People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
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Questionning The Power of Subaltern In Nawal El Saadawi's Novel Women At Point of Zero (1975)

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in: Literature & Civilisation

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Academic year

2017-2018

Dedication

This dissertation is truely dedicated to :

The most tender woman in the world, my mother .Thank you for all your support , sacrifice , patient , love and tears .

To the one who is always by my side , my father .

To my dear sister Ibtisam , my brothers Mohamed and Aymen.

To my soul Grandma who was waiting in pins and needles for this moment .

To my husband Mounir who encouraged me in this work.

To all my friends especially Fatima , Khadija , Atika , Djihad .

Special dedication my neighbor who helped in this work and all my family.

Ikram

Acknowledgments

I am grateful to my supervisor Mrs. Boumous for her ceaseless support and encouragement.

My special recognition goes to the jury members. Special thanks to all my teachers.

Abstract

In the context of Western feminist theory, this study explores Nawal El Saadawi's celebrated novel, *Woman at Point Zero.* The aim of this analysis is to establish the benefits of comparative feminist discourse with regard to patriarchal policies in the Middle East. El Saadawi challenges the hegemony of a traditionally phallocentric society empowered by masculinity. *The woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El-Saadawi is a novel that embodies the hard condition of a woman, named Firdaus, who struggles for her rights, not only as a woman but also as a human. In three chapters, this study will provide a framework of post-colonial theory in the first chapter. The second chapter will shed light on the contributions of Arab Women who support many voiceless women. The last one will be devoted to the analysis of Nawal al-Saadawi novel *Woman At The Point Zero*(1975) with respect to the aforementioned theories

Keywords*:* feminism, postcolonial theories, subaltern, empowerment.

ملخص

في سياق النظرية النسائية الغربية ، تستكشف هذه الورقة بصورة حاسمة رواية نوال السعداوي الشهيرة ، "امرأة في نقطة الصفر". الهدف من هذا التحليل هو إقامة حوار وتحديد فوائد الحوار النسوي النسبي فيما يتعلق بالسياسات الأبوية في الشرق الأوسط .تتحدى السعداوي في هده الرواية "هيمنة مجتمع بلاشيونتي تقليدي يتخذه الدين والرجولة. في "المرأة عند نقطة الصفر فككت التقاليد الرجعية التي كانت ترتبط بالهيمنة الأبوية .

General Introduction:

In the context of postcolonial, "*Arabic Literature*" has gained significance in the Contemporary English Fiction. Literature becomes the medium with which Arab writers answer back the Western stereotypes of Arabs. In fact, there are many issues facing women become a thriving field of research. Therefore, a considerable number of works has been produced putting on the spot Arab women; hence they have attracted the focus of literary studies and become the norms of postcolonial lectures. The question of Arab women's role and status become the focus of various academic research. Furthermore, throughout the last few decades, the academic field of social sciences has been continuously challenged by the example of gender.

Gender issues, in fact, are repeatedly reframed as a notion to define, as an aim to pursue, or as a functional concept in the society. Consequently, the subject of "*oppressed Arab woman"* in her connection with the Arabic performs is among the most studied issues within postcolonial studies.

The 1990s witnessed a proliferation of writings by and about Arab women, as is the number of interested scholars who address issues of gender. This was the outcome of Arab's mass participation in the movement of freedom which is a landmark in the history of Arab women empowerment. Nowadays, Arab women have new roles, apart from the traditional role they were used to play for ages. As they seek to crave to reframe their identities, it remains a source of strength, guidance, and wisdom. Basically, for Arab women empowerment is not otherworldly, it is as much about social connections and works as it is about a state of mind. If an Arab woman is well-equipped with self-awareness and powers within herself, she becomes more confident and determined.

General Introduction:

Woman at Point Zero [1]will focus on the work of one of the Arab woman writers, Nawal EL Saadoui[2], and will discover her work on the light of postcolonial theory with regard to contemporary discourse on feminism and Arab women through empowerment. By this work, we wish to participate in the recent growing debate on works about Arab women. We are interested in Nawal's narratives, specifically *Woman at Point Zero* (1975), for her use of English as a vehicle to express her views.

The present study has been undertaken with the objectives to study Arab women empowerment in relation to the writer's contribution to correct the preconceived opinions about Arab women. Central to this investigation are the following questions: firstly, to what extent Nawal's *Woman at Point Zero* forefronts and supports Arab Women as a strategic choice for the protagonist, Ferdaus, to insert into the host culture? Secondly, Does Nawal contribute to the growing debate on feminism? It is highly recommended to shed light on the empowerment dimensions of the novel; consequently, what is the role of empowerment, in the novel?

What is hypothesized, thus, is that Arab women empower themselves through self-awareness; when Arab woman is well equipped with powers would face whatever the impasses she may find herself in. Indeed, it is a social connection which enhanced Ferdaus will to carry on her life. Additionally, the novel is a rich portrayal of Arabic principles and their role in saving Arab Women's life, mainly those placed in an uncomfortable environment as it is the case for Ferdaus. By the same mark, Nawal does contribute to the growing debate over the Arab women mainly through her positive representations of them.

[1] Summary of Women At Point Zero is provided in Appendix1
[2] Saadawi's biography is provided in Appendix2

Ultimately, Ferdaus's story is an invitation to re-think some feminist analysis about Arab women since the western feminist interpretations remain insufficient.

This study would contribute to the debate about the tensions between universal and local conceptualization of feminism. Moreover, it is expected to underwrite to the field of literature and literary studies. It might be helpful for those who are interested in the study of feminist narratives.

Searching through books, doctoral research, search machine and other sources reveal a delicate number of works published on the subject of Arab women's writings and their struggle to empower themselves. Many Arab writers have created masterworks in English about Arabs, for instance, Ahdaf Souief, Leila Aboulela, Hanan El Sheikh, and Fadia Fakir.

Nawal El Saadawi, along with other contemporaries, explores themes such as Arab women's representation, the process of integration when placed in a new environment, the quest for identity and other themes in *Woman At Point Zero* Nawal's popular novel. In the literature review of the novel and the writer, we have found a number of articles and doctoral research dealing with Saadawi's works.

Bill Ashcroft (2013), *The Empire Writes Back, Theory and Practice Postcolonial Literature* , has examined the heterogeneity of Arab women writers in the context of postcolonial theory through contrasting the thematic expressions of narratives produced by Arab women writers.

Edward Said (1978) *Orientalism,* has presented a glimpse into the life of Arab writers and the oppression they face, also, he emphasized the importance of literature for

these demoted women since it stands for these oppressed writers show off their Arab part of the identity and their pride of being obscured.

Homi Bhabha .k (1994) *Nation and Narration*. London have discussed the hybrid identity of Arabs; they have emphasized that this identity is achieved through the struggles of being placed in a host culture that joins with the Arab identity. Devi Mahasuet, Breat Giver is another literary scholar who has written on the issue of Arab narratives, in particular, works of Nawal El Sadawi (1975.

In addition to other thinkers who showed to be relevant to the suggested study such as Gayatri Spivak , Literary Reprenstaion,,she clarifies the discourse of Subaltern.
After checking several sources, the majority of the studies which have been done on *Woman At Point Zero* are either articles, doctoral thesis or book chapters; yet, no study so far, as far as we know, has discussed the subject of the protagonist's empowerment under the scope of feminism and the importance of trans-cultural dialogue for exiled Arabs mainly. Thus, a study is needed to examine the scope to which the novel advocates Arab women as the strategies that help the protagonist to overcome the contests she faces in her life , and the extent to which the novel conforms to the ideals of feminism and women empowerment.

This study falls within postcolonial theories, precisely feminism; therefore, we will follow a descriptive-analytical approach with a return to postcolonial theory. The data used are of qualitative nature. The specific procedure used in the selection of quotations involves close reading to have a deep understanding of the novel and collect textual data from, expressions and thoughts of the characters, namely the protagonist, in the novel.

General Introduction:

Our investigation will be made up of three chapters; the first chapter discusses the theoretical background emphasizing postcolonial feminism. The second chapter offers the Arab Women contributions and highlights the strategic role of women -means of empowerment- and the viability of feminism as a transcultural movement. The third chapter analyzes the empowerment scopes of the novel. A discussion of the central role and struggles of women mainly will be the core of this chapter.

In the light of what we have studied in the literature, precisely in literary criticism, close reading is a method of approaching literary texts. It consists of a careful and continued interpretation of passages. It emphasizes the single over the general; it focuses on words, the syntax, and the order in which the sentences unfold ideas. Literally, the reader scans the lines of the text.

A Theoretical Framework

Introduction:

The term postcolonial has been substituted in the 70s for the post-independence issues throughout the world. Postcolonialism is a critical theory which focuses on colonial experience from the colonized society's point of view. This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of the study focusing on postcolonial theories and their implementation on the chosen novel. It also aims to analyze the theory of feminism by providing a historical background. Besides, it explains how a woman has been victimized for ages in the name of customs, ideals, and honor.

Section one: A Historical Background of Postcolonialism:

Postcolonialism is a literary concept, which deals with political and cultural studies. Postcolonialism is not concerned only with postcolonialism but even colonialism otherness, and imperialism all fall in this field. There is a great debate over the definition of Postcolonialism. As a trend of study, although there is the word post which refers to after colonialism. However, the word covers the whole period starting from pre-colonialism, colonialism, and postcolonialism and even nowadays.

1. Dimensions of Postcolonialism:

Postcolonialism goes beyond the limit of its meaning as it deals with Africans and Europeans after colonialism. Yet, becomes a literary, political and cultural discipline which deals mainly with different reactions towards the phenomenon of colonialism. In fact, seeds of Postcolonialism can be found in every field related to colonialism.

According to Ashcroft et al. "We *use the term Postcolonialism, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of the preoccupations throughout historical process initiated by European, imperial aggression"* (Ashcroft et al. 2013). Ashcroft's definition of

Postcolonialism holds the leftover of colonialism, in so mean, colonialism is the physical occupation, whereas, Postcolonialism is the cultural and political impacts of colonialism.

Since it is related to culture, society, and people, studies within the scope of Postcolonialism cover a wide range of disciplines such as politics, sociology, economy, education, and history. Postcolonialism is all about the effect of colonized cultures, people, and societies. It is in the third world literature and African literature in particular, writers played a great role in representing the colonized societies.

2. Postcolonialism in Literature:

In literature, it is the all literary works written in English in formerly colonized countries. Ashcroft argues: *"Postcolonial literature is all the writings which have been affected by the process of imperial from the moment of colonialism to the present day*" (Ashcroft et al. 2). Therefore, it can be seen as the byproduct of colonialism; many post-colonial writers focus on common themes such as the struggle for independence, immigration, identity, feminism and political and economic issues. Hence, their writings, genuinely, have been given a great deal of attention and created a new branch in the English literature, Bertens, author of one bestselling book on literary theories, has stated:

> In recognition of this new situation, in which writing in English from the former colonies…. has proved itself as a vital and as important as the literature written in England itself; we now usually speak of 'literature in English' rather than of 'English Literature' if we want to refer to English language writing.(195)

Thus, the end of colonialism (at least physical colonialism) created the need for a new literature, a new kind of literature written in English by the previous colonies became as important as the British literature. It enriched the English literature and made it diverse.

Postcolonial theory is a literary theory or critical approach that handles literature produced by or about countries that were once colonies of other countries. It stands around the concepts of otherness and resistance. One of the most notable works within postcolonial

theory is Edward Said's book *Orientalism*. Generally, the advocates of the theory focus mainly on the way in which literature is used to articulate one's identity and reclaim once heritage in the face of that past's inevitable invisibility and how do the colonized citizens stand against the negative images that the colonizers generate about them.

Postcolonial writers investigate themes of struggles for independence, culture, displacement, and feminism in their local settings. The use of these themes in the writings of postcolonial writers was not accidental but a deliberate phenomenon (Ibid)issue of feminism) in fiction, as a part of postcolonialism, is significant and particular in this context. A whole movement dealing with the presence of women, their representation in literature, Postcolonial fiction mostly portrays the injustice, oppression, and the exploitation of both the colonizers and Africans. It extends and portrays the lives of women who suffer from the process of colonialism and male patriarchy as well. Ashcroft et al. state: "*the post-colonial desire is the desire of decolonized communities for identity"* (125). The issue of theorizing the nature and practice of post-colonial resistance more generally has become central to post-colonial resistances. Therefore, the question of women becomes one of the thriving fields of research in contemporary literature and being necessarily about resistance and representation, feminism became on the heart of post-colonialism.

3. Postcolonialism and Values:

To give a general characterization, actually, of such varied approaches is not easy. Much postcolonial writing seeks to dare the way in which the history of colonization and decolonization has been categorized by European writers, rather than by members of European and non-Western communities who themselves experienced the injustice of colonization. From the view of writers such as Edward Said, the production and control of knowledge itself constitutes an exercise of power (Said 1978), as well as, an analysis of the domination characteristic of colonialism must seek to take account of the cultural meanings

which attach themselves to our attempts to understand both past and present. What this suggests is that a literature on the ethics of colonialism written by Western academics with little regard to the voices of those who have suffered domination runs the risk not only of misunderstanding nature but of compounding the effects, of historical injustice.

The ethical suggestions of this part and for those working within Western traditions are duped First, engagement with non-Western writing can help to enhance the understanding of the rights and wrongs of colonialism, also of the broader questions of global justice and multicultural citizenship: by deepening our understanding of the cultural lives of others, but also by challenging our own moral principles and assumptions, particularly in relation to the primacy of liberal democracy and moral universalism .

Kohn and McBride, for instance, have recently drawn extensively on the work of a wide range of postcolonial writers, such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Jalal et al ,Ahmad, Amílcar Cabral, and José Mariátegui, largely neglected in Western political thought, to reply on the nature of political change and the foundation of new regimes, with a stated aim of challenging colonial power and perceptions by setting up a clash between liberal democratic and postcolonial ideological positions (Kohn and McBride 2011: 13).

Second, it may be that such a contract is not only helpful for thinking about colonial wrongdoing but forms a constitutive part of a proper rectification response. If one understands the wrongs of colonialism not just in terms of economic exploitation and physical violence, but also in relation to the establishment of ongoing forms of cultural imposition and domination, then there are powerful causes for seeking to include non-Western voices in academic writing on colonization and de-colonization. (Butt, 2013)

Section Two: Feminism Under the Scope:

Several scholars such as Maggie Humm and Rebbecca Walker, believe that the history of feminism can be divided into three waves:

1. Feminism Waves: The Three Waves:

First-wave feminism refers to an extended period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. The term first wave was coined retrospectively after the term second-wave feminism began to be used to describe a newer feminist movement that focused as much on fighting social and cultural inequalities as political inequalities.

It originally focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women (and their children) by their husbands. However, by the end of the nineteenth century, activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women's suffrage. Yet, feminists such as Voltairine de Cleyre and Margaret Sanger were still active in campaigning for women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights at this time. In 1854, Florence Nightingale established female nurses as adjuncts to the military.

In Britain, the Suffragettes and, possibly more effectively, the Suffragists campaigned for the women's vote. In 1918 the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses. In 1928 this was extended to all women over twenty-one. In the United States, leaders of this movement included Lucretia Mott, Lucy Stone, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Susan B. Anthony, who each campaigned for the abolition of slavery prior to championing women's right to vote; all were strongly influenced by Quaker thought. American first-wave feminism involved a wide range of women. Some, such as Frances Willard, belonged to conservative Christian groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Others, such as Matilda Joslyn Gage, were more

radical, and expressed themselves within the National Woman Suffrage Association or individually. American first-wave feminism is considered to have ended with the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution (1919), granting women the right to vote in all states.

Second-wave feminism refers to the period of activity in the early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. The scholar Imelda Whelehan suggests that the second wave was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism involving the suffragettes in the UK and USA. Second-wave feminism has continued to exist since that time and coexists with what is termed third-wave feminism. The scholar Estelle Freedman compares first and second-wave feminism saying that the first wave focused on rights such as suffrage, whereas the second wave was largely concerned with other issues of equality, such as ending discrimination.

The feminist activist and author Carol Hanisch coined the slogan "The Personal is Political" which became synonymous with the second wave. Second-wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power.

Feminism accelerated since 1960's mainly within the civil rights movement in the United States and the end of colonialism in Africa, North America and Asia and other colonized countries. Writers such as Virginia Woolf were the leaders that finished the way for the feminist movement. In her work, *A Room of One's Own* (1929) was among the first to develop a feminist consciousness. This consciousness was further enhanced by Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1953), while Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, among others, are other significant women writers who gave birth to new dimensions in the field of feminism. Based on the images of women represented in Western literature, such new dimensions of feminism were considered Western. However, a new dimension of feminism developed as a

result of colonialism, which is ‘’bel et bien” that literature penned by Muslim women writers who demonstrate a feminist approach in their works.

Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s, arising as a response to perceived failures of the second wave and also as a response to the backlash against initiatives and movements created by the second wave. Third-wave feminism seeks to challenge or avoid what it deems the second wave's essentialist definitions of femininity, which (according to them) over-emphasize the experiences of upper middle-class white women.

A post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality is central to much of the third wave's ideology. Third-wave feminists often focus on "micro-politics" and challenge the second wave's paradigm as to what is, or is not, good for females. The third wave has its origins in the mid-1980s. Feminist leaders rooted in the second wave like Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, Chela Sandoval, Cherrie Moraga, Audre Lorde, Maxine Hong Kingston, and many other black feminists, sought to negotiate a space within feminist thought for consideration of race-related subjectivities.

Third-wave feminism also contains inner talks about between distinction women’s activists such as the analyst Carol Gilligan and those who accept that there are no inborn contrasts between the genders and fight that sex parts are due to social conditioning. the third has begun basically amid 1990’s and amplifies to the display days within the west. It taken to note the huge alter from the moment wave to the idea of shared intrigued among women, they propose supplanting the notary picture of women with numerous personalities. Postcolonial women's activists refuse the thought that there's one outright truth but instead of there are numerous truths none of which is advantaged along sexual orientation lines. Besides, women’s character and self-identification got to be two foundations of 1990’s women's liberation. subsequently, its advocators are recommended to regard contrasts, confirming the peculiarity of each woman’s struggle.

2. Post-feminism:

The term was first used in the 1980s to describe a backlash against second-wave feminism. Post-feminism describes a range of viewpoints reacting to feminism. While not being "anti-feminist," post-feminists believe that women have achieved second wave goals while being critical of third-wave feminist goals. It is now a label for a wide range of theories that take critical approaches to previous feminist discourses and includes challenges to the second wave's ideas. Other post-feminists say that feminism is no longer relevant to today's society. Amelia Jones wrote that the post-feminist texts which emerged in the 1980s and 1990s portrayed second-wave feminism as a monolithic entity and criticized it using generalizations.

Susan Bolotin's article "Voices of the Post-Feminist Generation," published in 1982, in New York Times Magazine is one of the earliest that uses the term. This article was based on a number of interviews with women who largely agreed with the goals of feminism, but did not identify as feminists. Some contemporary feminists, such as Katha Pollitt or Nadine Strossen, consider feminism to hold simply that "women are people". Views that separate the sexes rather than unite them are considered by these writers to be sexist rather than feminist'.'

In her book Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women, Susan Faludi argues that a backlash against second wave feminism in the 1980s has successfully re-defined feminism through its terms. She argues that it constructed the women's liberation movement as the source of many of the problems alleged to be plaguing women in the late 1980s. She also argues that many of these problems are illusory, constructed by the media without reliable evidence. According to her, this type of backlash is a historical trend, recurring when it appears that women have made substantial gains in their efforts to obtain equal rights.

McRobbie argues that adding the prefix post to feminism undermines the strides that feminism has made in achieving equality for everyone, including women. Post-feminism gives the impression that equality has been achieved and that feminists can now focus on something else entirely. McRobbie believes that post-feminism is most clearly seen on so-called feminist media products, such as Bridget Jones's Diary, Sex and the City, and Ally McBeal. Female characters like Bridget Jones and Carrie Bradshaw claim to be liberated and clearly enjoy their sexuality, but what they are constantly searching for is the one man who will make everything worthwhile.

3. A Discussion of Spivak' Vision of Feminism:

In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", Spivak rebuilt the feminist discourse where she focuses upon a number of the problems of the third world women. they need never be mentioned within the international framework. Spivak' s writings mirrored the background of women's struggle and oppression within the third world Countries. Feminism as a theory could not take into thought within the aspirations of all the women within the world. There are regional variations all over and therefore the history that has to contend a key role in their formation ought to be analyzed a lot of vividly. Spivak's writings on feminism had an iconoclastic result as she challenged a number of the essential assumptions of feminism normally. All women do not seem to be constant and there area unit plenty of variations existing even among women with respect color, class, and creed.

The will and aspirations of the European women are totally different from the women of the Asian Continent. The European women are more or less liberated from their patriarchal dominance whereas women from the Third World Countries are struggling to cope with the European women. It would be very difficult to create a universally agreeable female gender and the time has now come for the people to respect the differences within the gender. Spivak

is not against feminism but her very arguments strengthen the fundamental principles of feminism. She reiterates the fact that there are differences in the case of race, class, religion, citizenship, and culture among women. Feminism needs to concentrate on this variation that exists among women and help them to achieve their personal goals.

Spivak analyses the experiences of Third World Women as being shadowed by the doctrines of French High Feminism in "French Feminism in an International Frame" (141). Such a point of view ignores the crucial differences in culture, history, language and social class. In her reading of Mahasweta Devi's short story "Breast Giver", Spivak challenges the tenants of Western Feminism. In "Breast Giver" Jashoda is a typical high-class poor Brahmin woman with an ardent devotion to her husband Kangalicharan and her numerous children. The female subaltern protagonist Jashoda challenges the assumptions of the Western Feminism that childbirth is an unwaged domestic burden. Jashoda becomes a professional mother, feeding the children in lieu of money for looking after her family: Motherhood was always her way of living and keeping alive her world of countless beings. Jashoda was a mother by profession, professional mother.

Jashoda was not an amateur mamma like the daughter and wives of the mother's house. The world belongs to the professional. In this city, this kingdom, the amateur beggar – pickpocket-hooker has no place. Even the mongrel on the path or side-walk, the greedy crow at the garbage don‟t make room for the upstart amateur. Jashoda had taken motherhood as her profession (Devi 222). In "A Literary Representation of the Subaltern", Spivak analyses Jahoda's story from a subaltern perspective. Jashoda lives for her husband, children and Haldar family. In Marxist feminist perspective, the logic of production-distribution values can be applied in the case of Jashoda. To her, the logic of sexual production is her production:

The milk that is produced in one's own body for one's own children is a use-value. When there is a superfluity of use values, exchanges value arises. That which cannot be used is

exchanged. As soon as the (exchange) value of Jahoda's milk emerges, it is appropriated. Good food and constant sexual servicing are provided so that she can be kept in prime condition for optimum lactation. The milk she produces for children is presumably through "necessary labor." The milk that she produces for the children of her masters‟ family is through "surplus labor" (Spivak, Literary Representation of the Subaltern 248). By placing her story in a gender context, Jashoda‟s position is that of a slave. The milk-sons abandoned Jashoda when she was afflicted by breast cancer. She has now ceased to be of any use to the society and she had to face a tragic end in her life without the assistance of anybody in the end.

The concept of the 'other' is a universal phenomenon in which the self-claims to be the subject and all the rest come under the category of the 'other'. The term 'other' is highly relative and it goes on changing its significance according to the context. There is supremacy of male domination over women in the society. The dominance of patriarchy has been achieved through historical forces. From the time immemorial, the male-folk went for work and they were the bread-earners of the family. Women were confined to the four walls of their houses, looking after their children and household duties. They never went out for anything and as a result, they lacked vigor, vitality, exuberance, and mobility.

Physiologically a parcel of changes do take put within the body of a woman particularly when she bears a child in her womb. The real changes together with the strict limitation on development brought about within the total subjugation of women . This verifiable calculate has cleared the way for the treatment of women as the 'other' Within the presentation to The Moment Sex, De Beauvoir talks almost the concept of the 'other' as The category of the 'Other' is as primordial as awareness itself. Within the most primitive social orders, within the eldest mythologies, one finds the expression of a duality – that of a Self and the Other. This duality was not initially joined to the division of the genders,

it was not subordinate upon any observational actualities. It is uncovered in such works as that of Granet on Chinese thought and those of Dumezil on the East Indies and Rome. The female component was at, to begin with, no more included in such sets as Varuna-Mitra, Uranus-Zeus, SunMoon, and Day-Night than it was within the contrasts between God and Evil, lucky and unlucky, right and left, God and Lucifer. Otherness is a fundamental category of human thought (16 - 17). Women are being treated as the „other" since they are subordinated to their men.

The situation of the third world women is even extra pathetic. they are doubly segregated; to start with from their men and additionally from the white upper class. The third world women are discriminated on the idea of gender, color, and caste. The idea of the 'other' contains no longer best of the women of the third world but all of the unwanted people like mentally retarded mentally derailed and people with gay sports. The 'other' constantly occupy a function outside the mainstream of life and they are treated as marginals who do now not make a contribution anything to the welfare of the society. The psychological reason at the back of the remedy of women because the 'different' is to subjugate them beneath the patriarchal dominance and utilize their servile life every time needed.

Wolfreys cites Spivak as within the case of scholastic women's liberation the discovery is that to require the favored male of the white race as a standard for widespread humankind is no more than a politically interested figuration. It may be a figure of speech that passes itself off as truth and claims that lady or the racial other is simply a kind of trooping of that truth of man – within the sense that they must be caught on as not at all like (non-identical with) it and however with reference to it (172).

Feminism aims at changing the perspective of women as being the nonsignificant other. The theory is advocating for women to see themselves as valuable people

possessing the same privileges and rights as every man. Hence, feminists want to encourage women to define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts. By personally committing themselves to fostering such change, feminists hope to create a society in which the female voice is valued equally with the male (Bressler, 1994, p. 103).

Many women have taken up roles in various sectors to drive home their empowerment and also to serve as a source of motivation for the others to emulate. Bressler ‘s version of feminism perhaps fosters such change. He takes it from a different approach; looking at the woman as a significant and valuable being in her own world, for instance, women need not battle for recognition with, and by their male counterparts but to have their own recognition and standards.

Conclusion:

Briefly, Postcolonialism simply examines the literature of the nations as the under colonial rule. Literature written by the post-colonial nations as well as literature is about them comes under the purview of postcolonialism. This chapter has Also tested Spivak‟s theory of subalternity. The theory proposes that „the subalterns cannot speak‟ by giving special emphasis on the element of noise

Introduction:

The literary market has been fertilized with writings by and about Arabs. Books buying about Arabs become hot commodities mainly that penned by women. Apparently, the event revitalized Arabic literature, from onward writers began to re-examine the neglected issues of representation of Arabs in a more nuanced way (Claire 176). The ultimate goal of these writers is to challenge the western biased stereotypes; they attempt to liberate of all those misrepresentation and misunderstandings. This chapter will expose some of these prominent women writers and their contributions in the literary canon of Arab anglophone literature.

Section One: El Saadawi an Activist, Scholastic , Feminist Arab Writer:

Over the past few decades, a great deal of attention has been given to Arab literature above all Arab women writings. the western media and texts portray through the lens of violence and barbarism and perpetuate distorted images about it as being a threat to the western democratic order. For many people in the west, the concept of Arab women entails oppressed and submissive women and victims of Arabic traditions. Hence, attempts within literature to reconceptualize the radicalized female subject has become increasingly important.

1.Nawel el Saadawi as a Scholar :

Nawal El Saadawi is a popular Egyptian feminist writer who has been called the "Simone de Beauvoir of the Arab world" (Beauvoir was an important French writer and feminist) and "Egypt's most fiery feminist." She is also a physician, activist, and psychiatrist. This can be a startling confirmation. It is difficult to think how El Saadawi the Egyptian author, dissident and one of the foremost imperative women's activists of her era seem gotten to be more fundamental. Wearing an open denim shirt, with her hair pulled into two plaits, she looks just like the agitators. It is as it

were the immaculate white hair, and the lines that spread over her confront as she grins, that allow absenting the truth that she is. El Saadawi as of now appears to have lived more lives than most. She prepared as a specialist, at that point worked as a therapist and college speaker, and has distributed nearly 50 books, plays, and collections of brief stories. Her work, which handles the struggle's women confront in Egypt and over the world, has continuously included shock, but she never appears to have balked at this; she has kept on address divisive issues such as prostitution, residential savagery and devout fundamentalism in her composing.

2. El Saadawi's Literature:

In 1972, her non-fiction book Women and Sex (which included criticism of female genital mutilation) led to her losing her job as director general of public health for the Egyptian ministry of health. In 1981, her outspoken political views led to her being charged with crimes against the state and jailed for three months – she used the time to write Memoirs From The Women's Prison on a roll of toilet paper, with an eyebrow pencil smuggled in by a fellow prisoner. In 1993 she fled to the US after death threats were issued against her by religious groups.

Her work continues to be explosive. Her play, God Resigns in the Summit Meeting – in which God is questioned by Jewish, Muslim and Christian prophets and finally quits – proved so controversial that, she says, her Arabic publishers destroyed it under police duress. And recently her criticism of religion, primarily on the basis that it oppresses women, has prompted a flurry of court cases, including unsuccessful legal attempts both to strip her of her nationality and to forcibly dissolve her marriage.

As El Saadawi prepares to talk about her life at a literary festival on Friday, she is unrepentant. "It's all worth it," she assures me. "If I went back I would do it all again. That is

what I have learned from my experiences, that I was on the right track." Her energy, she insists, comes from the 10 to 15 letters she receives every day from people who say their lives have been changed by her writing. "A young man came to me in Cairo with his new bride. He said, I want to introduce my wife to you and thank you. Your books have made me a better man. Because of them I wanted to marry not a slave, but a free woman."

El Saadawi is "a novelist first, a novelist second, a novelist third", she says, but it is feminism that unites her work. "For me feminism includes everything," she says. "It is social justice, political justice, sexual justice. It is the link between medicine, literature, politics, economics, psychology, and history. Feminism is all that. You cannot understand the oppression of women without this."

in her first autobiographical book *A Daughter of Isis*, the author tells of her personal experience with female genital mutilation. She wrote that when she was six years old, four women held her down while a midwife pulled out her clitoris and cut it off. "Since I was a child that deep wound left in my body has never healed," she writes. In this book, she writes of how the use of words became an act of rebellion against injustice.

The woman at Point Zero is a novel published in 1975. This story tells of a fictional character Firdaus who agrees to tell her life story before her execution for murder. It is based on El Saadawi's meeting with a female prisoner in Qanatir Prison. The novel explores the subjugation of women, female circumcision, and women's freedom in a patriarchal society.

Memoirs from the Women's Prison, published in 1986, tells of her 1981 imprisonment for "crimes against the state." She documents the women's resistance to state violence and the

formation of women's communities. Crossing religious lines, several women worked together to demand better conditions in the prison.

El Saadawi has earned several honors. She was awarded the Stig-Dagerman Prize in 2011 by the Stig Dagerman Society and Älvkarleby municipality. This Swedish prize is awarded to a person or group supporting the meaning and availability of free speech and promotes empathy and inter-cultural understanding. Moreover, she won the North-South Prize in 2004 by the North-South Center of the Council of Europe for her help in the fields of human rights protection, defense of pluralist democracy, promotion of public awareness about issues concerning global solidarity and interdependence, and reinforcement of the North-South partnership.

El Saadawi has also received three honorary doctorates. These doctorates came from the University of Brussel, Belgium in 2007; the University Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium in 2007; and the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Furthermore, *Woman at Point Zero* is a story about one of the key feminist topics of our times choice, though it stands in stark contrast to the lifestyle-oriented feminist writing so popular today – where anything from prostitution to labiaplasty to wearing a hijab can be considered feminist as long as it is a woman's choice. Although fictional, *Woman at Point Zero* is based on a true account of a woman awaiting execution in a Cairo prison. "Let me speak. Do not interrupt me. I have no time to listen to you," Firdaus begins. She goes on to tell a harrowing story of growing up poor, of being raped by family members, of being genitally mutilated, of being married off as a teenager to a 65-year-old, of being beaten up time and again, of taking to the streets, of becoming a prostitute, and eventually of having had enough, and of murdering a man, leading to her imprisonment.

Whereas, the contexts may be specific to Arab society, the core theme of the book – feminist awakening – resonates across time and cultures woman at Point Zero takes a refreshingly ideological and polemic stance toward choice, namely that the fact that a woman chooses something does not mean that choice is necessarily feminist. The story of Firdaus is one of a life bereft of choice. However, her predicament sets Firdaus free because to quote Janis Joplin: "freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose".

This is what makes Firdaus's story crucial to feminism. With its relentless truth-telling and steely defiance of patriarchy, it cuts holes in the gossamer of despair in which it entangles women. Gloomy as it all might sound, through Firdaus's inward transformations, the book invites us to experience some of that emboldening freedom ourselves.This is not to propose that *Woman at Point Zero* is devoid of hopefulness. Actually, to write a story as awful as Firdaus's in a poetic and peaceful way, as El Saadawi does, would be impossible for someone who wasn't an optimist at heart. But the book's positivity lies not in its capacity to dandify gross injustices with feel-good postulations about women's choices, but rather in the euphoria of feminist awakening. No matter what it is that ignites a feminist spark in a woman, it is a spark that inevitably makes her life brighter and more fearless.At rest vital four decades after its initial book, the story of Firdaus reminds us that if there is one choice that every woman should make, it is to not be fooled into thinking that patriarchy gives women choices at all.

In her essays and interviews, El Saadawi stringently attacks male Arab authors who regard women as fictional constructs or biological essences outside history and culture debunking the "master narratives" (Lyotard 1991, 19) of a masculine culture. El Saadawi identifies as patriarchal those inherited values and traditions that passed from generation to generation and aim to marginalize and disempower women. Her fiction advances a feminist critique to patriarchal ideologies exposing what Elaine Showalter calls "the sins and errors of

the past" and affirms a "disinterested" search for "essential difference" of "women's writing" (Showalter 1985, 247). In her novels, El Saadawi created what Kate Millett calls "something of an anomaly, a hybrid, possibly a new mutation altogether, a criticism which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived it.

Section two: Examples of Empowering the Subaltern in Arab Women literature:

The Arab world is in worried need of more English language novelists to take home the realities of life in the region. certainly, there are exceptions.

1.Ahdaf Soueif's *The Map of Love* :

Among the most winning is the Egyptian novelist and short story writer Ahdaf Soueif., *The Map of Love*, which was shortlisted for the Man Booker prize and shares its title with a collection of poems by Dylan Thomas published on the eve of the second world war. The book, which is cleverly weaved together, offers an insight into Egyptian society rarely accessible in the English language. In spite of, the romantic parallel storylines - one contemporary, the other at the turn of the 20th century.

A young American woman, Isabel, has befriended Amal, an Egyptian woman, because she needs her to translate the Arabic documents among the trunk of journals and letters that she has inherited from her British great-grandmother, Anna. In the reconstructed story of Anna, set in early 20th-century Egypt, the novel's Edwardian heroine befriends Leyla and falls in love with her brother, Sharif, but must speak with both of them in a shared second language: French. Soueif's novel is written in English, yet much of the time it is conveying speech and thought that takes place in other languages.

In its most romantic strain, the novel lets us believe that having to speak through an artificially adopted language is a kind of liberation. Sharif asks Anna if she is troubled by not being able to speak to him directly. "No. It makes foreigners of both of us. It's good that I should have to come some way to meet you." When, on his own, he imagines what she might say to him, we get the words in French, "Tu es en retard. Je commençais à m'inquiéter." But when they actually speak to each other, the dialogue is present in English and we must imagine the French. To let us do so, Soueif endows their speech with a certain awkward formality, letting us hear that their expressions are not instinctual. Sharif's poet friend Isma'il Sabri tells him that it is better for two lovers not to have a shared language. "You make more effort, you make sure you understand - and are understood.

Soueif is happy to send us off to her glossary, including in her novel even short exchanges of transliterated Arabic. She also gives us dialogues that are taking place in Arabic but which she renders in a special kind of English. The Arabic-speaking reader of the novel might catch in this the echoes of that language; the English-speaking reader discerns the patterns of a foreign tongue. "You have to clear your heart towards him. He is your father." "My heart does not forgive him." This is Sharif speaking urgently with his mother, in Arabic. Often such dialogue gives us the trace of idioms that we cannot exactly hear. Sharif's mother thinks her son "a true man who fills his clothes". When he finds out that she and his sister have been discussing his relationship with Anna, he exclaims: "You women! A bean does not have time to get wet in your mouths."

The language will be Anna's destiny: she will immerse herself in it and become a translator, turning her murdered husband's writings into English. Amal too will be a translator, in her case of novels, and the closing pages of Soueif's novel find her musing on the peculiarity of this occupation.

2. Assia Djebar & Investigating the Struggles of Algerian Women:

A noted Algerian feminist author, Assia Djebar is famous for investigating the struggles of Algerian women within a post-colonial context. Her works consist of the collection of short stories *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (1980), inspired by Delacroix's well-known *The Women of Algiers* (1834). These reply to the Orientalist and patriarchal structures surrounding contemporary Algerian society and attempt to demonstrate the ongoing inequality which defines women's lives. Djebar was elected to the Académie Française – a historic organization which seeks to uphold and protect French heritage and language – in 2005, the first Maghreb writer to receive this honor.

Assia Djebar is the most prolific and internationally acclaimed Algerian woman novelist. Oran, langue morte (Oran, dead language) is already her second work that examines some of the tragic events that have been unfolding in Algeria since 1992. In 1995 she published Le blanc de l'Algérie (The whiteness of Algeria), an intensely personal meditation on the loss of friends, fellow writers, and colleagues killed in the violence. Oran, langue morte presents a collage of short stories and a novella in which themes of violence against women in Algeria—from the time of the Algerian war of independence to the present day—are interwoven with images of the female body and feminine desire.

In the afterword to this work, Djebar notes that her purpose in writing the collection has been a "desire to reach this 'ideal reader,' i.e., the one who, by his or her silent and supportive reading, enables writing of pursuit or murder to free its own shadow, which will palpitate as far as the horizon…" (OL 378). The image of palpitating or fluttering shadows of the women—dead from the sectarian violence or natural causes—portrayed in these narratives is evocative of so much of Djebar's recent literary project in which she hopes to create a

literary space for the memories and oral histories of Algerian women who may not otherwise find expression.

In the story horrifically entitled “La femme en morceaux” (The woman in pieces), Djebar—a historian by training—evokes a link across time between present-day Algeria and a tale from The Arabian Nights. The story tells of a beautiful and innocent wife who is murdered by her jealous husband. The woman’s decapitated and dismembered body has been carefully wrapped up in costly fabric, then wound in a carpet and thrown into the Tigris River.

In Assia Djebar’s works, the introduction of Scheherazade and The Arabian Nights serves as a powerful illustration of the wealth of Arab women’s oral literary traditions. In her novel Ombre Sultane, Djebar evokes the image of Scheherazade together with her younger sister Dinarzade to symbolize women’s solidarity in the face of male aggression. Scheherazade may also be seen as an archetype of a female narrator/author in the Arab-Muslim cultural and historic context. Aside from these images, what links Scheherazade to the situation of present-day Algerian women is the fact that she lives and speaks under the threat of losing her life—execution by decapitation at the whim of her husband the sultan.

It may also be noted that by linking the violence against women by sectarian forces with their suffering at the hands of the French during the Algerian war, women novelists are suggesting that Algerian society’s enemies of the 1950s have more in common with the enemies of today than one would imagine. On a symbolic level, the images of past and present violence against women further underscore the desire of many writers to lay bare the physical, cultural, and psychological scars of women’s experiences and memories.

3.Fadia Faqir

Fadia Faqir is a Jordanian/British writer based in Durham, UK. Her work was translated into fifteen languages and published in eighteen countries. She is a Writing Fellow at St Aidan's College, Durham University, where she teaches creative writing. *At the Midnight Kitchen* (forthcoming): A novel set in a block of flats in Hammersmith, London, where a group of people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, and religions live. The shady figure in flat number two is stabbed to death. The narrative follows the lives of the residents and explores the reasons for the murder. There is violence, self-hate, guilt, love, the pursuit of redemption, compassion, humor, and forgiveness.

My Name is Salma (US title *The Cry of the Dove*): "This is a beautiful book, written in vivid, tender prose, about creating a new world when you have lost everything that matters. Salma is an unforgettable character, fierce and loving, veering between self-hatred and a sense of her own strength, touching and funny by terms. Now I have finished the book, I miss her."

*Pillars of Sal*t: "This is a powerful and distinctive piece of writing, melding the recent history of the country [Jordan] with the continuing personal and political oppression of Arab women." Pam Barrett, The Sunday Time*The Separation Wall*: A short story, in Bound, New Writing North, 2004, and in Magnetic North, 2005. *Nisanit*: "Nisanit is one of the saddest, most tragic, painful, and depressing books I have read in a long time. Told in a passionate, breathtaking, masterful style by Fadia Faqir . . . Nisanit is her first novel and it shows real talent and mastery at storytelling."

4.Hanan al-Shaykh:

Hanan al-Shaykh is considered one of the leading contemporary Arab women writers. Born in Beirut in 1945, she lived in Egypt as well as in Saudi Arabia before she settled in

London in the 1990s. Her œvre includes novels and short stories as well as plays. Al-Shaykh writes exclusively in Arabic, but her work has been translated into English and several other languages. Her novels such as The Story of Zahra (Hikayat Zahrah, 1980), which was banned in most Arab countries, Women of Sand and Myrrh (Misk al-ghazal, 1988), which was named one of the 50 Best Books of 1992 by Publishers Weekly, and Beirut Blues (Barid Bayrut, 1992) have received international attention.

Al-Shaykh's literature follows in the footsteps of such contemporary Arab women authors as Nawal El Saadawi in that it explicitly challenges the roles of women in the traditional social structures of the Arab Middle East. Her work is heavily influenced by the patriarchal controls that were placed on her not only by her father and brother but also within the traditional neighborhood in which she was raised. As a result, her work is a manifestation of a social commentary on the status of women in the Arab-Muslim world. She challenges notions of sexuality, obedience, modesty, and familiar relations in her work.

Being banned in the more conservative areas of the region including the Persian Gulf. directly against the social mores of conservative Arab society, which has led to her books Her work often implies or states sexually explicit scenes and sexual situations which go translations from being easily accessible to the public. Specific examples include *The Story of Zahra* which includes abortion, divorce, sanity, illegitimacy and sexual promiscuity and *Women of Sand and Myrrh* which contains scenes of a lesbian relationship between two of the main protagonists. In addition to her prolific writing on the condition of Arab women and her literary social criticism, she is also part of a group of authors writing about the Lebanese Civil War.

5.Mohja Kahf Themes :

Kahf's work explores themes of cultural dissonance and overlap between Muslim American and other communities, both religious and secular. Syria, Islam, ethics, politics, feminism, human rights, the body, gender, and erotics often feature in her work. In her poetry book *Emails From Scheherazade*, Kahf explores many different Arab and Muslim identities and practices, frequently using humor. Kahf reconfigures many female figures of the Islamic tradition, particularly in *Hagar Poems.*

Hagar Poems won honorable mention in the 2017 Book Awards of the Arab American National Museum. Kahf won a Pushcart Prize for her creative nonfiction essay, "The Caul of Inshallah," about the difficult birth of her son, first published in *River Teeth* in 2010. Kahf's first book of poetry, *E-mails From Scheherazad*, was a finalist for the 2004 Paterson Poetry Prize. Her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* was a "One Book" reading at Indiana University East (Richmond, Indiana) in 2017. The novel was chosen as Book Sense Reading Group Favorite for June 2007 and as book of the year for the One Book, One Bloomington Series by the Bloomington Arts Council, Monroe County Public Library, Bloomington, Indiana, 2008. Kahf won the Arkansas Arts Council Individual Artist Fellowship in 2002 for poetry.

In 2004, Kahf had a column exploring sexual topics on the progressive Muslim website MuslimWakeUp!.com. The column was called "Sex and the Umma" and featured short stories by Kahf, who also hosted guest writers on the column, including Randa Jarrar, Michael Muhammad Knight, and Laila Al-Marayati. The original first column published, a short story by Kahf, "Lustrous Companions," was later re-published on the website Love, Inshallah.com. Kahf's work on "Sex and the Umma" "earned her a torrent of attacks...the author, though at once playful and mischievous verbally and thematically, seems

to be putting across an alternative image of Islam...a more progressive...one" says Layla Maleh.

Kahf's poetry has featured in the installments of American neo-conceptual artist Jenny Holzer. Her poem "Two Friends Like Fireflies" was set to music composed by Joseph Gregorio, commissioned by the Women's Commission Consortium of the American Choral Director's Association, and premiered by the Soli Deo Gloria Women's Chorale. Kahf's work has been translated into Japanese, Italian, and Arabic. Her poetry features in the BBC documentary, *Poems from Syria* She was awarded the Caine Prize for African Writing in 2000 for her short story "The Museum" included in her collection of short stories *Coloured Lights.*

6. Leila Aboulela Fingerprint in Arab Women Literature:

Leila Aboulela has the world at her fingertips. She clutches a handbag patterned with a map of Africa, where she was born, in Khartoum in 1964, daughter of Sudan's first-ever female demographer. The handbag doesn't squeeze in the numerous other places that shape her peripatetic life and work - Egypt, Jakarta, Dubai, London, Aberdeen. Her softly spoken yet animated, articulate conversation, like her writing, hopscotches between these countries and cultures, full of laughter at the ironies of her life and peppered with anecdotes. Its resting point is always her Islamic faith. Her fiction grows out of an acute sense of geographical and cultural displacement and has won praise from Ben Okri and JM Coetzee, from her story 'The Museum', which won the first-ever Caine Prize for African Writing, to her first novel, The Translator, longlisted for the Orange prize for Fiction.

Her novel *The Translator* was nominated for the Orange Prize and was chosen as a *Notable Book of the Year* by *The New York Times in 2006.* Her second novel, *Minaret,* was nominated for the Orange Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Award. Her third novel, *Lyrics Alley*, is set in the Sudan of the 1950s and was long-listed for the Orange Prize 2011. Lyrics Alley

was the Fiction Winner of the Scottish Book Awards and was shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize -Europe and S.E Asia.

Her second novel, *Minaret* charts the 'coming down in the world' of Najwa, an aristocratic Sudanese woman forced into exile in Britain by a military coup. The narrative flicks between Najwa's prominence in Eighties Khartoum society and her present existence as a silent, invisible figure, 'moving in the background'. Aboulela offers a very different portrayal of Muslim women in London from that in Monica Ali's Brick Lane. Rather than yearning to embrace Western culture, Aboulela's women seek solace in their growing religious identity.

Conclusion :

Finally, The paper argues that El Saadawi challenges the hegemony of a traditionally phallocentric society empowered by religion and masculinity. In *Woman at Point Zero*, the author has effectively reinterpreted culturally dominated canons and deconstructed regressive traditions affiliated with patriarchal hegemony. Relying on her experience as a prison psychiatrist, El Saadawi interrogates a chauvinist culture that dehumanizes women.

Introduction:

The concept of Arab women entails oppressed and submissive women and victims of traditions. Hence, attempts within literature to reconceptualize the radicalized female subject has become increasingly important. This chapter will analyze and delve into *Woman at The Point Zero* to explore the empowerment of the Arab female.

Section One: Diasporic Arab Women

The feel of returning and being home for diasporic Arab women writers after leaving their countries for various reasons was revealed through their creative works, embodying the diasporic notion of being of two minds of their homelands and their host lands. This is how the term ‘diasporic writers’ took place.; it is about those people who no longer live in their motherlands but still return to their respective homelands in their writings.

1.The Quest for Women's Status :

Among these diasporic women writers: Leila Aboulela, Mohja Kahf and Fadia El Fakir whose fictional works, in particular, are differentiated from many other fictional works not only because they had a great impact on changing perspectives of Arab readers.

The text's fictional discourse marks the beginning of a different deconstructive challenge emerging from within academic feminism in the Middle East. Questioning the ethics of a phallocentric culture, El Saadawi interrogates the narratives of major male Arab authors who marginalized women in their fictional roles. In her novels, she recovers suppressed discourses and brings to light previously neglected unheard and unrepresented voices.

The silence at the beginning of the narrative epitomizes a permanent condition which women inherited since pre-medieval times. The process of silencing has been historically related to women as non-hegemonic subjects who were either denied the possibility of self-articulation or whose voices were purposefully ignored. Intrinsically, the act of silencing carries specific social, religious and gender implications. In Arab communities, the voices of women were colonized and subdued for centuries to give way to phallogocentric modes of expression and domination. El Saadawi had several interviews with female prisoners sentenced to death in Egypt. As a psychiatrist engaging in research on women prisoners and detainees convicted of committing crimes, the author met with Firdaus, the female protagonist of the novel: "This is the story of a real woman. I met her in the Qanatir Prison10 a few years ago" (1983, 1). El Saadawi visits the women's prison and painstakingly convinces Firdaus to narrate her personal history, along with the story of her abused body.

2.*Woman at The Point Zero* a Feminist Novel;:

Within a feminist literary creativity, novel-writing has become a point of reference for feminists and their opponents reflecting the shift in Arabic feminist literature born out of the widespread engagement with the historical indifference, hostilities, and brutalities committed against women in this part of the world. Historically, Arab women have suffered from invisibility for centuries in societies sanctioning sexual violence against the female subalterns.

On her part, El Saadawii develops a theory of feminist politics in the context of Arab-Islamic history from ancient times up to the present interrogating patriarchal ideologies and anti-feminist hegemony triggered by religion and reinforced in the literature by male authors such as Naguib Mahfouz, Tayyeb Saleh, and others. In her essays and interviews, El Saadawi stringently attacks male Arab authors who regard women as fictional constructs or biological

essences outside history and culture debunking the "master narratives" (Lyotard 1991, 19) of a masculine culture.

El Saadawi identifies as patriarchal those inherited values and traditions that passed from generation to generation and aim to marginalize and disempower women. Her fiction advances a feminist critique to patriarchal ideologies exposing what Elaine Showalter calls "the sins and errors of the past" and affirms a "disinterested" search for "essential difference" of "women's writing" (Showalter 1985, 247).

In her novels, El Saadawi created what Kate Millett calls "something of an anomaly, a hybrid, possibly a new mutation altogether, a criticism which takes into account the larger cultural context in which literature is conceived and produced' (Millett 1970, xii). In Woman, El Saadawi invades taboo territories in Arab culture. She intentionally exonerates male brutalities against women in a society, which viciously suppresses female sexuality under a religious veil. The novel painfully portrays the life of a woman rigidly confined within the boundaries of a brutal masculine system. Her being is defined by its rules, which reify a degraded concept of women by regarding them as property.

Therefore, the author uses animal imagery to affiliate Firdaus, the protagonist, with cows and buffaloes in her father's barn. Symbolically Firdaus is depicted as a domestic animal anticipating execution. In the beginning, the muted protagonist struggled to coexist with the most abusive practices of a merciless environment. On the long run, she failed to tolerate the hypocrisy of a masculine society. The protagonist, who is driven to "the streets" and ultimately kills her pimp, recalls her painful memories retelling the story of her vengeance against her abusers prior to the night of her hanging. The plight of the protagonist emphasizes that sexual commodification is augmented by tradition and a corrupt religious system that deliberately confines women in the periphery of society.

3.Opposing Patriarchal Hegemony :

In her foreword to Woman, Miriam Cooke refers to a drama emerging between two figures in "the cell of a woman the night before her execution." The novel, according to Cooke, "unfolds a universal tragedy as great as any of Sophocles, even if without the epic heroes" (Cooke 1983, vii). El Sadaawi has explained that the events of the novel were inspired by an encounter with a woman in the infamous Qanatir prison in Egypt in 1974. The woman was convicted of murdering a man and consequently sentenced to death by hanging. At that time, the author, originally a doctor specialized in psychiatry, was undertaking a major research on Egyptian women suffering from psychological disturbances and neurosis. El Saadawi was able to meet Firdaus, the protagonist of the novel, with the help of a male doctor working in the prison's hospital. In an interview with Fedwa Malti-Douglas and Allen Douglas (1986), she emphasizes the effect of the prison encounter on her writing: "I was so affected by this real woman, that I wrote it as it was. Imagination is only twenty percent, maybe ten percent" (Badran/Cooke 1990, 402).

In the beginning, Firdaus was silent and refused to meet or talk with anyone but finally she accepted to tell her story to the author/doctor. Firdaus courageously made her confession narrating the events leading to her imprisonment though she was aware of her destiny: "Tomorrow morning I shall no longer be here". El Saadawi was impressed by the stern look in her eyes, her courage, her absolute refusal to live and her fearlessness of death. In her preface to Woman, the author stated: "I developed a feeling of admiration for this woman" (El Saadawi 1983, xi).

Regardless of her poverty and miserable life, Firdaus was proud of herself. She feels superior to all men including "kings, princes, and rulers." Victimized by a legal system grounded in a merciless patriarchal society, which underestimated women, Firdaus was

executed because of killing her pimp in self-defense. Catherine Clément and Hélène Cixous denounce the "dual, hierarchical oppositions" set up by the traditional phallogocentric philosophy of determinateness, wherein "death is always at work" as "the premise of woman's abasement," women who have been "colonized" by phallogocentric thinking (Clément and Cixous 1986, 65).

Victimized by a culture, which breads self-loathing and self-hatred in the female subaltern, Firdaus is forced to sacrifice her body to a male-oriented world turning her into a shadow. In Woman, El Saadawi attempts to restore the lost body of Firdaus who was physically and psychologically repressed. By regaining herself via murder, Firdaus finds her authentic voice in addition to "her pleasures, her organs, and her immense bodily territories which have been kept under seal" (Cixous 2001, 2044). After several attempts on the part of the female author, Firdaus made a confession: "Let me speak. Do not interrupt me. I have no time to listen to you".

She starts her narrative by recalling disturbing childhood memories associating men with brutality and deceit. She suffered from subjugation throughout her life particularly in her childhood at a time when her "breasts were not yet rounded" (11). In her preface to Woman, El Saadawi emphasizes that the novel "is a story of a woman driven by despair to the darkest ends." She also points out that this desperate woman "evoked in all those who witnessed the final moments of her life, a need to challenge and to overcome those forces that deprive human beings of their right to live, to love and to real freedom" (xii). As a child, Firdaus was forced to carry "heavy earthenware jars, full of water" on her head. Under the weight of the jars, her neck would jerk back and forth. She was also forced to "sweep under the animals and then make rows of dung cakes" (12), which is an unsanitary, and humiliating task assigned only to women in the Egyptian countryside. During puberty, she was subjected to the aggressive masculine gaze:

> I knew nothing about men but I observed them constantly scratching under the armpits and between the thighs" watching her with "wary, doubting, stealthy eyes (1983, 11).

For Firdaus, men from all walks of life eventually blend into a threat. Her father, for example, resembled the other men in her community so closely that it was hard to identify him. Like all men in the village, her father is a cruel and barbaric person who frequently beats his wife and makes her "bite the dust each night." When one of the young sisters of Firdaus died in infancy, her father did not care but when a male baby died he "would beat my mother" (17).

Like other men in the rural community, her father is a selfish person who seeks his pleasures securing food for himself only, even if the other members in the family sleep with empty stomachs. Firdaus, the central narrator, describes her father in a disgusting way viewing him in the image of a ravenous camel:

> His mouth was like that of a camel, with a big opening and wide jaws. His upper jaw kept clamping down on his lower jaw with a loud grinding noise and chewed through morsel so thoroughly that we could hear his teeth striking against each other (18).

Throughout the eyes of Firdaus, the author refers to the power of religion as an instrument of oppression and one of the subjugating pillars of male-dominated societies. She elaborates on the theme of religious hypocrisy rampant in the village community where the protagonist spent her childhood. Firdaus narrates that her father, like other men, is a hypocrite who knows "how to bend over the headman's hand and pretend to kiss it". Every Friday her father goes to the mosque to attend the Friday sermon. The eloquent Imam speaks about love

of one's country and absolute obedience to the ruler because "love of the ruler and love for Allah were one and indivisible." The Imam usually prays to Allah to:

> protect our ruler for many long years and may he remain a source of inspiration and strength to our country, the Arab Nation and all Mankind (11).

Conversely, the Imam never says that :

> stealing was a sin, and killing was a sin, and defaming the honor of a woman was a sin, and injustice was a sin, and beating another human being was a sin (12).

Using innovative writing style and new modes of description and narrative representation to explore how women's lives were influenced by what Arlene Macleod calls the "layered and overlapping bastion of oppressors" (Macleod 1991, 68). El Saadawi condemns local restrictive socio-historical traditions solidifying women's subjugation. She also denounces economic and patriarchal policies contributing to the proliferation of corruption and religious hypocrisy. In Woman, El Saadawi negotiates the discursive articulation of female identity challenging a patriarchal system. Her protagonist struggles against "the pressures of poverty, patriarchy, marriage and social customs that assail her." (Fonchingong 2006, 136) The story of Firdaus is a replica of contemporary Arab women struggling against male hegemony, supremacy, and stagnant religious heritage.

As a minor narrator, the female doctor interviews the protagonist and introduces the readers to the main persona in the novel. She succeeded in urging Firdaus, the traumatized subject, and the humiliated subaltern, to make a confession. Entering the life of Firdaus means abandoning for the time of the interview the doctor's own life history and focusing on what is being related in the narrative. This process helps readers feel literal as if time has stopped in

order to allow a new history to emerge. Here, Firdaus, the central narrator, introduces the events of her life through the reminiscence of past events.

The willingness of the interviewer to experience the trauma of Firdaus jolts the main narrator into a time of telling that is, ironically, preceded by a time of silence—not an absence but a pregnant form, reshaping itself in the fertile environment of imagining the unimaginable. The silence that precedes confession is followed by the readiness of the interviewer to enter the time of trauma experienced by the main narrator. This is the most decisive moment of encounter in which the self of the narrator and the interviewer would probably be lost in the act of facing the catastrophic consequences of living in a decadent society governed by a medieval morality and corrupt patriarchal ethics that despise women. The basic act of preserving the tale told of a body and spirit in pain and agony is crucial to the ability of the story of suffering and marginalization to be narrated in all its rawness and complexity, retaining its truthfulness and capacity to generate feelings in others.

This denial of equality between the sexes, and the semi-surrender to sexual hierarchies that rank one sex over the other due to biological or social consideration is the core of El Saadawi's fight. Her feminist fiction aims to mobilize sex solidarity and eliminate prescribed gender roles.The female psychiatrist who appears at the beginning of the novel is semi-autobiographical figure serving as the voice of the author.

The prison doctor tells the author that Firdaus was sentenced to death for killing a man. In prison as in real life, Firdaus' voice is muted and she prefers to remain silent: "She refuses to meet visitors and won't speak to anyone". She stares vacantly into space for hours without uttering a word. In her silence, Firdaus refuses to answer any questions: "She emitted a short, sarcastic laugh and walked off. I heard her muttering to herself" (3). She even refuses

to sign an appeal to the president of Egypt so that "her sentence may be commuted to imprisonment for life" (2).

The façade of religiosity and piety epitomized by Friday sermons and ritualistic worship conceals a corrupt and immoral male-dominated society. Firdaus told the author that her father is a thief who like other men in the village is "quicker than his neighbor in stealing from the fields once the crop was ripe." He is a peasant who only knows "how to sell a buffalo poisoned by his enemy before it died, how to exchange his virgin daughter for a dowry" (10). The connection between selling the buffalo in order to be slaughtered and selling the virgin girl to an elderly husband in return for a dowry carries complex symbolic connotations in the text.

In Woman, there is a recurrent analogy between women and animals particularly female buffaloes and cows as opposed to the image of the father as a camel. In her harrowing confession, she reveals the scars of living in a repressive patriarchal society which crushes women particularly the weak and the marginalized: "Each time I picked up a newspaper and found the picture of a man who was one of them, I would spit on it." She continued:

> Every single man I did get to know filled me with but one desire: to lift my hand and bring it smashing down on his face. But because I am a woman I have never had the courage to lift my hand (11).

Though biological determinism is treacherous landscape in feminist studies it is noteworthy to demonstrate that women, unlike men, are represented as having lives determined by bodily functions particularly in male-dominated communities across the Middle East. Mutilating and Abusing the Female Body Historically, conservative societies have attempted to define women in terms of their physical characteristics, and patriarchal oppression of women is often rationalized by reference to those characteristics.

Throughout the confession of Firdaus, El Saadawi elaborates on the topic of sexual abuse targeting female children in Egypt and the Arab world. In her tale, Firdaus reveals terrifying details about her experience with female genital mutilation, 6 which initially aims to curtail women's sexuality. She forcibly underwent this ordeal in her early childhood.

As Firdaus grows into maturity, the pre-circumcision pleasure enjoyed during the game with the young boy is lost:

> I no longer felt the strong sensation of pleasure that radiated from an unknown and yet familiar part of my body. I closed my eyes and tried to reach the pleasure I had known before but in vain. It was as if I could no longer recall the exact spot from which it used to arise, or as though a part of me, of my being, was gone and would never return (13).

After a talk with Wafeya, a high school comrade, about potential erotic love experiences in the past, Firdaus struggled to regain some memories from the pre-circumcision time. In a vision, she saw Mohammadain lying on a bed of straw under the open shelter:

> The touch of his fingers moved over my body. My whole body shuddered with a faraway yet familiar pleasure arising from some unknown source, from some indefinable spot outside my being (25).

El Saadawi's fictional representations of the female body echo the perspectives of Hélène Cixous and Gayatri Spivak on female desire which runs counter to what Elizabeth Spelman calls the "fear and disdain of the body"(Spelman 1988, 126). In her discussion of desire, Cixous does not associate female sexual pleasure precisely with the clitoris but locates it throughout the body. She envisioned the female body as possessing "thousand and one thresholds of ardor" and its "profusion of meanings that run through it in every direction" (Cited in Gohar 2009, 21). In a connected scenario, Spivak refers to the clitoris as something

suppressed or invalidated in the interest of defining "woman as sex object, or as means or agent of reproduction" (Spivak 1988, 151).

According to Spivak, the clitoris is "the women's excess in all areas of production and practice" (Spivak 1988, 82) because female sexual pleasure is divorced from reproduction. Forbidden from celebrating her sexuality, Firdaus does not fit into the two categories identified by Spivak and Cixous who explored the specificity of the female body focusing on issues related to the localized reclamation of sexuality. The horrible circumcision of Firdaus has limited her sense of desire resulting in difficulty in attaining sexual pleasure. Throughout the narrative, she reminiscences over moments of pleasure prior to her clitoridectomy.

As a victim of brutal genital mutilation, Firdaus symbolically and biologically lost the clitoris. Therefore, she fails to center her pleasure on the point that "exceeds" male subjugation of her body. At the same time, she is disempowered from regaining her body from the fetters of a repressive patriarchal system entrenched in a tyrannical religious milieu. Violence was the only option left for Firdaus to reclaim her lost identity and mutilated sexuality. In Woman, the author criticizes the fears and horrors of female genital mutilation and other forms of sexual abuse, which annihilate female identities making women vulnerable to male violence and domination.

Section two: Postcolonial Feminism and the Issue of Gender

In addition to the trauma integral to her cliterodectomy, Firdaus suffered from the memory of incest and rape as the male members of her family sporadically harassed her. In The Hidden Face of Eve, El Saadawi unabashedly refers to frequent incestuous relationships.

1.Falling into the Masculine Quagmire :

Firdaus' uncle, an incarnation of religious hypocrisy, schemes to marry off Fidaus to an older man, planning to use her dowry to pay off his debts. Having no other options, Firdaus succumbs to the wishes of her uncle and marries the old man. The old man beats her, but uncle justifies the atrocity on religious grounds. He tells her that "all husbands beat their wives" (1983, 46), particularly those men who are well versed in their religion. When her husband, Sheikh Mahmoud, brutally beats Firdaus with his heavy stick until the blood runs from her nose and ears, she escapes into the streets with a bruised face and swollen eyes. She meets with Bayoumi, a poor waiter, who takes her to his small flat located in the slums. His voice and facial features remind Firdaus of her father.

In return for offering her lodging, Firdaus gives Bayoumi her body: "I ended up by sleeping in his bed throughout the winter and the following summer" (51). In the beginning, she enjoyed the sexual relationship, under the assumption that he would marry her: "My body pulsed with an obscure pleasure, or with a pain that did not pain really pain but pleasure, with a pleasure I had never known before" (51). However, the situation quickly changes, as Bayoumi becomes her new oppressor.

Eventually, Firdaus asks Bayoumi to either marry her or let her seek a job, telling him that she would not be able to live with him anymore in the same flat as a prostitute. He becomes extremely angry. Like her ex-husband, Bayoumi beats her violently. Bayoumi essentially turns the flat into a prison of enforced prostitution for Firdaus. He locks her inside, and at night rapes her by force:

> I lay there under him without movement, emptied of all desires, or pleasure, or even pain, feeling nothing. A dead body with no life in it at all, like a piece of wood, or an empty sock, or a shoe (53).

With the passage of time, Bayoumi starts to bring his friends over who rape Firdaus.

With the help of a neighbor, Firdaus is able to escape from the apartment and finds herself in the streets of the merciless city once again. On the banks of the Nile, near a wealthy district in Cairo, Firdaus meets with an aging prostitute named Sharifa Salah Eldin. The ironical connotations of the prostitute's name are integral to the anti-patriarchal motif deeply seated in the novel. "Sharifa" in Arabic means "a chaste woman who is highly concerned with protecting her honor and reputation." At the hands of Sharifa, Firdaus is trained as a professional prostitute. Sharifa tells her that she has great potential: she is young, educated and her body is sexy, particularly her thighs which are full, tight and muscular. Firdaus begins to receive her customers in Sharifa's expensive flat overlooking the Nile River.

She describes the intercourse as pleasure mixed with pain,

> like a thing arising out of an ancient wound, in an organ which had ceased to be mine, on the body of a woman who was no longer me……Firdaus, we just work. Don't mix feeling with work. You will get nothing out of feeling except pain (60).

Firdaus thus continues her life as a prostitute, engaging in a series of progressively more violent and exploitative encounters, culminating in a fight between Fawzy, the pimp, and Sharifa. Firdaus escapes and decides to start serving her own clients under her own management.

After her sexual encounter with a famous journalist, Mr. Di'aa, during which he humiliates her calling her a disrespectable woman, she decides to give up prostitution. Thanks to her secondary school certificate, she is able to get a job in a company. In the beginning, she is happy with the new career. However, she finds that the sexual harassment she receives from a socially acceptable job is even greater than that endured while being a prostitute:

> As a prostitute, I had been looked upon with more respect and been valued more highly than all the female employees. My body was never hemmed in by other bodies in the bus, nor was it a prey to male organs pressing up against it from in front and behind. Its price was not cheap (81).

However, some good does come from the new change in work, as she meets Ibrahim, the revolutionary chair of a committee devoted to defending workers' rights. Ibrahim emerges as a hero among the company's employees because of his brave confrontations with the administration and the owner of the company. Firdaus genuinely falls in love with Ibrahim and joins his committee after he proposes to marry her. She gives him her body willingly out of love and adoration but is horrified to discover that he will marry the daughter of the company's owner. As the relationship with Ibrahim is the only true love affair she experienced in her life, his impending marriage is a destructive blow to Firdaus.

After discovering his betrayal, she blames herself because she offered her body and soul to a man who embodies hypocrisy and opportunism. This moment of disillusionment is also a moment of illumination and self-realization. She realizes that:

> a successful prostitute was better than a misled saint. All women are victims of deception. Men impose deception on women and punish them for being deceived, force them down to the lowest level and punish them for falling so low, bind them in marriage and then chastise them with menial services for life, or insults, or blows (82).

Thus, Firdaus learns to hate men because they remind women that they are low. She becomes aware that prostitution is a profession invented by men who force women to sell their bodies at a cheap price.

She also ironically realizes that "the lowest paid body is that of a wife" (99). After breaking her relationship with Ibrahim, Firdaus refuses an invitation from a powerful man, a guest coming from an important foreign state. However, policemen, who are supposed to protect the honor of local women, worked as pimps, struggling to convince her to meet with the foreign delegate. Local police officers offered money in return for having sex with the guest, and then threaten her with prison after she refuses the offer.

Finally, a high-ranking policeman explains to Firdaus :

> that refusing a Head of State could be looked upon as an insult to a great man and will lead to strained relations between the two countries (98).

He tells her that she has to have sex with the guest in order to prove she is a patriot who loves her country. However, Firdaus is aware of the hypocrisy, that the senior police officer "wanted to take a prostitute to this important personality's bed, like any common pimp would do" while talking "in dignified tones of patriotism and moral principles" (1983, 98). Firdaus insists on rejecting the offer, telling the officer: "My body is my property alone, but the land of our country was theirs to own" (99).

As the events approach their tragic end, Firdaus meets the most vicious male character in the novel, Marzouk, the pimp who takes her earnings by force. He offers bribes to crooked policemen and is well connected with corrupt lawyers and judges. He tells Firdaus that he does not mix love with business: "My capital is women's bodies" (1983, 101). After several years of enslavement at the hands of Marzouk, Firdaus decides to leave him and give up prostitution forever, but he prevents her from leaving. They exchange blows: "He lifts his arm up in the air and slapped me. I raised my hand even higher than he had done and brought it down violently on his face.

The white of his eyes went red." In the frenzy, Marzouk viciously attacks Firdaus with a knife. She is able to snatch it and kill him. Firdaus describes the brutal encounter:

> buried it deep in his neck, pulled it out of his neck and then thrust it deep into his chest, pulled it out of his chest and plunged it deep into his belly. I struck the knife into almost every part of his body (104).

Having killed the pimp, Firdaus walks the streets of the city. She is picked up by a prince from a neighboring country. He gives her money, as he believes she is a high-class woman. Although she takes the money, Firdaus verbally assaults the prince:

> You are no better than an insect, and all you do is to spend the thousands you take from your starving people on prostitutes (109).

He calls the police, and when they arrive she turns on them:

> You are criminals, all of you: the fathers, the uncles, the husbands, the pimps, the lawyers, the doctors, the journalists, and all men of all professi.1 (110).

2. Ferdaus's Experience: Reconciliation with Feminism:

After these encounters, Firdaus feels triumphant and exalted. She confessed to the author that she did not regret killing the pimp. She takes pride in herself because she has finally succeeded in scaring men: "They were so afraid of me. I was the only woman who had torn the mask away and exposed the face of their ugly reality. They condemned me to death not because I had killed a man- there are thousands of people being killed every day- but because they are afraid to let me live" (110).

Through the act of murder, Firdaus regains her lost identity, avenging herself against the atrocities of a male-oriented world. For her entire life, Firdaus was silenced in multiple ways by her father, her mother, her uncle, sheikh Mahmoud, her pimp, the Cairo prostitute, and others. Murdering Marzouk liberated her.

The narrative ends with Firdaus expressing her indifference toward death. Firdaus is hanged not for murdering a pimp in self-defense, but because she exposes the evil latent in a corrupt socio-religious structure and stagnant hierarchal system. By the end of the novel, El Saadawi castigates the ideology of the prison system and the judicial network in Egypt as part of what Althusser refers to as the "repressive state apparatus is not a subaltern anymore as she succeeds in restoring her voice and breaking her silence." The repressive state apparatus according to him function massively and predominantly by ideology. It operates by "interpolating individuals as subjects with specific ideology" (Althusser 1971, 158).

By appropriating Althusser's thesis to fit into her narrative, El Saadawi aims to reveal the defects entrenched in a male-oriented legal system, one supported by an oppressive judicial institution, rooted in religious dogma, which crime The Feminist Trajectories in Woman at Point Zero In Western feminist canons, reading and writing are not neutral processes, but products of intricate conscious and unconscious social acts.

Textual meaning is not confined to authorial intentions or to any hermeneutics initiated by critical communities or Arab male critics such as George Tarabishi who misreads Woman. In his critique of the novel, Tarabishi ignores the novel's patriarchal vortex and attacks what he calls "the author's negative portrayal of men." However, not all men in the text are evil. Fedwa Malti-Douglas notes, "A slight glimpse of light exists with the male prison doctor in the prologue of the novel. He does not believe Firdaus is guilty"

(MaltiDouglas 1991, 52). Tarabishi also claims that the author visualizes the male-female natural / sexual relation "as the most hostile and belligerent relationship of all"

(Tarabishi 1988, 17).

Tarabishi ignores the entire social, economic, religious and political forces conspiring against Firdaus and concentrates on sexual and biological agendas. Forcing a Freudian reading on the text, Tarabishi focuses on what he calls the castrating effect Firdaus has inflicted on her male partners. Tarabishi builds his argument on the issue of castration on a statement uttered by Firdaus in her agony:

> I offered to men only the outer surface in order to protect myself and my inner self against thermalizes women who defend their existence against brutal forces of a patriarchal world.(111)

Gayatri Spivak rightly points out that "the man retains legal property rights over the product of a woman's body" (Spivak 1988, 80). This emphasis upon property and production intersects with the experience of Firdaus squarely at the crossroads of reproduction and desire. She is forced to marry an old man who suppresses her sexual and reproductive powers while struggling to possess her body. According to Spivak, a system of product/ownership obliterates the possibility of sexual pleasure. She relates her reluctance to underestimate what is uterine in favor of what is clitoral. For her, the "uterine social organization" is the arrangement of the world in terms of the reproduction of future generations, where the uterus is the chief agent and means of production.

The "uterine social organization" in Spivak's eyes, "should rather, be, 'situated' through the understanding that it has so far been established by excluding a clitoral social organization" (Spivak 1988, 150). Placing women's sexual desire alongside their value as

reproducers is a way of empowering women as subjects of pleasures rather than as objects for male satisfaction.

Firdaus was stripped of both dichotomies and thus is disempowered. She is subject to the violence engendered by the atrocity of an over-aged husband who fails to sexualize with her leaving her sterile. Being denied a sense of herself as a human being thwarts her sexuality and reinforces her powerlessness and frustration. Sexual abuse makes her believe that the relationship between men and women by the standards of her society is that of prostitute and client. Her history of abuse and humiliation circumvents her own desire and she becomes unable to feel anything sexually that drives her toward males.

To resolve her legacy of abuse, Firdaus should recognize her potential for violent revenge and ruthless retaliation. She started to show tenderness toward women and brutality toward men. Violence and fear coalesce in the text culminating in the murder of the pimp, the protagonist's oppressor, with a knife allegorically castrating him. Firdaus is never able to enjoy a moment of sexual intimacy throughout her life except as a child, but the final moment of murder witnessed an epiphany in which she reclaims her being from the narrative of abuse forced by society upon women. She re-evaluates her role as a victim by acknowledging her own ower to hurt her abusers.

Conclusion:

The woman at the point zero is a novel, which entails feminine modes of representation, exploring issues of silencing and denial. The narrative gives voice to the subaltern female negotiating a subversive dynamics aiming to contest tradition, religion, authority and power., El Saadawi provides sufficient narrative space for her subaltern protagonist to speak and tell her own story. By the end of the narrative, she is located in a

position to rebel the forces of oppression and exploitation. She is not powerless anymore contesting and confronting an entire tyrannical system.

General Conclusion

This study has tried to give a general overview of Arab women writings. Literature written by Arab women becomes a thriving field of research; they started to write about their struggles and tried to answer the Western stereotype about the oppression of women. Previously, the writings of Arab women are used to be dismissed, but today, their fiction has gained significance. Yet, it is very difficult to study and analyze women's writing without a basic study of feminist movements and have an idea of what Arab feminists do.

By the second half of 20th-century Feminism has shown a refreshing willingness, defining one's identity becomes crucial for every individual. It emphasizes on women's identity, they strive for equal rights and individualism. In fact, feminist movements were further enhanced thanks to female participation in freedom movements in almost all the independent countries. This is the very reason that third world feminism is often related to postcolonial feminism. Hence, the voice of feminism is more audible in postcolonial fiction, including Arab women writings, than anywhere else. As a result, feminism flourished mainly during the 1990's and started to speak up what Ithey call for.

In *Women At Point Zero, Nawal El Saadaoui* has stressed the feminist coalition among Arab women and the roles that they play in the novel. Nawal through *this novel* exposes the viability of feminism as a transcultural movement as a means of social connections and a strategic choice that has consoled the protagonist from the chaos she faces.

She also highlights the viability of feminism as the basis of partnership among women who come from different origins and backgrounds. Ferdaus's commitment to Arab principles and her spiritual powers have rescued her from a state of loss.

Indeed, Nawal el Sadaoui has contributed in correcting the image of Arab women. The novel is an answer to the Westerners who prejudge Arabs mainly Arab women as backward and weak who always need men to save them.

As what was hypothesized, the novel serves as a tool of empowerment among Arab women. In the loneliness of her exile Ferdaus turns into spirituality which becomes the source of relief from the sudden difficulties and solitude in which she finds herself. The protagonist encounter as an example of other Arab women. In fact, they give her an unexpected power to deal with her everyday issues and create in her a sense of belonging And family.

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Nawal El Saadawi , born 27 October 1931) is an Egyptian feminist writer, activist, physician, and psychiatrist. She has written many books on the subject of women in Islam, paying particular attention to the practice of female genital mutilation in her society. She has been described as "the Simone de Beauvoir of the Arab World.

She is founder and president of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association and co-founder of the Arab Association for Human Rights.[5] She has been awarded honorary degrees on three continents. In 2004, she won the North–South Prize from the Council of Europe. In 2005, she won the Inana International Prize in Belgium,[6] and in 2012, the International Peace Bureau awarded her the 2012 Seán MacBride Peace Prize.

Nawal el Saadawi has held the positions of Author for the Supreme Council for Arts and Social Sciences, Cairo; Director General of the Health Education Department, Ministry of Health, Cairo, Secretary General of the Medical Association, Cairo, Egypt, and medical doctor at the University Hospital and Ministry of Health. She is the founder of the Health Education Association and the Egyptian Women Writers' Association; she was Chief Editor of Health Magazine in Cairo, and Editor of Medical Association Magazine.

The second-eldest of nine children, Saadawi was born in 1931 in the small village of Kafr Tahla.[9] Her family was at once traditional and progressive: El Saadawi was "circumcised" (her clitoris cut off)[10] at the age of six, yet her father insisted that all his children be educated. Her father was a government official in the Ministry of Education, who had campaigned against the rule of the British occupation of Egypt and Sudan during the Egyptian Revolution of 1919. As a result, he was exiled to a small town in the Nile Delta, and the government punished him by not promoting him for 10 years. He was relatively progressive and taught his daughter self-respect and to speak her mind. also encouraged her

to study the Arabic language. Both her parents died at a young ageleaving Saadawi with the sole burden of providing for a large family.]

Saadawi graduated as a medical doctor in 1955 from Cairo University. That year she married Ahmed Helmi, whom she met as a fellow student in medical school. The marriage ended two years later. Through her medical practice, she observed women's physical and psychological problems and connected them with oppressive cultural practices, patriarchal oppression, class oppression and imperialist oppression.

Saadawi describes Firdaus who was executed in 1974, but she left a lasting impact on her, who said she could not rest until she'd written about Firdaus' story and finished the novel in one week she describes her as a martyr and says she admires her because, "Few people are ready to face death for a principle . Later, when Saadawi was imprisoned in Qanatir in 1981 for political offenses, she reflected that she would find herself looking for Firdaus among the prison population, unable to believe that the woman who had inspired her so much was truly dead.

The novel opens with a psychiatrist who is researching inmates at a women's prison. The prison doctor speaks of a woman, Firdaus, who is unlike any of the murderers in the prison: she rarely eats or sleeps, she never talks, she never accepts visitors. She feels certain the woman is incapable of murder, but she has refused to sign any appeals on her behalf. The psychiatrist makes several attempts to speak with her, but Firdaus declines. This rejections causes the psychiatrist to have a crisis of self-confidence. She became consumed with the idea that Firdaus was better than herself, and possibly better than even the president, whom she has refused to send an appeal to. As the psychiatrist is leaving the warder comes to her with an urgent message: Firdaus wants to speak to her. Upon meeting, Firdaus promptly tells her to close the window, sit down, and listen. She explains that she is going to be executed that evening and she wants to tell her life story.

Firdaus describes a poor childhood in a farming community. She recalls that she was confused by the disparity between her father's actions, such as beating her mother, and his dedication to the Islamic faith. Those days were relatively happy days, as she was sent out to the fields to work and tend the goats. She enjoys the friendship of a boy named Mohammadain, with whom she plays "bride and bridegroom", and describes her first encounters with clitoral stimulation. One day Firdaus's mother sends for a woman with a knife, who mutilated her genitals. From that point on Firdaus is assigned work in the home. Firdaus' uncle begins to take a sexual interest in her and she describes her new lack of clitoral sensitivity, noting, "He was doing to me what Mohammadain had done to me before. In fact, he was doing even more, but I no longer felt the strong sensation of pleasure that radiated from an unknown and yet familiar part of my body. ... It was as if I could not longer recall the exact spot from which it used to arise, or as though a part of me, of my being, was gone and would never return.

After the death of her mother and father, Firdaus is taken in by her uncle, who sends her to primary school. Firdaus loves school. She maintains a close relationship with her uncle, who continues to take an interest in her sexually. After Firdaus receives her primary school certificate a distance grows between uncle and niece, and her uncle marries and withdraws all affection and attention. Tensions between Firdaus and her aunt-in-law build until Firdaus is placed in boarding school, where Firdaus falls in love with a female teacher named Miss Iqbal, whom she feels a mutual connection to, but Iqbal keeps her at an arm's length and never allows her to get close.

Upon graduation, Firdaus' aunt convinces her uncle to arrange her marriage with Sheikh Mahmoud, a "virtuous man" who needs an obedient wife. Firdaus considers running away but ultimately submits to the marriage. Mahmoud repulses her—he is forty years older and has a sore on his chin that oozes pus. He stays home all day, micromanaging Firdaus' every action, and begins to physically abuse her.

Firdaus runs away and wanders the streets aimlessly until she stops to rest at a coffee shop. The owner, Bayoumi, offers her tea and a place to stay until she finds a job. Firdaus accepts. After several months, Firdaus tells him she wants to find a job and her own place to live. Bayoumi immediately becomes violent and beats her saveagely. He starts locking her up

during the day and allows his friends to abuse, insult, and rape her. Eventually, Firdaus is able enlist the aid of a female neighbor, who calls a carpenter to open the door, allowing her to escape.

While on the run, Firdaus meets the madame Sharifa Salah el Dine, who takes her into her brothel as a high-class prostitute. She tells Firdaus that all men are the same and that she must be harder than life if she wants to live. In exchange for working in Sharifa's brothel Firdaus is given beautiful clothes and delicious food, but she has no pleasure in life. One evening she overhears an argument between Sharifa and her pimp, Fawzy, who wants to take Firdaus as his own. They argue, and Fawzy overpowers Sharifa and rapes her. Firdaus realizes that even Sharifa does not have true power and she runs away.

Firdaus is wandering in the dark and rain when she is picked up by a stranger who takes her back to his home. He sleeps with her, but he is not as disgusting as the other men she's dealt with in her profession, and after they are done he gives her a 10 pound note. This is a moment of awakening for Firdaus, and she recalls that it, "solved the enigma in one swift, sweeping moment, tore away the shroud that covered up a truth I had in fact experienced when still a child, when for the first time my father gave me a coin to hold in my hand, and be mine". Firdaus realizes that she can exert her power over men by rejecting them, and can force men to yield to her will by naming her own price; she gains self-confidence and soon becomes a wealthy and highly sought prostitute. She employs a cook and an assistant, works whatever hours she wishes, and cultivates powerful friendships. One day, her friend Di'aa tells her she is not respectable.

This insult has a jarring and immediate impact on Firdaus, who comes to realize that she can no longer work as a prostitute. She takes a job at a local office and refuses to offer her body to the higher officials for promotions or raises. Although Firdaus believed that her new job would bring respect, she makes significantly less money than when working as a prostitute, and lives in squalid conditions. Furthermore, her office job gave her little autonomy or freedom which she values so highly. She eventually falls in love with Ibrahim, a coworker and revolutionary chairman, with whom she develops a deep emotional connection. But when Ibrahim announces his engagement to the chairman's daughter, which

has clearly been engineered to help his career, Firdaus realizes he does not reciprocate her feelings and only used her for sex.

Crushed and disillusioned, Firdaus returns to prostitution, and once again amasses great wealth and becomes highly influential. Her success attracts the attention of the pimp Marzouk, who has many political connections and threatens her with police action. He repeatedly beats Firdaus and forces her to give him larger percentages of her earnings. Firdaus decides to leave and take up another job, but Marzouk blocks her way and tells her she can never leave. When he pulls a knife, Firdaus takes it and stabs him to death.

High with the sense of her new freedom, Firdaus walks the streets until she is picked up by a high-profile Arabian prince, who she refuses until he agrees to her price of 3,000 pounds. As soon as the transaction is over, she tells him that she killed a man. He doesn't believe her, but she scares him to the point that he is convinced. The prince has her arrested and Firdaus is sentenced to death. Firdaus says that she has been sentenced to death because they were afraid to let her live, for, "My life means their death. My death means their life. They want to live." As she is finishing her story, armed policemen come for her, and the psychiatrist sits, stunned, as Firdaus is taken to be executed, and realizes that Firdaus has more courage than her.