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**The Representation of Women in Toni Morrison's
Beloved (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden
Woman* (1993)**

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Abstract

In this research paper, we have undertaken the task to lead a comparative study between two female writers: Toni Morrison and Malika Mokeddem. The purpose of this comparison is to study their respective works: *Beloved* (1987) and *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) in terms of gender. To our knowledge, they have never been joined before under the same study. Our intention is mainly is to highlight the common struggles of the female characters in these two works and the way they face the tyranny of the male dominated society and how they led themselves to affirm their identities through the disruption of the patriarchal traditional discourse. This research, then, relies on Simone De Beauvoir's ideas held in *The Second Sex* (1949), which is classified in the second wave of the Feminist movement. In this book, De Beauvoir discusses the treatment of women throughout history, which matches the different contexts "the Black decade in Algeria and slavery in the United States of America, which means that those distinct periods had several repercussions on women's subjugation. The work comprises a discussion of three important sections that include: the historical and literary contexts of the novels that led both authors to react, the representation of women and their objectification, and women's liberation. The conclusion that can be drawn from the study shows Morrison's and Mokeddem's feminist ideology. We close our dissertation with the suggestion that both novels can be read from a feminist perspective.

General Introduction:

Throughout history, women from all over the world have undergone several social, political and economic inequalities with the opposite sex. These inequalities are regulated either by religion or by the cultural context. In fact, girls are married as children or trafficked into forced labor and sexual slavery. They are refused access to education and political participation. Moreover, others are trapped in conflicts where rape is perpetrated as a war weapon. Deaths related to pregnancy are high, and women are prevented from making deep personal choices in their private lives¹.

As a consequence, these injustices led gradually to the rise of a wave of resistance within the women's consciousness that gave birth later to the Feminist movements during the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Century. The movements first appeared in America to spread later beyond the western bounds². The Feminist movements have been nourished by the contribution of reformers, revolutionaries, scientists and political figures but also by the literary community including novelists, essayists and journalists.³

However, in response to the racism of the white Feminist movements, Black Feminism made its appearance and became popular in the 1960s. Proponents of Black Feminism argue that sexism, class oppression and racism are bound together and relate to one another via "intersectionality". "Intersectionality", a notion coined by Alice Walker, means that unlike the Feminist movements that deal only with white women's struggles, Black Feminism manages to liberate and empower all the oppressed no matter their race, their gender nor their social class.⁴

Among the black feminist writers, we may refer to the American novelist, editor, teacher and professor Emeritus, Toni Morrison. She wrote eight novels, and the fifth one, entitled *Beloved* (1987), relates the struggles of a slave woman, haunted psychically by years

of abuse to her body and her humanity. While she tries to bury the past, its ghosts and wounds ravage the present.⁵

Morrison's *Beloved* has broken the silence in American society about slavery. Set during the Reconstruction era in 1873, the novel was written with the voices of black slave women who historically have been denied the power of language. Morrison was born into the cauldron of race in America only 68 years after the Emancipation Proclamation and her identity has been shaped by the history, life experiences and culture that she has in common with other African Americans. Therefore, the author dedicated her work to portraying her community, especially women, more multidimensionally than the Western literary tradition did; from each of the psychological and the social sides. Morrison suggests that readers should confront the history of slavery in order to address its legacy which manifests itself in ongoing racial discrimination and discord towards the black American community.⁶

Furthermore, as a response to Western culture's feminism, Postcolonial feminism developed in the 1980s in order to bring into light the third world nations' women struggles. Indeed, Postcolonial feminism points out the universalizing tendencies of Western feminist ideas regardless of women's struggles of the postcolonial countries such as Algeria.⁷

Algerian women's struggles dated from the Algerian resistance against the French colonial regime during the period of (1830-1962). Women such as Jamila Bouhired, Lala Fatma N'soumer, Hassiba Ben Bouali and others, had shown the bravest attitudes towards the oppressive colonizer alongside the male revolutionaries. As a result, women maintained their new-found emancipation of the new state in the aftermath of the Algerian Revolution and became more involved in the development of their country. Nevertheless, this liberal atmosphere soon reversed with the outcome of the "Civil War" (1991-2001) and the rising control of Islamists who claimed the right of using all means, to exclude women from the

public sphere. Among these means, we can state the institution of the 1984 family code which reinforces women's subordinate position and reflects the Algerian government's neglect for women's basic human rights.⁸

It was during that climate of terror that some feminist scholars such as Malika Mokeddem started to express themselves as the voice of feminism in Algeria. Mokeddem is an Algerian nephrologist who comes from an illiterate nomad family and who immigrated to France after having completed her medicine studies. She wrote not less than nine novels and the third one, entitled *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), gives a relevant description of the Algerian women within a sexist culture and a country torn between progress and prejudice, secular life and Islamic fundamentalism during the Black Decade in Algeria.⁹

The Review of Literature:

Both Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) have received a large bulk of criticism. First, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) has been studied by many scholars from different perspectives. Emma Parker studies the novel from a psychoanalytical perspective using Irigaray's reformations of Freud's psychoanalysis. In her article entitled *A New Hysteria: History and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's Beloved*, Parker argues that the central protagonists of the novel are hysteric people: Sethe, Paul D, and the women who exorcise the ghost. *Beloved*, according to her, symbolizes the shared hysteria of the black community haunted by the horrors of the past since all women are able to see the ghost. Parker also broadens this trauma to a social malaise and a form of rejecting the patriarchal and the prescribed cultural identity.¹⁰

Moreover, referring to Elaine Showalter's ideas on Gynocriticism, which is a project engaged with typically women productions based on typically women experiences, Hira Ali in her article entitled *Gender Analysis in Toni Morrison's Beloved and Sula*, argues that the

two novels are Gynotexts. First, they are written by a woman and then they have women as main characters. In her novels, Morrison creates matriarchal houses where fathers are absent, which is the case with Halle in *Beloved* (1987), thus Sethe is portrayed as a dominating figure. Gynocritics allow us to delve into the lives of women in African American society where they are considered as a double burden for both the white society and the black men. This burden deprives them from their rights of motherhood and womanhood.¹¹

At the end, using David Punter, Gina Wisker and A. Timothy Spauldin theories on the intersection of the gothic and the postcolonial, Ruth Van Den Akker in her article entitled *Hush, Little Baby-Ghost: The Postcolonial Gothic and Haunting History in Toni Morrison's Beloved*, consider *Beloved* (1987) to be a postcolonial gothic text. She claims that the novel being about a resurrecting ghost that stands for a resurrecting past is among the features of postcolonial gothic texts. According to Van Den Akker, Morrison's use of the ghost in *Beloved* (1987) does not only symbolize a traditional ghost story but also exposes the resurrected haunting past's effects on Sethe, Paul D and the African Americans as a whole. The novel speaks the unspeakable being dedicated to sixty million silenced people. Haunted by a traumatic past, the black community worked on burying the past in their deepest souls by avoiding to remember it. The ghost, as a Gothic trope, stands on the traumatic historical realities of the past.¹²

By the same token, Malika Mokeddem's novel *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) has been the subject of many studies among them, Mebtouche Nejai F.Z and Bia M.A in their article: *Reading as a Tool for Constructing Woman's Agency in Malika Mokeddem's The Forbidden Woman* (2010). Mebtouche and Bia focus on the character of Dalila. They consider her as being psychologically a "subversive agent" in her gendered and conservative society, due to the power of knowledge and the action of her extensive literary reading. Moreover, the study

stresses the important role of knowledge and education in liberating the mind of the main character Sultana from the chains of her oppressive patriarchal society.¹³

In addition, Twila Meding in her article: *L'interdite de Malika Mokeddem: Un Donjuanisme Féminin (2008)*, stipulates that Malika Mokeddem in her novel *The Forbidden Woman* breaks the traditional “male donjuanism” of the occidental philosophy by creating a new paradigm of “female donjuanism” through the character of Sultana. According to Meding, Sultana reverses the traditional pattern of the faithful woman waiting patiently for her traveler man. In contrast, she appropriates the role of the traveler and the inconstant lover as it is the case for the main character of Molière’s famous play “Don Juan”.¹⁴

Furthermore, Malika Mokeddem’s *The Forbidden Woman* is studied from a sociocultural viewpoint by Nada Elia in her article *Africa and the West Indies (1998)*. In her work, Elia demonstrates how the two characters Sultana and Vincent experience differently their “double métissage”, which refers to the male/female and the Algerian/French duality existing in both characters. Elia argues that Vincent takes advantage of his duality because of his recovery after benefiting from an Algerian women’s kidney. On the other hand, Sultana faces racism and sexism because of her Westernized way of living and her independent behavior considered as masculine in her native village¹⁵.

Issue and Working Hypothesis:

From the above review of literature, it is noticeable that considerable studies have been undertaken both of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved (1987)* and Malika Mokeddem’s *The Forbidden Woman (1993)*. Despite the importance of these investigations, the already mentioned critics remain fragmentary. To our knowledge, these studies do not put enough stress on the self assertion of women in the face of the hegemonic and patriarchal restrictions. Hence, this

research shall be a comparative study that will deal with the two works from a feminist perspective. Its fundamental issue is to depict the struggles led by women protagonist to achieve their self autonomy.

This research is a comparative study that deals with the works of the two feminist writers Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), and Toni Morisson's *Beloved* (1987) in terms of gender. By relying on Simone De Beauvoir's feminist ideas, which marked the second wave of the Feminist Movement and that aimed to bring equality between men and women, we direct our attention to the circumstances in which black women and Algerian women, facing slavery and religious fundamentalism, fight for their individuality. Through the emphasis on the subjugating implementations exercised by those social institutions, we aim to show how the latter marginalize and oppress women comparing to men who are attributed leadership status in society and family.

The theoretical basis of the French philosopher and author Simone De Beauvoir, with her revolutionary feminist book *The Second Sex* (1949) might be appropriate to sustain our study. In fact, in her book which is one of the earliest attempts to analyze human history from a feminist perspective, De Beauvoir presents the inferior position held by women in comparison to men throughout history by supporting her arguments with historical, sociological, biological and literary facts. She asserts thus that nothing could justify this imparity between the genders and that the emancipation of women from the male domination can only be achieved with the common efforts of the two sexes in order to revise the dominant/submissive character of their relationship.¹⁶

Our analysis will be divided into three chapters. The first will deal with the historical context of both of Malika Moeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* and Toni Morisson's *Beloved*. Then, the second will be devoted to the analysis of the patriarchal institutions subjugating

women. The last chapter will highlight the way in which women challenge their social defined order towards their emancipation.

Method and Materials:

Trying to answer an intricate question, ‘What it means to me to be a woman?’¹⁷, De Beauvoir writes what became later the “*Feminist Bible*”¹⁸: *The Second Sex* (1949) where the most outstanding feminist ideas of the Twentieth Century are held. Published in 1949, the book offers a meticulous case study of male’s oppression on women.

De Beauvoir became interested in the situation of women, Based on her personal experience, especially the social status of the French woman during the Second World War, she writes: ‘I begun to look at women with new eyes and found surprise after surprise waiting for me .It is both strange and stimulating to discover suddenly, after forty, an aspect of the world that has been staring you in the face all the time which somehow you have never noticed.’¹⁹

In this context, De Beauvoir explains the way various hegemonic patriarchal institutions reinforce what she calls “the eternal feminine”²⁰: a statement by which she means the condemnation of women inside the role of birthing body, sex objects, and excluding them from playing the role of subjects.

In the chapter entitled *The Mother*, De Beauvoir brings to light how women are socialized in such a way that they feel motherhood is what defines them²¹, she says: ‘a new existence is going to manifest itself and justify her own existence, she is proud of it’²².At the beginning of the chapter, she explains the process by which the role of mother is promoted. A woman becomes important only when she expects a baby because everyone takes care of her, as she claims it: ‘at present she is no longer a sex object or servant, but she embodies the species, she is the promise of life, of eternity her friends and her family respect her, even her caprices

became sacred.’²³ So becoming a mother is an alternative to get care, attention, and love. In some way, men convince women to embrace motherhood.

Moreover, in the chapter *The Independent Woman*, Simone De Beauvoir asserts that women’s emancipation from men can only be achieved through her economic independence and her professional career²⁴: ‘she affirms herself concretely as subject in her projects.’²⁵ However, despite this economic independence besides earning the right to vote, women are still partly chained to male domination. In fact, freedom could not be attained as long as women are inheriting the exclusiveness of household tasks. In addition, De Beauvoir affirms that women’s work is considered as a pastime and an extra wage comparing with her husband’s which could not ensure her freedom.²⁶

In the same book, Simone De Beauvoir advances the fact that the man’s “vocation” as “subject” is defined through his biological nature and does not contradict it²⁷: ‘man’s social and spiritual successes endow him with virile prestige.’²⁸ The woman, however, should resign to her “vocation” of being an “object” rather than a “subject” which goes with her biological nature. Nevertheless, if the woman chooses to deny her “vocation” of “object”, she is considered as renouncing to her femininity and thus to her humanity.

Furthermore, De Beauvoir argues that women are judged according to their appearance and the maintenance of their house contrarily to the man who is judged only for his intellectual abilities.²⁹ According to De Beauvoir, an intellectual woman loses automatically a part of her attractiveness towards the males. She says: ‘if she has trouble pleasing men, it is because she is not like her little slave sisters.’³⁰ Significantly, the intellectual and independent woman challenges the male by embodying the “subject” role which makes him lose his domination and thus his attraction towards her.

Summaries of the Novels:

a. Beloved:

Beloved is a 1987 novel written by the African-American writer Toni Morrison. Set after the American Civil War, the novel tells the story of Sethe, a black woman who escaped slavery. After a month of freedom, the slaveholder arrives to Baby Suggs' house to take Sethe and her children back to the slave camp. Being aware of the miserable life that is waiting her babies, Sethe decides to kill her children in order to protect them from the hellish life of slavery. Then, Sethe cut the throat of her baby daughter and wanted to pursue this act of "Infanticide" before Baby Suggs and the schoolteacher accompanied by the sheriff arrive to stop her. Years after this incident, Seth and her remaining daughter Denver went to live in 124 Bluestone Road, Cincinnati, Ohio whereas their home is haunted by a revenant, whom they believe to be the ghost of Seth's baby.

Paul D's reappearance after almost two decades of absence brought a lot of painful reminiscences to Sethe who worked hard to erase everything that remembered her about her dark past running behind her. Coming home after a day out, Paul D, Seth, and Denver encounter a young woman sitting in the front of the house calling herself Beloved. Sethe comes to believe that Beloved is her two years old daughter that she murdered, then tried everything to make it up and started to spend carelessly, which makes Beloved consume Sethe's life to the point she becomes depleted and sacrifices her own need for eating, while Beloved grows bigger and bigger and become too much influential on Sethe's well being destroying her in some way from the inside.

With the worsening of things Denver reaches out and looks for help from the black community to exorcise Beloved who is considered as a threat. The arriving of a white man who had the intention to offer a job to Denver brings Seth back in time, since she thought that he

was the schoolteacher who is back again to take her child from her. So she attacked him to protect her family, which brought her to depression. The novel ends with ‘this is not a story to pass on’³¹ which means that it is not something to forget.

b. The Forbidden Woman

Malika Mokeddem’s “*The Forbidden Woman*” was originally published in 1993 as *l’Interdite*. The novel is a depiction of the misogynistic Algerian society during the traumatic black decade of the Algerian Civil War (1991-2002). The story of the novel centers on Sultana Medjahed, an Algerian nephrologist exiled to France where she completed her medical studies, returns to her native village in AinNakhla in order to attend the funeral of her former lover, the doctor Yacine Mediane.

In the *Forbidden Woman*, Mokeddem portrays an Algerian society infested with fundamentalist Islamism that affects and threatens directly the Algerian women’s rights and freedom. In fact, Mokeddem relates the sexist experiences underwent by Sultana and other females in AinNakhla in the name of the patriarchal system advocated by narrow mindedness religious fanaticism.

With the support of her two suitors; Salah, a friend of Yacine, and Vincent, a French tourist; Sultana, instead of fleeing as she did a couple of years earlier, faces the hostility of the male town leaders towards her “sinful” westernized way of living. Moreover, Sultana wins an unexpected support from many women of her village that she thought were doomed to the submission of the males.

Through the character Sultana, Malika Mokeddem exhorts her compatriots especially women, to fight for their freedom in order to build a more tolerant country for their children. In her novel, she portrays the characters Dalila and Alilou as the symbol of a promising brighter future.³²

Endnotes:

- ¹Human Rights Watch, "Women's Rights," <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/-women's-rights> (accessed October 11, 2017)
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- ³Wikipedia, "Feminism," <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminism> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ⁴Shay Akil, "Black Feminism: A Short Intro," Decolnize All The Things, March 3, 2014, <http://decolonizeallthethings.com/2014/03/03/black-feminism-a-short-intro/> (accessed October 11, 2017)
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- ⁸ Lamraoui, Nidhal. "History of Feminism and Women's Rights" <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/history-feminism-women's-rights-algeria-nidhal-lamraoui> (accessed October 11, 2017)
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- ¹⁰ Emma Parker, "A New Hysteri: History and Hysteria in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," <http://tcl.dukejournals.org/content/47/1/1.full.pdf+html> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹¹ Hira Ali, Gender Analysis in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and *Sula*, middle-East Journal of Scientific Research (2013) :16(10) :1419-1423 <http://studylib.net/doc/8823995/gender-analysis-in-toni-morrison-s-beloved-and-sula> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹² Ruth Van Den Akker, "Hush, Little Baby Ghost : The Postcolonial Gothic and Haunting History in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*," the Cultural Discours of Crisis. study of culture, Issue 1 (2013). http://www.academia.edu/9398304/Van_Den_Akker_Ruth_-_Hush_Little_Baby-Ghost_-_The_Postcolonial_Gothic_and_Haunting_History_in_Toni_Morrisons_Beloved (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹³ F.Z Mebtouche Nedjai and M.A Bia, "Reading as a Tool for Constructing Woman's Agency in Malika Mokaddem's *The Forbidden Woman*," Gender Resistance and Negotiation, November 2011, 193-201.
- ¹⁴ Twyla Meding, "L'interdite de Malika Mokeddem: Un Donjuanisme Féminin," The French Review 82, no.1 (Oct, 2008): p.91-102, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/25481477> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹⁵ Nada Elia, "Africa and the West Indies: Algeria," World Literature Today 72, no.4 (1998): p.879, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40154417> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹⁶Sparknotes, "The Second Sex: Simone De Beauvoir," <http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/secondsex/summary.html> (accessed October 11, 2017)
- ¹⁷Elizabeth Fallaize, "Simone De Beauvoir : A Critical Reader" (London :Routledge, 1998), 03

¹⁸ Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 12

¹⁹ Elizabeth Fallaize, “Simone De Beauvoir : A Critical Reader” (London : Routledge, 1998), 03

²⁰ Simone De Beauvoir, “The Second Sex”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 233

²¹ Ibid, 597

²² Ibid, 612

²³ Ibid, 619

²⁴ Ibid, 813-862.

²⁵ Ibid, 813.

²⁶ Ibid, 815.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid, 817-818.

³⁰ Ibid, 818.

³¹ https://www.uscupstate.edu/globalassets/academics/college-of-arts-and-sciences/lc/english_literary-file/elfvol2wrenn.pdf

³² Annie,

Gagiano. “African Library: The Forbidden Woman.” <http://www.litnet.co.za/african-library-the-forbidden-woman/> (accessed November 21,

Results:

This paper constitutes a feminist reading of Malika Mokeddem's "*The Forbidden Woman*" (1993) and Toni Morrison's "*Beloved*" (1987). Influenced by their backgrounds, the two writers denounce women's oppression in the same way as they call for their emancipation and display women's resistance to counter the negative stereotypes of their inferiority.

The first chapter is devoted to the historical context of both novels of the Algerian and American feminist authors Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* and Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. It is quite evident that the historical epochs of these novels are different, yet the basic element that joins the two stories is the fact that both of them deal with the same issue which is women's oppression by various institutions which are either slavery or religious fundamentalism.

The second chapter discusses the affinities and the differences found between Morrison's and Mokeddem's novels. It demonstrates the institutions by which the patriarchal system oppresses women. In *Beloved* (1987), Morrison denounces the sexual subjugation of women by the institution of slavery. In Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), single women are isolated by a fundamentalist society, that pushes them to react.

The third chapter examines the way in which the protagonist women of both novels fight for their individuality and their emancipation from the subjugating practices of the patriarchal system. Thereby, the theme of emancipation is dealt with in both novels with two distinct approaches. Concerning *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), education and work are highlighted as the main keys to achieve emancipation. In other ways, Toni Morrison focused on women struggling both against the double burden of being former slaves and women at the same time and how they managed to achieve their emancipation from both patriarchy and slavery through the use of self reliance.

Chapter One: The Historical Background of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993):

The following chapter centers on the historical context in which the stories of both novels are written. It is important to give details about the different women's living conditions mainly during the black decade in Algeria for Mokeddem's novel and the post American Civil War for Morrison's. The purpose is to formulate a clear idea of the two distinct periods of time and to provide the appropriate historical materials for the analysis of the women's situation and the importance of emancipation.

1. Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987):

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) though written in 1987, is set during the Reconstruction era in 1873. Through the novel, Morrison immerses us in the dark period of slavery in the United States and makes us revive the horrors undergone by the protagonists.

The institution of slavery in North America began in the early Seventeenth Century and continued to be practiced for the next 250 years by the colonies and states. Slaves mostly from Africa worked in the production of tobacco crops and cotton. With the invention of the cotton gin in 1793 along with the growing demand for the product in Europe, the use of the slaves in the South became essential for its economy. In the late Eighteenth Century, the abolitionist movement began in the North, the fact that led to a break with the South and then to the outcome of the Civil War (1861-1865). The war resulted in the abolition of slavery throughout the entire United States through the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment in December 1865.³³

During the Seventeenth and the Eighteenth Centuries, the number of exported female slaves over passed the male's number. This distinction between the sexes is due to the

difference of their exploitation. In fact, black female slaves faced the “double burden” of racism and sexism being both females and blacks. Indeed, before being exported as slaves to America, African women that were mostly from West Africa, were highly estimated in their native cultures primarily for their role of mothers which was considered sacred there. Moreover, in some African tribes, women had the authority over men and were part of very strong communities. Nevertheless, after their exportation to America, they were introduced into a patriarchal and violently racist and exploitive society.³⁴

African female slaves were generally attributed the agrarian and domestic chores like working in fields, nursing, taking care of children, cooking, laundering...etc. Moreover, no matter where they lived, slaves and especially women endured hard and demeaning lives. They were expected to do field work as well as bearing children. They were forced into sexual relationships with their masters or with other white or black men either to please them or for the purpose of forced breeding. Furthermore, they suffered the hardships of raising their children often without any assistance from the males besides the dissolution of their families since their children were usually sold or given to other masters. They were beaten, undernourished and sometimes abused to death.³⁵

In the aftermath of the Civil War, the former slaves faced many hardships in their new lives despite their liberation from the brutalities and indignities of slave life. Although slavery was over, the brutalities of white race prejudice persisted and black Americans, though free, lived in desperate rural poverty. Black women for their part, often preferred to be homemakers given their past experiences.³⁶ In addition to that, slavery has inflicted serious psychological and physical damages for the victims and their descendants. Though their trauma was profound, enslaved black people had no mental health therapists available to them, no counselors to help them cope and heal, and the sickness was passed down to

subsequent generations who, to this day, have not received the treatment they so desperately require.³⁷

From a literary point of view, the subject of slavery has been widely addressed in the American tradition. The most well-known aspect that rose from slavery in America was the slave narrative. The slave narrative is an account of the life or a major portion of the life of a fugitive or former slave, either written or orally related by the slave personally. From 1760 to the end of the Civil War in the United States, approximately 100 autobiographies of fugitive or former slaves appeared, and after the abolition of slavery in 1865, at least fifty former slaves wrote or dictated book-length accounts of their lives in addition to 2500 oral personal stories gathered. Among the most famous slave narratives, we may cite the two volumes: *Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African* (1789), written by Olaudah Equiano himself. Afterwards, with the rise of the abolition movement in the early Nineteenth Century, several narratives reporting the harsh realities of slavery in the United States have been published, for instance, the narratives of Frederick Douglass and William Wells Brown claimed thousands of readers. In fact, the American slave narratives center on the narrators' "rite of passage" from slavery to freedom by depicting the harsh conditions of their ruthless exploitation. Therefore, the poignant testimonies of the slaves contributed significantly in the abolition of slavery process.³⁸

In the Nineteenth and the Twentieth Centuries, several black female writers tackled the issues experienced by women within and after slavery. These issues include sexual exploitation, motherhood, continued servitude and the pains of remembering. The first African American female slave to author her own narrative was Harriet Jacobs who published in 1861 her famous *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*. She was followed by many modern writers like Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Octavia Butler, who revisited the slave narrative

in order to shed light on the remaining psychological and social effects of slavery on American people and making sure that this painful page of history will not be forgotten.³⁹

Like most of the new wave of authors, Toni Morrison has been trying to develop a new type of novel that represents the hopes, aspirations and historical memories of black women struggling under a double burden, that of racial prejudice and a male-centered society. In her novel *Beloved* (1987), Toni Morrison intended to show what happened to slaves working in an institutionalized slave system and who experience violence, brutality and humiliation. In fact, Morrison was very clear about every incident, especially the specific trauma that black women and mothers were forced to endure at the hands of slaveholders.⁴⁰ She says: 'There is a necessity for remembering the horror, but of course there is a necessity for remembering it in a manner in which it can be digested, in a manner in which the memory is not destructive. The act of writing the book, in a way, is a way of confronting it and making it possible to remember.'⁴¹

In other words, Morrison argues that healing from the trauma of slavery involves remembering every single event. Morrison thinks that the horrible issues related to slavery are avoided and forgotten in the contemporary American culture. Morrison focuses on the brutal and dehumanizing aspects of slavery in order to affect the reader and the community in such a way that slave history should not be forgotten.⁴²

The American author Toni Morrison was directly inspired both by the roots of her African American culture and her personal life. In fact, the book *Beloved* came after Morrison read about Margaret Garner's story. She says: 'I wanted to understand about that period of slavery and about women loving things that are important to them.'⁴³ The story took place in 1851 when Margaret succeeded in escaping from the slave state of Kentucky to the free state of Ohio with her husband, mother in law and her children. However they were discovered as

runaways, so she tried to kill her children but only managed to kill one. Margaret didn't want her children to experience slavery the way she did.⁴⁴

In writing *Beloved*, Toni Morrison also borrowed the inspiration from her personal life. Being an African American woman writer, the problems of racism and sexism faced by the female slaves were not foreign to her. For instance, despite its high literary quality, being achieved through a unique narrative style besides the use of symbolism and poetic imagery, *Beloved* was overlooked by two major literary prizes: The National Book Award and The National Book Critics Circle Award. These oversights brought controversy and many African American writers and critics demanded recognition of Morrison's achievement in *Beloved*. The novel was however awarded against all expectations the Nobel Prize of Literature in 1993 making Toni Morrison the first black woman to win the prize.⁴⁵

2. Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993):

Through her novel, Mokeddem gives us a deep insight into the demeaning social conditions encountered by Algerian people at that time, especially women. Thereby, this part of the chapter will be dedicated to the understanding of the historical background in which the story takes place.

After the death of the Algerian president Boumediene in 1978, the socio-economic condition of Algeria was at its worst. By the time, Chadli Bendjedid took up the torch of power and launched a series of socio-economic reforms that saw the emergence of a new business elite that contrasted heavily with the deprived masses forced into austerity. Moreover, the increase of the population and the collapse in oil and gas prices had contributed to the emergence of a wave of unemployment that had increased to over 25%. As a consequence, the young population directed its anger towards the elite and called for the democratization of the corrupt and autocratic one-party system of the National Liberation

Front (FLN) that had held power since independence in 1962. For the Algerian youth, the system had marginalized them from the socio-economic discourse and caused them “existential anxiety”. As a response to these injustices, they organized the “most serious riots” since Algeria’s independence in October 1988.⁴⁶ The riots indirectly led to the fall of the country’s one-party system and the emergence of the popular Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) as the main opposition to the government since the introduction of religion in the new constitution of 1989. However, following a coup of the government negating an Islamic electoral victory in the national parliament elections of 1991, a spiral of instability and increasingly vicious political conflicts resulted ultimately in the Algerian “Civil War” which plunged the country in chaos for a decade.⁴⁷

During the Algerian Black Decade (1991-2001), the conflicts opposing the Algerian government and various emerging Islamic rebel groups including the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and the Armed Islamic Group (GIA), have mainly targeted the civilians with an extreme violence and brutality. Approximately 100000 citizens were killed and many others wounded, tortured or exiled. Besides these atrocities, women were aimed at first line by the Islamist groups who prevented them from moving into the public sphere and assuming significant positions of power. Moreover, the institution of the Family Code in 1984 which declared women as minors under their male guardians, belittled significantly the position of women in the Algerian society.⁴⁸ Simone De Beauvoir predicted it with her famous quote: ‘Never forget that a political, economic or religious crisis is enough to cast doubt on women’s rights. These rights will never be vested, you have to stay vigilant your whole life.’⁴⁹

Algerian women have viewed the Family Code as a means of legalizing violence and discrimination against them. Indeed, the Family Code gathers a set of laws destined to weaken the Algerian women’s position in front of the growing conservatism and gender segregation.⁵⁰ Among these laws we may refer to the discriminatory character of marriage

towards women. For instance, the man marries without a guardian whereas a woman must have one regardless of her age and status (divorced, widowed)⁵¹. Although the equality of the sexes is clearly stated in the three constitutions from 1963 to 1989, the discriminatory provisions of the Family Code are symptomatic of the growing misogyny in the Algerian society; they have facilitated violence against women to the extent of “femicide” which is the most extreme form of sexist terrorism brought about by Islamic terrorism.⁵²

Then, for the Islamists, the Family Code was not radical enough, for this purpose, they called for a total implementation of the “Sharia” and the institution of an Islamic state in Algeria. For instance, the FIS members used the religious space of the mosque for propagating their fundamentalist views especially towards women whom they put at the center of their populist propaganda. They rallied to their cause huge numbers of unemployed youths whom they convinced that women should return to their homes to fulfill their god-given roles as homemakers and leave their jobs for the unemployed males who needed them most. This discourse helped to make the public sphere even more hostile than it already was to women who were now designated as one of the wrongs of the Algerian society.⁵³

As a consequence of these political reforms, women were deprived from any political and legal representations in the government underwent several forms of injustices. They soon became the principal target of the “Fundamentalists” who used all the means to exclude them from the public sphere. They used verbal harassment and physical attacks against women who dressed up “indecently”, by throwing acid on their bodies and attacking them with knives. In addition, women were often abducted by terrorists claiming to be fighting under the banner of Islam, they were held captives and suffered the worst of physical, psychological and sexual abuses going sometimes so far as decapitation.⁵⁴ The first woman to be gunned was the twenty one years old Karima Belhadj in april 1993. After that, many other young girls and women followed, they were shot down even in the streets.⁵⁵

As a response to the Islamist “femicide”, Algerian women launched a real battle throughout the 1990s in order to have the Family Code repealed and to safeguard their fundamental human rights. The violent decade has been a formative period for women who intensified their efforts to raise awareness and build strong solidarity networks amongst women both nationally and internationally.

Women’s response to Islamist terrorism took two forms, the first was social and spontaneous and the second was political and structured mainly led by the feminist groups.⁵⁶ On the social level, women resisted the destructive powers of Islamic terrorism by continuing to lead normal lives despite the atmosphere of war. They continued to go to work and do their daily tasks such as shopping, going to hairdressers and beauty salons or simply roaming free in the streets. Moreover, they continued to send their children to school despite the risks of being killed as it happened on October 1997 when sixteen pupils were targeted and assassinated by the terrorists while at school. The female teachers were not spared either to these attacks, on September 1997, twelve teachers some of whom were veiled, were assassinated in front of their pupils. However, in defiance of the surrounding danger, many female teachers continued to accomplish their duties.⁵⁷

In addition, Algerian women organized gatherings mainly during the International Women’s Days which they continued to celebrate despite its prohibition by the Islamists. Moreover, they staged mock tribunals against terrorism; they showed films and staged plays that highlighted the dangers of fundamentalism besides glorifying women’s courage and contribution to the society. Furthermore, women showed the importance of women’s solidarity against the oppressor by consoling the orphans and widows when the country transformed into a large graveyard.⁵⁸

On the political level, women did their best to spread awareness about the demeaning value placed upon the Algerian woman through the so controversial Family Code. In fact, in view to mobilize support for the abolition of the Family Code, women launched information campaigns in high schools and universities so as to awaken consciences about women's human rights which were denied to them by society and the Fundamentalists at large. In the 1990s, Algerian women engaged in consolidating their roles as agents of change and resistance to Islamist terrorism despite being labeled as minors under the law. Thereby, on 2nd January 1992, women organized the first massive demonstration against the FIS and their electoral victory of December 1991. The demonstrations started in the Centre of Algiers and gathered massive crowds of thousands women along the march. The crowd called for the cancellation of the electoral process in which many women's voices were taken by the FIS through the proxy vote, and warned of the danger of Algeria becoming an Islamic state. Moreover, women's aim through the demonstration was to manifest their opposition to the institution of a Fundamentalist rule that they considered as a threat for women in particular and for the nascent democracy in general. After that, many demonstrations followed, proving that Algeria was not to submit to terrorist violence.⁵⁹

From the literary perspective, the Algerian Black Decade witnessed a rise of francophone Algerian women writers who tackled the issue of the growing Islamic Fundamentalism and the escalation of torture, rape and violence against Algerian women. The latter started to rebel against these demeaning and humiliating practices by speaking and writing publicly. Their objective was to describe the civil crisis to a French language reading public both at home and abroad, as well as to ensure that women's experiences of the conflict will not be undocumented for future generations.⁶⁰ Thereby, since 1992, thirty-five women mostly Algerians, have brought out forty works about the conflict that has caused the death of almost 100000 persons. In fact, women are not content to suffer; there is a determination to

invert their position as victims and to fight. In the novel *La Priere de la Peur*, Latifa Ben Mansour writes: ‘If you only knew the violence that has been done to us as women for so long, if you knew! You would be surprised that we haven’t yet taken up arms against you!’⁶¹ In their writings, women tried also to break the “male-female” discourse that sees women as victims and men as oppressors. Indeed, the female-male relationships in women’s writings often reveal, rather, a power over men that is exerted from the women narrators from a distance. Most of the novels written by Algerian women come from the pen of the novelist Assia Djebar who examines some of the tragic events that occurred since 1992 in Algeria in her works like *Le Blanc de l’Algérie* (1995). Moreover, the autobiographical genre is especially privileged being a means of affirming women’s identity. Djebar says: ‘the more society prevented them from saying ‘I’ the more they wrote it in their texts.’⁶² Many other female writers reacted to the state of violence in their country by taking up the pen such as, Hafsa Zinai Koudil, Leila Marouane, Naila Imaksene, Malika Mokeddem and many others who followed the example of the novelist, author and journalist Tahar Djaout, assassinated in 1993 by the Islamist terrorists and whose prophetic pronouncement became emblematic: ‘If you are silent, you die. If you speak, you die. So, speak and die!’⁶³

Among the female Algerian writers who testified to the suffering of the Algerian people during the Black Decade, Malika Mokeddem through her novel *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) who describes the crisis in Algeria caused by injustice and ignorance. According to M. Kamel Igoudjil in his work: *Post Colonial Algerian Writers in French: Language as Representation and Resistance*, Malika Mokeddem wrote *The Forbidden Woman* to ‘denounce social injustice and declare her help and support for all Algerian writers including victims of violence’⁶⁴. After the assassination of the Algerian journalist and writer Tahar Djaout by the terrorists, Mokeddem took up the torch of revolt through her writings not only to denounce the barbarian Islamists’ methods to get rid of the country’s intellectuals and

thinkers, but also to shed light on the injustices endured by the Algerian women during the 1990s.⁶⁵

To conclude this chapter, we may assert that although Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) are set in two different historical and geographical backgrounds, they share, however, a common point which is the depiction of the oppressive restrictions exercised by hegemonic and patriarchal institutions. On the one hand, the story of Toni Morrison's *Beloved* centers on the struggles of former slave women facing sexism and racial discrimination both during slavery and the Reconstruction era in the United States. On the other hand, Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* relates the demeaning conditions undergone by Algerian women within a misogynistic Algerian society infested with religious fundamentalism during the Black Decade. Through their novels, the two authors intended to shed light on women's suffering and make their voices heard by all in such a way that their experiences should not be forgotten by the future generations.

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Chapter Two: Patriarchal Hegemony and Female Subjugation.

This chapter highlights the patriarchal subjugation on women and the object status they hold, in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Makkadem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993). In fact, those novels tell stories that might seem different but have some similarities despite the varied periods of time, in order to exhibit women's condition. Both novels expose the static statuses in which women are condemned without any striking difference through time. Within the novels, we find several female characters sharing various features concerning their representation as sex objects, birthing bodies, and mothers.

Thus, to understand more Morrison's *Beloved*(1987) and Makkadem's *The Forbidden Woman*(1993) the scrutiny of Simone De Beauvoir's feminist ideas held in *The Second Sex*(1949), will acquaint us with the theoretical basis with which we could better understand various details in relation to women's subjugation.

In her book, Simone De Beauvoir develops an original theory of female subjectivity under patriarchy, which offers an analysis of how a patriarchal power structures and constructs female position to indoctrinate women being either sisters, daughters, or wives to a socially imposed structure where females hold secondary positions⁶⁶. De Beauvoir then, studied the female situation from childhood until marriage and motherhood, a destiny traced to every little girl and a duty that society puts in their hands. As De Beauvoir claims : 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman'⁶⁷, which means, femininity is not the result of biology or intellectual defiance, it is a construction of civilization and culture, girls from their birth are taught how to be a woman in the future, especially in patriarchal societies.

Correspondingly, those conceptions are mainly present in Toni Morrison's *beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokaddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993). The striking differences that resulted from the divergent time and space might separate the two novels, where we find unequal portrayals of the role of the mother and disparate relationships between mother and

daughter. Thus both novels not only have differences but also similarities concerning the representation of women as sex objects and the discrimination between the two sexes, which suggest the universality of women's condition and the scheme used by men to keep going women's locus.

1/Affinities shared between Morrison's novel and Mokkedem's:

a/Women as Sex Objects:

The sexual objectification of women commonly appears in both novels. The female characters, whether they have small or important roles, are described as being sexually submissive. In Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Mokaddem's *The forbidden Woman* (1993), women are considered as sexual partners but not independent entities, and they are treated as commodities without regard to their humanity.

In Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), the protagonist of the novel, Sethe, is a black female who underwent sexual and physical abuse because of her gender and color. The story of Sethe, then, begun before arriving to Sweet Home, the slave plantation in Kentucky, a part of her life buried in the deepest of her soul. Sethe was asked by her daughters to tell about her mother, she then talks about Nan, the black woman with whom Sethe's mother was in the slave camps, who had revealed to her about the period they were together. Thus Sethe's mother mirrors the sexual and physical abuse that women faced within the period of slavery. Nan confessed to Sethe that she and her mother were often taken to the sea by the crew, and made allusion to the several children that she had as result of white men's rapes.⁶⁸ Sethe then remembers about the mark that her mother had on her chest, a circle and a cross, made with a burning object to render it indelible, a method applied on cows and ships by the farmers to recognize their beasts. This is how black women were seen, beasts, sexual objects they abuse, impregnated, and then beaten to death. Sethe has no other rememory about her mother because she was too young and her mother always worked in the fields, she never knew her. Moreover the only things she could

remember is that she died by hanging adding to this the intriguing mark she had on her chest that she could not understand the meaning until she had her own's.⁶⁹ A scar that bear witness to the physical atrocities to which women are exposed during their enslavement

In addition, Sethe is about to have the same fate. After her arrival to Sweet Home, She was the only female among five black men, which arose lust in them. As Saint Ambrose argues it: 'Adam is led to sin by Eve, and not Eve by Adam',⁷⁰. Which means that it is women who drive men to sin, it is their fault if they are beautiful and attractive, so that men always put their silliness on women's back because they are weaker than them. All the men of Sweet Home desired her strongly; they considered her as a challenge and let her freedom to choose one of them. During the period they waited her choice, as Morrison writes it: 'the men of Sweet Home were dreaming of rape, fucking cows, thrashing on pallets, and rubbing their thighs.'⁷¹ This quotation shows the idea of reducing Sethe to a fantasy object to the eyes of Sweet Home males.

Furthermore, while being pregnant with her fourth baby, Sethe was sexually and physically abused by the Schoolteacher and his nephews. They raped her and took her milk, and when she reported it to Mrs. Garner they punished her by using the cow hide on her back which caused the death of her skin. Sethe then, understands her mother's mark on her chest since she also had her own in her back, a scar revealing dehumanization and abuse.

Then, after eighteen years of this terrible episode, Paul D, the last of Sweet Home males, came back and find Sethe. After a short period of conversation and brief painful remembrance they had an affair, which disappointed Sethe because she could not feel any affection, warmth, or love. She claims: 'They encourage you to put some of your weight in their hands and soon you felt how light and lovely that was, they studied your scars and tribulations, after which they did what he had done, ran her children out and tore up the house,'⁷²

By this, Sethe makes allusion to the fact that all males have same defects, taking into account her husband Halle who abandoned her and her children, and then Paul D with whom she had a brief and disappointing relationship. Paul D with this brief moment he had with Sethe sought to satisfy the unreachable desire he had once while being at Sweet Home. Sethe then remembers what baby Suggs always said: 'a man is nothing but a man'⁷³.

Moreover, Babby Suggs experienced the sexual objectification. Being a slave woman during her whole life, Baby Suggs was the object of white abuse. She had eight children with different men, which bears witness to the number of time she has been raped and abused as she claims: 'there is no bad luck in the world but white folks'⁷⁴. This suggests that Baby Suggs blame the whites for all the pains she felt during her entire life, either being raped and abused or losing all her children to slavery.

Equally important, Morrison evokes the story of Ella. The latter is a slave woman locked in a room for a year by two white men, a father and his son. During this long period, she has been abused and raped. She said: 'you couldn't think up, what them two done to me'⁷⁵ Morrison did not give a lot of details concerning that misadventure, this suggest that words are not enough to describe those atrocities endured by women, and that we ought not look away at each detail concerning slave women, because each miserable one is full of pain, disgust, and horrifying experiences.

To sum up, the everyday life experience of enslaved women was a painful survival of extreme labor, family destruction, sexual abuse and violence. Women are more affected by the institution of slavery than men; they underwent dehumanizing experiences that tormented them for the rest of their lives, because their surroundings are full of scares and sequels. The sexual objectification of women had a great impact on slave women, since most of them were obliged to give up on a precious part of themselves, Sethe killed her daughter to protect her from slavery, Baby Suggs' children are taken from her to be sold as slaves, and Sethe's

mother abandoned hers being results of rape by the whites

Likewise, the objectification of women is also an outstanding theme in Malika Mokaddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993). Sultana, the female protagonist of the novel, is seen as a sexual object by men who surround her. The novel then offers us several scenes to support this idea of the sexual objectification of women.

First, Sultana was with Salah at home alone, this man had an erection, he could not control his libido seeing the beauty and the attractiveness of her, thus he could not keep himself from thinking about sex. Being alone with Sultana under the same roof, awakened his lust, and the last straw he is taking her responsible for it, he replies; 'I hate you for that too'⁷⁶

Another scene to mention, when the mayor Bakkar and Ali Marbah, the Islamist figures see Sultana, Vincent, and Salah under the same roof. They accused Sultana of having a relationship with both Salah and Vincent at the same time. They see in Sultana a bad person of bad influence that they must get rid of before she influences the other women of the village. The mayor orders her: 'we don't want you staying here anymore. Ain Nakhla isn't a whore-house! You even sleep with foreigners! Two men at the same time!'⁷⁷. Being men themselves, they think that the only relation that can bring together men and women can only be physical, and they did not blame Vincent or Salah, Sultana as a female is the one on whom to put the blame.

Identically, the story of a young woman impregnated by her brother is revealed through the novel. We could imagine how it feels to be raped by your own brother, a person who has the duty to protect his sister. This calamity is quickly hushed, the mother took her daughter to the north killed the baby and came back as if nothing happened. As a result of this abuse, and the terrible experience she underwent, the girl become mute, obeying to the society that looked away her case.⁷⁸

Then, Salah, Sultana's friend had this sexual objectification view about women. While

being with Sultana, Salah confessed his adventures with girls at the university with his friends. He tells her that: ‘once our studies were finished we put them aside, threw them to the mites with our cloth legends’⁷⁹. This statement makes allusion to the fact that men consider women as means of passing time, especially the ones who goes to the university. Educated females are considered as being not prudent enough, as a result none will marry⁸⁰, because of the stereotyped view that the conservative Algerian society had on educated females during the black decade when women are forbidden to go to school.

b/ Discrimination Between the Two Sexes:

The other affinity the two novels share is the presence of statements that highlights the big gap between the genders. In fact, in a patriarchal society males are privileged since their birth until their adulthood, contrasted to females that are given secondary position from their birth. As De Beauvoir claims it: ‘because of the prestige woman attributes to men, and also the privileges they hold concretely, many women wish for a son. “It is marvelous to bring a man into the world”, they say: as it has been seen, they dream of giving birth to a “hero” and the hero is obviously of male sex’⁸¹

In other words, patriarchal societies associate authority, power, and cachet to their males, so mothers wish for a son so that they would benefit from the privileges men hold in society.

In Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987), the character Baby Suggs shows a lot of inclination to males at the expense of females. Baby Suggs has been a slave woman almost her life, she has known several unsuccessful marriages that made her despise men. But when she talks about her son Halle she claims that: ‘A man ain’t nothing but a man, but a son? well, now, that’s somebody’⁸² Baby Suggs is proud of Halle since he bought her from Mr. Garner in exchange of extra Sunday work, this deed gave him the image of the hero in front of his mother. Baby Suggs was freed by her remaining child, a male. This tribute blinded her that she was not able

to see in him that he is a man just like the others. Halle is a coward man who abandoned his wife and his children run away, just as she was abandoned by fathers of her eight children. This suggest that patriarchy is not about to be ended. Men are nice to their mothers but monstrous with their wives, Helle's father did abandon his wife and children, and then Halle in return, withdrew from his roles of husband and father. Further, Baby Suggs' death is given in relation to Howard and Buglar departure as if it is their disappearance that saddened her to death, it is said that she died just after the boys run away.⁸³

Likewise, in Mokaddem's *The Forbidden Woman*(1993), the character who embodies this preference is Dalila's mother. She has six boys and a girl, but she could not refrain herself to always take side with the boys. She often tells her daughter : 'Obey your brothers, if you don't you're not my daughter'⁸⁴. The boys brutalize the little girl and treat her as their servant, they order her to help her mother, to stay at home, to bring their shoes, and to iron their pants. The mother stays out of all this, as if she is a co-conspirator of her baby boys who would became strong and dominant males as they grow up. Being from a female sex, the mother expects from her children, of male sex, to offer her the opportunities and power from which she is deprived. This is case with Dalila's mother who puts her hopes on her boys designed to be strong and influential men in the future. Sultana puts it: In past time the old woman ruled over a large family. She had the power of her sons. She enjoyed all joys; all the honors earned and saved up during the difficult years of her youth⁸⁵

In addition, the mayor Bakkar wants a boy more than anything. He got married with Lala Fatima's daughter and had a lot of children with her 'all girls'. During her last deliverance, Bakkar's wife had complications, the midwife implored Bakkar to get her to the hospital, but he refused to do so. He said: 'I'm sick of her only giving me daughters! So let her bleed out this tainted blood! That'll put her mess inside back together'⁸⁶. This ignorant

man is not aware about the fact that men are genetically responsible for the baby's sex. Bakkar did not see in his wife a partner, his other half, and a lover but just berthing body unable to give him an heir. This is obvious that a woman's life is trivial especially when she does not give birth to baby boys.

As a reword, we had a glance of the similarities that bounds Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) to Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), distinct novels but written by two females. Both novels exhibit women's situation from a single angle, the sexual objectification of women and the secondary position they hold. Females in both novels are raped, abused, and silenced. None dared to talk about a sister impregnated by her brother; otherwise it would bring shame to the family. A pregnant woman raped and beaten to death, because she is a black woman, and it is her owners who did it. A woman left to bleed to death because she was not able to give birth to a boy, because her husband had enough of baby girls and wanted an heir.

2. Differences Between Morrison's and Mokeddem's Novels:

In addition to the similarities, Morrison's *Beloved*(1987) and Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman*(1993) have likewise ideas framed differently due to the different context, but leading to the same result, which is women subjugation. Women are presented under the yoke of a male universe restricting them to the repeating domestic life. Men come to believe that women exist in order to insure the continuity of the human race, to raise their children, and serve their husbands. Thus to maintain the 'reproduction'⁸⁷ position women are offered, men promote this status and manipulate them to embrace this 'supernatural gift'⁸⁸ which consists on bringing to life the generation of the future. Nevertheless, confining them to the role of mothers is the perpetuation of this situation of submission.

a/ Motherhood as a Means of Tyranny:

De Beauvoir argues in her book: Indeed, from childhood woman is repeatedly told she is made to bear children, and the praises of motherhood are sung; the disadvantages of her condition—periods, illness, and such—the boredom of household tasks, all this is justified by this marvelous privilege she holds, that of bringing children into the world.⁸⁹

This quotation means that, in a patriarchal society; women are trained to be mothers from their young age; and bringing a child to the world would put an end to their boring existence they spend in housekeeping. Men make females believe that motherhood is what defines them. Morrison and Mokeddem shed light on this assertion dealing with motherhood as one of their major themes. In *Beloved* (1987) and *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), the characters Sethe and Sultana react differently to this socially imposed status.

In Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) the characters Sethe, Baby Suggs, and Sethe's mother embody the features of birthing bodies. As a slave woman, Sethe is asked to have as many children as she could to please her owners The Garners, so that they could ensure the continuity of the slavery system. As Denver points it: Slaves not supposed to have pleasurable feelings on their own; their bodies not supposed to be like that, but they have to have as many children as they can to please whoever owned them.⁹⁰

It is important that a slave woman gives birth to many children, bigger the number is, better it would be, because those children will later on become slaves from which the owner would have benefits.

To start our discussion, we go back to the period when Halle proposed to Sethe, then, she goes to Mrs. Garner to ask her if there would be a ceremony, and this last asked her if she was expecting a baby. Sethe answered with negation, then Mrs. Garner whispers: 'Well, you will be. You know that, don't you?'⁹¹ Mrs. Garner makes allusion to women's mission of being a mother which Sethe is about to accomplish. Then they got married and had children,

as Paul D witnesses: 'Halle's woman. Pregnant every year'⁹² a quotation by which we understand that a woman is an object and a birthing body that belongs to a man, as it is reported in Simone De Beauvoir's work: 'the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man'⁹³.

In addition to Sethe, we mention Sethe's mother and her mother in law, Baby Suggs, who are considered as birthing bodies serving the institution of slavery and guarantying its continuity. Those two women had several children: eight children for Baby Suggs and a great number of children for Sethe's mother 'a lot of them'⁹⁴. But no remaining child to any one of them, the new born are not born to their parents but rather born to slavery so they have never lived with their parents. Slave holders use reproductive black female as a mean of production which means that when they sell their children they will get a lot of money. The case with the Pauls, Paul A Paul F and Paul D, brothers brought to Sweet Home since their young age.

After a period of time, a terrible thing happened to Sethe. The schoolteacher and his nephews raped Sethe and took her milk. When she reported it to Mrs. Garner, they punished her and used the cowhide on her and caused a lot of scars on her back. The schoolteacher and his nephews are not the owners of Sweet Home, they are just servants, with this abuse on a slave woman they created two positions: the subject and the object. They are the whites and she is the black and a woman. As Beauvoir argues it: 'A fundamental hostility to any other consciousness is found in consciousness itself; the subject deposits itself only in opposition; it asserts itself as the essential and sets up the other as inessential, as the object.'⁹⁵

In other words, there is no strong 'subject' without comparing himself to a weak 'object', in order to be portrayed as the essential, a man associates importance and power to himself as the opposite to a weak unessential woman.

Again, with the return of Paul D, Sethe tells him about what happened to her just before running away from Sweet Home. She tells him that they took her milk and then they made a

tree on her back. Paul D focuses only on the fact that they heated her. But Sethe was not able to feel the terrible pain on her back, she was spoiled by the milk they have stolen from her, she says: 'All I knew was I had to get my milk to my baby girl'⁹⁶. That is a failure to her, to be unable to nurse her baby. This made her an insignificant person due to the status of the mother she occupied. After running away from Sweet Home, the slaveholders came after Sethe to bring her back there with her children. Being aware of the hellish life waiting her family, Sethe killed her daughter and had the intention to kill the rest of her children then kill herself. As Beauvoir argues: 'a mother who beats her child does not only beat the child, and in a way she doesn't beat him at all: she is taking her vengeance on man, on the world, or herself; but it is the child who receives the blows'⁹⁷

In this case, Sethe is not angry with Halle who was not brave enough to protect his family, she is angry about the whites who do not respect children and their innocence whatever their color might be, and blamed herself for bringing children to such an unsecured world, especially for African-Americans. After the act of infanticide she committed, no one tried to understand or ask why she behaved in that way, the society marginalized her. Even though, she views her choice as being right in her heart, this attitude reinforces the fact that for patriarchal society, motherhood is what defines women. The attitude of people taken toward Sethe made her believe that they are right, and she is a bad person who does not deserve any sympathy. She herself had that look on her, she felt an enormous void and uselessness due to her failure to be a mother, she lost her friends, her neighbors, and her husband run away.

Thus, Sultana in Mokeddem's novel is the opposite of Sethe. She is a symbol of the modern Algerian woman, she is rejected because she refused to be submitted, and she did not want to get married and become a mother; a treatment that the Algerian Islamist society generally allocates for women. As the title suggests, Sultana became forbidden to visit Ain

Nakhla because she refused this established status. The men of the village address her as ‘whore’ and ‘slut’, they only utter rude words and offences at her expense. After a short period of time, things started to worsen, the villagers became really aggressive, and they are throwing rocks on her window and menacing her. Salah, a friend of her worried about her and wanted to give her advice, says : ‘do like the other Algerian women, the real ones’⁹⁸ This means that even though she has the Algerian origin, her behavior is undignified of a real traditional Algerian woman. The latter is characterized by respect, obedience, and servitude she owes to her husband. Being as a wedding pretender to Sultana, Salah advised her to be as a real Algerian woman, then to accept his offer to be with him, to get married, and have children. He recommends her this status so that Ali Marbah and the mayor leave her be and forget about her. As Beauvoir claims it: ‘marriage is the only way to be integrated into the group and if they are “rejects”, they are social waste’⁹⁹ which means, a woman who refuses the sacred role of wife and mother are worthless and has no place in society. This matches Sultana’s situation within a fundamentalist society that rejects and maltreats her, because she has chosen not to bring children to such stereotyped society. In Algeria, women are repressed in the name of religion. The Islamists say that after Adam, God created Eve to serve him and have children. It is this belief that females are created to be in a secondary position, men then have the perfect justification for subjugating women since God did it first.

Whereas, bringing children to the world is not enough. In a male dominated society, women are given the duty to raise children, care for them, nurse them, and teach them traditions and customs of the society they are born to, men are always absent under the pretext of work in order to subvert to their families’ needs. So it is up to the mother to know what her baby wants, if he is sick, if he is hungry or if he preferred to play with his toys or go outside the yard.

b/ Mother and Daughter Relationship:

When children are born, the parents should make sure that their babies receive the most appropriate education, especially the mother who is in charge with this mission. The latter then treats her children in different ways because of their different gender. Concerning the boys, mothers do not find any complication to deal with them; the more difficult they are the better their mother gets along with them. However, in the case of the girls, mothers try to control and submit them to their wills, so that they create their doubles. A daughter's personality thus is shaped by her mother, which means that if a mother is satisfied with her life and achievements she would create her double in her daughter, and if it is the opposite, if she had endured bad experiences or suffered from choices she made in her life. Then, she will prevent her daughter to have the same fate¹⁰⁰. Toni Morrison's character Denver and Malika Mokaddem's Dalila are little girls both of whom their mothers' condition had a great influence on their childhood.

In Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), Denver experienced the mother's interference in her life. As a slave woman, Sethe left painful struggles due to her race and her status as mother. Denver is the only child that remains to her, so Sethe could not let her baby to be exposed to the same faith. Concerning the idea, De Beauvoir claims: 'and at times, by contrast, she fiercely forbids her to resemble her: "she wants her own experience to be useful." It is a way to get even.'¹⁰¹ It means that Sethe, as a protective mother, forbids her daughter to go out and encounter a racist and merciless society. Denver then never goes out, she has neither friends nor family to visit, and she grows up under her mother's protection. The only thing that comforts her was the presence of a ghost, 'as ghost that feels lonely and rebuked'¹⁰², just like her. Denver never went out the house for twelve years, the latter reports that: 'not since Miss Lady Jones' house have I left 124 by myself.' Never'¹⁰³. Sethe did her best to lock on Denver any chance to see the external world. She was not the kind of mothers who tell their baby girl

how a beautiful woman she will be, and that all the boys would fall in love with her. Confined in 124, Denver was told that there is no security outside her house; she should love being there because it is the most secured place in the world, and no one dares to come and hurt her. Then, Sethe, aware of the atrocities of slavery based on her personal background and her dead mother's, she imprisoned her daughter to protect her from marriage and abandonment, from becoming a mother to children she would not keep, and then from losing the human part of herself, on which she renounced when she killed her baby.

In contrast to Denver, Mokkadem's character Dalila, is born in an Algerian and Muslim society. Her mother has features of a traditional woman, she is satisfied by the life she lives, an existence limited to housekeeping, cooking, laundry, and taking care of her husband and children. For this housewife, she is the example that her daughter should follow. Dalila, the ten years old daughter, has always her mother at the back, she is dictating her what and what not to do. By this, the mother prepares her daughter to be an authentic Algerian woman when she will grow, just as her mother. As De Beauvoir argues it: 'At times she tries to impose exactly her own destiny on her child: "what was good enough for me is good enough for you; this is the way I was brought up, so you will share my lot."'”¹⁰⁴

This explains more the mother's attitude toward her daughter, for her, her life is full of achievements like taking care of her house, the children, and husband, this makes the woman satisfied. So she has the duty to raise the woman of the future as her own mother already did with her, a precious tradition to keep and this is how things should be done.

From those distinct mothers, we understand that daughters are shaped by their mothers' experiences. They become what their mothers decide to; whether to follow the traditional path and become her double, a wife and a mother who maintains the established order that defines females as servant and birthing bodies under patriarchal instructions, or to

be her opposite by preventing her from following the same path. Those postures of mothers and wives oblige women to obey and to not take the risk to challenge their societies, due to the threatening circumstances society demonstrate. This prevents any woman to choose her own path. The women's position toward the social established statuses promotes the continuity of patriarchal subjugation and women subordination.

Endnotes :

⁶⁶Elizabethe fallaize ,‘Simone De Beauvoir : A Critical Reader’(London :Routledge,1998),10

⁶⁷Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),14

⁶⁸Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),73

⁶⁹*Ibid*,72

⁷⁰Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),133

⁷¹Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),13

⁷²*Ibid*,26

⁷³*Ibid*,31

⁷⁴*Ibid*,105

⁷⁵*Ibid*,140

⁷⁶Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998),39

⁷⁷*Ibid*,139

⁷⁸Ibid,107

⁷⁹Ibid,40

⁸⁰ Ibid, 40

⁸¹ Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 636

⁸²Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987), 27

⁸³ Ibid,11

⁸⁴Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998),27

⁸⁵Ibid,142

⁸⁶Ibid,140

⁸⁷Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),14

⁸⁸Ibid,103

⁸⁹Ibid,605

⁹⁰Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),247

⁹¹ Ibid,27

⁹²Ibid,10

⁹³Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),133

⁹⁴ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),74

⁹⁵Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),27

⁹⁶Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),19

⁹⁷Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),632

⁹⁸Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998),111

⁹⁹*Ibid*,504

¹⁰⁰Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),636

¹⁰¹*Ibid*,638

¹⁰²Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),16

¹⁰³*Ibid*,243

¹⁰⁴Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),636

Chapter Three: Emancipation in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokaddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993)

Women have had to fight for their independence. Only recently have women started to gain respect as men's equals. However, to locate the source of this subjectivity on women, De Beauvoir suggests that oppression is a matter of tradition, in other words, women's inferiority is not a modern phenomenon, but existed since the creation of Adam and Eve, ideas on 'Creation Myths'¹⁰⁵. Thus, in this part De Beauvoir asserts that patriarchal society imposes its laws on individuals, especially females, in a particularly and effective mode, working through the intermediary of religion, traditions, language, tales, and songs.¹⁰⁶ That is to say, patriarchal society uses religion, customs, and language in order to maintain women in a secondary position. So challenging this established patriarchal system requires a lot of strength and audacity, that the new woman sought to demonstrate in order to liberate herself. In literature, women have been an inspiration for many writers for centuries. They have been celebrated as symbols of beauty, affection, and strength and we usually connect them with motherhood and bearing children. Therefore, the portrayal of female characters depends on the authors' gender. Consequently, male writers created a biased knowledge about women in their writings. De Beauvoir claims that, D.H. Lawrence, Claudel, Montherlant, and Breton, in their writings, portrayed women as weak, the flesh, and men's servants, disseminated the myth of women.¹⁰⁷

As a result of their revolt against such a biased portrayal of female characters in male literature, female authors seek to reformulate and redefine female figures distorted throughout centuries. Toni Morrison and Malika Mokeddem are among those female authors that gave another terminology to the female representation in literature, by putting emphasis on giving female characters fundamental roles and sought to unveil the feminist side of history. Through their novels, *Beloved*(1987) and *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), both writers portrayed female

characters as independent women who managed to take responsibility of themselves, especially in hard conditions. Consequently, this chapter focuses on Toni Morrison's and Malika Mokeddem's mediation to exhibit women's quest for autonomy through work and their self assertion in the face of redoubtable obstacles, slavery and religious fundamentalism.

1. Emancipation in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987):

First, Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) depicts the situation of women during slavery in the United States of America. It is about a slave woman who escaped slavery, then had to reconstruct herself as a free human being despite the cruelty of the patriarchal system, poverty, racism, and social isolation. In the novel, we encounter female characters that are liberated from the traditional inferiority and passiveness to which they were associated during their enslavement.

Sethe, Morrison's heroine, a single mother, is portrayed as an independent woman. Financially, she managed to assume her role as the economic provider for her family and take responsibility of herself, after her husband's desertion. Sethe works at Sawyer's Restaurant, which she sought as the first step toward her independence. This allows her to subvert to her personal and her daughter's needs without the help of any one, then she can consider herself as an autonomous woman. De Beauvoir argues it when reporting a working woman: 'I never asked anyone for anything. "I made it on my own" She was as proud of being self sufficient as a Rockefeller'¹⁰⁸.

Though, Sethe works for a low wage, and earns only few pence, she could secure a life saving sum of thirty eight dollars.¹⁰⁹ This suggest that, being a black woman did not prevent her from going forward after being a slave for the longest part of her life. A few amount of money was enough for her to be at ease and in peace. Sethe is strengthened by the experiences

that she have been through. She became a strong woman who imposes herself and defends her choices. For her, men do not secure her life anymore; they have no influence or place in her life. None could impose on her anything; she is the master of herself. However, this strong will of self assertion is mainly apparent throughout several scenes in the novel.

First, Sethe lives with her daughter Denver in a house without a man. When Paul D, a man with whom she was in the slave plantation, arrived to 124, he was surprised how she could live without a male presence, he says: '*No man? You here by yourself ?*'¹¹⁰ Sethe showed courage and economic autonomy being able to survive without being under male's protection and charge. Just after, Paul D encounters the ghost in the house, he was terrified by this paranormal presence, so he asked Sethe to leave the house, but she refused to obey, saying:

I got a tree on my back and a haint in my house, and nothing in between
but the daughter I am holding in my arms. No more running- from nothing.
I will never run from another thing on this earth. I took one journey and
I paid for the ticket, but let me tell you something Paul D Garner: it cost
too much! Do you hear me? It cost too much. Now sit down and eat with
us or leave us be.¹¹¹

This quote from the beginning of the novel evinces the strong position held by Sethe. When Paul D suggested leaving the house, she made him know that it is not up to him to decide. Eventually, Sethe made allusion to the darkest period of her life and the terrible sequela on her back, by which she means that nothing would be worse than what has already passed. Sethe tells Paul D that she will never run again, because nothing on this earth scares her anymore. Sethe then orders Paul D to eat with her or leave. This attitude testifies the reversal of roles between males and females, man is no more the head of the family, with herself assertion, Sethe faces the patriarchal and racist society and appropriates the position of family head for herself. De Beauvoir claims: 'A woman who is not afraid of men frightens them'¹¹² After this scene Paul D, being impressed by Sethe's attitude, never talks about leaving the house.

Additionally, Paul D asked Sethe about having a baby together, he says: 'I want you pregnant, Sethe. Would you do that to me?'¹¹³ Sethe rejects Paul D's demand and tells him that she is not going to do it again. Sethe declines motherhood because it brought to her a lot of suffering and sorrow in the past. She feared that her bad experiences would start all over again. So, as an independent woman, Sethe refuses to bear a child once again. De Beauvoir associates this refusal to the features of the autonomous woman, she argues: 'There is one female fundamental function that is still almost impossible to undertake in complete freedom, and that is motherhood; in England and in America, the woman can at least refuse it at will'¹¹⁴

Similarly, De Beauvoir associates freedom to the English and the American woman who, during the 1940s, had access to each of abortion and birth control, in contrast to the French woman. She claims that women who could choose to have or not to have children are already emancipated. This corresponds to the case of Sethe. During her marriage with Halle, she could not even think to say no to pregnancy. She was impregnated every year without being asked if she really wanted to or not. Being a mother brought too many injuries to Sethe. The strong love for her children caused her loss. She had to kill her daughter to protect her from the dehumanization and humiliation of slavery she experienced. Sethe, consequently, paid for this exaggerated maternal love, and thinks that being a mother is a burden which she has no strength to bear anymore. She has already lost three children and does not want to have another only to see it, too, run away or be taken from her.

Then, Denver, Sethe's remaining child, is also an emancipated figure in Morrison's novel who challenged the external world after years of imprisonment by her mother. Denver lived all her youth locked in 124 by her mother, who had the intention to protect her from the community by which they were rejected. As a result, Denver had no friends, no family, and she did not know how to build a social life due to the lack of contact she suffered from, during the twelve years she stayed at the house.¹¹⁵ She is constantly told that the world outside this house

is full of insecurity and dangers, especially the reason that motivated her mother to kill her sister, something, she believes might come again one day. As she puts it: ‘Whatever it is, it comes from outside this house, outside the yard, and it comes right in the yard if it wants to, so I never leave this house and I watch over the yard so it can’t happen again and my mother won’t have to kill me too.’¹¹⁶

Denver’s monologue advances the deepest of her fears and the permanent anguish she lived through since her youth. This quote may also refer to the whole black community terrorized by slavery and the effects it left on them. The injuries of this institution had many repercussions even on the generation that followed, which is the case of Denver. Denver did not live the period of slavery, but experienced its trepidity through her traumatized mother, Sethe.

Moreover, the arrival of Beloved, whom Denver thinks to be her sister¹²⁴, ended her loneliness and made her happy. Together, with Paul D, Sethe, and Beloved, Denver experienced what it means to have a real family life. Moreover, when Sethe knew about Beloved she completely forgot about Denver, and consecrated her energy, time, and money to catch up the time she did not have lived with the daughter she murdered. As a result, Beloved became greedy, which brought trouble to the family, and Sethe lost her job. The girls and their mother are out of money and food. Sethe was not in good health so that she could look for a job once again. It was up to Denver to take this step and protect her family.

Under those circumstances, Denver decided to save her family starving. To do that she had to put her fear aside and sacrifice herself for the mother and sister she loves so much, as Morrison says: ‘So it was she who had to step off the edge of the world and die because if she didn’t, they all would’¹¹⁷ Here she becomes an independent woman who is able to take in charge her family. She is aware of the importance of having a job as a mean by which she

would secure the needs of her family. Denver went out alone for the first time of her life in order to get a job. She was ready to do anything, whatever work it might be, she was ready to learn, most of all she wanted to take care of her family. She claims: ‘ I want work, Miss Lady’ ‘I can do anything, but would learn it from you if you have a little extra’¹¹⁸ Denver succeeded to get food for her mother and sister, and some of company to stay by her mother’s side and help her to overcome the difficult time.

Subsequently, Morrison in her novel highlights the importance of the harmonious relationship that exists between women as a means of solidarity and the first step toward liberation from the male domination. For instance, the character Amy Denver, the white woman, helped Sethe to deliver her last child and flee the slave state of Kentucky, despite her awareness of the repercussions to help a fugitive slave. She took the risk to have her head cut in order to help a running slave rather than watch her die. The help that Sethe received from another woman allowed her to change her condition of the slave woman to a freed one, and cross the river to another phase of her life. This makes allusion of what a female union could do, if they join hands together. This is also similar to the women gathered in front of Sethe’s house to exorcise the ghost. A woman alone cannot have great achievement, thus serving the same cause together, lead to a full glory. As Morrison writes it: ‘The voices of women searched for the right combination, the key, the code, the sound that broke the back of world. Building voice upon voice until they found it, and when they did it was a wave of sound deep water and knock the pods off chestnut trees. It broke over Sethe and she trembled like the baptized in its wash’¹¹⁹

This quote demonstrates women’s strength while they are united to achieve a common objective. With their union nothing is impossible for them, even if it is a supernatural power. The woman of the black community succeeded to liberate Sethe from the traumatic past that kept her imprisoned for eighteen years. That is why Morrison calls for the feminine unity to

overcome the traumatic effect of slavery that the black woman suffered from.

1. Women's Emancipation in Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993):

Throughout history, women suffered all kinds of injustices and oppressions in several societies around the world. Indeed, in ancient times and even nowadays, women do not possess the same legal and political rights as men. Moreover, they had been for a long time under the control of fathers and husbands. This oppression was justified in most cases by religion and culture. For instance, the myth of the Original Sin condemned the woman and legitimized female's oppression and subjugation within most of the religious societies. As a response to these injustices, feminist theorists started to analyze the female oppression in order to eradicate it and preserve women's dignity all around the world.

In the opening of *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone De Beauvoir asserts that 'One is not born but rather becomes a woman.'¹²⁰ From this famous quote, De Beauvoir illustrates on the fact that biology or psychology do not make a woman a "woman" as she is viewed in society. She is not born passive, secondary and nonessential but all the factors in the external world have contributed to make her so, and the main one is undoubtedly patriarchy. Therefore, according to her, the inferior position held by women all around the world across the centuries is only the unfortunate result of culture and circumstances, and not the matter of destiny.¹²¹

In the final pages of *The Second Sex* (1949), De Beauvoir argues that women have two choices, either to take charge of their own destiny and thus work hard for their emancipation and independence from men, or to enjoy the privilege of "irresponsibility". The second option is the most attractive for women being less exhausting. In fact, women rely on men to provide them shelter, sustenance and protection. However, De Beauvoir warns about

the trap of “irresponsibility” and affirms that this privilege is actually a curse that chains women to the status of “parasites” in the society. Hence, Simone De Beauvoir through her book attempts to encourage women to accept all the opportunities offered to them to gain their total independence from their male counterparts.¹²²

With the same intention, Malika Mokeddem has always fought for the feminine condition and the emancipation of women from all over the world especially in her native Algeria. In an interview for the newspaper Kabyle Universel, the Algerian author asserts that the best way for her to fight the archaisms of a given society is to present in her novels female protagonists who oppose the social norms with their rebelliousness.¹²³ In fact, in *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), Mokeddem introduces a group of women of all ages who are thirsty for freedom. Although fictitious, these characters might be, they incarnate the voice of all the Algerian women who have been denied the right to express their anger with the patriarchal society.

In *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), Malika Mokeddem got her inspiration from her personal life. Indeed, the character Sultana resembles closely the author, they are both born in the Algerian desert and have both fled the sexism of their misogynistic society to settle in France after having completed their medical studies and specializing in nephrology. Through Sultana, Malika Mokeddem intends to show to the readers the great importance of women’s emancipation and denounces the unfair practices of men that reinforce women’s passivity and secondary position in the society. In an interview made in 1994, Malika Mokeddem stated:

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 leave. That is 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.¹²⁴

In *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), Sultana Medjahed is the perfect example of the emancipated woman. Just as Malika Mokeddem, she has challenged the established norms of her society by evading her traditional role of housewife, in order to accomplish brilliant studies and become later a successful Nephrologist. For Malika Mokeddem, this exemplary career is due to the great influence played by her grandmother who insisted to put her in school contrarily to the majority of girls at that time. Mokeddem said: ‘She said that a sedentary person, which is what we had become, is someone whom death has taken by the feet, and there were only words to bring back the nomadic memory.’¹²⁵ In addition, the author’s professional success is also the result of her reluctance to the degrading conditions of women in her family circle. As Mokeddem declares it: ‘I saw my mother, I saw the women closed up inside their houses and subjugated. I didn’t want to become one of them. I didn’t want to grow up. I dreamed of going into the desert to die, to be devoured by jackals. I became anorexic.’¹²⁶

Moreover, in *The Second Sex* (1949), Simone De Beauvoir insists on the importance of women’s financial independence through an equal participation in the labor market alongside the men, in order to achieve a total independence. She states: ‘It is through work that women have been able, to a large extent, to close the gap separating her from the male; work alone can guarantee her concrete freedom.’¹²⁷ In fact, in *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), Sultana embodies this independence thanks to her job; she is self reliant by living and supporting herself alone. In addition, she does not conform to the servitude of her peers towards men by being an obedient housewife. For instance, unlike the majority of women in her native village, Sultana does not spend her time in cooking and doing the household chores. Rather, she employs a housekeeper named Halima to deal with it while she is working outside. This is what Simone De Beauvoir exposes in her book: ‘Woman cannot be emancipated unless she takes part in production on a large social scale and is only incidentally

bound to domestic work. And this has become possible only within a large modern industry that not only accepts women's work on a grand scale but formally requires it'.¹²⁸

In other words, for De Beauvoir, to be fully equal to men, women should invade the external world, and be more involved in the labor market. Furthermore, in her definition of the emancipated woman, Simone De Beauvoir, claims that a woman who is busy in building a successful professional career has not enough time to prettify herself in order to look feminine and elegant. She says:

The independent woman _and especially the intellectual who thinks through her situation_ will suffer from an inferiority complex as a female; she does not have as much free time for beauty care as a flirt, whose only preoccupation is to seduce; while she might follow all the expert's advice, she will never be more than an amateur in the elegance department.¹²⁹

In *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), Sultana exemplifies this theory. In fact, her dedication to her work in the hospital gives her less time to take care of herself. For instance, after her misadventure in the Ksar, the young doctor decided to devote some time to revive her beauty that she has long neglected. She says: 'I take a shower and take particular care to make myself beautiful again.'¹³⁰ Another aspect of Sultana's emancipation is shown in her way of dealing with the males characters. In the novel, Malika Mokeddem puts emphasis on the rebellious temper of the protagonist in the face of the oppressive masculine figures, such as Ali Merbah and Bakkar, the mayor of her village. Instead of adopting a submissive attitude towards them, Sultana bravely dares to defy them. As an example, while talking about the Islamists with her friend Salah, Sultana states: 'They don't scare me.'¹³¹ Then when Bakkar came to Sultana's house to order her to introduce herself, she answers: 'That's none of your business.'¹³² And when he required her to replace the deceased doctor of the village, Yacine, she retorted: 'I won't show you anything at all, as for the job, if you'd behaved properly, I

would have maybe tried to do something.¹³³ Another example is shown when a woman from Ain Nakhla reminds Sultana of her departure from her village to Oran. She reports:

Before getting into the car, you turned around and ran your eyes over all of us. And then you stared at Bakkar and you said in a harsh voice, ‘you and your band, you’re the rot of this country. But I’m going to study, and I will be stronger than all of your cowardly and disgraceful acts. Look hard at me. I don’t give a damn about you! And I will come back one day to tell you so.’ Yes, you said that, and you even repeated, ‘I don’t give a damn about you!’ then you got into the car and you both left.¹³⁴

From the previous behavior, Sultana confirms what De Beauvoir promoted in *The Second Sex* (1949) by saying: ‘the emancipated woman on the contrary wants to be active and prehensile and refuses the passivity the man attempts to impose on her.’¹³⁵ In addition to what has been said, Sultana Medjahed has also achieved her emancipation from the oppressive chains of Islamic fundamentalism through sexual liberation. In the novel, Sultana attracts the rage of her village inhabitants for having broken the sexual taboos by sleeping under the same roof with men to whom she is not married. According to Simone De Beauvoir: ‘A woman who works hard, who has responsibilities, and who knows how harsh the struggle is against the world’s obstacles needs _like the male_ not only to satisfy her physical desires but also to experience the relaxation and diversion provided by enjoyable sexual adventure.’¹³⁶

In other words, Sultana refuses to repress her sexual desires as a form of resistance to the social norms. Moreover, De Beauvoir adds thereupon: The woman who achieves a virile independence has the great privilege of dealing sexually with autonomous and active individuals who _generally_ will not play a parasite’s role in her life, who will not bind her by their weakness and the demands of their needs.¹³⁷

This quotation takes shape through the nature of relationships maintained by Sultana with the character Khaled and Vincent. In fact, whereas the two suitors fight for her love, Sultana is completely detached from the sentimental aspect of her relationships and sees in

them temporary stories. She says: ‘how can I make them understand my terror of choice, of settling down? How can I make them understand that my survival is only in moving around, migrating?’¹³⁸

Dalila is another figure of revolt in *The Forbidden Woman* (1993). She represents a glimmer of hope for the Algerian women’s emancipation. Despite her young age, Dalila is already aware and revolted against the injustices undergone by women in her entourage. Through her confidences to Sultana and Vincent, she complains about the way in which her father, brothers and even her mother oppress her daily. She says:

Yes, I have too many brothers. They make too much noise. They fight all the time. They fight with me, and they even fight with my mother. They are always saying to me, ‘You’re not going out! Work with your mother! Bring me something to drink! Give me my shoes! Iron my pants! Lower your eyes when I talk to you!’ and on and on and you multiply it by seven. They yell and do nothing but give me orders. Sometimes they hit me. My mother, she’s happy when I’m with Ouarda because I can read and do schoolwork, but she also says, ‘Obey your brothers. If you don’t, you’re not my daughter.’¹³⁹

Nevertheless, Dalila is full of hope to get her emancipation one day, thereby, she created an imaginary sister, Samia, that she takes as a model. She portrays her as a brave woman who didn’t submit to the traditional role of women in Ain Nakhla, but rather preferred to pursue her studies abroad. Dalila dreams of escaping her restrictive way of living under the patriarchal hegemony. She says: ‘the reading at school is always a story of good little girl who helps her mama while her brother plays outside. It’s all I don’t want to be, all I don’t want to do.’¹⁴⁰ Simone De Beauvoir wrote on this: ‘For a woman to accomplish her femininity she is required to be object and prey; that is, she must renounce her claims as a sovereign subject. This is the conflict that singularly characterizes the situation of the emancipated woman. She refuses to confine herself to her role as female because she does not want to mutilate herself.’¹⁴¹

De Beauvoir argues that in order to get her emancipation, a woman have to renounce to her femininity, which according to the social norms contradicts it. In the case of Dalila, her society considers that a feminine woman is an obedient wife and mother cloistered at home, which goes in the opposite direction of Dalila's aspirations.

Alongside with Samia, Dalila also gets her inspiration from her schoolteacher Ouarda. She states: 'Well...yes. But she's never here. Fortunately there's Ouarda! Ouarda, she makes me read and learn. With her I really talk about things. She makes all my fears of threats that I get in school go away. She makes me think.'¹⁴² In fact, Ouarda encourages Dalila to work hard in her studies in order to reach her dreams of emancipation. For Dalila, Ouarda is an example to follow because she is not subjugated by her husband thanks to her intellectual capital and her status of independent woman. Therefore, Dalila is determined to follow in her footsteps.

In the last pages of *The Forbidden Woman* (1993), we witness a wave of rebellion coming from the female inhabitants of Ain Nakhla. In fact, their solidarity with Sultana who was threatened by the Islamists, has revived a glimmer of hope for their emancipation which has been unexpected. After a long time of subjugation, women dared finally to counterattack the ugliness of Islamic fundamentalism. This is shown in the way in which a group of women intervened to defend Sultana against the claws of Bakkar saying to him: 'You're just a bunch of frustrated people, in your head and your underpants! You've never had any brains. You're just erect penises! An unsatisfied erection. Your eyes are nothing but vermin. Vermin that constantly dirty, gnaw at, and devour women!'¹⁴³

This rebelliousness towards patriarchy is explained by Simone De Beauvoir as the first step towards women's emancipation. She says: 'She gets fed up with her servility; she tries to take her revenge by playing the game with masculine weapons: she talks instead of listening,

she flaunts clever ideas, unusual feelings; she contradicts her interlocutor instead of going along with him, she tries to outdo him.’¹⁴⁴

In like manner, this idea is exemplified in the novel. In fact, women of Ain Nakhla are no more afraid of their masculine counterparts and they defy them openly thanks to their solidarity without which they could do nothing. As one of them says: ‘We must speak. We must give ourselves solidarity. One hand alone cannot applaud, and we can’t take anymore! We are so worn out.’¹⁴⁵

To conclude this chapter, we may say that women’s emancipation is a fundamental theme in both novels. The two authors have dealt with this theme in different ways. Malika Mokeddem through the characters of Sultana, Dalila and Ouarda, tends to transmit her conception of emancipation through their professional achievements and their strong will to smash patriarchy.

Endnotes :

¹⁰⁵Gill Plain and Susan Sellers, *A History of Feminist Literary Criticism*.(New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007),89

¹⁰⁶*Ibid*,91.

¹⁰⁷*Ibid*,91.

¹⁰⁸Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),282

¹⁰⁹ Simone De Beauvoir “The Second” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),813

¹¹⁰Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),18

¹¹¹*Ibid*,11.

¹¹² Simone De Beauvoir “The Second sex”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),822

¹¹³ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),151

¹¹⁴ Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010),828

¹¹⁵ Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (New York: Vintage Books, a Division of Random House, Inc, 1987),243

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*,243.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*,242.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*,281.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*,292.

¹²⁰ *Ibid*,308.

¹²¹ ThoughtCo. “Opression and Women’s History.”<https://www.thoughtco.com/oppression-womens-history-definition-3528977> (accessed November 27, 2017)

¹²² Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 14

¹²³ Sparknotes. “The Second Sex-Simone De Beauvoir.”
<http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/secondsex/quotes.html> (accessed November 27, 2017)

¹²⁴ *Ibid*.

¹²⁵ KabyleUnivesel.com. “Entretien avec la Romancière Algerienne Malika Mokeddem.»
<http://kabyleuniversel.com/2011/05/22/entretien-avec-la-romanciere-algerienne-malika-mokeddem/>
(accessed November 27, 2017)

¹²⁶ Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), vii

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, viii.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*.

¹²⁹ Simone De Beauvoir “The Second Sex” , trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 813

¹³⁰ *Ibid*, 89.

¹³¹ *Ibid*, 818.

¹³²Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 135

¹³³*Ibid*, 109.

¹³⁴*Ibid*, 46.

¹³⁵*Ibid*.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 146.

¹³⁷ Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 850.

¹³⁸*Ibid*,819.

¹³⁹*Ibid*, 827.

¹⁴⁰Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 137

¹⁴¹*Ibid*, 27.

¹⁴²*Ibid*, 75.

¹⁴³ Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 819

¹⁴⁴Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 75

¹⁴⁵*Ibid*, 138.

¹⁴⁶ Simone De Beauvoir “‘The Second Sex’”, trans. Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany- Chevallier (New York: A Division of Random House, Inc, 2010), 119

¹⁴⁷Malika Mokeddem, *The Forbidden Woman*, trans. Melissa Marcus (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 143

General Conclusion :

The study of the two novels: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) highlights the great contribution of the two works in bringing a positive portrayal of women in literature. The women's subjugation from the various hegemonic institutions is ultimately unaccepted in the two novels by the female protagonists. In addition to that, the two feminist authors put the stress on the advantages and the great importance of women's emancipation mainly through their active participation in the domain of work.

Emancipation is vital for women. Throughout history, women have been under the men's yoke and didn't enjoy their full freedom alongside the males. Therefore, feminism appeared as a revelation that paved the way for women's liberation from the patriarchal constraints and their recognition as human beings at the same rank as their male counterparts. Many female authors appeared during the past centuries to be the defenders of women's rights. Despite the difference of religion, period of time, language and even culture, the feminist writers have the same aim. Their writings manage with time to clarify, correct and give more importance to the women's status.

In this study, we tried to shed light on the works of both Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) and Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993). In terms of gender, the two novels seem to be different. In fact, the stories are held in two completely different historical backgrounds. On the one hand, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) centers on the struggle of slave women facing both of sexism and racial discrimination, during slavery and the Reconstruction era in The United States. Thus, Morrison's records of the historical events concerning women's achievements during this particular sensitive epoch. On the other hand, Malika Mokeddem's *The Forbidden Woman* (1993) relates the demeaning conditions undergone by Algerian women within a misogynistic Algerian society infested

to religious Fundamentalism during the Black Decade. Indeed, Mokeddem puts an emphasis on the emancipating figures such as Sultana, Dalila and Ouarda and their significant contribution to the outbreak of an emancipatory revolt in their village.

Hence, the comparative study demonstrates that the two feminist authors give great importance to women's achievements in their societies, and according to them, the latter can get their freedom through work within their societies. That is why many female protagonists from both novels share many liberated characteristics. As a matter of fact, both of authors share the ideas and perceptions of Simone De Beauvoir on emancipation in their novels' protagonists.

From what has been written above and from this comparative approach, we may deduce that, women today should take the example of their predecessors who fought for the recognition of their human rights.

Women are becoming more conscious of their duty. They should liberate themselves not only from social restrictions, but also from the political, cultural and religious ones. Their claim of being emancipated should be applied to their everyday lives. Furthermore, Men should also bring their solidarity to women in order to liberate the human race from all forms of unkindness.

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