first meeting with the narrator, Bertha expresses her interest in an article that he wrote about a kind of flowers that she thought they never exist. As a result, the narrator expresses his willingness to take her on a trip to see those flowers. However, when they reach the place, the narrator forgets everything about the flowers and starts to "kiss her" and let his hands run over "the cool sumptuous skin of her shoulders." What the narrator

can see before him is not a person who is interested in his article and has passion for flowers, but a body that is meant to be for kissing and serving men's desires.

Although Bertha does not react in a way or another to what happens, in a low voice, "she aroused him from a daze" asking about the flowers (384). Starting to look for the flowers, the narrator stops after three to four minutes to kiss her again. This time he describes the complete submission of Bertha's body in his arms as "The acquiescence of her body was sensational in its quietness" (385). Bertha's submission to the narrator's kisses and touches spots the light on her surrendering to being an absolute sex and to men's use.

Reminding us of the patriarchal ideology that views a woman as a seducer who sets traps for men (Beauvoir 427), the narrator's father warns him against meeting Bertha because she is "that sort of girl [who] can easily trap you" (Bates 386) and "stalk her prey" through her sexuality. Through this warning lays an emphasis on the belief that in woman's attempt to make her weakness a tool of her strength, "she is interested to appear freely given to men" (Beauvoir 427).

Another incident that illustrates Bertha's objectifying as an absolute sex though she is still in her early twenties is when she dates two men at the same time. When the narrator and Bertha come back home from the woods, he asks her if she would meet him the next day. To his surprise, she refuses because she is going out with another man named George Freeman, but she offers to spend four nights a week with him and the rest with George (Bates 386). Thinking of how Bertha is able to lure men and why they are attracted to her as moths attracted to flame, the narrator reaches the conclusion that the reason men "fell in love with [Bertha] at once, with abandonment, [and] quite blindly" is that she likes it (380). Thus, she rewards them "with the sort of affection that moulds itself on the pattern of the receiver" (381). Again the blame is put on women and they are accused of being the reason behind their own objectification because they love that which is absolutely wrong.

In a party that her American husband held for his men, "[Bertha] was surrounded, on all sides, by young officers in uniform. There were [...] no other women near" (390). Bertha is the flame that attracts moths with the difference that a moth would die immediately because of its eagerness to be near the beauty of the flame while Bertha is the one who is dying each time she leaves part of herself to be part of the men around her.

Through becoming a passive prey and exposing herself to men, Bertha cannot change her fate of becoming the Other in spite of the fact that she tries to reduce the male to "carnal passivity" by the desire she aroused. However, the narrator scorns all her attempts to free herself from being the Other and describes those attempts as striving "to secure masculine support [for herself] through sex" (Beauvoir 850).

### **3.1.2. Objectification as Being an Instrument**

Being an instrument means the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes (Nussbaum 257). This section contains the last category of Bates' female characters in *The Good Corn* and *The Wild Cherry Tree* in which women are objectified and treated as instruments to satisfy men's desire to forget their misfortune and bad experience with their wives.

#### **3.1.2.1. Woman as an Instrument in The Good Corn**

Being a single lady who gets pregnant once before reaching the age of nineteen and again when she is nineteen years old introduces Elsie's otherness as an absolute sex.

At the beginning of the story, Elsie is seen to be a girl who is "settled into the house and moved about it with unobtrusive quietness" (Bates, *The Good Corn* 243). However, she turns to be a wild girl who believes in the idea that "It isn't always the loud ones who say most" which is an indication that women are deceivers whether they are young or old, wild or quiet, bad or good. Additionally, they are able to surprise the man with the opposite of what can be seen in their personalities.

Through the events of the story, it can be noticed that Elsie's sexuality causes Mr. Joe Mortimer, to behave in an unacceptable matter, and accuse his wife of being somehow responsible for his infidelity because she cannot perform her natural gender role; therefore, it is excusable for him to look elsewhere for sexual gratification.

Consequently, even though it is Joe Mortimer who makes the first move, he blames Elsie for the incident and depicts her as a villain because of her sexual desire. In fact, instead of stopping him from kissing her, she asks him to find another place instead of the corn field because Mrs. Mortimer or anyone may be able to see them; thus, she does not want to "fool" with him there. Trying to kiss her again, Elsie emphasizes that she does not want to "fool" in "broad daylight" and she does not like people watching her (246).

Because of such a condition, Elsie is depicted into two ways. First, besides picturing her as an absolute sex, she is seen as being perfidious and treacherous to Mrs. Mortimer who trusts her and treats her as a member of her family. Then her request of finding a place that no one could see her fooling with Joe portrays her as an expert mistress who wants to hide her identity from the others when she carries out something wrong. Such a depiction makes it clear that Elsie is raised in a society that sees a girl in her age to be an absolute sex to men even if they are married which proves Beauvoir's assumption that "[a man] observes in the young girl a desire to be dominated" (471). Thus, even though, "The young girl [...] possesses little of her own except her body [which] is her most precious

treasure; the man who enters her takes it from her" (455). For Mr. Mortimer, he cannot see an eighteen-year-old girl having an affair with him, but a body that has to serve his needs.

With the passing of time, Elsie decides to leave her job with the Mortimers because she gets pregnant. Instead of telling Mrs. Mortimer about her husband, or ask for help, Elsie prefers to hide everything from Mrs. Mortimer and leave. Elsie's relationship with Mr. Mortimer leads her to experience, "concretely the humiliation" of being "dominated, subjugated, [and] conquered" (Beauvoir 455) and thus prefers to suffer alone instead of engaging Mr. Mortimer who is part of what happened to her. However, Mrs. Mortimer stops her from leaving when she knows that the father of her child is Mr. Mortimer and asks her to stay with them until she delivers the baby and gives it to them.

Through her intention to escape, Elsie is seen as a weak and a naïve character who ruined her life by herself for the second time. Mr. Mortimer uses Elsie as an instrument and then leaves her to face her destiny. He does not sympathize with her. Instead he puts the blame on her.

Whenever a man has an affair with a teenager, Beauvoir's states that "even if it is [the young girl] who first flirts with the man, he is the one who takes their relationship in hand; he is often older and more experienced, and it is accepted that he has the responsibility for this adventure" (450). What is worthy to note is that despite his liability in the ordeal, Joe Mortimer assumes the role of the victim. Although he is forty years old while Elise is eighteen years old, Joe is depicted as the prey that has to be forgiven and given excuses for his deed. Therefore, to put the blame on Elise, Joe tells his wife that "I didn't know what I was doing. She kept asking me. It was her who kept asking me" (Bates 249).

Another way of putting the blame on Elsie is through the description of her youth. In fact, Elsie's youth is only mentioned because of the beauty it gives her: "During summer the face of the girl had reddened with sun and air and as autumn came on it seemed to broaden and flatten, the thick skin ripe and healthy in texture" (247). It is because of the beauty of this young girl that Joe falls prey to her.

To end with, in this story, the three characters Elsie, Mrs. Mortimer and Mr. Mortimer are depicted in different ways. Elsie is the sexual object for Mr. Mortimer's desires and ends up to be depicted as the villain and the source of troubles; Mrs. Mortimer, the reason of the disaster; and Joe Mortimer, the hero and the victim, despite committing what is widely regarded as a sin.

### 3.1.2.2. Woman as an Instrument in *The Wild Cherry Tree*

In relation to her husband, Mrs. Boorman is captivated in her immanent role as a mother and considers her pregnancies to be the reason for her enslavement. However, in this section, her character is portrayed as an absolute sex. In fact, Mrs. Boorman gets involved in a new relationship with Jack Gilbert to escape her immanence to find herself unfortunately a prey to a man who treats her as the Other, an instrument to satisfy his desires. Such objectification can be clearly shown through the following incidents.

First, in their second meeting, Jack presents himself to Mrs. Boorman who introduces herself to him as Margaret. While walking in the woods, Jack picks some flowers and gives them to Margaret and starts kissing her. When Jack comments on how beautiful she can kiss, Margaret tries to be a little bit firm about it and scorns him for saying such a thing. Moreover, she draws his attention to another mistake that he should not be doing which is putting his hands "inside the jacket of her costume, [and] holding her breasts." As a response to that, Jack asks if he should take his hands away. The only answer that he gets was "Oh! God," she said. "Please—" not completing her sentence and feeling for a great need to be very close to him, makes her:

fold herself deeply into his arms. Obviously, for some minutes, she made a complete surrender of herself, actually at one moment helping him lift the fringe of her jumper and draw down the straps of her slip, so that he could touch one naked breast. (Bates, *The Wild Cherry Tree* 32)

Through the above incident, it can be noticed that Jack is sure of Margaret's need for him and that she does not want him to leave her; however, to humiliate her and show that he is the master in any activity that is taken by him, he asks her if she will be glad to take off his hands. Proving that she is the slave, and the Other who relies on the one, Margaret begged him for not leaving her.

Such a master-slave relationship is as Beauvoir describes it: "To pose Woman is to pose the absolute Other, without reciprocity, denying against all experience that she is a subject, a fellow human being" (462). Beauvoir demonstrates that the master-slave relationship has proven to be of such advantage for men because "it justifies all [their] privileges and even authorizes their abuse" (463). The woman is necessary for the joy of the man and his triumph to the point where it could be said that if she had not already existed, "men would have invented her" (186) which is clear in the way that Jack has treated Margaret whenever she is trying to say no.

Another example that shows woman's objectification through being an absolute sex is when Jack asks Margaret if she wants to "make love" with him. Margaret tries to show that she does not care about such sexual activity and that she needs someone to talk to only when she answers with "Don't torment me like that, please."

Playing with her nerves again knowing that she is unable to leave him, and will do whatever it takes to stay with him, Jack's reaction is so humiliating: "All right, whatever you wish. He suddenly withdrew his hands from her breasts, at the same time kissing her dispassionately, and slightly mockingly, on the centre of the forehead. I

withdraw –." Again, Margaret surrenders to him and accepts to be a tool in his hands, she begs him to stay with her saying: "Oh! no, don't go away from me now" (Bates 32). According to Beauvoir, for a man to assert his aggressive superiority:

He wants to take and not receive, not exchange but ravish. He seeks to possess the woman beyond that which she gives him; he demands that her consent be a defeat, and that the words she murmurs be avowals that he extracts from her; if she admits her pleasure, she is acknowledging her submission.

Margaret's submission to Jack's demands are clearly shown in her rapid begging whenever he withdraws. It is through those begs that Margaret is admitting her pleasure and happiness to be with Jack and that, in Beauvoir's words, is her way of "acknowledging her submission" (823).

Asking her again if she would make love with him, Margaret repeats the same answer saying "I already asked you – don't torment me like that." However, this time, Jack said "Tomorrow then" (Bates 33). Taking the lead and deciding instead of her shows the superior side of Jack over Margaret's submission. It is "the man who conquers, who has the woman [...] she is [his] prey." Thus, without waiting for an answer, Jack is sure that Margaret will agree because she cannot miss such a chance to be loved, touched and kissed. It is understood that "the male has integrated the forces of the species into his individuality, whereas the woman is the slave of the species. She is represented alternately as pure passivity: she is a 'slut; open for business'; ready and willing" (Beauvoir 823). To Jack, Margaret is just a slave that has to obey orders. She is no more than a mistress who will give herself to him willingly.

Last but not least, in their last meeting, Jack informs Margaret that he may be sent to the Golf again; thus, he has to go to the town for a couple of days. The objectification of Mrs. Boorman reaches its culmination when she asks Jack whether he would forget her or not. As an indication of her happiness when Jack told her that "It hurts just as much to go as it does for you to be left," she kissed him a kiss of gratitude more than a kiss of love or passion (Bates 35).

Through that kiss, she shows her gratitude for accepting her to be part of his world even if that lasts for a short period of time starting from April and ends by the end of May. It is gratitude for giving her the chance to remember herself, to remember Margaret and to bring her back to life. It is gratitude for helping her forget her life as Mrs. Boorman with all its misery and allowing her to love and be loved whenever she is with him. Through that kiss, it is clear that she is saying goodbye to Margaret who would vanish the moment that Jack would leave her and go.

The above incidents prove that to Jack, Margaret is just a tool that he uses to "fill in the gap" of his divorced wife (31). He is the one who is controlling all the meetings, conversations, and requests. He does not help Mrs. Boorman to live a new life as she thinks, but helps himself to live his own new life.

Bates' ends all Mrs. Boorman's dreams in a wink and brings her back to slavery through her new pregnancy and the way that her lover does not recognize her in the farm when he comes back after a month from their last meeting to look for her.

For Jack, nothing will change. He can go and find another woman to be his new instrument to live his life in a new way while for Mrs. Boorman that is the end of all her dreams and she will never be able to create a new happy world for herself.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

In *The Enchantress*, Bates introduces his readers to an objectified character that is totally different from the ones in the other stories. The way that Bates has described Bertha's body parts and appearance in her childhood or adulthood emphasizes the patriarchal belief that women are no more than a body that has to be dedicated to men. From an early age, Bertha knows that she has to satisfy men's gazes with her beauty to get a lover or a husband to get rid of her miserable life and poverty and secure herself financially.

Bertha is reduced into being an icon for beauty that has to be looked at and conquered by men. Reaching her forties with no change in her appearance and with the same eagerness to be with men and the center of their gazes makes it clear that she has been stolen from living her life the way she wants into being an object that has no right to express her own real feelings and live a real life away from men.

In fact, no one has judged Bertha as a human being who has feelings, emotions, and interests. Everyone has looked at her as a body that has to be possessed no matter how.

In *The Good Corn* and *The Wild Cherry Tree*, Elsie and Mrs. Boorman are treated as nothing more than mere instruments for the satisfaction of Mr. Mortimer's and Jack's sexual desires.

In both cases, men are trying to get rid of the memories of their failure with their wives. In *The Good Corn*, Mr. Mortimer uses Elsie as a mistress because his wife refused to sleep with him due to her belief that she is not worth for him since she could not achieve her main role in life and be pregnant.

Paying no regret to his wife's feelings and remembering only her request for him to find another girl for himself gives Mr. Mortimer the excuse to use Elsie as an instrument of satisfaction. He also puts the blame on her though she is eighteen years old and accuses her of seducing him to justify his act of betrayal in front of his wife.

In the case of Mrs. Boorman, she is the one who is cheating on her husband because Jack is a divorced man. Being attracted to her apricot dress leads Jack to use Mrs. Boorman as an instrument to help him forget his wife. Meeting her again in her usual clothes in the pigs' farm and not recognizing her emphasizes the way he looks at her as a body in a fancy dress.

Believing that she finds her real love and ready to start a new life with him is the reason behind Mrs. Boorman's self-destruction. Neither her husband nor her lover treats her as a human being that has to be respected. Both of them have treated her as a body that was created for them and has to be used by them by any means.

Mrs. Boorman is left to be pregnant again and live her life as it has been before meeting Jack while nothing is mentioned about what happens to Elsie after she abandoned her baby to Mrs. Mortimer.

Neglecting their souls and forcing them to be marginalized not only in the course of their lives but also in their rights to live respectfully is part of women's objectification that Mrs. Boorman, Mrs. Mortimer and Elsie suffer from.

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