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Title

**The Intersection of Race, Class and Gender in Zora Neale
Hurstons' *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's
L'interdite (1993).**

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To:

*I dedicate this thesis to my beloved mother and
generous father*

To my lovely brothers

To my dearest partner Lyticia

Hanane

To:

My father Ali and my mother Chehrazed

My brother Amir

To my binominal Hanane

Lyticia

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Abstract:

This research examines the intersection of race, class and gender in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993). It aims at showing the way how female figures are discriminated in both novels in terms of race and gender. This contributed to their relegation to the lower class of their societies and to present the different forms of oppression that women encounter in both Afro-American and Algerian societies . To achieve our purpose, we have relied on the theory of Kimberly Crenshaw's 'Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics (1989)'. The first chapter examines the intersection of gender and class in both novels and demonstrates how these overlapping identities interact together to affect women's lives in the American and African societies. In the second chapter, we have analyzed the intersection of race and class in Hurston's and Mokeddem's works to show how ethnic distinctions determine economic and cultural expectations, reinforcing systems of oppression and segregation towards women in the African and Afro-American societies. The analysis leads to the findings that the Afro-American author Zora Neale Hurston and the Algerian francophone author Malika Mokeddem, despite their different racial and societal backgrounds, similarly portrayed the experiences of women in their societies, revealing how the latter have resisted against different kinds of oppression, manifested in racism, class distinction and marginalization.

Key words: Class, Discrimination, Gender, Intersection, Race.

General Introduction

I. General Introduction

This dissertation examines the intersection of race, gender and class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993). It tries to put the aforementioned issues in the American and African contexts and compare their impact on African and Afro-American women in the twentieth century. While hailing from different backgrounds, cultures and societies, both Hurston and Mokeddem present similar issues of patriarchal oppression and societal expectations. Hurston, who grew up in a vibrant African American community, faced racism, patriarchy and economic hardships. Mokeddem who experienced the Algerian War of Independence and the Black decade that traumatized Algerian people, suffered from a double oppression imposed by both the colonizer and her North African culture in relation to her race and gender. Thus, *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and *L'interdite* (1993) stand as powerful examples that reveal women's resistance against different kinds of oppression manifested in racism, class distinction and patriarchy.

The Afro-American woman presented by Hurston shows how racism and sexism intersect to create distinct forms of oppression imposed on women of color in the U.S.A. Hurston's contributions to the understanding of African American women's experiences and her emphasis on the importance of Black women's voices have made her an influential figure in the development of black feminist thoughts. Hurston's prominent work *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) was highly relevant to the deeper discussions that emerged later during the Feminist movement and aligned directly to its main goals. Throughout her work, she emphasizes the experiences and struggles of Black women and the need to challenge traditional gender roles during the twentieth century. The novel offers a rich portrayal of class and gender roles within African American society.

Similarly, the African women presented by Mokeddem faced significant social challenges, experiencing unjust treatment in patriarchal societies, as well as discrimination related to their

race and class. This patriarchal dominance is, in fact, noticeable in African communities in general and Algerian society in particular, where women are taught to live under the control and authority of men. Mokeddem explores the struggles of Algerian women and the intertwined dynamics of patriarchy, race and class during the twentieth century. As a prominent figure in feminist literature, Mokeddem presented women's suffering within oppressive societal structures rooted in both colonial and post-colonial legacies. *L'interdite* (1993) captures the complexities of women's identities as they navigate the intersections of race and class while challenging patriarchal norms that seek to constrain their freedom. She used her writing to raise awareness on the gender inequality and the ongoing struggle for women's rights. Through her work, she reflects the collective and individual hardships faced by Algerian women, emphasizing their resilience and determination to challenge social norms.

a. Review of the Literature:

Zora Neale Hurston and Malika Mokeddem, two celebrated female authors, have specifically explored themes related to gender, class, and race in their writings. A review of existing scholarship reveals that both authors have faced distinct criticisms. Hurston's work has been debated for its portrayal of Black life and gender relations, with some scholars questioning her approach to racial and social issues, while others commend her cultural and feminist insights. Mokeddem is studied in relation to her portrayal of oppressive realities of patriarchy in Algerian society, emphasizing gender based violence and women's resistance. Together, their works offer valuable but different perspectives on the intersections of the overlapping systems of power and identity.

To start with, Richard Wright criticizes Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) in his book entitled *Between Laughter and Tears* (1937), where he harshly criticized Hurston's work, claiming that, she was reinforcing negative stereotypes about African Americans. He claimed:

“Her characters eat and laugh and cry and work and kill; they swing like a Pendulum eternally in that safe and narrow orbit in which America likes to see the Negro live, between laughter and tears”. (wright.1937, p.22). Wright believed that the work of Hurston presented African American life in a way that aligned to the expectations of white audiences. He criticized this approach, arguing that it overlooked the several challenges of segregation, poverty, and racism. For example, in *The Gilded Six-Bits*, Hurston focused on the personal conflict between Joe and Missie May instead of exploring the larger social and economic forces that influenced their lives. Wright viewed the story’s depiction of wealth represented by Slemmons as superficial, arguing that the narrative avoids addressing the deeper problems of inequality in society. (Wright. 2011, pp.700, 717)

While Wright criticized Hurston’s work in relation to race, H.L Gates overused it in relation to gender roles. Gates’s criticism is addressed in his article “*Zora Neale Hurston: Critical Perspective Past and Present*” (1993). Gates criticized the work in relation to its portrayal of gender roles and its failing to challenge the patriarchal values of its time.

Gates argues that Hurston’s story does not challenge or transform social expectations of women’s behavior. Missie May’s role as a submissive wife shows that women are still seen as responsible for fixing problems in marriage and maintaining harmony. Hence, while Hurston’s work was important for giving voice to black women’s experiences, this particular story still follow the old rules about women’s place and their worth being tied to their loyalty and forgiveness.

Like Hurston’s *The Gilded Six Bits*, Mokeddem’s *L’interdite* also has been a center of interest to many critics in relation to its portrayal of the oppressive patriarchal traditions, identity and trauma that restrict Algerian women’s freedom. Starting with an article written by Crista Jones entitled “*Exploring the Depths of Trauma: Identitary Instability in Mokeddem’s L’Interdite*”(2007), the autobiographical nature of the novel is emphasized along

with its post-colonial characteristics. Jones says: “ In *L’Interdite* (1993), a highly autobiographical narrative, French Algerian novelist Mokeddem (born in 1949) explores identity instability in conjunction with trauma and hybridity, as it is experienced by postcolonial subjects.” (Jones.C. 2007, p.109, 118)

Jones’s criticism exposes the complex interplay of identity and trauma in Mokeddem’s *L’interdite*. The focus on Sultana’s experience as an Algerian woman living in France, alongside Vincent, underscored the theme of identity instability in a postcolonial context. Moreover, Mokeddem’s narrative indeed criticizes the rise of political and religious Fundamentalism, illustrating how it led to the silencing of women in Algeria during the 1990s. The backdrop of violence and oppression, particularly from terrorist groups, added a layer of urgency to Sultana’s story and the difficult situation of the Algerian society. The characters’ identities are shaped not only by their individual experiences but also by their relationships with each other and the cultural contexts they navigate.

By depicting Sultana’s struggles and the oppressive environment she faces Mokeddem condemns the societal norms that restrict women’s voices and choices. Jones also stated that the work serves as a condemnation of the broader cultural and political forces that contribute to the silencing of women, illustrating the impact of violence and fear on their identities. This interplay further criticizes the societal structures that define and limit women’s roles within their communities. In essence, Mokeddem’s work addresses the immediate consequences and invites reflection on the larger implications for female identity and resistance within a postcolonial framework.

In the same context, Sarah Forzley in her essay “Silence and *Movement in Malika Mokeddem’s L’Interdite*”(2016), explores the harsh realities of oppression and discrimination faced by women as she develops several themes that portray the difficulties of female empowerment and survival in a patriarchal society and a historical context. While

acknowledging the novel's feminist intensions, Forzley points out that the narrative's belief in multiple perspectives, including the significant male character "Vincent", may weak on the focus on the female protagonist Sultana and complicate the feminist message. She suggests that this narrative choice reflects ongoing tensions in representing women's voices within patriarchal and postcolonial conditions, which can limit the clarity of the novel's feminist critic and the female experience in the story. In this regard, Forzley explained:

Because Vincent now hosts a part of this woman's body in his own, he sees as his partner, but he also vacillates between seeking a more intimate, seamless relationship with her and trying to establish where the boundaries are between this Other inside of him and his 'self'. Although the deceased donor never speaks, Vincent imagines her as acting upon her free will. Because of the agency Vincent attributes to the Kidney donor, I depart from other scholars of *L'Interdite* by treating her as a character akin to the subaltern that cannot speak but for whom someone else speak (Frozly, 2016, p.41)

The above quote shows how the male narrator's perspective mediates the female voice and complicates the direct representation of the feminist position in the story. When Forzley compares Sultana to a "subaltern that cannot speak but for whom someone else speaks", she emphasizes how marginalized voices in the case of Sultana can be a powerful example of an oppressed woman in a male dominated society and how she is silenced socially by patriarchy and how Mokeddem complicates the female empowerment in the novel, as it challenges the clarity of Sultana's voice by positioning it within a male framework. This also reflects the broader cultural and political challenges of women's experiences in a society marked by male authority and where race, class and gender were the cause of multiple exclusion, marginalization and control in Algeria.

b. Issue and Working Hypothesis:

It follows from the above review of the literature that the two selected works have received a spate of criticism and have been studied from two different perspectives and viewpoints. While Hurston almost received negative criticism in relation to race and gender, Mokeddem is mainly studied from socio-cultural and political perspectives. However, to our best knowledge, little research in the context of the intersection of multiple systems of oppression and discrimination has been undertaken so far on Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* with Mokeddem's *L'Interdite*, and no work gathering the two novels has been conducted. Thus, the purpose of the present dissertation is to bring these two narratives together by relying on Kimberly Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality to put emphasis on the intersection of race, class and gender roles, highlighting the experiences and struggles of African and Afro-American women during the twentieth century.

As it has been revealed so far, our study is justified by the fact that both works are linked by similar themes of patriarchal oppression and discrimination related to race, class and gender that determine the class of women in the two selected novels. The two writers, Hurston and Mokeddem experienced oppressive historical backgrounds (the New Negro Movement or the Harlem Renaissance the 1920s America and French Colonialism and 1990's Terrorism) respectively that enable them to write about the same issue and use their characters as a self-representation. This work hypothesizes that despite the fact that the two novels expose similar themes of discrimination related to women, there is a slight difference between them. Hurston focuses on women oppression and gender roles within family members and Mokeddem studies how female characters suffer from patriarchy in their society.

Methodological Outline:

Our work is opened with an introduction which gives an overview of the two literary works and in which we have introduced patriarchy and the way women suffer from gender oppression both in Africa and America. This section also have included a literature review of the two selected books and a presentation of our issue and working hypothesis. The second section presents the method and materials. In the method part, we are going to explain Kimberly Crenshaw theory of “Demergenalizing the Intersestion of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics (1989)”. In the materials part, we have provide the summaries of two novels: *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and *l’interdite* (1993). The third section will present the results of our research, and it will be followed by the discussion section, which is divided to two chapters. The first chapter will analyze the female characters in both novels, focusing on the way male domination creates oppression and social class for the female characters of the two novels. The second chapter focuses on race and class in relation with the female characters in *The Gilded Six Bits* and *L’interdite*. It will analyze how these women experience inequality due to their racial identities. At the end of our research paper, we will include our assumption and summarize and our research findings.

II. Method and Materials:

1-Method:

Kimberly Crenshaw is a prominent American legal scholar and critical race theorist. She is known for introducing and developing “intersectionality”, also known as intersectional theory, the study of how intersecting social identities, relate to systems and structures of oppression, domination or discrimination. Her article further expends to include intersectional feminism which is a sub category related to intersectional theory. Intersectional feminism

examines the overlapping systems of oppression and discrimination that women face due to their ethnicity and sexuality. Therefore, her critical scholarship on race and gender seems to be appropriate to our topic under study since it examines critically how racism legal societal norms intersect together to achieve a real identity.

Intersectionality is then first used by Crenshaw to show the interconnections between social categories and systems of dominance, power, and oppression. Crenshaw explains how various social identities such as race and gender overlap and create different modes of discrimination and privilege. Throughout her work, she emphasizes the unique position of women in general and Black women in particular within both feminist and antiracist movements. She argues that Black women are often rendered invisible in discussions that focus on race or gender, a fact that leads to a lack of understanding of their specific struggles.

“Demerginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex” by Crenshaw is a foundational text in Black feminist thoughts that highlights the inadequacies of traditional feminist and antiracist frameworks. Crenshaw argues that these frameworks often fail to address the unique experiences of Black women who faced discrimination on multiple fronts both as women and as people of color. Crenshaw states that modern class categorization is the result of class, gender, and racism, as well as ethnic discrimination. In this perspective. She argues:

An example of how some feminist theories are narrowly constructed around white women's experiences is found in the separate spheres literature. The critique of how separate spheres ideology shapes and limits women's roles in the home and in public life is a central theme in feminist legal thought. Feminists have attempted to expose and dismantle separate spheres ideology by identifying and criticizing the stereotypes that traditionally have justified the disparate societal roles assigned to men and women. (Crenshaw,1989,p.139)

Crenshaw is against the association of women with private spheres and men with public life (work, politics). This idea is called the separate spheres ideology and used to justify gender inequality in society by confining women to domestic roles and excluding them from public life. Crenshaw criticizes the traditional feminist theories, that are often based on the

experiences of white women and overlook the realities of women of color. While the separate spheres ideology limited women's roles to home, white women focused on challenging to gain more rights. However, women of color, who were often already working outside home, faced different and more complex barriers due to their gender and class. Indeed, Crenshaw argues that feminist theories need to be more inclusive; they should consider how factors like gender, race and class shape women's experiences differently.

“In Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex”, Crenshaw emphasizes the unique position of Black women within both feminist and antiracist movements. She argues that Black women are often rendered silenced in discussions that focus solely on race or gender, leading to a lack of understanding of their specific struggles. She uses the term “Black women” to show the compounded discrimination they face due to the intersection of race and gender. By centering the experiences of Black woman, Crenshaw calls for a more nuanced understanding of social justice that takes into account the complex realities of those at the intersection of multiple marginalized identities. This perspective is crucial for addressing the broader issues of inequality and discrimination, as it challenges both feminist discourses to be more inclusive and responsive to the needs of all women, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds.

To explain the intersection of race, class and gender, Crenshaw uses three cases of women: the first one is *De Graffenreid v. Gnerel Motors*, the second one is *Moore u. Hughes Helicopter, Inc*, while the third one *Payne v. Travenol*. These three cases have been used as arguments of the intersection of race, class and gender to form a unique identity within social movements such as women suffrage. Her analysis put emphasis on the compound discrimination which refused and excluded women from different opportunities in public life due to their race, social class and gender.

To clarify more, the first case *De Graffenheid v. General Motors* refers to five black women working in a factory owned by a white industrialist. The factory was an oppressive and gendered one. So these Black women were treated differently from white women and Black men and discrimination is directed only to them because they were both Black and women. Their experiences are only protected if they matched those of either Black men or White women ignoring their unique intersectional discrimination. This case shows how the overlapping nature of race and gender distinction activates individuals to seek for economic and social equality. (Crenshaw, 1989)

In the second case, these Black women filed a class action lawsuit, alleging both gender and race discrimination in their employer's practices. Crenshaw shows how the narrow focus of antidiscrimination law tends to center the experiences of white women, often overlooking racial inequalities. This limited framework fails to fully address the intersectional nature of gender and race discrimination, as she asserts:

In order for Moore to represent the class of women, even in a disparate impact case, she was required to allege sex discrimination claims separately. Once Moore claimed discrimination as a "Black woman" she narrowed the scope of her claim and placed herself at odds with White women. (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 145)

Furthermore, these women had effectively overcome any belief in discrimination, as there was a notable difference between men and women, though the disparity was somewhat smaller between black and white men in supervisory roles. In fact, she also refers to the concept of white women occupying a superior position within a supreme or legal framework of gender, using it as an example of racial privilege.

In the third case, *Payne v. Travenol*, two Black women initiated a class action lawsuit accusing their employer of race discrimination on behalf of all Black employees, later expanding their claim to include sex discrimination. This case marked a partial victory for Black women. It also reveals a challenge within antidiscrimination law, where Black women

are often forced to choose between advocating for Black men or sidelining their own intersecting experiences of race and gender to make a claim that is inclusive of all Black people. (Crenshaw, 1989)

Crenshaw's three aforementioned cases illustrate a form of political discrimination and marginalization that specifically targets Black women through their intersectional experiences. She explores how race and gender intersect, shaping Black women's understanding of their identities. Crenshaw argues that the marginalization and discrimination faced by Black women are profoundly influenced by the interconnected categories of race, class, and gender. Additionally, she critiques contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses for narrowly defining violence against women as limited to battering and rape. Instead, she emphasizes the need to analyze the intersecting dimensions of race, gender, and class, and their collective impact on Black identities.

2-Materials:

Zora Neale Hurston's Biography:

Zora Neale Hurston was a world-renowned writer and anthropologist. Hurston's novels, short stories, and plays often depicted African American life in the South. She influenced many writers, forever cementing her place in history as one of the foremost female writers of the 20th century. Hurston was born in Notasulga, Alabama on January 7, 1891. Both her parents had been enslaved. At a young age, her family relocated to Eatonville, Florida where they flourished. Eventually, her father became one of the town's first mayors. In 1917, Hurston enrolled at Morgan College, where she completed her high school studies. Then she attended Howard University and earned an associate's degree. (Hopson, 2024, pp.20-30).

Throughout her life, Hurston, dedicates herself to promoting and studying black culture. She travels to both Haiti and Jamaica to study the religions of the African diaspora. Her findings were also included in several newspapers throughout the United States. Hurston often incorporates her research into her fictional writing. As an author, Hurston starts publishing short stories as early as 1920. Through, her work is ignored by the mainstream literary audience for years, she gains admirers among African Americans. In 1935, she published *Mules and Men*. She later collaborates with Langston Hughes to write the play, *Mule Bone*. She published many books which shows her unique voice and exploration of African American culture and the struggle of women in society. Some of her notable books include *Their Eyes were watching god* (1937), *Dust tracks on a road* (1942) and *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) explored themes of love, betrayal and complexities of relationships. (Hemenway,1977,p.101-60).After years of writing, Hurston had to enter the St. Lucie County Welfare Home as she was unable to take care of herself. She died of heart disease on January 28, 1960.

Malika Mokeddem's Biography:

Malika Mokeddem was born on October 5, 1949, in Kenadsa, a small mining town near the western desert of Algeria. She came from a family of illiterate nomads who became sedentary. She completed her primary education in Kenadsa and then her secondary education at Bechar's high school. She enrolled to study medicine in Oran and finished her studies in Paris. She specialized in Nephrology and later in Montpellier in 1979.

Mokeddem's childhood, is marked by political and social turmoil in Algeria. She left her country in 1994 due to rising violence and political tensions, which profoundly influenced her writing. Her works reflects not only the struggles of women but also the conflict between tradition and modernity in Algeria. She also explores the effects of exile both on a personal and cultural level. Her novels examine the challenges faced in patriarchal society while

exploring themes of exile and women identity. Her writing is noted for its poetic richness using metaphors to depict women's experiences and the complexities of identity. (Green. J. P, 530).

She wrote several narratives on women's problems. Her first work *L'interdite* (1993) lays the groundwork for her exploration of women's experiences and struggles. She presents the struggles of women who resist patriarchal norms and faced oppression under religious fundamentalism. She continued to explore these themes in her later works, Including *La Remontée des Cendres* (1999), and *Le Siècle des Femmes* (2000). These books have been translated into other languages, including English what makes them as a powerful stories about women lives accessible to readers around the world.

Synopsis of *The Gilded Six Bits*:

Zora Neale Hurston's short story *The Gilded Six Bits*, published in 1933, is set in Eatonville, Florida, a predominant Black community during the 20th century. It explores different themes such as gender, race, and the complexity of love and betrayal within a patriarchal society. The story centers on Joe and Missie May, a young couple who seems to have a happy and loving marriage. However, their relationship changed when a wealthy stranger named Otis D. Slemmons comes to the town. His arrival brings conflicts and challenges that force them to confront deeper issues about gender roles, economic inequality, and racial identity in a world full of unfair expectation.

The story begins with Missie May, a kind wife who loves Joe deeply and fits the role that society expects from women. On the one hand, she is loyal and focused on taking care of her home and husband. Her life is shaped by the idea that woman's job is to support her husband, which shows how gender roles can limit what women are supposed to do. On the other hand, Joe is a hardworking man, he takes care of his family which reflects society's

expectation of masculinity. Their relationship is full of love but also shaped by gender and class dynamic with Joe and Missie May as the supportive wife.

A pivotal moment between the two occurred when Joe discovered the affair between Missie May and Slemmons a wealthy man with gold tooth who represents money and power that made him a symbol of the American Dream. Missie May was drawn to Slemmons not because of his wealth but because he represents a chance to escape the limitations placed on her as a black woman. However, this hurts Joe and creates a big emotional gap between them. Despite his pain, Joe decided to give a chance to their relation. He did not leave her to show how much he love her. Over time, their relationship started to become good as they both realized how strong their love really was. In the end, Missie May is pregnant and the birth of their child become a symbol of new beginning and hope of their life. (Hurstons. Z. N.P).

Synopsis of L'Interdite:

L'interdite is an autobiographical novel that addresses the conditions of Algerian women after independence. The main character, Sultana, leaves Algeria to settle in Montpellier, France, where she becomes a doctor. Following the death of her friend Yacine, she decides to return to her homeland. She goes back to her village, Ain Nakhla, where she defies religious norms by attending Yacine's funeral. Since he worked as a doctor at the village clinic, Sultana takes his place. She faces numerous insults and misunderstandings from the locals, especially from fundamentalists, and suffers from violence.

A key event in the story is her meeting with Vincent, a French tourist often referred to as "Roumi," a term used to describe Europeans. Within the story, the interactions between Sultana and the French characters such as Vincent stresses the cultural differences and tensions that arise from colonial histories. Indeed, Sultana's resistance to the village's narrow views and her rejection of the imposed limitations on her gender caused anger among the

local male leaders. The story also portrays the struggles of women in a patriarchal society. Sultana's journey from Algeria to France and back illustrates her fight for autonomy and the challenges women face in asserting their rights. The fundamentalists opposition to Sultana's actions at Yacine's funeral exemplifies the societal constraints placed on women. Sultana's profession as a doctor and her education create a class distinction that affects her relationships and the expectations placed upon her.

III. Results:

In our dissertation, we explored the issue of race, gender and class by reading and analyzing the two novels Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993). We noticed that in the two novels, the authors give an image of oppressed women who struggle against the restrictions of a patriarchal society and inside and outside home. Both works reveal how women are trapped within intersecting systems of domination yet they also emphasize resilience, agency and the possibility of self-realization. By comparing these two narratives, we highlight the transnational dimension of women oppression and the shared struggle for liberation across different cultural and historical contexts.

In the first chapter of our study, we have examined the impact of racial and gender oppression, particularly on Black women and explained how male domination restricts their opportunities and agency. In both *The Gilded Six Bits* and *L'interdite*, the female characters endure social and traditional forms of abuse. In Hurston's story, Joe Banks marginalizes his wife, Missie May, by enforcing his own ideals of masculinity and control within their marriage. His behavior reflects patriarchal norms that confine women to domestic roles and thereby reinforcing male dominance within the household. Similarly, in Mokeddem's *L'interdite*, the female protagonist faces oppressive cultural and familial expectations that limit her freedom and self-expression. Mokeddem's work exposes how deeply ingrained

social traditions and gender roles in Algerian society perpetuate the marginalization of women, presenting their struggle against both patriarchal authority and broader societal constraints.

In the second chapter, we have explored how race and class intersect to marginalize women in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite*. Both works reveal how social and cultural structures contribute to the marginalization of individuals, restricting their opportunities and freedoms. Hurston's work illustrates how racial discrimination compounds economic hardship constraining the lives of Black individuals. Similarly, Mokeddem's narrative depicts the challenges faced by women in the Algerian society marked by patriarchy and religious intolerance, which severely limit their autonomy. Together, these texts demonstrate the complex and interconnected ways in which race and class perpetuate inequality and exclusion across different cultural and social contexts.

Despite the similarities between the two novels, but there are differences between them. Hurston focused on women oppression and gender roles with family in Afro-American society and intimate relationships. She exposes how marriage, gender roles and social expectations confine women to silence and submission, while also showing their gradual attempts to resist. However, Mokeddem studied how female characters suffer from patriarchy the whole society. She illustrates how women's subjugation operates not only on domestic spaces but also in cultural, religious and political frameworks that collectively silence female voices.

Chapter One:

Gender and Class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded*

Six Bits (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite*

(1993)

Discussion:

In this section, we aim to study two narratives : Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993). In the light of William Kimberly Crenshaw's "Demerginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics" (1989). This analysis will answer the complexities of patriarchal oppression and societal expectations present in both narratives. Hurston's work presents Afro-American society and Mokeddem's novel portrays the Algerian traditional society. Both works evoke women's experiences and struggles against the prescribed roles and classes. By examining the aspects of gender disparities, resistance against racism and social challenges, the similarities between the experiences of the main characters become clear despite their belonging to different cultures. Thus, the purpose of this study is to offer a profound and vast comprehension about the harsh and cruel impact of patriarchal dominance, multiple discrimination and oppression on the Afro- American and Algerian women.

Chapter One: Gender and Class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993)

This chapter discusses the intersection of gender and class in Zora Neale Hurston and Malika Mokeddem's selected works. The authors present respectively stories about the lives of Black American and the Algerian people in the twentieth century. They elaborate how gender and class are related through the interplay of economic status and values and how they are both patriarchal societies. Historically, The Afro-American and the Algerian societies suffered from patriarchy, where men dominated all the fields of life and gained authority over women, leading to inequality, unjust treatment as well as limited opportunities and social rights. Through Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Mokeddem's novel *L'interdite* (1993), gender and class are closely connected and affect the behavior of the main characters.

a-The Intersection of Gender and Class in *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933):

In the Afro-American society, gender roles often confine women to domestic responsibilities, while social class pressures create a strong desire for wealth as means of improving one's life. This intersection influences the characters' actions and relationships, revealing how societal expectations based on both gender and class impact personal decisions and moral struggles within the narrative. According to Karl Marx, class is a group with intrinsic tendencies and interests that differ from those of other groups within society, the basis of a fundamental antagonism between such groups which means the fact that each class has interests that contradict those of other classes and creates a basic conflict at the heart of society. In other word, class refers to a system of stratification; how people are grouped based on their economic status, occupation, education and social power. (Marx&Engels, 1848.p.14)

Hurston tells us a story of a young working -class Black couple Joe and Missie May who were living in a small simple home. Their life was not a prestigious one but full of joy and love. Missie is just an ordinary woman whose world is limited in terms of power and prestige. She cooks, cleans and her role is based only on a wife and homemaker. Her experience shows how a woman is seen and judged or precisely how she is exploited and sexualized by Otis D. Slemmons, a wealthy man who clearly does not respect her. He views her as someone he can manipulate because he thought she is fragile and buy her attention with gold and compliments because of her lower class. In this context, we may read the following words in Crenshaw's theory: "when we talk about inequality, we are often talking about material differences in conditions of life. Take income inequality. Numerous statistics show that women still get paid less for the same work." (Crenshaw, 1989, p.140)

From the above quotation, Crenshaw means that inequality is often understood in terms of material differences such as their income disparities and poverty that affects women's lives in profound ways. She points out that women often earn less than men for the same work, and

this means that inequality is not just an abstract concept, but something that has real and measurable effects on people's everyday lives.

The law often failed to recognize how being female created a specific kind of exclusion because it did not take into consideration all the compounded struggles they face. In Hurston's story, Missie May's struggles are compounded by her position as a lower class and a Black woman in the early twentieth century South, suffering from the Jim Crow Laws effects and her modest class origin belonging. She faces challenge that cannot be explained by her being a woman or poor alone. Her limited options, the pressures she feels to improve her family's financial situation, and the harsh judgment she faces after her mistake all are caused because of her position as a working class Black woman.

Hurston seeks to explore the struggles of Black women in a unique situations, emphasizing the fact that gender and class oppression can affect women across various social backgrounds. She showed that women experiences at home are strongly influenced by their social class. Furthermore, the interplay of gender and class shapes women's attitudes toward work and their employment behaviors, occasionally challenging or even reversing the typical class influenced norms commonly observed in society.

In *The Gilded Six Bits*, gender creates class divisions through traditional roles and power imbalance in the marriage of Joe and Missie May. Joe, as the husband, holds economic and social authority as the main provider while Missie May is expected to be the homemaker, supporting him and managing the household. This reflects the patriarchal society where men dominate and women are dependent, reinforcing class distinctions within their community. This means that men's authority limits women's independence (Babamiri. 2017, pp. 46-47) Through Kimberly Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, we can explain how gender and class are intersect in *The Gilded Six Bits* and create unique experiences of oppression. In this sense, Crenshaw states:

Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It's not simply that there's a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ problem there. Many times that framework erases what happens to people who are subject to all of these things. (Crenshaw, 2017)

This quote examines the case of how gender and class intersect to shape unique experiences of oppression. For example, Missie May's identity as a Black woman in a lower class community cannot be understood by looking at gender or class alone. Her struggles in the novel come not only from being a Black woman but also from the economic limitations linked to her lower class. In her community, women are expected to stay at home and are not allowed to work outside. This expectation limits women's opportunities to improve their class standing and maintain the current class status. They face oppression from both white society and within their own race, especially from Black men. Stripped of civil rights and denied protection from the state, they endure dehumanization and abuse. Thus, gender roles actively contribute to sustaining class divisions by restricting women's economic independence and reinforcing their subordination. (Babamiri, 2017,p.45). The American culture justified this violence by portraying them as prostitutes and thieves. They are ignored compared to white women and always face violence and feel unsafe.

Hurston wrote *The Gilded Six Bits* in which she presented her life in an indirect way by using the character of Missie May. She described how women suffer from class and gender roles and how they were forced to stay at home and do house work. It was a social norm that women were forced to obey and they are completely dependent on their husband's income. However, she does not accept to be a homemaker who would have sacrificed her career for her husband's comfort, by staying at home and focusing on managing the house. In the story, Missie May's experience shows the complexity of being a black woman in a patriarchal society that judges them harshly and limits their rights, as shown in the narrator's description:

Halfway between her house and the quarters she met her husband's mother, and after a short talk she turned and went back home. Never would she admit defeat to that woman who prayed for it nightly. If she had not the substance of marriage, she had the outside show. (p. 6).

This quote shows that even black women are convinced by the gender roles and accepted their status attributed to them. Missie May's determination to resist traditional expectations imposed by her mother in law and society and her marriage may lack true emotional depth, she maintains the appearance of a proper wife, refusing to admit defeat to those who wish her failure. It highlights the difficult position of Black women in a patriarchal society, who face harsh judgment and limited rights but continue to assert their strength and resilience.

One day when Joe comes back home from his work, he initiates a game to show that he has more control over his wife. In this game, he uses money as he thinks that it brings him power. However, Joe's way of using it to control his wife shows that he does not realize he is hurting the love and care they used to have. Instead of being close and kind to each other, he is trying to be the boss, and this makes their relationship weaker.

Who datchunkin' money in mahdo'way? She demanded. No answer from the yard. She leaped off the porch and began to search the shrubbery. She peeped under the porch and hung over the gate to look up and down the road. While she did this, the man behind the jasmine darted to the chinaberry tree. She spied him and gave chase. Nobody ain'tgointer be chunkin' money at me and Ah not do 'emnothin, she shouted in mock anger... (pp. 11-12).

Missie May actually feels so hard in how Joe conduct her. His behavior is closely related to sexism and how gender roles shape her identity as a Black woman. Joe's view of women is highly stereotypical. This is evident when he warns Missie May not to reach his pocket. He said "Tain't. Move yo' hand. Woman ain't got no business in a man's clothes nohow. Go way," (p. 10, 12).

Crenshaw's theory helps us to understand Missie May's experience beyond sexism and class. She explains that the problem with identity politics is not that it fails to transcend difference, but that it frequently conflates or ignores intragroup differences (Crenshaw, 1989). This quote explained how Missie May's marginalization results from the overlapping

and interacting systems of sexism and class oppression. Joe's control over her, including restricting her actions and access to resources, reflects the combined effects of patriarchal gender norms and class based economic dominance that limit her autonomy and rights. Her identity as a Black woman in a lower class context means that these oppressions overlap and compound so they intersect rather than act separately. Crenshaw criticizes approaches that examine race, gender, or class, arguing that these perspectives often overlook the unique challenges faced by individuals at these interconnected identities. Missie May's struggle, including her affair with Slemmons as an attempt to gain economic independence, exemplifies the harm caused by these oppressions.

Joe allows Missie May to do only what he believes she is entitled to do. Although their family appears to be perfect, in reality, Missie May as a wife, does not have the freedom to act according to a specific agenda and a clear set of guidelines directed by Joe. She was controlled by her husband, who believes he knows what is best for her and thinks that he has this responsibility to guide and control her. Another scene that reveals discrimination occurs during a conversation between Joe and Missie May at the dinner table.

Very little talk during the meal, but that little consisted of banter that pretended to deny affection but in reality flaunted it. Like when Miss May reached for a second helping of the tater pone. Joe snatched it out of her. After Missie May had made two or three unsuccessful grabs at the pan, she begged, "Aw, Joe, gimme some mo' dat tater pone. (p. 10, 13)

Missie May does not accept how Joe's reductive view about women. She just does not know how to answer that problem without making a new problem. She said "Don't you mess wid mah business, man. You git in yo' clothes. Ah'm a real wife, not no dress and breathe. Ah might not look lak one, but if you burn me, you won't get a thing but wife ashes." (p. 10, 12). Which means that she still depends on her husband and she wants to show that her true power and resilience cannot be destroyed. He takes her to Otis D. Slemmons's ice cream shop, a newcomer from Chicago intending to introduce her and show

her off. Although Missie May feels insecure about Slemmons's wealth and style, her husband wants to demonstrate both his wife's value and assert his ownership.

In the story, Missie May's gender marginalization is evident in how Joe controls her actions and restricts her freedom. For example, Joe's jealousy and suspicion lead him to keep a strict watch on Missie May, limiting her social interactions and independence. In addition, Missie May is expected to manage the household and support Joe without any financial or personal autonomy, reflecting the traditional gender role, that confines her to servitude within marriage.

Another situation illustrating her gendered oppression is when Missie May feels trapped in a life where her worth is tied to her role as Joe's wife and homemaker. Her affair with Slemmons can be seen as an act of resistance against this limited role, seeking economic security and personal agency outside the constraints imposed by Joe and societal expectations of women. Through these experiences, the story reveals how Missie May's gender shapes her struggles and her desire to assert control over her own life.

The hours went past on their rusty ankles. Joe still and quiet on one bed rail and Missie May wrung dry of sobs on the other. Finally, sun's tide crept upon the shore of night and drowned all its hours. Missie May with her face stiff and streak toward the window saw the dawn come into her yard. It was a day. Nothing more. Joe wouldn't be coming home as usual. No need to fling open the front door and sweep off the porch, making it nice for Joe. Never no more breakfast to cook, no more washing and starching of Joe's jumper-jackets and pants. No more nothing. So why get up? (pp. 10, 16)

According to the quote, Missie May's suffering is deeply tied to the restrictive gender roles imposed on lower class women. The latter often have fewer and limited opportunities for education and financial independence, making marriage as the unique social empowerment of social standing. Yet, this also traps them in a system where their value is tied to their role as wives and mothers. Joe's control over Missie May reflects how gender expectations within their class maintain male dominance and restrict women's freedom. This dynamic creates a

cycle where Missie May's class position is reinforced by her gender role, as she cannot easily challenge her husband's authority or improve her status independently. The intersection of class and gender thus confines her showing how working class women suffer from both economic hardship and patriarchal control.

Missie May's involvement with Slemmons represents her struggle to escape the confines of her modest life with Joe and to attain wealth. She is unhappy with her everyday life and is attracted to Slemmons's money because she believes having wealth could help her overcome the unfair treatment and social limits she faced as a Black woman and as Joe's wife. By being with Slemmons, Missie May tries to gain independence and show that she is not just Joe's property but a person who has the right to choose what is best for her. (Scallo, 2014) Missie May becomes a plot device to reveal male anxieties rather than a fully realized subject. Her temptation by Slemmon's wealth reflects the economic precarity black women faced, forced to navigate between romantic loyalty and material survival.

Missie May is described as a woman who betrayed her husband. She believes that by engaging with Slemmons, she can bring money and improve her status in a society that does not value women like her. Within the story we may read these lines: "She wanted something from him, something she couldn't name, something that her own man, Joe, couldn't give her". (Hurstons.1933). This quote shows Missie May's material motivations behind the betrayal, her desire for a better life rooted in the limitations of her class, drawing her to make this decision. This reinforces Crenshaw's idea that the intersection of gender and class creates unique experiences of oppression and Missie May's betrayal is an intersectional response to the complex pressures she faces in society that offers few options for Black lower class women.

Missie May's actions driven by these intersecting oppressions reflects how society fails to see the complexities of her situations and how people respond to her actions. Class

plays a significant role in how Missie is seen after the betrayal especially as a Black woman in the 1930s. People who live at the intersection of several marginalized identities are often not understood unless we use an intersectional approach.

In Hurston's portrayal of a simple town life, women's reputation is very important and any unacceptable form of loyalty and modesty would directly lead to a social exclusion from individuals and community as a whole. Unlike someone from a wealthier background, the protagonist Missie must stay living the same social conditions and the consequences of her actions, in other terms she cannot have any option to escape moral judgment and this illustrates Crenshaw's point that the intersections of multiple oppressions result in a complex form of marginalization as Missie May who is seen through her gender as a woman expected to be sexually loyal and pure and her class as a lower-class woman and her idea of intersectionality helps us to explain why Missie May's infidelity has a such heavy impact; because identity is shaped by gender and class what makes the consequences of any inadmissible actions more severe.

Missie May already reaches what she wants by sacrificing her marriage. However, as a wife who loves her husband, she continues her struggle to get back her husband's love and forgiveness. She wants a happy marriage. Even though their relation is not so fine like before, Missie May tries to have a baby, the one who Missie May thinks can help her to win her husband's love and forgiveness even her class position. Her struggle succeeded. Then Missie May delivered a fine boy, who looks like Joe. The latter tries hard to heal this big wound in his relationship with Missie May.

The selected work is deeply rooted in the experiences of Black women in America, as we have shown through the characters in the story. By portraying the difficult realities of systemic racism, economic and social consequences, African American writers encourage resistance and empowerment, inviting readers to challenge the structures that sustain

inequality and to advocate for liberation and social justice especially those of oppressed women. This work remind us that societal structures whether based on gender and class often impose unjust limitations on individuals.

b-The Intersection of Gender and Class in Malika Mokeddem *Linterdite* (1993):

Gender and social class are deeply interconnected and jointly shape individuals' identities, roles, and experiences within society. While gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviors, and expectations associated with being male or female, social class denotes a hierarchical system based on economic, cultural, and social status. The intersection of these two dimensions reveals how gender roles and expectations vary significantly across different class backgrounds. For instance, women from lower social classes often face compounded challenges such as economic hardship, limited educational opportunities, and restricted labor market access, which reinforce traditional gender norms and limit social mobility. Conversely, women from higher social classes may experience gender expectations intertwined with privileges related to education, cultural capital, and social influence, allowing for more diverse expressions of gender identity and roles. This intersectionality shows that gender cannot be fully understood without considering the social class as an influential factor, as both factors together shape access to resources, power dynamics, and socialization processes. Thus, analyzing gender through the lens of social class provides a more nuanced understanding and complex of social inequalities and the diverse experiences of gender across different socio-economic contexts.

In Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993) Sultana Medjahed is the perfect example of the oppressed woman. She is widely understood as a fictionalized portrayal closely reflecting Mokeddem's own life experiences. Like Mokeddem, Sultana was born in Algeria into a traditional environment and later fled to France to carry on her medical studies, becoming a doctor. Sultana's return to her Algerian village and her confrontation with patriarchal

oppression portrays Mokeddem's critique of Algerian society and her personal journey of exile and identity conflict. Sultana's character embodies Mokeddem's own struggles with being a Western educated woman challenging male dominated and religious norms in Algeria. The novel uses Sultana's story to allegorize broader themes of misogyny, exile, and resistance making her a semi-autobiographical figure representing Mokeddem's life and feminist stance. In an interview made in 1994, Mokeddem states:

All my life I have waged a battle to be whom I want to be in the face of a society that wanted to crush women. I dedicated myself to my studies, to the battle for women's rights, but I was suffocating. I had to live. That's my failure. I write to raise my voice from the midi (the southern coast of France), a voice other than that put forth by the (Muslim) fanatics, and to rid myself of this feeling of failure. I am from both coasts, a woman flayed alive, but also an angry woman. (Mokeddem,1994)

This quote reflects the intersectional nature of Mokeddem's struggle shaped by gender, culture, religion and migration. Her refusal to remain silent in the face of these challenges makes her marginalized. As she chooses to write and raise her voice, she counteracts the dominant narratives imposed not only on her, but on all women who are silenced and oppressed. Mokeddem reflects on dedicating herself to education and the fight for women's right, only to feel suffocated by the persistence barriers and failures she encounters. Her sense of failure is not personal but is shaped by the broader context of societal and religious pressures. Mokeddem's testimony powerfully reveals how class underpins and deepens her sense of marginalization.

Her dedication to education signals not only a feminist ambition but also a desire for upward mobility in a context where access to knowledge and opportunity is often denied to women from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Yet her admission that she was "suffocating" points to the emotional and material toll of navigating spaces not built for her. The mention of "the midi," a region historically associated with immigrant labor and working-class communities, further anchors her voice within a peripheral and economically

disadvantaged geography. Her feeling of “failure” can be read as a response to the systemic limitations placed on women of her background, who are expected to sacrifice personal and political fulfillment in order to survive. Class, then, is not a separate category of oppression but one that intersects with gender, religion, and cultural displacement to produce a uniquely precarious position. Mokeddem’s act of writing becomes a form of resistance against not just patriarchal or cultural silencing, but against the economic exclusion that shapes the lives of many postcolonial women.

Sultana confronts gender and class oppression in a deeply patriarchal and religiously fundamentalist Algerian society. As a modern and educated woman who returns from exile in France to her native village Ain Nakhla, she becomes forbidden because she refuses to submit to the prevailing male dominated norms. She faces constant judgment from men who see her as a threat to traditional gender roles and regard her as a whore simply because she defies their expectations of female behavior.

This shows the awareness that despite her professional status, her identity as a woman is what primarily exposes her to social marginalization and gendered violence within a rigid class and patriarchal system. Sultana's education profoundly shapes her view on gender roles by enabling her to critically question and reject traditional patriarchal norms. Her exposure to knowledge and rational thinking allows her to envision a society where women govern and men are secluded reversing conventional gender roles. This education fosters her awareness that gender roles are socially constructed and not biologically fixed inspiring her to imagine an ideal world where women excel in science, politics, and ethics, domains traditionally reserved for men.

Her education also shows the negative impact of isolation and lack of knowledge on women’s self-confidence and social status, as she initially feels shy and constrained but gradually realizes through her dream that these restrictions are unnecessary and oppressive.

Thus, education empowers Sultana to see gender equality as achievable and to challenge the ideology that confines women to domestic and subordinate roles.

Throughout the whole novel, the protagonist Sultana faces challenges as a woman from a traditional and rural Algerian village. She chooses a professional career as a doctor, which puts her in conflicts with her conservative society as she challenges the traditional gender roles. She says “Le village contre moi! C’est pas nouveau!” (Mokeddem, 1993, P110). Sultana describes how oppressive societal norms reflect her life and how she becomes stronger and confident to transcend the limitations imposed upon women. By studying medicine in France and her professional status as a doctor, Sultana is alienated from villagers, she suffers from marginalization and misogyny just because her society imposed traditional customs and limited roles on women of her class. Thus, Mokeddem uses Sultana as a symbol of resistance and celebrates her as a figure of resilience and strength. Her presence in the story serves as a powerful example of the profound impact of challenging societal norms as she did not accept to live under male authority.

As a result, her class and status were an opposite point that marked her life as a protagonist. She was an educated woman working as a doctor in the Algerian society and at her time it was a brave and courageous departure for the other women of her land but living in a male dominated environment upset the balance and makes her a “Forbidden Woman”. Mokeddem shows how class oppression is deeply gendered. Poor women in the village are denied education and expected to submit to arranged marriages and domestic roles. Sultana’s refusal to participate in this system is not only a feminist act but also a class act, she uses her education and economic independence to reject a class based system that keeps women subservient.

Despite suffering from the external world because of her social class, Sultana never stops challenging the traditional norms and the male domination. She bravely deals with the

masculine figures in the novel such as Bakkar , the mayor of her village, instead of adopting a dominated attitude towards them, Sultana dares to defy them. For instance, while talking about the Islamists, she states: “they don’t scare me”. Then when Bakkar orders her to introduce herself, she answers: “that’s none of your businesses”. Another example is when she is required to replace the deceased doctor of the village, she refuses to show him anything about her job.

These examples take shape through Sultana’s access to education and a professional career as she challenges the intersecting oppressions of her society. The village’s women, are abandoned, living under traditional background and patriarchal oppressions and Sultana refuses to accept this social order what makes her rejected both by men and women in her village.

Sultana is still challenging the social inequalities and disrupt the oppressed barriers in her village. She gradually discovers new sources of strength within herself and her community. She begins to build alliances with women who share her vision for change, realizing that collective action can be a powerful force against discrimination. Through small acts of solidarity and resistance, she helps to foster a sense of hope among those who have long felt marginalized. Over time, Sultana’s journey becomes not only about her own self-realization, but she affects the journey of many women in her village. But at the same time, her daily experiences are marked by the awareness that no matter how much she achieves, her acts and class origins continue to define her in the eyes of others.

In *L’interdite* the intersection of gender and class is not only central to Sultana but also shapes the portrayal of secondary characters. Many of them reflect Algeria’s social inequalities and postcolonial and Black decade trauma. Mokeddem uses these characters to illustrate how racial and class division operate within both Algerian and Franco-Algerian contexts, often reinforcing systems of exclusion and silencing.

Dalila's experience illustrates how gender functions as a fundamental axis in the construction of social class in Mokeddem's *l'interdite*. Dalila is a young Algerian girl who lives under the authority of seven brothers. Her position within the family and society is not only shaped by economic or social status but is deeply influenced by the expectations and limitations imposed on her due to her gender. This intersection of gender and class reveals the ways in which patriarchal structures perpetuate inequality, reinforce class divisions and keep women like Dalila in lower social position. (Gagiano, A.2013, NP)

To illustrate, Dalila and her mother live under the authority of male figures who dominate their lives. Their subjugation is not merely a matter of economic dependency but also tied to social norms that define the roles and behaviors appropriate to women. Dalila's mother, for instance, is restricted to the home, and her work dismissed and overlooked because of her gender. Dalila states: "I don't say anything to my mother. Sometimes, she too feels the anger of my brothers. But if I speak out against them, she hits me. She says I must obey them." This gendered division reinforces a lower social class, by marginalizing contributions and their opportunities for upward mobility are severely limited.

Furthermore, Dalila's experiences demonstrate how patriarchy intersects with class oppression. The dominance of male authority in her life exemplifies how patriarchal power structures maintain class divisions by limiting women's agency and liberty. This is evident when Dalila's anger and frustration are dismissed or punished, as seen in her emotional expression, "Sometimes, they hit me, I lower my eyes, and I stay silent. Their anger is a wall against which my rebellion breaks". It represents how female resistance is silenced within a strictly gendered social structure. (Mokeddem, M. 1993)

Moreover, these gendered expectations affect Dalila's view about herself and limits her aspirations. Society believes that women should stay at home and be subordinate to men. This creates a cycle of class reproduction, where women like Dalila do not have the

opportunity to pursue higher education because her family and society believe that women's place is at home. In addition, Dalila is prohibited from attending public places such as the regregations policies in the south, which isolates her from cultural and social experiences that could broaden her worldview. Her family control her appearance and behavior, emphasizing obedience and submission. These restrictions do not limit only her personal freedom but also prevent her from forming social connections outside her immediate environment.

These experiences illustrate how gendered expectations combine with class structures to exclude Dalila and women like her from education, employment, and social mobility. This systemic exclusion reinforces their class position and perpetuates the inequalities inherent in the patriarchal system. Dalila's character shows that gender is not just a personal identity but also a social tool that creates and maintains class divisions. Her story reveals the complex ways in which patriarchal norms intersect with economic and social structures to confine women to a subordinate class position. This illustrates the urgent need to address gender as a critical factor in the analysis of class and social inequality.

Throught the novel, Mokeddem portrays other female characters, who are native Algerian woman, to illustrate the suffering and class divisions that women endure because of their gender. The rigid expectations imposed on them in their community confine them to subordinate social positions, limiting their access to education, economic independence, and personal freedom. These gender roles are not merely cultural norms but function as mechanisms that reinforce and perpetuate class divisions, keeping women trapped in cycles of poverty and marginalization. One of the native women claims:

What sadness to realize that one's life was nothing but slavery and humiliation, in continuous powerlessness! So how can one pass on a tradition that no one respects anymore? How to perpetuate a way of life that no longer grants us any dignity, at any moment of life? (p.97).

This quote reflects the awareness of native women of their oppression and class, emphasizing their suffering and lack of agency in their social environment. It reveals their consciousness of being trapped in a system that denies them respect and freedom. (Djafri, Y.2014, NP)

The women in the village are expected to perform traditional domestic roles, caring for children, managing the household, and supporting their husbands without recognition or compensation. This unpaid labor sustains the family and the community, but does not translate into social or economic power for the women themselves. Their limitation to domestic roles denies them access to public participation and professional opportunities. Mokeddem illustrates how such gendered expectations effectively limit women's opportunities for upward social mobility, reinforcing their lower class status.

The village's social structure reinforces inequalities through individuals like Bakkar, the mayor of the village and women openly challenge male authority and Nassima is a perfect example of these women. Her bravery in confronting male dominance reveals the harsh reality of exclusion from education and economic opportunities. Nassima's struggle illustrates how systemic barriers prevent women financial independence and social status, trapping them in cycles of poverty defined by unpaid domestic responsibilities. This analysis aligns closely with Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality which argues that social identities such as gender and class do not operate independently but intersect to create unique experiences of oppression.

Moreover, women like Fatma, a hardworking woman managing her house under difficult conditions embody the compounded effects of class and gender oppression. Fatma's daily life is marked by scarcity and struggles as she handles domestic responsibilities under difficult conditions. Her story reveals the impact of traditional gender roles on women. These roles trap them in a pattern of deprivation and subordination, limiting their autonomy and reinforcing their marginalization within the village's class structure.

Despite these challenges, Mokeddem draws attention to the strength found in female solidarity and resistance. The village's women organize secret meetings to share their experiences and support one another against male domination. These gatherings become spaces of empowerment and resistance and self management where women recognize their shared struggles and the structural nature of their oppression. Through collective action, they challenge social norms that keep them marginalized, suggesting that unity can be a powerful force for change. (Mokeddem.1993)

L'interdite analyzes how class oppression in the Algerian village is deeply gendered. It reveals how women's poverty is maintained through cultural expectations that limit them to unpaid domestic labor. Mokeddem's narrative affirms the strength found in female solidarity and collective resistance as essential to challenging entrenched social inequalities. The intersection of gender and class plays a crucial role in exposing the effects of colonialism and internal social system in postcolonial Algeria. Malika Mokeddem does not depict distinction in a traditional, biological sense but rather as a cultural and symbolic construct shaped by colonial history. Sultana, the protagonist, embodies this intersection: as an Algerian woman educated in France, she occupies a privileged class position due to her professional success and economic independence. However, her Westernized identity also marks her as othered within her own community, where she is perceived as having adopted the ways of the former colonizer. This cultural difference is not creates a source of class resentment, as her village sees her both as morally corrupted and economically superior. Mokeddem thus reveals how gender and class are intertwined in producing exclusion and inequality: those who deviate from traditional norms are punished not just for their identity but for embodying a class status that symbolizes both foreignness and power and through these intersecting dynamics, the novel critiques how colonial structures continue to define value, voice, and belonging.

Sultana in Malika Mokeddem's *L'Interdite* and Missie May in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* share parallels as complex female protagonists who navigate the intersecting pressures of race, class, and gender within oppressive cultural frameworks. Both women challenge traditional gender roles in societies that closely regulate female behavior. Missie May through her act of infidelity and the ensuing negotiation of forgiveness within her working class African American community, and Sultana through her exile and professional achievements as a doctor which defy the patriarchal and cultural expectations of her Bedouin background. Additionally, both characters grapple with issues of identity and belonging: Missie May's role is deeply connected to home and community stability, while Sultana experiences displacement and bicultural negotiation between Algerian and French worlds. Their stories reflect themes of resilience and agency, illustrating how women from marginalized backgrounds assert control over their lives amid social and economic constraints, ultimately revealing nuanced intersections of personal and collective struggles against gendered, racial and class based oppression.

Chapter Two:

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Mokeddem's L'interdite (1993).*

Chapter Two: Race and Class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993).

In the following chapter, we will discuss the issues of race and class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite*. While the forms delve into how colonial history has shaped social status, creating divisions that persist long after independence and Hurston portrays a society where ethnic distinctions depend on economic and cultural expectations, reinforcing systems of oppression and discrimination. To explore these issues, we will rely on of Kimberly Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality which describes the realities of women from historically marginalized societies as being victims of multiple types of discrimination related to race and class.

a. Race and Class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits*:

According to the English Oxford Dictionary, race is the inability or refusal to recognize the rights, needs, dignity, or value of some people of particular races or geographical origins. Race is understood as a social and cultural construct that arose historically, particularly during European colonization. In Hurston's novel, Missie May's story is a profound exploration of the intertwined nature of race and class oppression in early twentieth-century America. Missie May's experiences as an African-American woman reveal the systemic barriers that limited her economic opportunities and social mobility. Through her narrative, we gain insight into how race and class function together to shape the lives of marginalized individuals, particularly Black women, whose struggles were often invisible or misunderstood.

In *The Gilded Six Bits*, Missie May's character illustrates how race shapes directly class status and economic realities. She and her husband Joe live in a small Black community where Joe works at a fertilizer plant. The arrival of Slemmons, a wealthy white man flaunting his gold coins, exposes Missie May to the stark contrast between her impoverished life and

the illusion of white wealth and privilege. Her temptation and eventual affair with Slemmons demonstrates how racialized class barriers create desires and pressures that drive her to desperate actions. The gold coins Slemmons offers are not just money but also a symbol of class divide wealth and status that are largely inaccessible to her because of her race.

Slemmons was a tall, fat man, with a diamond ring on his finger and a roll of bills in his pocket. He walked with the confidence of a man who had money to burn. He took out a handful of gilded half-dollars and tossed them into the air, letting them catch the sunlight. The coins look like gold but are fake. For Missie May, this shows how Black women suffer because racism keeps them poor they. They see wealth but cannot have it, and this makes life hard for them.

Missie May's betrayal is a response to the intersection of race and class oppression. Her race confines her to a lower economic class, shaping her aspirations and decisions. The poverty she experiences is not incidental but a product of systemic racial exclusion from economic opportunities. This is evident when Joe discovers that Slemmons is in relation with Missie May and finds the gold coins, which turn out to be gilded half-dollars only illusions of wealth. This moment underscores the painful reality that the wealth and status associated with whiteness are often superficial and unattainable for Black people such as Missie May and Joe. The coins symbolize the deceptive nature of class mobility under white supremacy, where the appearance of wealth masks the structural inequalities that maintain racial stratifications. Joe left the gilded coin on the table and walked out without another word. Hurston states: "Missie May sat alone, the weight of shame pressing down on her. The coin, once a symbol of wealth, now felt like a token of her betrayal and the harsh judgment of their community". (Hurston.Z.N,1933. p.11)

Furthermore, Missie May's suffering is intensified by the patriarchal expectations within her community. Her role as a wife and woman is tied to fidelity and domestic

responsibility, and her betrayal subjects her to social vulnerability. Joe's initial coldness and the symbolic act of leaving the gilded coin as payment for her "love" underscore the complex interplay of race and class in their relationship. Missie May's eventual pregnancy and the birth of their child mark a renewal of the connection between them. It also reflects the social pressures on Black women to restore family unity despite systemic hardships.

The community's racial background shapes their views on class distinctions by deeply intertwining race and socioeconomic status, influencing how class is perceived and experienced within the group. In predominantly Black communities, historical and systemic racism has created economic disparities that make class divisions more pronounced and complex. These communities often recognize that race affects economic opportunities, which in turn shapes social status and class distinctions internally and externally.

Within such communities, class is not viewed independently but through the lens of racial experience. For example, Black individuals such as Missie May and her husband may have different perspectives on discrimination and economic challenges compared to other Black individuals, affecting their views on class solidarity and political agendas. Additionally, socioeconomic status influences racial self-identification and the perception of others, reinforcing class-based distinctions that are also racialized.

Joe, the protagonist, envies white men who appear to have more wealth and status which symbolize their economic advantage and social power. This reflects how race limits African Americans' access to wealth and upward mobility, reinforcing class distinctions within the Black community itself. Missie May's temptation by the flashy, seemingly wealthy Otis Slemmons who flaunts his money and status also underscores how race and class intersect as Slemmons represents a level of economic power that Joe and Missie May aspire to but cannot easily attain.

Hurston criticizes the capitalist and patriarchal structures that perpetuate these inequalities, showing how race-based class distinctions affect personal relationships and self-worth. Joe's struggle with his identity and status after Missie May's betrayal is tied to his awareness of racial and class barriers that define his place in society. Hurston narrates: “every Saturday Joe came home with a great whoop and his pockets bulged with silver dollars” (Hurston. 1933, p.12) Thus, race causes class distinction in the story by creating systemic barriers that restrict African Americans' economic opportunities and social status, which in turn shape the characters' desires, conflicts, and sense of identity within their community.

In Hurston's narrative, characters' appearances linked to race affect their social standing because physical traits serve as markers of racial identity that carry social meanings and power dynamics shaped by historical racism and colorism. As described by Hurston “She was a slim girl with eyes like black smoke; her lips were full and when she laughed a rare thing her smile was wide”. (Hurston.1933,p.14) Lighter skin or features closer to white standards often confer higher status or perceived beauty within the Black community, as seen in Hurston's works where characters with lighter complexions are sometimes treated as superior or more socially acceptable. This reflects internalized racism and the legacy of white supremacy that equates whiteness with privilege and higher class.

Moreover, racial appearance influences how characters are perceived both within their own community and by the outside white society. Hurston reveals that race is not just a biological fact but a social performance shaped by context and perception. For example, race is less about stigma and more about community identity, but outside racial appearance determines both the way individuals are treated and their social opportunities.

Thus, appearances linked to race affect social standing by reinforcing class distinctions through colorism and racialized social hierarchies, impacting characters' self-worth, relationships, and economic prospects in Hurston's narrative. The psychological

impact of these intersecting oppressions shapes Missie May's sense of self-worth and personal agency. The relentless pressure to conform to restrictive gender roles within a racially oppressive society creates a complex and fragile emotional terrain for her. Missie May's act of betrayal, followed by her efforts at reconciliation, reveals not only a struggle for economic survival but also a deep yearning for dignity and acceptance in a world that systematically marginalizes Black women.

The intersection of race and class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* reveals how these social categories collectively shape the characters' identities, relationships, and aspirations. The story criticizes the way class and racial discrimination intertwine to impose barriers to dignity and self-worth. It shows that economic status and racial identity must be understood together to fully grasp the complex struggles faced by African Americans in the early twentieth century. This nuanced intersectional perspective enriches the analysis of the novel and deepens our understanding of its social and cultural context.

b. Race and Class in Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993)

The Oxford Dictionary defines "race" in relation to people as one of the main groups that humans can be divided into according to their physical differences, for example, the color of their skin; it also refers to the fact of belonging to one of these groups. In addition, "race" can mean a group of people who share the same language, history, culture, etc. This definition highlights race as a categorization based on physical and cultural commonalities among humans.

In relation to the definition of race, we find that throughout the history of Algeria, women have faced complex intersections of race, class. During the French colonial rule, Algerian women became symbols of cultural resistance against French domination. They navigate a history marked by colonial racial oppression and ethnic struggles. In Mokeddem's *L'Interdite*,

race is shown through Sultana, the protagonist of the novel. As an Algerian woman who returns from exile in France to her native village, she confronts the oppressive social norms and fundamentalism, she is seen as an outsider who betrayed her cultural and religious norms. She faces suspicion from her community which reflects broader racial and cultural tensions rooted in Algeria's colonial history. She claims " Je suis une étrangère ici, une interdite, rejetée par tous, même ceux que j'aimais autrefois " (Mokeddem,1993,p121). This expresses her sense of exclusion and alienation from the community and the ones she belongs to, emphasizing her status as someone forbidden and isolated within her own village because of difference from the other women of her village and because of her carelessness about the customs and rules of her own village.

The racialized dimension of exclusion is further complicated when characters like Sultana navigate both Algerian and French societies. Mokeddem draws from her own experiences as a woman of a mixed heritage to show how Sultana faces double marginalization. In fact, she is seen as an "other" in France due to her darker skin or African origins. In Algeria, she encounters prejudice and racism within her own community where darker complexion is subject to discrimination even from family members. For example, in her autobiographical writings, she mentions how her own mother makes remarks about her skin color "plus noire que nous toutes" (Mokeddem.1993) and how she feels the pain of being alienated within one's own family. At the same time, when Sultana moves to France, she experiences racism as a Maghrebian immigrant; her ethnicity and skin color mark her as foreign and inferior in the eyes of many other races in French society.

Within the context of racial discrimination, Crenshaw says that race has significant social consequences because it roots in power and oppression particularly within women cases. She argues, "in sex discrimination cases, the focus is on race and class privileged women". (Crenshaw, 1989) This quote shows that legal and social analysis center on the experiences of

the upper class rather than those who face multiple, overlapping forms of oppression such as race, class and gender combined. Crenshaw argues that this leads to the exclusion of marginalized groups from feminist theory. Sultana, is forbidden not only because of her defiance of societal norms and also of her racial and class background that mark her as different and subordinate in society. Mokeddem's novel illustrates intersectionality by revealing that Sultana's challenges cannot be explained by gender alone but require an understanding of the interconnected impacts of race and class in postcolonial Algeria. Mokeddem calls into question the universal problematic of racial prejudice and challenges the reader to recognize how multiple identities such as race and class interact together, making intersectionality central to understand the protagonist's journey. She states,

I would not want to be a woman here. I would not want to have to permanently bear the weight of these stares, their multiple violences, fueled by frustration. For the first time, I realize that the most banal act of a woman in Algeria is immediately charged with symbols and heroism as the animosity is great, almost pathological. (p. 66)

In *L'interdite*, the intersection of race and class plays a crucial role in exposing the effects of colonialism and internal social system in postcolonial Algeria. Malika Mokeddem does not depict race in a traditional biological sense, but rather she considers it as a cultural and symbolic construct shaped by colonial history. Sultana, the protagonist, embodies this intersection: as an Algerian woman educated in France, she occupies a privileged class position due to her professional success and economic independence. However, her Westernized identity also marks her as racially othered within her own community where she is perceived as having adopted the ways of the former colonizer. This cultural difference is not only a form of racialization but also a source of class resentment, as her village sees her both as morally corrupted and economically superior. Mokeddem, thus, reveals how race and class are intertwined in producing exclusion and inequality: those who deviate from traditional norms are punished not just for their identity but also for embodying a class status

that symbolizes both foreignness and power. Through these intersecting dynamics, the novel critiques how colonial structures continue to define value, voice, and belonging.

Moreover, the women of the village in *L'interdite* represent a critical counterpoint to Sultana's character and offer a profound example of how class and race intersect to sustain gendered oppression in postcolonial Algeria. These women are not individually named in the same way as Sultana, which is itself a narrative choice that emphasizes their discrimination within a patriarchal and class based social order. These village women belong to the lower socio-economic class, often limited to domestic spaces with a little or no access to education or autonomy. Their lives are structured by the demands of survival and submission to male authority. Poverty intensifies their subjugation: economic dependence on fathers, husbands or brothers restrict their ability to resist or question the roles imposed on them. Women in the story are associated with authentic Algerian femininity and tradition. Mokeddem, does not idealize them, but instead uses their marginalization to emphasize how deeply the established structures of class and race are in the national psyche.

Marginalization is compounded by a form of internalized racial logic, where cultural difference becomes racialized within the same ethnic group. Women, grounded in a traditionalist worldview, come to view Western education, independence, and modernity as foreign or impure qualities they associate with Sultana and, by extension, with whiteness and colonial contamination. This dynamic reflects how race in a postcolonial society can be symbolic, operating through cultural markers. Sultana's return is not simply the return of a woman who has left; she is perceived as an "other" and racialized figure of betrayal and arrogance who challenges the moral and social fabric of the village. The hostility toward Sultana is therefore not only personal or cultural but also ideological. It is a reaction to her class mobility. She embodies the possibility of a life they are denied and taught to distrust. In this way, Algerian women are not only victims of the system but also its unwitting guardians,

reinforcing norms that preserve male dominance and class stratification. They pass down these values to younger generations, ensuring the reproduction of social inequality.

Mokeddem also implicitly critiques the nationalist discourse that idealizes women like the Algerian ones as keepers of cultural purity. In the aftermath of colonialism, Algerian identity is often constructed through a return to tradition, and women are placed at the center of this narrative as bearers of moral and national honor. However, this role comes at a cost: it denies women individuality, agency, and complexity. The village women's lack of voice is not just literary it is also political, symbolizing how the state and society both erase and exploit them.

Moreover, Sultana may appear to be opposite, her story also reflects the psychological toll of breaking away from such a background. Her loneliness and alienation are not signs of freedom without consequence, rather they reveal the emotional and cultural rupture that occurs when one goes beyond the limits of the boundaries of race, class, and gender. Mokeddem does not idealize either option conformity results in invisibility, while resistance leads to exile.

Furthermore, Dalila is another character through which Mokeddem exposes the complex intersections of race and class. She is a young Algerian girl who comes from a lower socioeconomic background, which limits her opportunities and freedom. Her family confines her to a life of labor, due to his living under the authority of her seven brothers. This reflects the patriarchal norms prevalent in her society. Her life is shaped by both her family's poor economic situation and her place in a marginalized community in Algeria, where women are socialized to accept subordination. Dalila herself describes the oppressive atmosphere at home:

Yes, I have too many brothers, they make too much noise. They argue all the time. They argue with me and they even argue with my mother. They always tell me,

'Don't go out! Work with your mother! Bring me a drink! Give me my shoes! Iron my pants! Lower your eyes when I'm talking to you!' over and over again, and you multiply that by seven. They shout and only give me orders. Sometimes, they hit me. (Mokeddem, M, 1993.p. 13)

This passage illustrates how Dalila's experiences of oppression are shaped by interconnected influences of her family dynamic and cultural environment. The house is not a comfortable place for her; it is a place where she has to do a lot of work without rest or help. Dalila does not have right to go to school or to live freely she faces challenges and racism more than poor and marginalized people.

Dalila's social class in *L'interdite* is largely determined by her racial identity as a woman of color within a society marked by systemic inequality. Her marginalized racial status places her in a lower social stratum, limiting access to resources and opportunities that are more available to others. This racial class position subjects her to social exclusion and economic hardship, which are reinforced by discriminatory practices within her community. For example, Dalila's inability to pursue education and the harsh restrictions imposed on her reflect the intersection of racial prejudice and class barriers. These structural inequalities confine her to a subordinate role, restricting her mobility and autonomy beyond what her immediate family circumstances alone would dictate. Thus, her class status is inseparable from the racial hierarchies that shape social expectations and opportunities in her environment.

Dalila's identity is rooted in the complex intersection of her Algerian heritage, cultural expectations, and the socio-political context that influences her experiences as a woman. This perspective shows that cultural identity and nationality can be just as important as race when it comes to understanding the discrimination and violence that women face. This means that discrimination and violence against her are influenced by cultural by race. In other words different Algerian laws and social norms play a crucial role in shaping the challenges she faces.

Mokeddem's perspective aligns with intersectionality by recognizing that factors such as ethnicity, culture, and national identity interact with class to create unique experiences of marginalization. Crenshaw stated: If you don't have a lens that's been trained to look at how various forms of discrimination come together, you're unlikely to develop a set of policies that will be as inclusive as they need to be (Crenshaw,1989). She argues that to understand and address the challenges faced by women of color, we must examine how race and class intersect in their lives. This intersection creates unique experiences of oppression that need specific attention. Mokeddem's novel exemplifies intersectionality by illustrating how ethnicity, culture, national identity, and class combine to create distinct experiences of marginalization for women. She writes: "Exile has softened me. Exile is the realm of the elusive, of resistant indifference." (Mokeddem.M,1993, p.71).The protagonist's oppression is not caused by a single factor but by the interlocking systems of discrimination that affect her identity and social position.

As shown in the novel, in Algeria, class and race intersect to influence the life of women. Dalila's family occupies a marginalized social position, which compounds the restrictions imposed on her. Their social class limits their access to education, mobility, and autonomy, reinforcing systemic barriers. Dalila's home became as a place of confinement for her, rather than being a place of safe. The financial struggles keep her trapped in a cycle of reliance on others, making it hard for her to find ways to resist or assert her independence. This intersection of class and gender creates a layered oppression, where societal norms and economic conditions collaborate to enforce subordination.

Mokeddem's depiction of Dalila's family as "les Noirs du désert" (L'interdite, 1993) emphasizes their racial otherness, which marks them as outsiders. This racial distinction is not merely symbolic but has tangible consequences, effectively relegating Dalila's family to a lower social stratum characterized by economic precocity and social

exclusion. The racial identity attributed to Dalila's lineage operates as a structural mechanism that produces class marginalization, limiting their opportunities for upward mobility and reinforcing their confinement within a marginalized social space.

The novel illustrates how race, as a social construct, intersects with historical and cultural factors to create a form of class differentiation. Dalila's family and their racialized identity restricts their access to education, resources, and social networks, which are essential for socioeconomic advancement. This exclusion is compounded by the social perception of their racial identity as inferior or alien, which legitimizes their subordinate class position. Thus, in *L'interdite*, race is not simply an individual attribute but a social force that shapes class relations and perpetuates systemic inequality. Mokeddem's narrative reveals how racialization underpins class structures, producing a form of marginalization that confines Dalila's family to the periphery of Algerian society.

Class profoundly affects people's lives as it shapes daily decisions and experiences and determines the distribution of power, resources and privileges creating distinct life opportunities for individuals. *L'interdite* vividly exemplifies how class shapes Dalila's experiences, this is clearly illustrated when Mokeddem writes: "The house is a place of endless work, where women exhaust themselves without rest, without recognition". (Mokeddem.M, 1993.p. 27) This quote demonstrates how class shapes Dalila's oppression by limiting her opportunities and reinforcing her subordination both at home and in society. Drawing on Crenshaw's concept of intersectionality, Mokeddem's work reveals that the struggles of these women are not caused by a single factor but by the combination of race and class identities.

In the Algerian context, race and class are deeply linked to social and cultural systems, which, together, make the challenges that women face. This layered oppression explores the urgent need to address social inequalities in a comprehensive way, one that recognizes how

race and class interact to shape women's lives, restrict their freedoms, and limit their access to different resources and opportunities. Mokeddem's portrayal of Algerian women, calls for a broader understanding of discrimination that goes beyond simplistic categories and acknowledges the multifaceted realities of women in Algeria.

In Mokeddem's novel native Algerian women are marginalized not only as females but also as indigenous members of their society. In *Ain Nakhla*, women are not satisfied, they suffer from different kinds of pain and oppression because most of them come from poor and working class families. They do not have access to education or any good job, which in fact keeps them dependent on men. One of the women of the village states:

How heartbreaking to realize that one's life was nothing but slavery and humiliation, in continuous powerlessness! So how can one pass on a tradition that no one respects anymore? How can we perpetuate a way of life that no longer grants us any consideration, at any moment in life? (Mokeddem.M, 1993.p.15)

It goes from this quote that Algerian women faced difficulties and struggles in their society. The girl must fight to be free and to shape her place within the strict social expectations of the village, changing the limitation imposed on her by her family and community.

Mokeddem's representation of native women's experiences reveals how racial otherness, rooted in their indigenous identity and skin color, functions as a fundamental axis of class oppression. These women are often perceived as outsiders within their own countries, subjected to systemic exclusion that limits their economic opportunities. This racialized marginalization compounds the effects of poverty, creating entrenched cycles of dependency and social invisibility. Similar to how native women in other contexts face historic and ongoing discrimination native women in Algeria are caught at the intersection of race and class, where their identity as "the other" justifies their relegation to the margins of society. This structural exclusion not only restricts their material conditions but also shapes societal attitudes that devalue their contributions and deny them full participation in social and

political life. Addressing their marginalization, thus, requires recognizing how racial identity operates as a mechanism of class based exclusion and demands multifaceted interventions that confront both racial prejudice and economic inequality simultaneously.

Both Zora Neale Hurston in *The Gilded Six Bits* and Malika Mokeddem in *L'Interdite* explore the intersections of race, class, and gender to reveal the compounded oppressions faced by their characters. Hurston and Mokeddem depict how socio-economic status and racial identity deeply shape individual experiences, while also illustrating how gender roles enforce additional layers of constraint and resistance. Their works highlight the struggles of women who navigate oppressive patriarchal societies that are simultaneously marked by racial and class hierarchies. Both authors expose the burdens and agency of marginalized women confronting intersecting systems of domination. This comparative analysis demonstrates that Hurston and Mokeddem use narrative to critique social inequalities and affirm the complex identities of their protagonists.

Conclusion

V. Conclusion

In this dissertation, we have examined Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* (1933) and Malika Mokeddem's *L'interdite* (1993) through the lens of Kimberly Crenshaw's influential theory of "intersectionality", as developed her 1989 article, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics". Crenshaw's framework allowed us to explore how the central characters in both texts experience intersecting and compounding forms of discrimination based on race, class, and gender revealing the unique challenges faced by women in both African and American contexts.

In our research, we have examined the intersection of gender and class, and how these factors contribute to the oppression of women. In the first chapter, we compared *The Gilded Six-Bits* by Zora Neale Hurston and *l'interdite* by Malika Mokeddem and explained how the characters manage the challenges posed by both gender expectations and economic status. This chapter demonstrates how Hurston's work reveals the struggles and resilience of Black women within a patriarchal and economically constrained society. Through her work, Hurston shows how strong and proud Black women are, motivating readers to see and push back against the unfair restrictions that gender and class put on their lives. Similarly, Mokeddem's novel reveals the complex realities faced by Algerian women, demonstrating how cultural traditions and social hierarchies restrict their freedom, while also portraying their determination and courage to challenge and overcome these limitations.

In the second chapter, we have deals the themes of race and class in Zora Neale Hurston's *The Gilded Six Bits* and Malika Mokeddem's *L'Interdite*. These novels explore how colonial history has influenced social hierarchies, creating divisions that continue to exist long after independence. To analyze these themes, we applied the theory of intersectionality, which explains how women experience multiple layers of discrimination based on race, class,

and gender. This framework helped us understand how these women have been treated like slaves.

By comparing *The Gilded Six Bits* and *L'Interdite*, it becomes clear that both works powerfully depict how gender, class, and race intersect to shape the lives and struggles of women in different cultural and historical contexts. While Hurston highlights the resilience of Black women navigating patriarchal and economically limited environments, Mokeddem reveals how colonial legacies continue to enforce social division and oppression. Together, these works demonstrate that women's experiences of discrimination are complex and multifaceted, reinforcing the importance of Kimberly Crenshaw's "intersectionality" theory in the understanding of the overlapping systems of oppression they face. This study opens the door for future researchers to further explore these intersections across diverse contexts, encouraging deeper analysis of how race, class, gender, and other social categories interact to influence women's lives globally. For example the exploration of economic constraints and class dynamics, also the impact of patriarchal structures on women's resilience underscore how multiple social categories combine to produce unique lived experiences of oppression and resistance.

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