

Dedications

I dedicate this work to

My beloved parents, sisters and brothers and all our friends

My dear husbands and children

And to you passionate readers

With all my love

Fatima

This work would be dedicated to

My dear father and mother

My lovely sisters who supported me all along

My beloved husband

With all my love

Thihalli

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Abstract

The present research is meant to make a feminist reading of Nawel El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995). Our main concern in this comparative study is to highlight the common struggles of the female characters for emancipation and break away from patriarchy and gender constraints. In order to reach our aim, we have opted for Judith Butler's theory put forward in her book entitled *Gender trouble: Feminism and Subversion of identity* (1999). We have also supplied our theoretical framework by Frantz Fanon's chapter of "the Algerian Family" as developed in *A dying Colonialism* (1965) in order to develop more our issue, and to demonstrate the subordinate position that women occupy in society. The work comprises a discussion of two important issues; the first part includes the representation of women as victim of patriarchy and their objectification in both aforementioned works, while the second one discusses the alternative ways of resistance and the subversion of identity. As far as our findings, we may say that in both works, the two respective authors have drawn pictures of two worlds which are predominant by gender stereotypes, patriarchy and traditional world order. Yet as it is portrayed in both works, the two protagonists succeeded to overwhelm these constraints either by resistance or by subversion.

Key words: Gender, patriarchy, performativity, subversion.

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General Introduction

The following research paper is a comparative study between the Egyptian women's writing and that of the Algerian women's writing written in French. It particularly aims at comparing Nawel El Saadawi's **The Hidden Face of Eve** (1980) and Malika Mokedem's **Des rêves et des assassins** (1995). As concerns both works, and before fully embarking in this comparative study, we believe that a few historical and literary background is needed in order to understand the objectives of the research.

It has to be noted that throughout the history of humanity, women have been traditionally dominated both at the domestic and public spheres because of the patriarchal norms, as they have been subjected to all types of discrimination. This also had been consolidated by the social, cultural and religious powers. Having said this, women then were good only as housewives, as taking care of their children, husbands and assuming domestic duties. Consequently, some of them have been sold as child brides, sex slaves, buried as little infants and as objects of sexual pleasure.

As far as literature is concerned, women's writing is interesting for many reasons. First, because of being a new field of study, if compared to men's literature, and secondly because of the inferior position women have held in male dominated societies. For these reasons and others, literature was then never absent from women's history for emancipation. Moreover, Feminine voices emerged in Egypt and Algeria to oppose women's silence and exclusion from public spheres. Furthermore, female writers such as Nawel El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem lamented about their conditions in front of their predominantly male society. El Saadawi's masterpiece which shall be compared with Mokeddem's one is **The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World** (1980). The latter was published in a period known in the Egyptian history as "Sadat Era" which refers to the presidency of Anwar

Sadat. The latter's era was deeply marked by the rise of religious fundamentalism which brought a significant change in the Egyptian social, cultural, and political environment. While the fundamentalists opposed Anwar Sadat, who defended the rights and the emancipation of women.

On the other hand, the other kind of literature we are concerned within this comparative study, is the Algerian one. In fact, women's literature dates back to the 1950's, when Algerian women writers such as Assia Djebar and Maïssa Bey and many other figures who expressed what was like living under male authority. It was then, during the "Dark Decade" in 1990's, that a new literature was born called "*La littérature d'Urgence*." This literature is more concerned with showing the lives of Algerian women who were subjugated not only to religious fundamentalism, but also to male repression and violence. It was under such circumstances that many Algerian female writers, such as Mayssa Bey, Ahlem Mustaghanemi to cite but a few, turned on writing under "*La littérature d'Urgence*". Malika Mokeddem is also a leading figure who of this kind of literature mainly through her pioneering novel **Des rêves et des assassins** (1995).

However, if we have chosen to put together these two works, it is because we believe that it deal and reveal a similar chapter about Egyptian and the Algerian history, which is more concerned with women's position or status in two dark periods. The two works deal with the same themes and portray the position of women in society and the various abuses they endured due to the inequality of social status between men and women. In fact, El Saadawi and Mokeddem use mainly the same methods in their writing to denounce all the social injustices; thus, it seems that the two authors' preoccupations are nearly the same that is women's position in Arabic and Islamic societies in general.

Review of the Literature

Like many other feminist writers, Nawal El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem also raised their voices in protest against the injustices and violence facing women in the Arab world. They also developed an important portrait of the social and political climate that is affecting the lives of the Egyptian and Algerian women both at home and in exile. While handling Nawal El Saadawi's **the Hidden Face of Eve** (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's novel **Des rêves et des assassins** (1995), we have noticed that both authors and works have received a wide range of studies and criticism.

To begin with, Tag-El-Din Donya is a representative critic whom in her thesis entitled **Resisting patriarchy through literature: The feminist writings of Nawal El Saadawi and Hanan Al-Shaykh** (2009), sees El Saadawi's writing as an avenue for resistance to male domination. In other words, as Nawal El Saadawi writes: "the Egyptian woman is the slave of men, the slave of society, religion and the politico-financial system that crushes us all"¹. El Saadawi adds: "writing has become a weapon to fight the system, which derives its authority from the autocratic power exercised by the head of state, and that of the father or husband in the family"². In this regard, Donya Tag-El-Din writes:

Men were sentenced to till the earth, women were sentenced to fully experience the Pain of child birth, and both were cast out of the Garden of Eden. While the Islamic scenario of the Genesis story has both Adam and Eve equally deciding to eat of the apple, thereby relieving Eve of sole responsibility for the fall. Islam still constructs women in much the same ways as Christianity and Judaism before it.³

Throughout the above quote, the critic stresses the fact that women suffered from marginalization because of the stereotyping of female inferiority. As the quote shows, the fall of Adam is interpreted in a way that it was Eve's responsibility. In other words, humanity blames the Eve as she was the source of sufferings and pain since they were cast out of the garden of Eden.

Moreover, Muhammad Youssef Suwaed's *The Exploitation of Women and Social Change in the Writing of Nawal El-Saadawi* (2017) focuses on the oppression and exploitation of the Arabic women, particularly the stereotyped rules imposed on the Egyptian women relying on religion, tradition and the regime through gender discrimination, social inferiority, sexual oppression, and rape. In this context, the critic asserts that: "it is important to point out that El Saadawi, more than many intellectuals interested in various aspects of social injustice, emphasizes physical and emotional needs, alongside the obvious discrimination in education and employment"⁴.

In other words, Muhammad Youssef Suwaed considers El Saadawi's work not only as a manifestation of women's position in society, but also makes a reading of the novel on the various ways through which women in the Egyptian society were deprived from other basic rights such as the right for education and employment, because of the narrow-minded attitudes of the patriarchal Egyptian society. He also sees the work as an attempt to break the taboos of her society by using her writing as a mighty arm to denounce the various types of discrimination, particularly women's discrimination, exploitation of the lower classes by the upper echelon and religious control in the public and the political arena.

Like her Egyptian counterpart, the Algerian novelist Malika Mokeddem and her novel *Des rêves et des assassins* have been a subject of a wide range of criticism and a target of many studies. In her piece of criticism, *Female Identity in Algerian Writing: Malika Mokeddem's Des rêves et des assassins* (2014), Dr. Paschal Kyiiripuo Kyoore portrays the feminist emancipation in post-colonial Algeria and states that Malika Mokeddem's works are influenced by the historical, religious and political complexities the country had experienced. In other words, she draws a vivid portrait of the Algerian women's suffering in a patriarchal structure by using the protagonist Kenza as a rebellious female who challenges the identity inflicted upon her, as the following quote shows:

Kenza is the character that embodies the militancy in Mokeddem's critique of the factors that militate against women's emancipation in Maghrebian society. Through her character, Mokeddem has crafted a story about how women's dreams are shattered by assassins the assassins are not just religious fundamentalists who terrorize everyone and especially women. They constitute all the individuals and institutions that have declared a war on the female identity, depriving women of their religious, economic, social, and political rights.^{5 p 11}

From the above citation, we understand that the Algerian woman is a victim of harsh and traditional cultural practices contribute to her sufferings. Thus, Mokeddem among others felt the need to denounce the different forms of social injustices which ignored women's role within their society.

Another literary criticism about Malika Mokeddem's work and life, is a thesis entitled *Representation of the revolt to the feminine of des rêves et des assassins of Malika Mokeddem(2014)* by Demane Debbih Ramila, the work tackles the issues of the relationship of women to the society and the representation of this report in the literature. Mokeddem therefore restructures reality, not only with regard to his life but also that of all the women who have followed a similar path. In this regard, the author asserts:

The intimate relationship between literature and society has been our common thread. Indeed, Malika Mokeddem depicts, with a direct style and strong words, the social reality of the time. It focuses on the conditions of women during this dark period of the history of Algeria and thus denounces all the injustices practiced against them.^{6p 155}

From the above quotation, we have noticed that the ninety years have seen the emergence of a new generation of French-speaking North African female writers who have drawn attention to the plight of women in a society marked by the weight of traditions and religious practices. Like many Algerian writers, Malika Mokeddem emphasizes the necessity of writing to make people aware about women's severe conditions in life.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

From the above review of the literature and many other criticisms that we cannot mention here, it can be said that El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* and Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* have received a large bulk of criticism and a spate of studies. However, and to our best knowledge, no study has so far conducted or ventured to put the two works together and make a comparative study. Therefore, and in order to carry our research, our aim is first to attempt and read El Saadawi's work in the paths of Mokeddem's novel, by shedding light on the common concerns of both works, particularly the way the two authors depict their protagonists (major characters). For instance, examining the various ways and oppressions practiced either by the fundamentalists in both countries, who use religious principles as a way of domination and violence to crush women's voices, or by the patriarchal order established by the male counterparts, through which "imposed identity" is the main barrier to women's freedom.

It has to be observed that the two authors, Nawal El Saadawi, and Malika Mokeddem are acclaimed feminist writers respectively in Egypt and Algeria. In fact, both writers have raised the issue of women's oppression, religious fundamentalism, and other forms of injustices endured by women in a hostile environment characterized by culminating and turning socio-political events in the history of their respective countries. The historical context of Nawel El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem has a deep impact on their writings which the latter allowed them to speak for themselves, and describe what was like living in an oppressed social environment.

Saying all of the above, our main concerns then in this dissertation is to shed light to the fact that although the two novels were written in different geographical locations, the two authors have produced literary works with many literary merits, which is to denounce the

severe conditions imposed on women by patriarchal societies as well as to liberate women from a gendered identities assigned to them by the repressive patriarchal structure. Therefore, to achieve our aim, it is relevant to analyze the influence of El Saadawi and Mokeddem personal experience on their writings and the different affinities they reveal.

In order to reach our goal, we will make use of Judith Butler's theory of Feminism as documented or explained in her famous book entitled *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). We will also supply our theoretical framework with other complementary theories as that of Frantz Fanon whenever needed.

End notes:

¹ 'L'égypte égyptienne de l'émancipation de toutes les femmes arabes, <<https://www.thePhoenixdaily.net/les-affaires-internationales/Igrie-egyptienne-de-l'émancipation-de-toutes-les-femmes-arabes-nawalelsaadawi>.(Accessed on 10 April 2021).

²Ibid.

³Donya Tag-El-Din, 'Resisting patriarchy through literature: The feminist writings of Nawal El Saadawi and Hanan Al-Shaykh'(PhD thesis, Windsor University, 2009), 55.

⁴Muhammad Youssef Suwaed, 'The Exploitation of Women and Social Change in the Writing of Nawal El-Saadawi'(Bridgewater: State University), 233.

⁵Pascal Kyiiripuo Kyore, 'Female Identity in Algerian Writing: Malika Mokeddem's Des rêves et des assassins' (Gustavus Adolphus College: St. Peter, Minnesota, 2014) ,11.

⁶Ramila Demmane Debbih, 'Representation of the revolt to the feminine of des rêves et des assassins of Malika Mokeddem'(PhD thesis, Mentouri University, 2014), 153.

Methods and Materials:

1-Methods:

a- Judith Butler's Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity:

This section of our memoire deals with the methodological as well as the theoretical approach that we shall use throughout our research work. In order to achieve our purpose, which consists on studying and exploring deeply the feminist perspectives in Nawal El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980), and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995) we will make use of Judith Butler's theory of "Gendre Performativity" and "Subversion" as suggested in her book *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999) which is regarded as one of the most important feminist writings dealing with women's experiences throughout history. Our choice of the above mentioned theory lies in the fact that the two selected novels deal with the status of Muslim and Arab women as the subject of feminism in terms of gender issues and women's resistance to counter patriarchal stereotypes of their respective societies.

Feminism is a set of social, political, cultural movement and ideas which aim at defining and establishing gender equality in the social and personal life as well as politics and economy. This movement originated mainly in response to Western norms that limited women's rights, but later its ideas spread out all over the world by a variety of organizations dedicated to advancing women's right and interest. Among them, we may cite; the UN Women, National Organization for women, The Women's Refugee Commission, and others.

Feminism has been theorized by many theorists. One of its basic theories is the theory of "Gender Performativity", suggested by Judith Butler. The latter is an American scholar, feminist and gender theorist whose works have influenced political philosophy, feminism and even today's queer theory. Accordingly, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* is seen as a provocative and a controversial work of the general understanding of

“Gender”, “Sexuality” and “Identity”, which are according to her views a constructive phenomenon by particular social ideologies.

In her work, Judith Butler developed the concept of “Gender Performativity” and explains that the fact of being born male or female does not determine one’s behavior, but instead people learn to behave in particular ways to fit themselves to society to which they belong. Gender, according to her, is Performative, which implies acting and performing activities that are already attributed by the dominant conventions of gender. In this light, Butler states that: “the act that one does, the act that one performs is, in a sense, an act that has been going on before one arrived on the scene”.⁸ “Gender performance” is then the idea that gender is something inscribed in daily practices, learned and performed according to cultural norms of a society. In this sense, Butler writes in her Preface the following: “Performativity” is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration”.⁹ That is to say, people act as if being male or female as an internal reality of ourselves, but actually it’s a phenomenon that has been produced and reproduced over the time.

Accordingly, Butler’s theory on “Gender Performativity” is based on the cultural belief that sex is biological and gender is socially constructed, and that gender and sexuality are used to reinforce stereotypes that defines our behavior. The following quote shows cases of the above idea:

Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is Subjects of neither the causal result of sex nor as seemingly fixed as sex. The unity of the subject is thus already potentially contested by the distinction that permits of gender as a multiple interpretation of sex¹⁰.

In the above citation, Butler refers to two distinctive forms of gender. The first is biological, it refers to “sex” and the other one is culturally constructed; “gender”.

As a reaction to the theoretical approach cited above, Butler also developed the concept of “subversion” as a way to resist the dominant stereotypes on women. The latter refers to the way of destroying the norms, rules, and behaviors fixed for male and female by subversive actions and practices. Indeed, Butler uses the term "subversion" to free women from the roles and constraints that society either has assigned to them or imposed, as well as to achieve their freedom. Butler in her preface, made a reference to what explained above by the following: “so, subversive performances always run the risk of becoming deadening cliches through their repetition and, most importantly, through their repetition within commodity culture where “subversion” carries market value”¹¹. She adds: “subvert gender in the way that I say, and life will be good”¹². To illustrate this idea, we may focus on Butler’s own personal experience with Lesbianism. As an example, Butler finds her way to break and subvert the dominant thinking about the intimate relationships which are according to the world’s views made between the opposite sexes by being a Lesbian person.

b- Frantz Fanon: *A Dying Colonialism* (1965):

Another theoretical approach to which we rely to in addition to that of Judith Butler is Frantz Fanon’s categorization of **The Algerian Family**, a chapter of his book *A Dying Colonialism* (1965). In fact, Fanon describes how the Algerian revolution caused significant changes inside the Algerian family, notably the status of women, whose job is no longer restricted to domesticity, but also to join the Algerian nationalists and freedom fighters and fight for their country’s independence. However, and according to Fanon, the Algerian women experienced the universal patriarchy under harsh restrictions. As he writes:

The girl has no opportunity, all things considered, to develop her personality or to take any initiative. She takes her place in the vast network of domestic traditions of Algerian society. The woman's life in the home, made up of centuries-old customs, allows no innovation. Illiteracy, poverty, the status of an oppressed people, maintains and strengthens the specific features of the colonized universe, to the point of changing their entire nature¹³.

According to the above quotation and according to the Algerian norms, the home walls are the main landscape women are imposed to enjoy in an underdeveloped society such as Algeria because of the traditional customs, the economic and political situation that harshly oppressed women from enjoying other opportunities in life.

Fanon adds that Algeria experienced the oppression and domination of the colonial forces which urged the population to revolt including women, thus they become a central figure in the Revolution. In this way, Fanon in the paths of Butler argues that women are an integral part of any given society, as they participate along with their male counterpart in the building up of their nation, as he asserts in the quote:

The unveiled Algerian woman, who assumed an increasingly important place in revolutionary action, developed her personality, discovered the exalting realm of responsibility, The freedom of the Algerian people from then on became identified with woman's liberation, with her entry into history. This woman who, in the avenues of Algiers or of Constantine, would carry the grenades or the submachine-gun chargers, this woman who tomorrow would be outraged, violated, tortured, could not put herself back into her former state of mind and relive her behavior of the past; this woman who was writing the heroic pages of Algerian history was, in so doing, bursting the bounds of the narrow world in which she had lived without responsibility, and was at the same time participating in the destruction of colonialism and in the birth of a new woman.¹⁴

Women reacted to the cultural and masculine system by resisting colonial domination and become involved in the independence of their country, a new step for a new image of the woman that is an independent woman.

Correspondingly, in order to draw parallels between the most current social issues and cultural backgrounds of the black period of Algeria and that of Egypt, and for our best

understanding of the attitudes and sensibilities of the ideological, religious, and political systems, we intend to borrow the most relevant concepts of the above mentioned theories of gender and identity troubles and that of the Algerian Family, which explore our main concerns of gender complexities as well as the homogenous practices against the marginalized women. In other words, Butler's and Fanon's main occupation was to draw attention on women as the subject of complicatedness and even a provocative term. As Butler asserts: "women, even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety".¹⁵ Fanon adds: "the woman in an underdeveloped society, and particularly in Algeria, is always a minor, and the man-brother, uncle or husband-represents first of all a guardian"¹⁶

2- Materials

As it has been already mentioned, our research is made on Nawal El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995). Indeed, before going into details in the analysis of the works, we believe that it is necessary to provide the reader with some biographical elements of the two authors and short synopses of the novels.

a- Life and Times of Nawal El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem

1- Nawal El Saadawi

Nawal El Saadawi is one of the most outstanding and contentious personalities in the Egyptian literature. She was born in Cairo in 1931, and she is well-known for her contentious feminist writings, which were once prohibited in Egypt due to the country's political situation and instability at that time. She became known as the first to write openly about female

sexuality. Nawal El Saadawi excelled in writing and reading, which allowed her to join Cairo's University, in the Faculty of Medicine. She wrote many novels, nonfiction studies of women and men, short stories, essays, and plays, all of which have been translated into at least 10 languages. Among her works, we may cite: *Women at Point Zero* (1975), *God Dies by the Nile* (1985), *The Daughter of Isis* (1999), *The Diary of a Child Called Souad* (2015). Her career was marked by a shift from writing literature to activism, then living through serious troubles, including incarceration under Sadat's government as well as her dismissal from her position as director of Health Education and exile to the United States. She died on March 21, 2021, in Cairo, Egypt. At the age of eighty-nine.

2-Malika Mokeddem

Malika Mokeddem emerged as a prominent writer during the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Mokeddem then is an Algerian writer, born on October 5th 1949 in Kenadsa (Bechar), Algeria. She began her medical studies in Oran and completed them in Paris, where she specialized in Nephrology. She later settled in Montpellier in 1979, where she worked as a doctor until 1985, when she decided to devote herself to literature.

Mokeddem has written a number of novels. Among them we may cite: *Les hommes qui marchent* (1990), *Le Siècle des Sauterelles* (1992), *L'interdite*, (1994), *La Nuit de la Lézarde* (1998), *La Desirante* (2011). Mokeddem began writing urgently after the assassination of Tahar Djaout, an Algerian journalist, poet, and fiction writer who was opposed to Islamist fanaticism, in 1993, in order to oppose the horrors, violence, and the emergence of fundamentalism in Algeria, which advocates woman to a return to the medieval structure that recognizes the maintenance of women in a state of servitude. In fact, Mokeddem uses her novels as an opportunity to critique the policies and prejudices of her homeland, and defies social and literary conventions by addressing taboo subjects. The author denounces the

feminine predicament and presents women in a wide range of contexts, as well as her writings express a sense of longing and homesickness for the life she left behind.

From the above short biographical notes about the life and times of El Saadawi and Mokeddem, we can say that both authors have nearly the same path, as both of them address taboo subjects. They express clearly their perspective on the female situation in these works. They also nearly devoted their lives to feminist activism and fought for women's emancipation and gender equality in a hostile socio-economic, political and religious environment which both Egypt and Algeria had experienced respectively.

B- Synopsis of *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*

Nawal el Saadawi's most renowned work, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, was published in 1980. It is divided into four main chapters and twenty sub-chapters, which discusses mainly the suffering of the Arab and Muslim women under the patriarchal and religious structures. In the novel El Saadawi recounts her personal experiences within her patriarchal family and environment, as well as those of her female patients on whom she performs a study on their traumatic childhood experiences. sexual violence, circumcision, forced and arranged marriages and divorce, prostitution and Islamic fundamentalism are major themes of the work. The publication of her book, in which she studied the role of religion in maintaining the slavery of women in the Arab world, introduced English to the work of this famous writer. This work is a general study of Arab society, especially Egyptian society, and investigated the historical role of Arab women in religion and literature. The conclusion is that polygamy, the veil, and legal inequality such injustices are incompatible with the essence of Islam and basic human rights.

d. Synopsis of *Des rêves et des assassins*:

Des rêves et des assassins is one of the greatest masterpieces of the Algerian writer Malika Mokeddem. It is a ten chapter's novel released in 1995 in the eve of the Algerian Civil War. *Des rêves et des assassins* is an auto fiction that tells the story of a young girl whose name is kenza. kenza Meslem is born in Montpellier in the same year of Algeria's independence, in 1962. She and her mother come back to Algeria with a hope of evolution and changes brought by independence at the level of the Algerian society. Sadly, kenza's mother found herself repudiated then left again the country, but without her daughter. As a result kenza grew up in a hostile environment, she becomes more interested and determined in her scholarship in order to free herself from the oppressive conditions where she lives. As a student, she met Yacef, her lover with whom she lives a beautiful love story. However, after the submission of the latter to the traditional order of conventional marriage and the threats she received from the fundamentalists, she was forced to move to France following in the footsteps of her mother who had fled to Montpellier long before her, and dies by a self-induced abortion.

After her painful discovery about her mother's truth, Kenza flees once again to Canada, probably because she wants to lose her memory. In short, *Des rêves et des assassins* paints a vivid picture of the social and political atmosphere that affects Algerians lives both at home and abroad.

Endnotes

⁸Judith Butler, performativity and dramaturgy<
<http://performancephilosophy.ning.com/profiles/blogs/judith-butler-performativity-and-dramaturgy>> (Accessed on 25 August 2021).

⁹Judith Butler, Preface to *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, by Judith Butler (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), xv.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹*Ibid.*, xxi.

¹²*Ibid.*, xxi.

¹³Frantz Fanon, 'The Algerian Family', in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans, Monthly Review Press (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 105- 106.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 107-108.

¹⁵Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.

¹⁶Fanon, 'The Algerian Family', 106.

Results

This paper constitutes a feminist reading of Nawel el Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995). Affected by their backgrounds, the two authors attempt to prove and denounce the oppression, the poor and bad living conditions of women in such patriarchal society; Egyptian and Algerian society, and call on women to resist the negative stereotypes of female inferiority.

In this paper, we have explored the issue of gender in African societies taking Nawel El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem as case studies. The use of Judith Butler's theory which is part of the Third-wave feminism that challenges definitions of gender and promotes sexuality as female empowerment, shows how the two authors helped women restore their image by providing narrative voices for them. From our reading of the above mentioned works, we deduced that El Saadawi's work and that of Mokeddem share a number of affinities that make our study a comparative one. In fact, although the different geographical locations to which they belong, they dedicated themselves to the same objectives; the feminist one, as they both suffered from oppression and patriarchy.

In the first chapter, we have seen the female subjugation in the African patriarchal societies. We have explored the Egyptian and Algerian different traditions practices towards the feminine gender as well as the relationship between parents and their daughters. We have found that the state of dominance correspond to Judith Butler's notion that women's gender is cultural rather than natural. Hence, to combat stereotypical depictions of women as valueless, servants or slaves, and weak creatures, both authors created rebellious female characters,

Nawel and Kenza, who reject the traditional female roles as well as break and defy the norms, values, and principles established by the male-dominated society.

In the second chapter, we have shown that El Saadawi's and Mokeddem's female protagonists resist and subvert the social and even political domination. In fact, we have deduced that El Saadawi's and Mokeddem's main character may represent Judith Butler's concept of subversion, since they challenge the boundaries imposed by Egyptian and Algerian society.

As an overall, this comparative study investigated the situation of women who have suffered severe and unbalanced masculinization, but are striving for more independence. Therefore, the female protagonist's education is a beacon of hope for ending gender inequality and social domination over women.

Discussion:

In this part of our dissertation, we will discuss the status of women as highlighted in Nawel El Saadawi's *THE Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995). Our discussion comprises two main chapters. In the first chapter we will investigate the patriarchal power and the image of women as reflected in both books by shedding light on the oppressive conditions which were imposed on them in Egypt and Algeria respectively. The second chapter, it will be devoted to the resistance strain resulted from the subversion of gender, that leads to the building up of a female subjective identity.

Chapter One: The Image of Women as Reflected in The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World and Des rêves et des assassins and Malika Mokeddem's Des rêves et des assassins

A- Family and Patriarchy:

The patriarchal system, which favors male dominance over female one in general, represents the Egyptian and Algerian family values, as it does in all undeveloped societies. In doing so, we will examine first the concept of patriarchy in order to set the topic of the first chapter.

Patriarchy refers to a social system in which power is held by men, through cultural norms and customs that favor men and withhold opportunity from women¹. In other words, patriarchy is the male domination in the public and private spheres as well. Feminists mainly use the term 'patriarchy' to describe the power relations between men and women. In her essay entitled "**Understanding Patriarchy**" (2004), Bell Hooks defines patriarchy as:

political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence.²

Accordingly, throughout history, women suffered from greatest oppression and they still suffer in modern societies. In fact, this patriarchal system is basically rooted first inside the members of family to reach outside society. In El Saadawi's first chapter, "The Question that no one Would Answer", she investigates the subjects about the differences that Arab societies make between the two sexes. In fact, as anyone knows, Socialization begins with the family. There is evidence that parents socialize their sons and daughters differently, particularly in Arab and African cultures. As far as girls are concerned, on the whole, they have fewer opportunities to break free from their gender roles. Boys, on the other hand, generally have more advantages. As a result, they are more autonomous and independent at a younger age. They may have no restrictions on what they wear, how they date and when they can stay up late. Sons are often exempt from housework or cooking, as well as other traditionally female responsibilities. In this context, El Saadawi says:

Why did they favor my brother as regards food, and the freedom to go out of the house? Why was he treated better than I was in all these matters? Why could my brother laugh at the top of his voice, moves his legs freely, run and play as much as he wished, whereas I was not supposed to look into people's eyes directly, but was meant to drop my glance whenever I was confronted with someone? If I laugh I was expected to keep my voice so low that people could hardly hear me...my duties were primarily to help in cleaning the house and cooking, in addition to studying since I was at school. However, the boys were not expecting to do anything but study.³

In her writing on power and gender, the American feminist writer Judith Butler approaches gender as a "Performative Theory". She states that, "gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts."⁴ Therefore, According to Judith Butler, gender follows cultural conventions in which

people's conduct and behavior is influenced by social and cultural factors. This contributes to a person's gender identity. In other words, the term refers to how men and women should act and behave in such society. These roles are based on societal norms or standards. Masculine roles are usually related to power, aggression, and authority, whereas feminine roles are equated with passivity, caring, and servitude. As a result, women are just social products, and the social roles that are assigned to them are cultural, not innate.

El Saadawi, in this context, writes about the answers she receives from her grandmother by the following: "I have never in all my life seen a girl with such a long tongue as you. Of course you are not like your brother. Your brother is a boy, a boy do you hear? I wish you had been born a boy like him."⁵ In fact, the differentiation Egyptian parents make between their children, and this may be the result of what El Saadawi adds: "a daughter does not bring with her the advantages of a son. The son carries the name of his family and provides continuity, whereas the girl ends up as a member of her husband's family. A daughter may be a source of dishonor."⁶ she also admits that to this days most families are happy to give birth to a boy but disappointed when it is a girl. Therefore, the above quotations perfectly exemplify Judith Butler's thesis, which claims that the social world creates the conditions in which one can perform and play within society.

Indeed, Mokeddem, like El Saadawi, chronicles from the opening of the novel the story of Kenza, describing how as a baby she was removed from her mother's arms by force. It is clear that Kenza lived with the lack of her mother's love as she stresses in this quote: "I never knew my mother. My childhood was marked by her absence as much as by my father's excesses. The lack and the excess. Two opposite enormities and without its compensation."⁷ The narrator starts directly by introducing Kenza's parents and her family environment; an absent mother, and a father whom she qualifies as a sex pervert and who adheres to traditional patriarchal structures, and who never expressed his emotions and

feelings particularly his love towards daughter. She clearly states: “My father never loved me!”⁸ As a result of growing up in this environment, kenza’s life is marked by sadness, loneliness, and isolation. Furthermore, the absence of her mother elicited in her a sense of disconnection from herself and the world around her, as well as a feeling of hatred against her surroundings, particularly her half-brothers and sisters.

Malika Mokeddem in chapter “les Fausses Amours” had introduced the character of "the consierge" for whom Kenza throws a dirty mattress from her window. However, "the concierge" suspects dirty marks on the mattress which can come from illegal sexual relations because of the fact that she lives alone and often receives her boyfriends at home. She says:

I threw a mattress. Could you take care of it, please?
He grabs the bill and follows me out:
Hey American, do you throw away a mattress like that?
Suddenly, his eyes dilate, become fixed, horrified at the sight
of small pale halos like wilted flowers on the mattress, then,
contemptuously:
Dirt! Dirt! Common on, go away! Go away!⁹

The concierge represents in this discourse the oppressive and patriarchal voices that impose harsh norms and values on a society that oppress women. For Kenza, The concierges of Algerian society, who are themselves far from being morally upright people, should not have the right to inflict norms and values on people as she says: “dirty things, he doesn’t do it!”¹⁰ Judith Butler talks about women’s role and man’s dominance and superiority over woman. She assert: “gender emerges as the congealed form of the sexualization of inequality between men and women.”¹¹ Butler, then, is predicated on the idea that males are born with characteristics that predispose them to dominate women. This is what Simone de Beauvoir refers to in the second part of her book *The Second Sex* (1949) that the world is always dominated by men. She writes: “this world has always been man’s world.”¹² The idea of De Beauvoir is that man is allowed to do whatever he wants to satisfy his needs without any

barriers. As a result, this creates gender hierarchy which aims to give men superior position over women and then creates gender roles.

Moreover, El Saadawi in her book denounces the sexual abuses that little girls suffer from their brothers, uncles, neighbors and even grandfathers, who take advantage of their youth to violate them. In the third chapter “The Grand Father with Bad Manners”, El Saadawi introduced the character of the grandfather, a figure which is recognized in all societies as pillar; he often represents wisdom, quiet strength, courage and the foundation on which the grandchildren can build their personality. However, she gives a different image of what a grandparent should be with bad manners and immoral behavior as she says:

He would hand me a few red and yellow flowers and when I became engrossed in their petals and colors, seat me on his lap, and start caressing me or singing to me until closed my eyes like one going to sleep. But I never feel asleep, because each time I could feel his hand creeping tenderly and stealthily under my clothes, and his finger disappearing to a hidden spot under my knickers.¹³

The two examples we mentioned in the above discussion draw us to speak about the sexual abuses of children. Indeed, in Egypt the young girls are victims of some form of forced sexual act. However, those acts happened in strong patriarchal societies because of being imbued with and carrying patriarchal power gives men a status of superiority which legitimizes their crime against children and women. In addition, the girls even as they grow up, they hide the truth by fear of being abused. They become afraid to face different social and relational difficulties as a result of the assault: social isolation, break-up with the family, lack of trust in complicated relationship building, professional difficulties, being punished by their parents because of the humiliation of the honor of the family. In this sense, El Saadawi’s patient says: “and that if my mother found out, she would be angry with me and would scold me.”¹⁴

Judith Butler explains in chapter one "Subjects of Sex/Gender /Desire" of her book: "If one is a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a gendered "person" transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constitute identities."¹⁵ Nevertheless, being born man or woman is conditioned by the social norms. In one side, man has the strong power and has the freedom towards everything and has a complete independence in all aspects of his life, in the other side; woman appears to be weak and submissive.

Yet, in the case of *Des rêves et des assassins*, Mokeddem puts forth the period of the "Black Decade", the new conflict that broke out between the Algerian army and the Islamic Group and that lasted more than ten years, while women were deprived of freedom. They were exposed to violence since the fundamentalists imposed on them the full veil, which according to kenza has the effect of making the woman invisible; they literally erase her from the public space. For them, women have neither a voice nor a face. As Kenza says: "Now the laws go further than the tradition. They do not provide women any rights. "¹⁶

Moreover, Kenza lives in an environment of greed, corruption, sexual abuses, and the dominant religious fundamentalists who impose a distorted identity on women. Hence, kenza's father tried forcibly to take control of her life beyond what a father's duty of responsibility requires, by threatening her if she dishonored the family name, "but be careful, we will kill you if you disgrace us. We've got our eye on you!"¹⁷ He adds: "you are my daughter. I would have to find you a husband who breaks you and if you rebel, I will drink your blood."¹⁸ In the same context, Simone de Beauvoir qualifies marriage in patriarchal societies as: "the only way to be integrated into the group and if they are 'rejects' they are social waste."¹⁹ This means that a girl should marry and bear children in order to guarantee

the proper functioning of the patriarchal family and get status then to be accepted in society. However, if she refuses and rebels against that, she will have no place in society as she will suffer bad treatment from those around her. Hence, the sentences excerpted from the book show how harsh and severe the father is towards his daughter, and how the daughter is considered a threat and danger to the integrity of the family. Indeed, Kenza and her father serve as a representation of society's oppression and repression of freedom. In fact, due to her mother's absence and especially father's lust, Kenza was ostracized and sidelined.

Following the threats that Kenza received, she was obliged to enter into a secret love relationship with her beloved Yacef. As she says: "Yacef and I were forced to hide our love."²⁰ Unfortunately, life does not make her happy again since Yacef submitted to the pressure of his parents to marry his cousin. However, the circumstances in which she lives, (cultural, political, and religious pressures) are very hard and frustrating for her which pushed her to cross the Mediterranean Sea seeking for freedom elsewhere, in France.

In fact, despite the establishment of various women's organizations, that advocate women's equality and rights in some Arab and Muslim countries, women's freedom and rights in daily life are still far away and remained elusive. As a result, women's concerns are mostly about giving birth and raising children. They have no place in the public field. In this sense, Frantz Fanon made evidence that patriarchy is an inherited belief and the domestic life of a woman, which is based on centuries-old norms, does not allow for innovation since girls naturally adopt the behavior and values of Algerian feminine culture, and their mother also instill on them the greater value of a man²¹.

This indicates clearly that despite the emergence of women's associations and women's suffrage movements, women are still suffering under patriarchal norms as an inferior being. In addition and according to Fanon, the concept of patriarchy is an inherited phenomenon which

is transmitted from one generation to another, and which justifies women's withhold from social, political and public sphere. For this, women in modern societies still combat for equality.

B-Childhood and Memories:

The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World is a work that exposes the reality of the Egyptian society during 1980s. In fact, El Saadawi opens her novel with a painful memory. That fateful day is still fresh in her memoire. At just the age of six; her family drugged her out of her bed in the middle of the night and carried her to the bathroom where old women practiced on her surgery, an exceptional act for small females children, as they slashed and wept her genitals, a procedure known as "circumcision" which consists in removing of external female genitals in order to attenuate and control women's desire²². In the book, El Saadawi describes this scene with the following words: "I felt that the rasping knife or blade was heading straight down towards my throat. Then suddenly the metallic edge seemed to drop between my thighs and there cut off a piece of flesh from my body."²³ At this stage, the reader is early informed about the high degree of atrocity and violence to which female babies were subjected in the traditional social order of the Egyptian family.

In Arab countries, being born female frightens an entire society, especially in Egypt; "society had made me feel since the day I opened my eyes on life, that I was a girl, and that the word bint (girl) when pronounced by anyone is almost always accompanied by a frown."²⁴ Women endured several forms of violation; such as Female Genital Mutilation which is often practiced by the rural classes, a practice considered to be a socially compulsory standard. It is a necessary step in a girl's education and often it's about controlling female sexuality, a tradition to prepare women for a marriage, supposedly to prepare them for their husbands²⁵. In general, it aims to "purify" women from sexual temptation and as a coming of age ritual²⁶. It

represents a sort of a cycle of social pressure which is considered by some families as a religious duty, particularly a Muslim one. However, El Saadawi admits that the act is inhuman and primitive, and she qualifies it as an action of savagery. El Saadawi explains the fact that this act of savagery traumatizes women even during the mature life, as she says:

Even when I had grown up and graduated as a doctor in 1955, I could not forget the painful incident that had made me lose my childhood once and for all, and that deprived me during my youth and for many years of married life from enjoying the fullness of my sexuality and the completeness of life that can only come from all-round psychological equilibrium. Nightmares of a similar nature followed me throughout the years, especially during the period when I was working as a doctor in the rural areas.²⁷

“The Female Genital Mutilation” that Nawel undergone at the age of six resulted on psychological trauma, and in the feeling of insecurity and guilt. Accordingly, in psychological studies it has always been argued that the psychological trauma that women experience through “Female Genital Mutilation” often stays with them for the rest of their lives²⁸. These women feel angry and defeated, and do not talk about what was done to them, feeling ashamed, alone and disempowered²⁹. In the similar context, also Butler writes the following: “Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporal to express signs and other discursive means.”³⁰ Meaning that families have resorted to Egyptian practices in order to create women's identities according to Egyptian culture, such as circumcision of girls, which they perform in order to create a specific identity that corresponds to their tradition and culture, thus distinguishing themselves from other cultures. In fact, the first passages of the literary work give us a glimpse into what seems to be the life of women in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt.

In a similar way, Mokeddem opens her novel with a childhood memory, a memory that is neither pleasant nor enjoyable. As a young girl, Kenza observed her father several times in a

sexual act with the women of the neighborhood. She claims: "as a child, I watched him many times without his knowledge, unintentionally, I surprised him mating with neighbors."³¹ From the opening of the first passages, Malika Mokeddem plunges us into the realistic atmosphere of life that Algerian families underwent, especially during the post-colonial period. Indeed, the aim of introducing Kenza's father to the readers is to show how he portrays the male gender and to what extent he represents the brutal as well as how his indecent conduct breaks social taboos.

She continues to describe her father as a narcissist and a sex fanatic, and his sexual impulses towards mother, sister, and wife by rendering them as sexual objects. In fact, because of her father's attitude, Kenza becomes traumatized. She then sees him as a caricature, "Now, he is just a caricature for me"³², a caricature which exemplifies the world that surrounds her, the one which is dominated by the immorality of her society, such as her father. Therefore, the comparison of Kenza's father to a caricature is simply the fact that she shows her ultimate dislike and disgust of her father's humiliating side, and its reflection of the immoral attitudes practiced by so-called Muslim men, as well as its representation of the patriarchal system that invades and enslaves the country. By so doing reduces them to caricatures of social values and norms.

Hence, according to Judith Butler, objectification and life under male gaze are considered as other forms of oppressive issues faced by women which aim at marginalizing them. In this sense, she argues:

The "body" appears as a passive medium on which cultural meaning are inscribed or as the instrument through which an appropriative and interpretative determines a cultural meaning for itself. In either case, the body is figured as a mere instrument of medium for which a set of cultural meanings are only externally related.³³

Furthermore, Kenza observes that the profession of her father as butcher stands for his obsession with sex, and the satirical descriptions of his manipulations of meat reflect his view of women as sexual objects. And the conflictual relationship between Kenza and the latter serves as symbolic of contemporary Algerian society's attitude towards women in general as well as society's sacrifice of women. As she proclaims:

His obsession has found an ideal activity and setting: the butcher shop. In clouds of flies and the smell of blood, he is at his ease. Between the handling of the meat maintains the expectation of a prey. It is necessary to see him seize a carter of beef or mutton...My father stares at his spots with an expression of silent hilarity bordering on dementia. Dementia that totally overcomes him as soon as a woman crosses the threshold of his door.³⁴

In fact, Kenza's narrative voice in Mokeddem's novel in a sometimes exaggerated description of her predicament, is to examine and challenge the oppressive environment created mainly by male voices that control her community.

C-The Institution of Marriage:

Many feminist authors produced works that heavily emphasize the issue of marriage as a constitution. Marriage is considered the only firm basis and hence the only viable choice and best way to happiness and girls security and well being. Nawel El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995) are the best examples which portray patriarchal institution of marriage.

To begin, the custom of marriage differs from one society to another. Unlike the western culture, marriage in the Middle East and North Africa is considered to be a union of families, which is why the elders are actively involved in the wedding arrangements. Since El Saadawi and Mokeddem are part of an old established patriarchal system, marriage then takes on other form. Indeed, rape and forced marriage of young girls are widespread phenomena common in the Middle East, sub-Saharan and northern Africa to which the two authors

belong. Moreover, even though the interpretation of the institution of marriage is different in the two works, they almost convey the same message. In her chapter “Obscurantism and Contradiction”, Nawel El Saadawi evokes some hidden aspects of the institution of marriage in Egypt, and tells its realities to her readers. She begins by confiding her personal experience with her mother who even comes from high educated environment; but, who is always caught up by tradition,

The moment I took refuge in my own small world of illustrated books and colored pencils, my mother would drag me to the kitchen and mumble: ‘your future lies in marriage and must learn to cook.’ Your future is in marriage, marriage! That ugly word that my mother would never tire of repeating until I hated it with all my being. No sooner pronounced, I would imagine before my eyes a man with a swollen belly full of food. The kitchen for me was the smell of men. So I learnt to hate the smell of men, and the smell of food.³⁵

From the above quote, we come to understand that Nawel El Saadawi in this case criticizes the institution of marriage and the patriarchal order of the Muslim society on the one hand. On the other hand, she compares the smell of man with that of the kitchen in order to mock the patriarchal man who is made only to be fed by his wife. In addition to this, the world where she lives or thinks living and her views on many things seem with no sense, since her parents and the society that surround her thinks the same thing about marriage as being girl’s future, and that she is a girl full of ambitions, and has a different perception of woman’s life makes life for her meaningless. However, she has no right to dream much other than meeting her future husband. In other words, marriage is the only future a girl can dream of.

Hence, in the underdeveloped nations, such as Egypt and Algeria, a girl is sometimes viewed as a burden. Her marriage gives her parents the opportunity to feed one less mouth, to enrich themselves, and to form strategic relationships with another family. Female virginity is the source of a family's honor. Parents marry their daughters long before

they dishonored them. This is an unfair situation with serious consequences on the life of a girl as they keep girls in their inferior status to man and do not allow them to come out of reach for the development of communities and countries. This illustrates what El Saadawi says: “Many girls were sold into prostitution under the legal cover of arranged marriages. The case of the young girl whose father forged a birth certificate to show that her age was eighteen and not twelve, in order to marry her to an old man in exchange for a large sum of money.”³⁶

In a similar way, Malika Mokeddem in the first chapter “l’Amour Fausse” introduces the personality of KENZA’s mother to the readers. KENZA’s mother’s name is “Keltum”, a mother she never knew, confessing that she was pushed to marry against her will at the time of country’s independence: “It was in 1962, at the time of Algeria’s independence. One year later, we have married her. Against her will, of course.”³⁷

Like Malika Mokeddem in *Des rêves et des assassins*, El Saadawi also addresses the subject of arranged marriages in Egypt, which remains the most common ritual among the general population, not only because the two persons who enter into relationship but the family. In doing so, she reveals many reasons why parents marry off their daughters at a young age.

Within the Arab and Muslim cultures, love marriage is regarded a taboo and a betrayal of one’s own family. In reality, marriage is intended to be a parent’s project of their daughter’s new identity and economic security, neglecting their personality, goals, wants. In this context, we find that Fanon, in his chapter “The Algerian Family”, asserts that “marriage in the underdeveloped countries is not an individual contract, but a contract between clan and clan, tribe and tribe, family and family.”³⁸ As El Saadawi says: “At the same time she is exposed to a whole system of traditional and religious values. But the moment she falls in love with a young man, her reputation is at stake, her name is bandied around in a scandalous way, and

she falls victim to the values of a puritanical and corrupt society.”³⁹ Moreover, the girl in a society is always considered bad whether it is by carrying feelings of love towards someone or becoming a wife of someone. Fanon expresses it well in *A Dying Colonialism* (1965):

A girl who had been asked for as a wife would leave the family circle for several days and take refuge with relatives. This is explained by the shame felt by the girl at being the object of sexual pursuit. It was also usual for the young bride to avoid appearing before her father for one or two months after the consummation of the marriage.⁴⁰

Almost in the same way, in the fourth chapter “*Les Fausses Amours*”, Mokeddem introduces a character by the name of Yacef, a lover of Kenza, who perfectly expresses the course of arranged marriages in Algerian society. Yacef declares to Kenza: “ You know my parents are convinced that I should marry my cousin from Algiers. Despite my protests, the poor girl was taken out of school to prepare her marriage outfit.”⁴¹ Indeed, the choice of the characters that Mokeddem used in her novel is of a great importance. First, it shows the different social classes that exist in Algeria. Yacef and his parents belong to the bourgeois class and the female protagonist to the middle one. Second, how their belonging shapes their thinking which constructs their identities later on.

Kenza’s mother is a divorced woman who is already seen badly by her surroundings. Her exile and leaving her daughter made her a dishonorable and shameful woman. This made Kenza bear the cost, as she expresses it: “Yacef’s parents had let their son know long time that it was normal for him to have a good time with an easy girl. But that such a girl does not marry.”⁴² This statement matches perfectly with Fanon’s saying that: “in Algeria marriage is generally decided by the families.”⁴³ And: “the social and economic reasons for this tradition are sufficiently well known and need not be explained here.”⁴⁴

Correspondingly, by considering the social status of Kenza and her family’s situation does not correspond to that of Yacef, “There is no way their son would marry a bad girl.

Never!”⁴⁵ Note the choice of the word “bad girl” by the protagonist, which exemplifies perfectly the image that society has towards her. Even the fact of having a higher degree in education does not help her as she proclaims: “how many are they, those that their lovers leave to go and marry virgins submitted to the tradition?....With a diploma in their pocket and their future in front of them, they feel "finished" because a man has taken their virginity and betrayed them.”⁴⁶ Thus, in Muslim societies, a girl will be able to contact an honorable marriage within her community only by remaining pure. However, the fate reserved to the young girls who lost their virginity is the dishonor of their family. Honor which is considered an important attribute and aspect of Muslim community. Hence, this daily pressure and fear of dishonor, makes of marriage the only relief from this daily stress. As Pierre Bourdieu highlights it in his book “**Masculine Domination**” (1998), “the honor carries the burden of defending at all cost the specific image of oneself intended for the others.”⁴⁷

According to Pierre Bourdieu, honesty is the basis of the Algerian family, the choice of the spouse is very precise for the good reputation of the family. Yet, to avoid risky and distant marriages, parents start to search the ideal and pure girl in the circle of the family in order to ensure a perfect future for their son. This is shown when Yacef told to kenza that “the girl was withdrawn from school to prepare her wedding trousseau.”⁴⁸ Camille Lacoste Dujardin speaks about the subject of marriage in Algeria. He writes: “As in all of Algeria and the Maghreb, the patrilineal society where descendancy is counted from man to man to the exclusion of women, shows a preference for endogamous alliance.”⁴⁹ This girl of whom Yacef speaks is in fact his cousin chosen by his parents to be his bride, a process called endogamy, which is according to dictionary of psychology, the custom or practice of marrying within one’s kingship, network caste, or other religious or social group⁵⁰, Camille Lacoste Dujardin speaks about endogamy and says that:

Endogamy is then presented as a palliative for a family deficiency. But other justifications for marriage in lineage endogamy are also put forward. Indeed, it is presented in turn: as an ordinary marriage, it would be sacred to the guardian of the household, it would ensure not to derogate finally, it would make it possible to preserve the integrity of the family, since it avoids a daughter of the family going to fill the homes of others.⁵¹

Mokeddem then does not accept and rejects this kind of attitude and the process of endogamy. She even names those women who are subject to this situation as “submissive to the tradition.”

In conclusion, throughout the above chapter, we aim to portray the female figures in both works. Then we came to the conclusion that the two female writers give the reader an insight into how women are inferior to men in two distinct societies and how they advocate gender discrimination. We have tried to investigate the way El Saadawi and Mokeddem portray and reveal the life and social impact on African women's gender role attribution through their female protagonists' Nawel and Kenza, by focusing mainly on the influence and impact of the institution of marriage, traditional family structures on both characters, and the various oppressions they have been subjected to the cause of being women in patriarchal Egyptian and Algerian societies, respectively.

From all what has been said above, the gender role fixed for women by patriarchalism is not natural thus it is created by traditions. The patriarchal societies sets women like male property as man is the dominant and woman is the dominated.

Endsnotes:

- ¹ Dictionary.com. <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/patriarchy>. (Accessed on 10 oct 2021).
- ² BellHooks, "UnderstandingPatriarchy". <https://imagineborders.org/pdf/zines/UnderstandingPatriarchy.pdf> (accessed on 28 spt 2021).
- ³ Nawel El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, trans. Sherif Hatata (London: Zed Books, 1980), 23.
- ⁴ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 6.
- ⁵ Nawel El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, trans. Sherif Hatata (London: Zed Books, 1980), 25.
- ⁶ El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 101.
- ⁷ Malika Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins (Paris : Grasset et Fasquelle, 1995)*, 12. Trans mine.
- ⁸ Ibid, 17.
- ⁹ Ibid, 84.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, 84.
- ¹¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, xii.
- ¹² Simone Debeauvoir, <<https://www.quotemaster.org/qaf56947b009cb768243b901c8a05073a>> (Accessed on 29 spt 2021).
- ¹³ El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 35.
- ¹⁴ Ibid, 36.
- ¹⁵ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 173.
- ¹⁶ Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 48. Trans mine.
- ¹⁷ Ibid, 57.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, 57.

- ¹⁹Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex”, Trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A division of Random House. Inc, 2010), 632.
- ²⁰Mokeddem, *Des Rêves et des Assassins*, 59. *Trans mine*.
- ²¹ Fanon, ‘ The Algerian Family’, 106.
- ²²<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Female_genital_mutilation> (accessed on 20 November 2021).
- ²³El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 18.
- ²⁴*Ibid.*, 21.
- ²⁵<<https://www.excision.ch/reseau/excision/raisons>>. (Accessed on 28 September 2021).
- ²⁶<<https://www.plan-international.fr/info/actualites/news/2016-02-03-causes-et-consequences-de-la-pratique-de-lexcision>>. (Accessed on 28 September 2021).
- ²⁷ El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 21.
- ²⁸Serene Chung, The Psychological Effects of Female Genital Mutilation. (2016), <<https://www.28toomany.org/blog/the-psychological-effects-of-female-genital-mutilation-research-blog-by-serene-chung/>>. (Accessed on 28 September 2021).
- ²⁹*Ibid.*,
- ³⁰Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12-13
- ³¹Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 12. *trans mine*.
- ³²*Ibid.*, 12.
- ³³Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12-13
- ³⁴Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 14. *Trans mine*.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 12.
- ³⁵El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 94.
- ³⁶El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 96-97.
- ³⁷Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 12. *Trans mine*.
- ³⁸ Fanon, ‘The Algerian Family’, 114.

³⁹El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 96.

⁴⁰Fanon, 'The Algerian Family', 112.

⁴¹Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 54-55. *trans mine*.

⁴²*Ibid.*, 60.

⁴³Fanon, 'The Algerian Family', 114.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*,

⁴⁵Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 61. *Trans mine*.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 76.

⁴⁷Bourdieu. P *Esquisse d'une théorie de pratique : précédée de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle*, Ed Seuil, Paris, 2000, 38. Quoted in .Chaoudi Taous and Si Moussi Yasmina, *Le rituel festif du mariage (La dynamique du changement) dans la region de Maatkas.*(University Mouloud Mammeri :2016/2017), 28. *Tans mine*.

⁴⁸Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 54-55. *Trans mine*.

⁴⁹Taous Chaoudi, Yasmina Si Moussi, *Le rituel festif du mariage (La dynamique du changement) dans la region de Maatkas.* (University Mouloud Mammeri :2016/2017), 27. *Tans mine*.

⁵⁰<<https://dictionary.apa.org/endogamy>. (Accessed on 18 Oct 2021).

⁵¹Taous, Yasmina, *Le rituel festif du mariage*, 27

Chapter Two: The Resistance Strain and Subversion in El Saadawi's and Mokeddem's works:

The following chapter will shed light on the resistance strain and subversion of gender as portrayed in El Saadawi's and Mokeddem's works. In other words, this part of the research will contend to examine the theme of resistance as well as subversion that are embodied by both female protagonists in the aforementioned works.

Although women are stereotypically portrayed as inferior to men and deprived from different aspects of life, women still have strong feelings for better future with an equal treatment and for more freedom in making their choices. In their respective works, El Saadawi and Mokeddem portray the long years of misery, distress by focusing on the adventures of two young ladies, Nawel and Kenza, in a patriarchal cultural system, and are both presented as embodiments of the Egyptian and Algerian patriarchal conditions under homogenous social dominations. Furthermore, the female characters presented in both works, subverted the different forms and the gendered stereotypes imposed on them either by the inherent social norms or by the religious fundamentalism.

a: Resisting Patriarchy Through Literature :

The painful memories that occurred in women's lives have been a source of inspiration and creativity for women authors. Throughout their feminist writings, El Saadawi and Mokeddem create works that represent the reality of a woman's enslavement by male dominated societies and the struggle for gender equality. According to them, since ancient times, women have always been positioned under men and are considered second class citizens. In this context, and in an interview, El Saadawi answered the following question: "Is the oppression of women in Egypt due primarily to the tradition of the patriarchal system or is it attributable instead to religious factors?"¹ El Saadawi's answer was that: "No, antislavery! The oppression of women in Egypt cannot be traced to traditions, Islam and fundamentalism, but

rather to the slavery system – a system of the patriarchal class society that is supported by the religions. I have studied the history of the slaveryera”². She means by declaring this answer that women’s oppression cannot be traced to Islam and it’s principles but rather she means the way it is interpreted is a way that fit the fundamentalist’s interests.

Indeed, the works of Nawal El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem delve into the lives of these oppressed women and attempt to show the role of literature in the construction of their personal female identities in its relationship with the patriarchal regime which suppressed women’s existence, in relation to sex.

As far as we know, literary works are expected not only for entertainment, but also to portray the real world by providing moral lessons on the important issues of life. As a result, pen became the unique tool the author uses to express his / her inner feelings of pain and anger against the living social conditions. Women’s emancipation through literature became the most preoccupation of women’s writings. Moreover, both authors show in their piece of literature the importance of their education in their careers and how later is used as means of struggle, fighting for women’s freedom, opinions that has been considered a taboo for so long.

Nevertheless, the feminist ideologies are revealed in Nawal El Saadawi’s writing as she allows her works speak for itself, as she elaborates the importance of writing and how it contributes to her political activism and to women's rights in her creative article entitled «Exile and Resistance” (2002) where she maintains that she never stopped writing because writing enabled her to communicate with individuals in both her native nation and other parts of the globe. She has dismantled the barriers that had separated her from them, herself from her body. No matter where she gets rid of her sense of estrangement and exile.³

During the Sadat Era, El Saadawi was imprisoned for denouncing the Egyptian patriarchal regime. Generally, every woman who attempts to hold a pen and paper on one

hand finds herself holding a gun on the other hand. El Saadawi was threatened several times inside prisons well as outside.

Furthermore, El Saadawi in *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, centers her work around the importance of literature as a tool of expression and to the status of a woman as an author. As it is shown in the following quote:

There is no doubt that to write about women in Arab society, especially if the author is herself a woman, is to tread on difficult and sensitive areas. It is like picking your way through territory heavy with visible and hidden mines. Almost every step might touch an electrified wire, a sanctified and sacred spot which is meant to be untouchable, a value that is not to be questioned because it is a part of the religious and moral structures that rear themselves up like heavy iron bars whenever questions related to women are raised and hand stretched out to set her free.⁴

As El Saadawi writes in the quote, also Judith Butler centers her studies around the unequal distribution of gender roles between the sexes in the construction of subjective space of individuals. Butler claims: “A woman cannot use the first person ‘I’ because as a woman, the speaker is ‘particular’ (relative, interested, perspective), and the invocation of the ‘I’ presumes the capacity to speak for and as the universal human: ‘a relative subject is inconceivable; a relative subject could not speak at all.’”⁵

From what is said so far, we may say that women’s voices are not heard, because they have not the capacity to speak as an independent individual since they faced numerous injustices created either by the family or social laws that came into force. As a reaction, El Saadawi in her work speaks in the first person because she was in perpetual combat against her family and surroundings in search for equality, individuality and even identity as she refused to follow the order established by her society.

On the other hand, Mokeddem argues in her piece of art *Des rêves et des assassins* that: “School, the only way out. Learning the language of the other, first steps towards

singularity. Towards a deeper and deeper solitude.”⁶ She adds: “El Hayet high school was my first refuge. El Hayet: life. It was narrow and concrete, life, in this old convent. Walls went up endlessly. A slice of sky... But these barriers were enough protection”⁷. In the quotation, it appears that obtaining a female education in a patriarchal cultural system is one form of women's resistance and at the same time is a way for empowerment. In other words, Mokeddem describes the school by using the term El Hayet which means life as well as the walls meant for her security and protection. From this idea, we understand that education and school seem to be the means to free the oppressed woman from domesticity to other fields of life.

In addition, Arab and Muslim women's ability to subvert patriarchy and find empowerment are well exposed in both selected works through their expressions of thoughts in a time when it is prohibited for women. El Saadawi writes:

However it was also natural that a small minority should express their fear, or even panic, at words written by pen sharp as a scalpel that cuts through tissue to expose the throbbing nerves and arteries embedded deep in a body. It was the panic of those accustomed to darkness, faced suddenly a searching light. Some of the letters I received called upon me to refrain from publishing the facts and knowledge which I had gathered with an impatient patience over many years. Their call was like a hand raised to shield the eyes from an expected light.⁸

From what is said above, the minority of population dared to defy their feelings of fear under threats with the use of their words as a system of challenging conservatism. In other words, many activists and intellectuals have received daily threat letters just to refrain their freedom of expressing the severe conditions of the most current living issues in such patriarchal societies which were supported by the religious codes. The later aimed at suppressing women's confrontation with education and literature in particular and with public sphere in general. According to Judith Butler, the world's views on women as weak, submissive, and dependent are just a social convention created to reduce women's activities.

Among them, prohibiting women to enter in other public fields like writing because it is seen as a way of challenging the male superiority. As Judith Butler asserts:

Some accounts, the notion that gender is constructed suggests a certain determinism of gender meanings inscribed on anatomically differentiated bodies, where those bodies are understood as passive recipients of an inexorable cultural law. When the relevant 'culture' that constructs gender misunderstood in terms of such a law or set of laws, the nit seems that gender is as determined and fixed as it as under the biology – is – destiny formulation. In such a case, not biology, but culture, becomes destiny.⁹

In the same context, Butler adds:

The self-justification of a repressive or subordinating law almost always grounds itself in a story about what is was like before the advent of the law, and how it came about the law emerged in its present and necessary form. The fabrication of those origins tends to describe a state of affairs before the law that follows a necessary and aniline a narrative that culmination, and thereby justifies, the constitution of the law.¹⁰

Accordingly, the prohibitions and laws addressed to women to act in such particular way are drawn and constructed by particular cultural beliefs. Therefore, nothing is evident in fixing and imposing such characteristics of weakness and inferiority. In this case, it is not the biological formation of gender which prohibited women to submit to particular acts, but it is the cultural system produced by males in order to fit their aims and interests. However, in the illustration written above, El Saadawi subverted these prohibitions by acting in opposing way to those dominant cultural norms. By doing so, she became a famous feminist writer and activist who defends and encourages other women to subvert and resist these collective repeated gender performances.

In addition and in case of a woman, Butler assumes that: “if subversion is possible, it will be subversion within the terms of the law through the possibilities that emerge when the law turns against itself and spawn sun expected permutations of itself.”¹¹She adds: “the culturally constructed body will then deliberate, neither to its natural past, nor to its original

pleasures, but to an open future of cultural possibilities.”¹²This means that a woman may tend to deviate from the domestic, economic, and political laws which oppress her freedom and reduce her role to a subordinate one. In other words, subversion is a way to a liberated and independent woman.

B / Resisting Patriarchy through Subversive Acts:

As an Egyptian and Algerian feminists, El Saadawi and Mokeddem went on to write a number of polemic and controversial works which questioned governmental structures, political systems, patriarchy, and especially religious fundamentalism and their effect on women in general. Therefore, El Saadawi and Mokeddem in their piece of literature, attempt to subvert the Egyptian and Algerian patriarchal system by empowering the status of their female characters. In this regards, it is argued that the female characters used in the two novels are manifestations of the novel's rejection of the negative depiction of women. Focusing on El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, since childhood, El Saadawi was a disobedient girl who was always curious to find answers to a series of questions related to gender unequal treatment she faced with her brother. In addition, the author strongly refers to resisting the traditional life she used to live. At an early age, she has the sense of a rebellion against the traditional thinking on females. She provides an illustration by assuming that:

As a child I had to struggle against the whole family so that I could be permitted to read and develop my mind. I used to refuse cooking and cleaning in the house and insist on going to school. I would rebel against long hair, colored ribbons and plaits, and wonder why my mother paid so much attention to my clothes and dresses. I used to surpass my brothers at school and gain high marks, yet nobody seemed to be happy or think of congratulating me. Yet if I once cooked a bad meal, everyone would criticize me.¹³

According to El Saadawi's thoughts, women like men in all societies were born free and independent. The desire for liberty is a natural and legitimate one. however, the religious and other social fanatics created a dominant thinking of male superiority and women

inferiority for their benefits and interests. Thus, she calls for the freedom of the women; a freedom which will bring to her, personality and independence.

In this sense, Malika Mokeddem also devotes herself in a subversive position to the Algerian cultural beliefs, politics and the religious ideologies as they appear in her novel. The female characters used in *Des rêves et des assassins* are almost subversive and resistant to the prohibitions and intolerance of the society where they used to live. Indeed, Kenza performs new gender roles by breaking up the traditional basis. Kenza's deviation starts with her educational acquirement then to challenge and reject the living social traditions. She starts enjoying her freedom, living alone far from the limits and barriers drawn by the judicial and the religious system as shown in the following excerpt taken from the novel: "the excuse of studies having ceased, and my desire to live alone and in the city produced the effect of a bomb. Suddenly, I became different, defied tradition. I became a social danger and jeopardized the honor of my family."¹⁴ She adds: "no one tried to impose on me or even to find me a husband. That would have meant giving up the pension I was paying them every month."¹⁵ From this quotation, we may say that the female characters are described as a social menace who rebel against and deviate from the basic norms imposed on women who are confined to the domestic life. Meaning that, in Algeria and particularly in this period of time which was characterized by a serious of social and political instability and also where women are restricted to live under harsh religious barriers imposed by the Fundamentalists. Thus, women were a question of attention in matters related to their freedom, clothing, honor...However, Kenza and the other female characters presented in the novel are totally deviating these dominant norms and be a social danger. In a similar context, Judith Butler writes: "hence, as a strategy of survival, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. Discrete genders are part of what "humanizes" individuals within

contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their Gender right are regularly punished”¹⁶. She adds:

Simone De Beauvoir wrote in *The Second Sex* that, “one is not born but rather becomes a woman,” the phrase is odd, even nonsensical, for how can one become a woman if one wasn’t a woman all along? And who is this “one” who does the becoming? Is there some human who becomes its gender at some pointing time? Is it fair to assume that this human was not its gender before it becomes its gender?¹⁷

It means that the question of gender roles is well constructed by the collective cultural beliefs, then to be performed by the performer to who were attributed. Additionally, woman who deviates her gender role will be severely punished.

Unlike the old traditional conception of women’s role in the Algerian society, women in Mokeddem’s novel like those in El Saadawi’s work are rebellious and revolting women. In their struggle, they have subverted the gender roles that had been assigned to them in the past by the patriarchal system, and thus, they become active individuals like their male counterparts. This can be seen, for instance, in Algeria, mainly during the Algerian Revolutionary war of 1954, where many women participated on one way or another in building the road for independence as joining the ranks of the revolutionists or by helping them by providing food, weapons or arms. In this light, Fanon says that:

All these restrictions were to be knocked over and challenged by the national liberation struggle. The unveiled Algerian woman, who assumed an increasingly important place in revolutionary action, developed her personality, discovered the exalting realm of responsibility. The freedom of the Algerian people from then on became identified with woman's liberation, with her entry into history. This woman who, in the avenues of Algiers or of Constantine, would carry the grenades or the submachine-gun chargers, this woman who tomorrow would be outraged, violated, tortured, could not put herself back into her former state of mind and relive her behavior of the past; this woman who was writing the heroic pages of Algerian history was, in so doing, bursting the bounds of the narrow world in which she had lived without responsibility, and was at the same time participating in the destruction of colonialism and in the birth of a new woman.¹⁸

In other words, the Algerian Revolution was an exceptional one, because it remarkably detached women from the traditional and religious norms. Nevertheless, the Algerian “Moudjahidats” have been represented as the most gorgeous, beautiful, intelligent, and educated girls who have embarked the revolution with their body and soul although they knew that they were going to die because times were hard in those years 1958-1962, but they were cheerful, laughing and almost hopeful. Indeed, by the Revolution, women have started to enjoy their freedom and affirm their existence unlike in past times. Therefore, Algerian women, as described by Mokeddem and in the paths of Judith Butler, are holding new roles through “Gendre Performativity”, giving a way for a new woman.

In addition to what is said above, it has also been apparent that the Algerian women’s role had remarkably shifted during the Algerian Revolution from housekeepers to revolutionists and rebellious women. In fact, they fought the colonial regime in the side of the freedom fighters and they assumed an important and complex position during the revolutionary movement. They entered history with courageous actions which sometimes men can not submit in liberating their nation.

Moreover, in their masterpieces, El Saadawi and Mokeddem both strongly suggest a new “Performative” role on their female characters by reversing the gender role imposed on them either by the social or the Islamic ideologies. Through their works, it appears that both authors use empowering female characters for criticizing the patriarchal social structure as well as the Islamic Fundamentalism which are used as a means to enslave women in general and particularly those who are illiterate and uneducated. Hence, in our selected works, the female protagonists are not accepting their social roles assigned to them by the Egyptian and Algerian cultural practices. In other words, the resistance of women is reflected through playing active and challenging status and the opposition can be seen in various forms among them, the struggle for equal rights in the field of education, fighting for freedom of doing

things or issuing opinions that are a taboo by women and fighting for freedom to make choices and decisions. In short, Nawal and Kenza broke the dominant silence through being an educated females and practicing their jobs, travelling abroad and discover new countries, being detached from their male's protection, living alone far from the father's and brother's control. In general terms, the female characters used in both novels are strongly refusing and resisting the traditional beliefs and thinking. In the following quote, Judith Butler writes:

Witting understands gender as the workings of 'sex', where 'sex' is an obligatory injunction for the body to become a cultural sign, to materialize itself in obedience to a historically delimited possibility, and to do this, not once or twice, but as a sustained and repeated corporeal project. The notion of a 'project', however, suggests the originating force of a radical will, and because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, the term strategy better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs¹⁹

She adds:

That the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality. This also suggest that if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body. The gender border control that differentiates inner from outer.²⁰

The notion of a 'project' mentioned in the quote is to express the role and the influence of the social conventions such as class, race, and sexuality in the categorization of the gender role. For Butler, the performative acts are also considered as planned strategy by the social norms.

To summarize, El Saadawi and Mokeddem's works raise many concerns about female oppression in the Egyptian and Algerian society, it also reveals that Nawel and Kenza bring hope not only to women, but to society as a whole, because of their resilience and bravery in rejecting, fighting and resisting patriarchy.

Endnotes :

¹An interview with Nawal El Saadawi, viewed 29 September 2021, <<https://www.e-we.org/eng/show-art-asp?t:1&aid:2536>>.

²Ibid.

³Exile and Resistance, viewed 19 November 2021, <[https://www.nawalsaadawi.net/oldsite/articlesnawal/nawal articles.htm](https://www.nawalsaadawi.net/oldsite/articlesnawal/nawal%20articles.htm)>.

⁴Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World* (London: Zed Books, 1980),

⁵Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1999), 149.

⁶Malika Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins* (Paris : Grasset et Fasquelle, 1995), 29.

⁷Ibid, 21

⁸El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 7.

⁹Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 12.

¹⁰Ibid, 46.

¹¹Ibid, 119.

¹²Ibid, 119.

¹³El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 94.

¹⁴Mokeddem, *Des rêves et des assassins*, 56.

¹⁵Ibid, 57

¹⁶Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 178.

¹⁷Ibid, 141.

¹⁸Frantz Fanon, 'Algerian Family', in *A Dying Colonialism*, trans, Monthly Review Press (New York: Grove Press, 1965), 107.

¹⁹Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 177-178.

²⁰ *Ibid*, 173.

General conclusion

Throughout this research paper, we attempted to compare Nawal El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* (1980) and Malika Mokeddem's *Des rêves et des assassins* (1995). We have shown that although the two authors belonged to different geographical locations, social and cultural backgrounds, they manifest nearly the same current issues in their works. Accordingly, to carry on our study, we relied on Judith Butler's theory of "Gender Performativity" and "Subversion" developed in her book entitled *Gender Troubles: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1999). And as a second theoretical approach, we cited Frantz Fanon's categorization of "the Algerian Family" explored in his book entitled *A Dying Colonialism* (1965). We have the conclusion that both authors examine the gender and identity troubles in the Egyptian and Algerian society. Throughout our analysis, we have depicted that the gender roles performed by women are not biological but are the results of traditional, patriarchal structure's production. We have also put into evidence the long struggling of the female characters against the unjust conditions by performing new gender roles as a way to build their own identity as well as in order to put an end to gender discrimination.

All in all, the authors have presented through their works the role of the patriarchal norms in the segregation and enslavement of women. Through our research, we focused on the different forms of physical and mental traumas the Egyptian and Algerian women faced within their families as well in their societies. We examined the circumcision of the Egyptian girls, the domestic violence, forced and arranged marriages, the judicial laws which were always in favor of men such as divorces.

Last but not least, the overall research had uncovered the similar issues developed by Nawal El Saadawi and Malika Mokeddem in their respective works. However, we initiate

other students to undertake a comparative study by focusing on the differences between the aforementioned authors. As for instance focusing on the different formal aspects of both works (language and style). As also can be studied from other literary perspectives such as psychoanalysis.

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