

**Tribhuvan University**

**Gender Subalternity in *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences***

**A Thesis Submitted to the Central Department of English  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in English**

**By**

**Yashoda Bam**

**Symbol No.: 282201**

**T.U. Regd. No.: 6-2-327-913-2008**

**Central Department of English**

**Kirtipur, Kathmandu**

**May 2018**

Tribhuvan University

Central Department of English

Letter of Recommendation

Yashoda Bam has completed her thesis entitled "Gender Subalternity in *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences*" under my supervision. She carried out her research from July 2017 to May 2018. I hereby recommend her thesis to be submitted for viva voce.

---

Badri Prasad Acharya

Supervisor

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Tribhuvan University  
Central Department of English

Letter of Approval

The thesis, entitled "Gender Subalternity in *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences*", submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Yashoda Bam has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

Members of the Research Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Internal Supervisor  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
External Examiner  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Head  
Central Department of English  
  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to a number of people for their help with this research project. Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Badri Prasad Acharya, Lecturer at the Central Department of English for his guidance, advice, criticism, encouragements and insights throughout the research. His willingness to motivate me contributed tremendously in this research for its completion.

Thanks are also due to Prof. Dr. Amma Raj Joshi, Head of the Central Department of English, for his approval of this research work in its present shape.

Similarly, words cannot express my gratitude towards Dr. Tara Lal Shrestha, Dr. Dhurba Karki, Pradip Raj Giri and all respected professors and lecturers at the department for their feedbacks, insights, and valuable suggestions.

Finally, yet importantly, I want to express my love and gratitude to my parents for their constant and lifelong support and encouragement. Most importantly, thanks to all my friends near and far who have been there for me through to help me to complete this research directly and indirectly. Innovative Computer Institute also deserves gratitude for its typing and other technical support.

May 2018

Yashoda Bam

## Gender Subalternity in *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences*

### Abstract

*This research casts light on how the rigid patriarchal practices like early marriage and hegemony of patriarchal doctrine have relegated female characters in *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences*. Linda and Rose are being treated as feeble human beings without capacity. Linda and Rose cannot act normally because of patriarchy. They are subjected to various harrowing consequences of trauma and suffering. In both plays, females are cheated by males. Linda Rose, Miss Forsythe, Alberta are presented as feeble human beings who are not given important roles. They all act as meek in front of Loman and Troy as if they are captivated by their authority. They are unaware of their critical condition. Their subordinated, excluded and alienated lives prove that they are subalterns. The females of the plays represent feminine gender whose job, interest and agency have been manipulated by the males.*

**Key Words:** Gender, Subaltern, Voiceless, Margin, Patriarchy, Domination

## Introduction

This research examines the miserable condition of female characters in Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman* and August Wilson *Fences*. In both dramas, female characters like Linda, Rose and many others have position of subaltern woman. They are treated as the objects to be possessed by males, assets to be owned by them and creatures to be subjected to the brutal practices like assault and confinement. Their subordinated, excluded, and alienated lives prove that they are subaltern under the grip of patriarchy. This research deals with the specifics of females in the selected plays and effort to vocalize muted voice. Female characters are under traditional roles and stereotypical images created by patriarchy. The female protagonist Linda and Rose including other female characters in the dramas represent the feminine gender whose identity has been manipulated by the patriarchal society. The female gender has been made subaltern due to the relative domination, assault, rape and exclusion. The dramas are studied using the concept of gender subaltern with the insight from Ranjit Guha, Gayatri Chakrawarti Spivak, and David Ludden.

Linda of *Death of a Salesman* is the only woman mentioned by name in the play, is overlooked. The entire play is centered on Willy and what he desires. Linda is merely a tool he uses in order to enhance his own personal happiness. This is seen through Willy's affair and symbolic use of stockings. Willy selfishly cheats his loyal wife and buys new stockings. Later, Linda is seen mending old stockings because she is too kind to burden Willy with needing new ones and because she assumes it is her duty to keep things together including her stockings. Willy obviously neglects his wife's need for new stockings revealing woman's "second rate" place within society. Willy also takes advantage of Linda's "infinite patience" and makes decisions solely based on him because he is aware of this attribute within Linda. Further, the fact

Linda is completely oblivious to Willy's affair displays her as "stupid" or at least not as intelligent as Willy who is able to hide it from her.

The play *Fences* by August Wilson revolves around a male protagonist named Troy and the relationships between Troy and his Wife Rose. Many of the conflicts in the plot arise because of Troy's inability to be flexible to the choices that others are making and the changes going around him. This creates a lot of conflict between Troy and the other characters as well as conflict within Troy. It is also evident that Troy has a specific schema of the roles that men and women are supposed to play. This is seen with his interactions with his wife, Rose. The other aspect of gender that is presented in the text is the oppression and objectification of women. Troy's portrays women's roles mainly as "on the bench." Given Troy's narrow schema of how the world works, it is no surprise that he views women in a similar light. Rose is a caring, loving mother. Even though Rose has much to offer, since Troy's schema of women's role is so narrow, she is constantly being left out and abused. She has no say in big decisions such as Cory 'their son, playing football or not. Another consequence of Troy's predisposition is that he sees women as a sort of object that performs services. This is evident in the way that Troy interacts with Rose about his sexual flirting as well as the fact that Rose expresses many times that she feels that Troy is constantly "taking" and never "giving." Wilson's *Fences* views existing domination over females, no matter what social strata they belong.

This project hovers around the story of Linda and Rose focusing on their troubled marriage, their difficulties in bearing a child and their troubled relationship with family due to evils of patriarchy. In both plays, dramatist vocalize the pathetic and pensive voices of the female characters. Females have to endure unspeakable torture not only from outsiders but also from their own father, brother and husband.

Unspeakable violence and tortures are poured upon them. Dramatic depiction of the hellish living conditions of Linda and Rose has done a lot in taking the voices of the oppressed women to the western world. The dramatists show significant contribution to the campaign of bringing reform in the position of women in the society.

In the dramas both dramatists present an increasingly common concept of patriarchy in which a woman is constrained by tradition to be dependent on men, crippled to realize her own strength. They present their women struggling side by side because of patriarchy but at the end; have given them a gesture of defiance against patriarchy. Women have been portrayed as intelligent, questioning women who are not contented with the injustice against them. Therefore, women raise the question of their way of life consolidated by patriarchy, and look it not only as the site of their oppression at home and in society but also make it a field of battle to conquer their agency.

Both plays have been got several criticism and reviews since the date of their publication. Miller is an American dramatist who writes about the sufferings and subjugations of margins. His words are filled with plenty of social issues .As a dramatist he has carried distinct voice to the English speaking world. Wade Bradford makes following remarks regarding *Death of a Salesman* :

The main character in "*Death of a Salesman*," Willy Loman, is an open book. We learn very early on in the play that his professional life is a failure. He's the low-man on the totem pole, hence his last name, "Loman." (Very clever, Mr. Miller!) Within the first fifteen minutes of the play, the audience learns that Willy is no longer capable of being a traveling salesman. We also learn that he is suicidal. (87)

Willy Loman represents the common man. Arthur Miller felt that tragedy could be



found in the life of ordinary people. Tragedy works best when the main character's choices become whittled away, much like a masterful yet imperfect chess player who suddenly realizes he is out of moves.

Arthur Miller seems to be criticizing the American Dream, claiming that Corporate America drains the life out of people and casts them away when they are no further use. Another critic Alexis Sloski talks about realistic elements of the play. He says:

*Death of a Salesman* has never been a strictly realistic play. It describes the final hours of Willy, a traveling salesman flummoxed by the downward trajectory of his life and his livelihood. An early draft seemed to take place inside Willy's skull, and the final one skids back and forth in time as Willy tries to pinpoint just where and when and how he went wrong. (45)

Willy endures not because of the tricksiness of its timelines or the perpetual resonance of its themes. It lasts because of Willy and the queasy surfeit of admiration and contempt with which Miller portrays him. There's such ache in watching him fool himself and catch wise and fool himself again. Or there should be. But here the directorial flourishes, like the old-age masks, jam the flow of emotion. In *Death of a Salesman*, Miller tends to reflect upon the history of modern America. Modern America has come a long way since the last few decades. Yet it still has to face countless number of challenges and troubles. Miller is recognized as one of the best authors who can contemplation upon history that gives profound insight to those who want to alter the course of history of modern America and the condition of the modern female youth

*Fences* shows Rose's suffering to raise social debate about victimhood of females. This debate, which peaked around the time the drama was published. Rose's

struggles are so difficult because her abusive father trained her to see herself as a victim—someone with no power or freedom. Troy cast himself as an omnipotent fate in control of Rose’s destiny. It is inevitable that Rose embraces a sense of tragic inevitability. Cary Nelson observes, America often casts itself as “uniquely hated” (113). A key text in the debate about victimhood is Wilson's drama in 1989. Nelson makes the following remarks with respect to the distinct writing of Wilson:

Apart from feminist subject-matter and socio-cultural issues, the dramatist has managed to introduce fresh issue of gender and shifting currents of modernization of females. It offers a moral authority based on the victims’ innocence. “Innocence is power,” but, Wilson insists, it is a power that individuals seek at the cost of their own personal power .Other writers (perhaps less attuned to the reality of oppression than Wilson) bemoaned what they called the culture of victimization. (55)

Nelson focuses on the social condition of females. He observes the drama from modernist perspective. He analyzes the changing scenario of gender role in American context. The struggle of Rose in racially transit American society is struggle of innocence to search for identity for Nelson.

Rose’s passivity is connected with fatalism by Hodgson. Another critic Ween Lori analyzes this text from the perspective of individual trauma. Lori claims:

In the story, the protagonist has undergone unpleasant childhood because of being raped by master. She cannot build her self-confidence. He repeatedly raped Rose and her sister Rose when they were teenagers. . . this overwhelming experience of raped haunts Rose regularly, in which she responses to the event with hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena. (55)

Through the analysis directed in this thesis, the writer has verified that Rose, who also

cope with her trauma, is at last able to expel her trauma and be a whole person. Rose has nasty experience of being victimized both physically and psychologically in facial American society. She was raped by her master. She is molested by whites many times. She has unpleasant memory within her. Angela Carter makes the following remarks about the drama, *Fences* on its Historical reality and representation of Modern American society and realistic situation of the Females of nineteenth century in city as:

*Fences* personalizes the political and social changes in his country over the past few decades in this drama unlike most historical narratives from USA, which are pegged to political events? *Fences is a* representative of people's history, a bottom-up rather than top-down view of a country in flux. By moving back and forth in time and focusing on small events and everyday people, Wilson creates life into history by describing the effects of larger-than-life events on the average citizen. (12)

Thematically, Carter opines the political and social issues are merged and modified in the drama. The drama works as mirror. It reflects the racial gender and cultural issues. It is the history of the margin who struggles hard in racially dominated American society.

Howard Goldblatt is another critic of Wilson who analyzes Wilson's text on the basis of the sensual imageries for the depiction of modern society and its open expression. He is critically aware of Wilson's ability to have his own aura of writing drama and he criticizes about his limitations as a dramatist. He enumerates how Wilson has injected his own anecdotal experience to portrayal of society. Goldblatt argues thus:

Much of the energy of the drama is spent on long and sensuous descriptions of

the effect and impact of ultra modernity. There are too many episodes when the reader has to witness this or that character urinating, and to endure long descriptions of the urine. Whether Wilson has been successful in portraying the characters in their organic form or not, it is not clear. But one thing is undoubtedly clear that daily activities are described in a vivid and vigorous way. The real charm of Wilson's literary aura is that he is skillful in describing the common incidents of life. (27)

Goldblatt appreciates Wilson's selection of real characters from the society and his vivid depiction to carry out the theme of the drama as a representation of the contemporary society of America.

Although all these critics have raised different issues in this drama, the issue of the gender subalternity is not noticed by any of them. The notion of gender subaltern is, thus, fresh and innovative in the sense that it deserves serious scrutiny. In the drama, *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences* Linda, Rose, Alberta, Miss Forsythe and Letta are subjected to serious brutalizing and ruthless practices.

The unheard voices are the major concern of subaltern theory. Subaltern refers to those groups who are marginalized from the mainstream society, history, who are ignored by the colonialist and the bourgeoisie and they are merely subject to the ruling classes. This research deals with the gender subaltern showing how the dramatists raise voice of voiceless women in the society in the form of the resistance. The subaltern literature challenges the elitist writing and focuses upon the minority and the marginalized.

Gender subaltern deals with the matters of the women in the society who are suppressed and excluded by the males. It gives strength and courage to those women who are meek in front of males, who cannot raise their head in front of males

and who are marginalized, excluded and made voiceless. Gender subaltern gives a voice and search history by excavating the history of deprived women. The concept of gendered subaltern was developed by Gayatri Spivak. Her article, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" speaks clearly and directly to the difficulty of expressing subaltern identity. The concept of gender subaltern always speaks about the connotation of gender in the formation of societal unfairness. Judith Butler a feminist critic, who usually comments the male centric tradition in society, explains that "sexuality is culturally constructed within existing power relations," and that "the postulation of a normative sexuality that is 'before,' 'outside,' or 'beyond' power is a cultural impossibility" (Spivak 30). In contextualizing regulated gender roles and sexuality within a matrix of power relations, Butler takes reference of Spivak's criticism of gender subalternity to strengthen her claim that the limited possibilities for expression of gendered identity include the female subaltern's capacity for expression.

Similarly, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak claims that males subordinates females. Men are responsible for female's effacement. Their presence as agency destroys the female's position as she writes: "The agency was always male; the woman was always the victim. . . dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subject as female was successfully effected" (298). She charges male for female's social marginalization. According to her, it is the agency of males who oppress women. For males, females are always the followers. Males are responsible to destroy the female's gender subjectivity. They lack social status. They are auxiliaries of males. Their role is to support their male counterparts.

The subalterns, by definition, are groups who have had their voices silenced; they can speak through their actions as a way to protest against mainstream development and create their own visions for development. About the subaltern,

Ranjit Guha writes “Subaltern” is “a name for the general attribute of subordinate, whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any way” (27). Explaining the aim of Subaltern Studies, Guha writes, “The aim of subaltern studies is to promote the voice of margin” (480). In the dramas, the main female protagonists Linda and Rose sometimes have been presented as a voiceless females and sometimes as mute who cannot resist male's misbehaviours. Instead of speaking they perform as per the wish of male and family. They are moral, strong, confident, talent, courageous who goes takes different skillful trainings but society does not reckon their skills. It becomes clearer that though they do not speak against male's domination and rude behavior because no one is there to listen their voice.

*Death of a Salesman* explores how problematic patriarchal ideology is not only to the family, but also to personal identity and to women. Linda, plays a large role in that. With a husband and two sons, her role is centered around domestic stability. The family is about to make the last payment on their house, the boys have ideas on how they can help the family thrive, and her husband struggles with a constant paranoia that the reason for his perceived failure is that he is not well liked. He holds strongly to values taught by the American Dream, yet is still not coming out ahead. All of the men are attempting to achieve success through being popular, making money or having social dignity. Meanwhile, Linda is keeping everything afloat. She plays the role of mother, wife and caretaker, but she suffers a lot despite of her hard work.

Wilson reflects on the conditions of African women in America. *Fences* highlights miserable plight of Rose who is beset with plenty of hurdles and harassment despite of her courage and knowledge. Rose is a matriarch figure that holds the family together. The extremely maternal figure of Rose in *Fences* who

Wilson said came “in a large part from my mother,” (2) and the fact that a child is introduced to the play ensures maternity again constitutes as an important theme (2). Rose not only mothers Cory, but also plays the role of mother to her husband Troy. She takes over the finance even though she does not work outside the home. She does all the shopping, cooking, washing, monitors his money and scolds Troy like a mother. Her maternal role supersedes her marital role and pushes Troy away from her. This behavior from Rose may have pushed Troy to have an affair with Alberta. Yet, a submissive stereotypical woman Rose, would not have given any punishment when the husband brings home a baby he had with another woman for his wife to raise. Rose accepted the child because of her maternal nature and never blamed or had any resentment towards Raynell. This is a symbol of her subservient condition.

Both plays are well suited for a gender role analysis. Willy Loman is an aging salesman in the waning years of a mediocre career. However, to his wife, Linda and to his sons, Biff and Happy, Willy was the best salesman to ever work the New England territory. Building on blind faith in the American Dream of hard work begetting prosperity, Willy has lived his life on the premise that being well-liked is the key to success. A new and younger generations runs the work place in a different manner. For Willy, life is a daily struggle to earn enough to meet his expenses. It is not just the choice of characters that reinforces Willy’s position. Rose also struggles hard with moody and bullying nature of her husband to protect her family from economic, racial and political influences. But Troy does not reckon her efforts.

Subaltern Studies come as a social theory to speak against colonialism and bourgeois nationalism. Dipesh Chakravarty, in his seminal essay, “Invitation to a Dialogue” points out about subaltern consciousness as “the peasant consciousness”(72). According to Gayatri Spivak, subaltern women are more

oppressed than subaltern men. They do not have proper representation, and therefore, are not able to express their opinions or their stories. No one is aware of the daily struggles they face; subaltern women are lost in society: “I think it is important to acknowledge our complicity in the muting, in order precisely to be more effective in the long run” (227).

Loneliness, seclusion and alienation are the part and parcel of lives of Linda and Rose. Their husbands were often outside on business and work. Their sons and daughters are away from their houses for study and work. They are always alone and solitary. There are neither husbands nor children to understand their feelings. That is why both of characters are like caged birds. Linda expresses her lonely situation. She says that when her husband does not care her, she feels terribly lonely. The painful sense of loneliness weakens her immensely.

The social dogmas have not only made illusions of the illiterate and lower class women but also the educated and economically sound. They are to be called hegemonized if readers take the words of Antonio Gramsci (6). Gramsci comparatively familiarizes the history of the subaltern groups as being as complex as the history of the dominated class and their struggles. Even when they raised their voices against the complacent elite group, the subalterns were still subject to the activities of the elites. He opines that the history of subaltern class has less access to the means and social and cultural institutions by which they can construct their representation. David Ludden says that the meaning of subalternity in Subaltern Studies shifted as the framework of study increasingly stressed the clash of unequal cultures under colonialism and the dominance of colonial modernity over India's resistant, indigenous culture. Ludden claims:

Methodologically, recuperating subaltern subjectivity entails the analytical and



rhetorical liberation of Indian culture from its domination by the colonial archive and by modernity. Ingenious methods for uncovering fragments of subaltern nationality became the project's particular speciality. (12)

More specifically, Spivak argues that “the everyday lives of many third world women are so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by the vocabularies of western critical theory” (175). In this respect, the lived experiences of such women can be seen to present a crisis in the knowledge and understanding of western critical theory. For Spivak, this crisis in knowledge “highlights the ethical risks at stake when privileged intellectuals make political claims on behalf of oppressed groups” (176). These risks include the danger that the voices, lives and struggles of third world women will be silenced and contained within the technical vocabulary of western critical theory.

In *Fences*, there is one another female character namely Alberta who is oppressed, powerless, poor and servant by profession. She a mistress of Troy whose condition is also no different than Rose. Rose's position is oppressed by profession because she is a female who was controlled by male. It becomes by the telephone conversation where Alberta herself discloses that: "Mrs Hudson said you might be needing someone to take care of your son" (Wilson 166). Alberta is servant so that she is powerless and poor in front of Rose . She is compelled to work as a servant of her poorness. She is doubly victimized and for it male is responsible. She dies after delivering a child without marrying Troy.

Rose narrates how her sisters, nieces and other female relatives had to endure unspeakable torture not from outsiders but from their own fathers, brothers and husbands. Unspeakable violence and tortures are poured upon women. Though women in the west are enjoying huge and high degree of freedom, women are still

forced to live in a hell. By so doing, Wilson has made a significant contribution to the campaign of bringing reform in the position of women. Rose and several other girls are subjected to the terrifying living conditions. Rose is a girl who is deprived of a sense of recognition by her own father. Her father does not give her parental love. She tries her best to win a dose of fatherly love. But she is left in the lurch. Disillusioned and agitated at her vain endeavor to win fatherly love, she decides to take a different course of life.

Rose is a girl who marries a man named Troy whom she loves. Her husband does not care her and enjoy with another woman though superficially he pretends to love her. The following lines from *Fences* exemplify Rose's unhappy marital life:

I wanted a house that I could sing in. And that's what your daddy gave me. I didn't know to keep up his strength I had to give up little pieces of mine . . . It was my choice. It was my life and I didn't have to live it like that. But that's what life offered me in the way of being a woman and I took it. (98)

Rose's these lines in the play's final scene, is contradictorily a figure of repressed femininity and also a figure of great feminine strength. She admits in this scene that her life as a housewife and mother was forced upon her by Troy, yet she insists that at no point did she ever lose her ability to choose. The domestic life was what she chose and in this scene she owns that choice for herself. Some of the play's critics have noted that Rose is the least dimensional of Wilson's characters, but this scene shows that glimpses of Rose's complexity are able to come through. The condition of Rose represents the conditions of many women in the world. Women are treated as though they were the liabilities and chattels of males. Girls do not have any freedom to decide whom they can marry and whom they can reject.

Linda believes that if her sons become successful then Willy's fragile psyche

will heal itself. She expects her sons to manifest the corporate dreams of their father. It is not because she believes in Willy's version of the American Dream, but because she believes her sons (Biff in particular) are the only hope for Willy's sanity. She might have a point, by the way, because whenever Biff applies himself, Linda's husband cheers up. His dark thoughts evaporate. These are the brief moments when Linda is finally happy instead of worrisome. But these moments don't last long because Biff doesn't fit into the business world. Nor he trats Linda's advice in the positive degree. Within cocoon of comforts and luxury, women are living like caged birds.

Family, religion, system of governance and other so-called graces of life confine and enervate women of spirit and energy. Even the dominant social institutions like marriage, family and cultural centers have contributed to the subordination and subjugation of women. Within material comforts and luxury, women are doomed to languish emotionally and psychologically. Their position is no less than the position of a subaltern victim. Even the organizations with proper authority are biased in their dealing with women. Police are always ready for arbitrary investigation leading to punishments ever unheard in any society. The punishment would be arbitrary and inhumane at the hands of Secret Police. The following lines illustrate the point:

The fundamental duties of the police are: to be constantly mindful of the welfare of the people, to enforce laws that protect people and property, to defend the weak against oppression or intimidation, and to safeguard the constitutional rights to equality and justice of all men and women. A police officer is expected to obey the laws of the land, remain non-partisan and honest in thought and deed, and never to permit personal feelings, prejudices

and animosities to influence his decisions. But do policemen in normal societies enforce the law courteously and appropriately without fear or favors, malice or ill-will. (189)

The agents of government never employ force or violence and never accept gratuities. They remain true to the ethics of the police service. There is mostly a discretionary action by the police. Linda , Rose and Alberta are forced into a cat-and-mouse chase from family, society to States, finding out many males who effort to exploit them. They take their sons, husband and relatives as the supporters but in vain. Biff is at least one source of agony for Linda. Throughout Act One, Linda chastises her son for not being more attentive and understanding. "He's the dearest man in the world to me, and I won't have anyone making him feel blue." But why is he the dearest man in the world to her? Willy's job has steered him away from his family for weeks at a time. In addition, Willy's loneliness leads to at least one infidelity. It's unclear whether or not Linda suspects Willy's affair. But it is clear, from the audience's perspective, that Willy Loman is deeply flawed. Yet Linda romanticizes Willy's agony of an unfulfilled life (3).

David Ludden says that the meaning of subalternity in Subaltern Studies shifted as the framework of study increasingly stressed the clash of unequal cultures under colonialism and the dominance of colonial modernity over India's resistant, indigenous culture. Subalterns in India became fragments of a nation; their identity and consciousness reflected India's colonial subjugation. This approach has organized an impressive collection of enduring scholarship on colonial texts, vernacular resistance, bureaucracy, police, factories, communalism, ethnography, prisons, medicine, science, and related topics. It has also enabled Subaltern Studies to speak as India's subaltern voice:

Methodologically, recuperating subaltern subjectivity entails the analytical and rhetorical liberation of Indian culture from its domination by the colonial archive and by modernity. Ingenious methods for uncovering fragments of subaltern nationality became the project's particular specialty. Critical readings of colonial texts, oral histories, and ethnographic techniques are employed to reveal India's cultural roots in subaltern subjectivity. Subaltern Studies thus becomes a post-colonial critique of modern, European, and Enlightenment epistemologies. A new kind of cultural essence for India is found in iconic residues of hidden identities, expressions of difference, and misunderstood mentalities. (12)

Linda and Rose's characteristics are in keeping with traditional image of a passive and dependent woman. She provides comfort to Willy when he is feeling low, and as the center of Willy's domestic world, she cooks, cleans, does the laundry and is the mother to his children. She keeps the household finances straight, and in order to maintain stability, as a symbol of domestic life, she enters carrying a basket of laundry, several times she is shown mending or has mending clothes.

Especially symbolic is her association with Willy's suit jacket. She keeps his jacket looking neat and she helps him put into on when he is ready to leave the house. The jacket becomes a symbol for Willy's masculinity. He wears it as part of his armor in the business world. After a lifetime of standing behind Willy, his death leaves her in a state of confusion. She has lived a life according to her gender's dictates. She received no credit for her place within the family. Rose is the wife of irresponsible husband. The husband does not love her affectionately. She hankers after her husband's love and affection. But he is too niggardly of giving love to her. As a result, Rose is depressed and psychologically restless. She turns away from the

optimistic side of her life. The idea of marriage is alien to her. Her husband interferes into her personal decision. The following lines describe her suffering:

I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy. I got a life, too. I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me. Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? (146)

Rose's husband is a fierce and formidable man who has the worst and condescending attitude to women. He does not treat women as decent human beings who like to be treated as a human being. He takes women as puppets. He maintains that women are the objects to be possessed. They are the creatures to be conquered.

His view on femininity represents the collective view of men in regard to women. Rose tells about his nature.

I married your daddy and settled down to cooking his super and keeping clean sheets on the bed. When your daddy walked through the house he was so big he filled it up. That was my first mistake. Not to make him leave some room for me. For my part in the matter. But at that time I wanted that. I wanted a house that I could sing in. And that's what your daddy gave me. (33)

When Rose learns that after eighteen years her man had sustained a relationship with another woman, she was devastated. She hardened.

The softness in the love she had for Troy changed forever. His pain can be felt through her words as she tells Troy exactly how she feels:

I been standing with you! I been right here with you, Troy... I took all my

feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams... and I buried them inside of you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it... And it didn't take me no eighteen years to find out the soil was hard and rocky and it was never going to bloom (2). The pain she reflects is intense. Rose never doubts staying in the marriage; she would never abandon her world. Her family means everything to her. Although this is true, it does not stop her from letting Troy know how angry his infidelity has made her. (56)

Just as Rose, Linda lives according to a prescribed set of rules as a wife, Biff lives with his own set of rules for being a good son and a productive man. Biff is a failure in his father's eyes for living up to his full potential as a son and as a man. Happy, the second son of Willy was always following in Biff's shadow. Happy has a job, his own apartment and his own spending money, but he also has father's tendency to exaggerate his own self worth. Willy tried to pass on to his sons the legacy of the American Dream and how to find success. Biff has learned to define the characteristics of manhood from an internal perspective, not an external one. Happy firmly believes his father's vision of success.

Thus, it is fair to say that most of the female characters are living in hell like accursed condition. The patriarchal society takes great delight in the subjugation and exclusion of females. A lot of these women shows that they are no less than subaltern figures. Miller and Wilson truly present the dark life of women where the basic human rights to women are still a dream. Rather women are badly treated, molested and given harshest punishment through police investigation and law of the region. The law Peninsula is male oriented and anti women as the latter are forbidden to testify in criminal proceeding. It also elaborately expresses the different types of punishments that are in store for them.

Wilson also to a great extent talks authoritatively about African women in *Fences*. The cultural background or the African descent gives her a certain authority to speak about African women. In such kind of a fictional narrative, there can be exaggerations as well as misrepresentations of African women and fixing of African women into certain stereotypes. Rose's longing to start indulging in the outside world was an outcome of her boring and disappointed domestic or family life. *Fences* depicts this loneliness and disappointment of Rose. She under the patriarchal domination and her relationship with her husband is characterized by her husband's sexist point of views. Similar to the other African-American women, when she got married, she has to give up her free will and she is owned and fully controlled by her husband. Rose Maxson is Troy's second wife and mother of his second child, Cory.

Rose is an African-American housewife who has been married for eighteen years and loves her family very much. As the caretaker of the family and home, she showers her family with love and care, and protects them at the same time. This can be seen when one day Rose requests Troy to build fences in their small backyard: ". . . Go on, Troy! You supposed to be putting up this fence" (23). It is from Troy's friend, named Bono, the reason of making the fences can be revealed (31). In Bono's opinion although it is true that she had nothing, Rose sees the fences as something necessary: "Some people build fences to keep people out and other people build fences to keep people in. Rose wants to hold on to you all. She loves you" (31). Rose sees the fence as the symbol of protection, by building it she wants to restrict her family from leaving their house, or in the other word to keep her loved-ones close, and to keep-out the outsiders from interfering her family's affairs. Her main goal is to maintain her family's relationships from falling apart. In this case we can see that for her, family stands as an important thing and that is why Rose's dreams center around a hope for a



stable, loving family, something that she lacked as a child:

And you know I ain't never wanted no half nothing in my family. My whole family is half. Everybody got different fathers and mothers . . . my two sisters and my brother. Can't hardly tell who's who. Can't never sit down and talk about Papa and Mama. It's your papa and your mama and my papa and my mama . . . I ain't never wanted that for none of my children . . . (33)

While Rose is trying her best to protect her family, Troy is messing up by having affairs with several women as his way to gain freedom. This fact shocked Rose: "You should have stayed in my bed, Troy . . . You should have held me tight. You should have grabbed me and hold on" (33). She is questioning Troy's loyalty as her husband and his willingness to keep their marriage in a right track. However her voice is unheard by Troy.

Gayatri Spivak, indicating that the identity of a woman is not fixed rather it keeps on changing, depending on historical, cultural, geographical and local contexts. When Rose and Troy having an argument, Rose tells him about her dreams and needs which she often denies:

I gave eighteen years of my life to stand in the same spot with you. Don't you think I ever wanted other things? Don't you think I had dreams and hopes? What about my life? What about me. Don't you think it ever crossed my mind to want to know other men? That I wanted to lay up somewhere and forget about my responsibilities? That I wanted someone to make me laugh so I could feel good? You not the only one who's got wants and needs. (33)

Then her decision to sacrifice everything, even her own dreams as a woman, revealed. Troy is her only hope, he is the one who she can rely on and makes her dreams come true, ". . . I took all my feelings, my wants and needs, my dreams . . .

and I buried them inside you. I planted a seed and watched and prayed over it. I planted my self inside you and waited to bloom" (33). She then convinces him that after they got married, he is the most important thing for her. As a Troy's wife, she sees him as his savior. Thus she is willing to accept him inside out, to be his other half and loyal to him. Rose desires to have a devoted spouse, too " . . . I want to know if you're coming straight home after work" (4), which her husband cannot give. As a matter of fact, Troy always comes late, having mistress and soon will have an illegitimate son from a woman named Alberta (4). Rose notices that it has been going on for about six months.

Rose is only one of many ordinary black women living under their husbands. As a result of her traditional family background, Rose has always accepted the idea that it is meaningless to "kick against fate" (Wilson 22). "She appears to conform to the teachings of her mother, who instructs Rose that it is a woman's role to accept her suffering with indifference" (Hussain). So, she adopts all the roles which are imposed to her by the others. While being an black in America is already difficult, Rose's situation as an oppressed woman makes the situation worse and unavoidably makes her feel double alienated. In this respect, it is important to define the alienation of Rose firstly as an black and secondly as a woman in a white society. The immigrants, who feel alienated because of being seen as the other as a result of having colonial background, not being white or Christian, being exposed to prejudices and racial discrimination, and having socio-economic problems cannot adapt into the life as they do not feel belonging to the society they live in.. Although Rose is aware of her isolation and position, she accepts it as it is the destiny of black. That oppression continues for a long time. Her miserable condition is reflected as:

I seen hundreds of men come by on the road an' on the ranches, with their

bindles on their back an' that same damn thing in their heads . . . every damn one of 'em's got a little piece of land in his head. An' never a God damn one of 'em ever gets it. Just like heaven. Ever'body wants a little piece of lan'. I read plenty of books out here. Nobody never gets to heaven, and nobody gets no land. (154)

Rose and other black women, are similarly caught in the trap of identity crisis. The more they desire for recognition the more they are frustrated and they feel alienated . Rose's family , has faced the pain of being a member of black family and still they are the victim of the same racial practice.

Race, in particular, is the classification of the human beings into distinguishable groups that are based on physical characteristics (i.e. skin color, hair texture, eye shape). There is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along the lines of race. The socio-historical categories are employed to differentiate among groups. These categories reveal themselves to be imprecise if not completely "arbitrary" (Winant 172). Orientalism is founded on the belief in one's racial supremacy over other. It involves a generalized lack of knowledge or experience as it applies to negative determined. Therefore, it is inherently unchangeable. The concept of race was originally introduced in the field of natural history merely "as a convenient way to refer to groups of human beings in different geographic locations not with the intention of separating human beings into physiologically distinct groups" (Benjamin 27).

Cultural exoticism itself is not the criterion of inferiority or superiority, but the presumption of color is. People impose feelings on skin color and categorize people according to skin-color. To Rose the skin color of people matters a lot. It is not an enjoyable idea for her to cas Africans. Working among the white people, she has

many opportunities to experience exclusion. Cultural exoticism can be a barrier to further development in her career. He tells Troy about her thoughts of not getting success in her work because of racism, for which she has high expectations at first.

Obviously, Rose accepts all his ideas of racial discrimination. She tells:

My father says they are racist, . He thinks he will get the promotion, but it will take him longer than any white man. He says that if he painted his skin pink and white, then there would be no problem. It is what Troy has concluded about the phenomenon of the hybridization of culture from all his decades of working among the white people. (72)

There are two interpretations of Rose's opinion. The first is that the reality is just like what she has said. The white people are not willing to promote a non-white person because they are not of the same color. For the white people, blacks people are inferior. The saying "it will take him longer than any white man" may be just another way to say that it is impossible for the blacks people to get a promotion if there is any white man are doing business. There must have been a number of signs showing prejudice in his working environment as Rose reaches this conclusion of racial discrimination. However, the second interpretation is the opposite of the assumption about the working environment. They have shown no racial discrimination against Rose rather gender discrimination. She becomes doubly isolated one in family and another in racial society.

Wilson creates the one and only female character, named Rose. He uses her as his weapon to show how hard the life of an African American woman is. Her failure in gaining her dream to have a happy marriage, and her decision to focus her life more on her motherhood's side resembles the life of Wilson's own mother and even many other African-American mothers. His mother, who was failed to

have a happy marriage during her first marriage, as well as her accomplishment in shaping up her children (*The New York Times*, 2005), is his tools to lead his reader to a better understanding of the history of African American women. African-Americans' daily life are much measured by male standards and values. From the discussion, women are put in the injustice position by men and the patriarchal system, and this situation make them hardly have a chance to think about their dreams, moreover to reach those dreams.

Etymologically, subaltern means a person in lower rank or subordinate. It was first used to denote a commissioned officer below the rank of captain in British Military. The term subaltern is used in postcolonial theory. Others, such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak use it in a more specific sense. She argues, Subaltern is not just a classy word for oppressed, for other, for somebody who is not getting a piece of the pie. In postcolonial terms, everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism in subaltern- a space of difference" (271).

In this way Spivak differs the term from the postcolonial view as well as Marxist view that everything that is oppressed is Subaltern. It is simply unheard voice; if a person's voice is not heard, it is a subaltern situation. A person without lines of social mobility is a subaltern figure. Subalternity is not vague and limited like the Marxist or other political ideologies.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is one of the most influential figures in contemporary critical theory. Spivak is perhaps best known for her overtly political use of contemporary cultural and critical theories to challenge the legacy of colonialism on the way we read and think about literature and culture. Always cutting-edge, always provocative, Spivak champions "the voices and texts of those marginalized by western culture and takes on many of the dominant ideas of the

contemporary era” (56). Spivak talks about subaltern consciousness and the colonial subject as the basis of theorization. She perceives there as making “a theory of consciousness or culture rather than specially a theory of change” (4) points out about subaltern consciousness as “the peasant consciousness” (72).

Linda is economically subaltern in the society. Miller mentions another case of how women are reduced to the deplorable condition. Linda felt that bitter damage was done by the patriarchal society upon her. She does not even get chance to investigate murdering incident freely what she wants in the sky of freedom. Some male characters has been very terrified with Linda's investigation mission because she is going to uncover the mystery of Winthrop family murder case therefore they threatens her very harshly to stop her investigation mission. They even do not want to see Linda in public place. If they see they treat her very rudely. However she ties her hope. She does not stop to collect rays of hope following lines exemplify her strength:

Before she finished building a canoe, a ship arrived at the island. When she saw that it was not a ship, she was eager to contact the people on it. When she went to Coral Cove to meet it, the seas were rough. One of the passengers came ashore and seemed to call to her, but, did not see her. Neither did he see her when she went into the ocean after him. The ship left and she remained on the island. (54)

Linda eventually comes to Iowa to search a doctor for her treatment , where meets unnamed military official. He promises with Linda to help her, but she must first get him out of Iowa, as someone is attempting to kill him. Linda accepts, and he leads her to closed town . After disguising Linda as a prostitute and going in with her, he efforts to abuse her. The following lines throw light on this sort of extreme subordination of women, "He shrugged. 'I'm sorry. Without an appointment –Linda

held on to her temper. 'I have an appointment.' He looked at her skeptically. ? He picked up a telephone and spoke into it for a few moments. He turned to Ginny. 'Third floor, ' he said reluctantly. 'Someone will meet you" (293).

The above cited extract shows that women do have subaltern position in the society .It is really deplorable that men do not treat their wives as equal partners. The idea of reciprocity in man-woman relation is alien to aggressive and belligerent males .This kind of extreme subordination and subjugation of women prove that the plight women is that of subaltern people.

Academic work on subaltern themes quickly detached subalternity from its various inventors. Migrations of reading dispersed research on subaltern themes connected by circulating terminologies, arguments, and texts. Outside forces molded the project itself, and its own institutional boundaries have always been permeable. Its internal coherence has been less intellectual than personal and more formal than substantive. Intellectual cohesiveness has never been a project priority, and it has appeared primarily in solidarity against critics. Outsiders have built outer walls for Subaltern Studies and landscaped its environment to dramatize its distinctiveness. As Eric Stokes claims “Respondents, interlocutors, interpreters and translators have worked with Subaltern Studies material. They redefined it by writing about it differently. Insiders have become outsiders” (71). Outsiders have become insiders. Outsiders doing independent work on subaltern themes have embraced Subaltern Studies as a kindred project.

Thus, major thrust of this research is to show how the patriarchy has reduced women to the position of subaltern beings. In *Death of a Salesman* and *Fences*, female characters like Linda and Rose are oppressed and dehumanized in a shocking way. So, they feel increasingly alienated and lonely. The sense of loneliness trouble

them. Due to the self-centrism and arrogance of males, many females are suffering from loneliness and domestic isolation. Though they have no scarcity of material comforts and luxury, they are seriously and psychologically handicapped. Behind the outer gorgeous lives of these women lies agony, isolation, mistreatment, dehumanization, confinement. These women sometimes protest but their protests seldom produce effect. Majority of women are forced to remain in the lower condition. In the era of modernization, feminism and human rights, women are still living confined and subjugated lives. They hardly have access to owning material assets. They themselves assume that they are their men's objects of possession.

In the mainstream society, they are no less than subaltern figures. Though the position of women is still deplorably miserable, changes and reforms have been occurring gradually. Certain degree of change is felt in the gender relation and social exposure of women. But the dramatists present women as though they are so oppressed, exploited and excluded that they have no power to resist.

Most of the males in the plays appear to be impulsive, aggressive and irrational. Miller portrays the society as though it is an exotic and inscrutable land which will hardly be penetrated by the light of modernism, feminism, human rights and other liberal thoughts. Though women in the west are enjoying high degree of freedom, women in patriarchal society are still coerced into living in a hell. Dramatists depiction of the hellish living conditions of women has done a lot in taking the voices of the oppressed women to the western world. Male characters in *Death of a Salesman* are represented as aggressive. They are dictatorial and callous towards females. The unspoken voice of females is vocalized by the dramatists.



## Works Cited

- Ali, Monica. *Hub of Excluded Subalterns*. Rutledge, 2004.
- Alter, Robert. *Pathos in Gender Narrative*. HarperCollins, 2005.
- Benjamin, Eric M. *Racial Theory and Practice*. Penguin, 2001.
- Cappo, Emily. *Feminist Upsurge: A Review*. HarperCollins, 2008.
- Gramsci, Antonio. *Hegemony and Forbidden Voice*. Penguin, 2004.
- Guha, Ranjit. *Exploration of Subaltern Movement*. Cannon Doyle Publication, 2003.
- Henderson, Martin. *Subordination and Silence*. Chicago University Press, 2008.
- Ludden, David. *Elements of Modernity: A Comparative Study*. Macmillan, 1996.
- Mahmood, Saba. *Discourse on the Effects of Islamism*. Penguin, 2001.
- Mark, Anthony. *Normalizing and Negotiating Patriarchy*. Penguin, 2006.
- Mehta, Vijay. *Formalistic Aesthetics in Wilson's Works*. Norton, 2006.
- Miller, Arthur. *Death of a Salesman*. Willy Loman's House, 1949.
- Nelson, Cary. *Modernist Glimpse in Wilson's Fiction*. Cannon Gate, 2009.
- Smith, Andrew. *Debate and Entropy*. Harper Collins, 2008.
- Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Subaltern Studies: A Reflection*. Vintage Books, 2004.
- Stokes, Eric. *Reflection on Subaltern Problem*. Cannon Gate, 2007.
- Ticktin, Miriam. *Fiction Studies: Pornography of the Oppressed*. Ginn, 1999.
- Wilson, August. *Fences*. Bantam Books, 2002.
- Wood, Marcus. *Structure and Motif in Wilson's Plays*. Macmillan, 2005.