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**The Representation of Women in the Arab World: An Analytical  
Study of Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at  
Point Zero***

**Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
Master's Degree in Literature and Civilization**

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## **Dedication**

*First, we want to say Al Hamdoulleh and thank God for those endless blesses around us.  
We would like to thank our families, Thank you for all the love and the support over years.*

*We dedicate our work to our dearest parents who provided us with whatever we need and  
surrounded us with great affection to reach our objectives in this life.*

*Our sisters and brothers each by name.*

***DJIHANE, IMANE***

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## Abstract

This study examines how Arab women are represented in El Saadawi's novels and evaluates if these representations fairly capture realities of these women. The study under investigation aims to analyze how Arab women are represented in Nawal El Saadawi's *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero*. The goal of the study is to determine how falsely El Saadawi's depictions of Arab women's lives reflect the actual complexity of those lives through an analysis of these novels. The study also explores the authenticity of El Saadawi's depiction, emphasizing the relationship between literature, feminism, and Egypt's sociocultural context. The study uses a qualitative, descriptive-analytical method with feminist theory to analyze El Saadawi's novels, focusing on women's representation in both novels. This study has employed postcolonial theory and a feminist point of view. Thus, the study reveals that both novels provide insightful analyses of the difficulties Arab women encounter, but they also give a constrained and perhaps distorted picture of Arab women's lives. El Saadawi's propensity to and complexity that Arab women endure, failing to give a complete picture of women's complicated identities and problems.

**Keywords:** Arab women, Egyptian Literature, Representation, Nawal El Saadawi, Feminism,

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## **General Introduction**

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## **General Introduction**

### **1. Background of the Study**

The way women are portrayed in literature has been historically impacted by the social and cultural norms that are in place. Novelist Nawal El Saadawi is a trailblazing feminist in the Arab world who uses her works to represent the difficulties women encounter. Her masterpieces, *God Dies by the Nile* (1974) and *Woman at Point Zero* (1983), powerfully illustrate the hardships that women face against patriarchal oppression and societal conventions. El Saadawi's books, which are rooted in the Egyptian socio-political context, explore more general themes of gender, power, and resistance. Although her works have played a significant role in increasing public awareness of women's issues, opinions about how accurately they capture the range of Arab women's experiences remain divided.

### **2. Statement of the Problem**

El Saadawi has made a great deal of feminist literature, yet her representation of women has come under fire for maybe providing a limited and occasionally overly dramatic view of women's lives in the Arab world. The purpose of this study is to critically assess how women are portrayed in *Woman at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile*. Specifically, we will investigate if these representations accurately reflect Arab women's lives or whether they present a more dramatic version of events. This research aims to comprehend how El Saadawi's writings reflect, and sometimes even distort the lived realities of women in Egypt and the larger Arab setting by examining the characters and topics in these novels.

### **3. Research Questions**

The current study answers the following questions:

1. How does Nawal El Saadawi portray the life of Arab women?
2. To what extent does Saadawi's depiction of Arab women accurate and reflects the real Egyptian women's status?

#### **4. Literature Review**

Several scholarly investigations have scrutinized El Saadawi's portrayal of women in *Woman at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile*. These books represent different facets of female strength, defiance of patriarchal frameworks, and the intersectionality of their battles. Numerous academic studies have examined how Arab women are portrayed in literature, exposing common motifs and misunderstandings.

In *Framing Nawal El Saadawi: Arab Feminism in a Transnational World*, Amal Amireh (2000) examines how El Saadawi's ideas are interpreted and received in both Arab and Western contexts. Although El Saadawi's writings are praised for their feminist viewpoint, Amireh contends that they are frequently mired in orientalist frameworks that idealize and oversimplify the lives of Arab women. Overall, Amireh's analysis shows how preconceptions might be unintentionally reinforced by the viewpoints that are used to interpret El Saadawi's narratives.

Though not exclusively centered on El Saadawi, Chandra Talpade Mohanty's 1984 book *Feminism and Difference: Gender, Race, and Critique* offered a critical framework for comprehending how Third World women are portrayed in feminist discourse. Western feminist studies are criticized by Mohanty for their propensity to homogenize and decontextualize the experiences of women from different cultural origins. El Saadawi's writings are frequently taken by Western feminist agendas that ignore the complex, localized reality of Arab women's lives, despite El Saadawi's attempts to give voice to the problems of Arab women. This is a huge gap

that becomes apparent when one applies Mohanty's framework to El Saadawi's works. This discrepancy highlights the need for more investigation into how gender, ethnicity, and culture mix in literary representations without succumbing to simplicity.

Even with a large amount of study, there is still a significant gap in the literature: very few, if any, studies have critically assessed whether El Saadawi's works reflect women's lives in the Arab world exaggeratedly or inaccurately. In order to fill this vacuum, this study looks into whether El Saadawi's dramatic and frequently depressing depictions of Arab women in her novels actually reflect their everyday lives or if they merely provide a symbolic narrative that might not adequately capture the range of experiences that women have.

## **5. The aim of the study**

The primary objective of this study is to examine the representations of women in *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi. Through an analysis of these novels, the study aims to ascertain how well El Saadawi's portrayals of the lives of Arab women reflect the authentic complexity of their lives. This analysis aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these literary works contribute to feminist discourse and whether or not they successfully capture the range of realities that Arab women face.

## **6. Research Methodology**

This study used a qualitative approach. It opts for a descriptive-analytical method using feminist theory in contextual analysis. A detailed examination of El Saadawi's books will be conducted, bolstered by secondary sources such as feminist literary theory, historical background, and socio-cultural research on Arab women. The study aims to provide an in-depth

knowledge of the novels and what they mean by critically analyzing how women are portrayed in *Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* using feminist and postcolonial frameworks.

## **7. Significance of the study**

This research is essential. It adds to the current conversation on how women are portrayed in literature, especially in Arab contexts. Through a critical analysis of Nawal El Saadawi's writings, the study invites readers to contemplate the intricacies and possible constraints associated with literary representations of female lives. It also provides insight into how society's attitudes toward women's rights and gender roles can be shaped and reflected in literature. The study's conclusion is intended to contribute to the scholarly discussion of feminist literature and offer a more thorough understanding of the situations that Arab women actually face.

## **8. Structure of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into three main chapters, each of which focuses on different aspects of feminist literary theory and how it is applied to Arab and Egyptian literature.

A comprehensive theoretical and historical introduction to feminist literary theory is given in Chapter One, *Feminist Literary Theory: Historical and Theoretical Overview*. This chapter explores feminist literary criticism, focusing on its development and importance. It explores different waves of feminism, including first, second, and third, and their relationship with postcolonial feminism and colonial legacies. The conclusion summarizes the main points of the overview, laying the basis for further investigation.

Chapter Two, *Egyptian Feminist Literature: Overview*, will focus on Egyptian feminist writing, providing an outline of its themes, evolution, and major writers. The chapter will describe Egyptian feminist literature and look at its historical background within the Arab world.

The chapter will emphasize the important role that well-known Egyptian feminist novelist Nawal El Saadawi played in influencing the development of Egyptian feminist literature.

Chapter Three, *Representation of Women in 'God Dies by the Nile and Women at Point Zero*, will be devoted to exploring and examining the way women are portrayed in the Arab world. The chapter will analyze each text, paying particular attention to the thematic themes, symbolism, and portrayal of female protagonists.

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Feminist Literary Theory:**

### **Historical and Theoretical Overview**

# **Chapter One: Feminist Literary Theory: Historical and Theoretical**

## **Overview**

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## **Introduction**

Women all over the world are oppressed, marginalized and deprived of their basic rights. Nevertheless, in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, women decided to change their condition, and advocate their rights. Therefore, different cultural theories and political movements largely motivated by the women's demands for equality have been emerged. These theories and movements are broadly known as feminism. For the most part, feminism can be seen as a vast term containing different cultural phenomena associated with women's situation in a patriarchal world. It represents a collection of movements at political and social levels. This chapter will demonstrate the way feminism and postcolonialism overlap and how they serve each other. It will also focus on the conceptualization of feminism in its three waves as social, political and economic movement.

### **1.1 Overview of Feminist Literary Theory**

Recently, feminism has gained significant traction. It emerged as one of the most utilized literary approaches. The term "feminism" was first coined in 1837 by the utopian philosopher and radical socialist Charles Fourier in response to organized activism supporting women's suffrage. From a broader perspective, feminism, as a theory, fundamentally posits that patriarchal societies have systematically oppressed women, denying them equal rights. Consequently, a demand for their rights became inevitable. This theory seeks to illuminate the suffering and struggles of women in the face of male dominance and oppression. Feminist theorists frequently scrutinize various spheres where women are portrayed as inferior, weak, and subordinate (Malinowska, 2020, p. 01).



Feminism empowers silenced women by challenging entrenched gender roles and advocating for their rights. As a result of being historically marginalized, dismissed and labeled as emotional and irrational, women reclaim agency through feminist movements, demanding recognition and equality in decision-making processes, thus reshaping societal norms toward inclusivity and empowerment (Malinowska, 2020, p. 03).

In attempting to give the exact meaning of feminism, the Oxford Dictionary defines it as "a belief in the principle that women should have the same rights as men" (p.163). According to this definition, feminism aims to establish equality between men and women, encompassing rights, treatment, and opportunities. In *The Periodic Table of Feminism* by Marisa Bate, feminism is portrayed as a multifaceted political, social, and philosophical movement that has reshaped and revolutionized women's lives (2018, p.10). Bate elucidates that feminism transcends mere theory, embodying a potent force—an energy, an incisive anger, and a beacon of hope for change (p.10). It is this force that propels women to seize agency and reshape the future narrative, transitioning from oppression to equality.

## **1.2 First Wave of Feminism**

The first wave of feminism is probably the most important one. It was the one to pave the way for the next generations of feminists to come. Getting to know how feminism started in the first place is crucial to this study.

### **1.2.1 Historical Context and Relevance**

The first wave of feminism is regarded as the stage of pioneering feminist activism. It started to spread across Europe and North America. Notably, modern feminism is said to have begun around the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. It was highly related to women's

suffrage, which advocates for women's rights to vote, working conditions, and right to education. In 1904, the International Woman Suffrage Alliance was created. Women in this period protested through speeches, writing, and public gatherings.

Mary Wollstonecraft is credited with influencing the birth of the first wave of feminism. In the Preface of *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Zoë Williams (2015) writes, "Wollstonecraft was the un-feminist, she was the mothership" (p.x). What makes Wollstonecraft related to the first wave of feminism is her beliefs in Enlightenment teachings, especially those related to the rights of individuals for education. She wrote a book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), where she expressed her beliefs. She revealed how she believes that the neglected education of her "fellow creatures is the grand source of the misery she deplores" (Wollstonecraft, 2015, p. 01).

Eighteenth and nineteenth-century Britain, like other parts of the world, did not offer equal rights to education for men and women. Even the subjects studied differed because women had to learn about etiquette and the domestic arts of refinement, and how to be an obedient daughter and later a wife. Their education also involved languages like French and Latin, and they had to be proficient in singing and playing the piano. On the other hand, men were given the chance for higher education in the fields they chose. When it comes to the economy, politics, and social activities in society, women were, of course, left out by the system of education. Accordingly, Wollstonecraft stated that this type of education "is a false system of education, gathered from the books written on this subject by men" (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 01). Wollstonecraft fiercely stood for the right to education for females.

The problem with the adapted system of education is that the subjects made for women were designed to control them. Wollstonecraft insists that men's purpose from these designed

courses is to “make them [women] alluring mistresses rather than affectionate wives and rational mothers” (Wollstonecraft, 1792, p. 01). Put into simpler words, they purposefully did that to put women into submission and inferior position.

Interestingly, many other female writers held similar views to those of Wollstonecraft, some even prior to her time. Bate argues that Mary Astell was "the first English feminist who argued for equal education opportunities for women" (Bate, 2018, p.10). Astell wrote a feminist treatise in 1694 titled "A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their True and Greatest Interest" (1694). The book was a call for women to stand by the side of one another in an attempt to reject their imposed inferior position and role in society. She also urged women to demand that their opinions be taken seriously in rational matters and not just left to be decided by men.

Astell had considerable influence on the coming feminists as she brought up important subjects like her “plan for an all-female college” (Bate, 2018, p.10). Astell is said to have been Christian to the core, holding beliefs about women and righteousness. She had a tight group of female friends whose main cause was to support, advocate for women’s rights, and stand for one another. Kirkham states that she was “the most outspoken feminist of her time” (Kirkham, n.d.), bearing in mind that the late 17<sup>th</sup> century was no time for feminists.

The 18<sup>th</sup> century was no different as times were difficult for women and all those who chose to speak up for the rights of women. Wollstonecraft, in particular, was hated and not tolerated for spreading these ‘provocative’ ideas in society. Still, her influence on female writers was undeniable and to a great extent, even on those who chose not to bring it up. She paved the way for other female writers to write about women’s rights and independence in their works, although they were still limited in that patriarchal society (Bate, 2018, p.12).

In summary, the first wave of feminism dealt with property rights and the right to vote. It lasted until the early twentieth century. Remarkably, the first wave of feminism ended with the recognition of women's right to vote. They advocated for better working conditions, reproductive rights, rights to education, and marriage and property laws.

### **1.3 The Second Wave of Feminism**

Due to the influence of the first wave of feminism, women secured the right to vote. Nonetheless, gender inequality persisted as an enduring and unresolved issue. The Second Wave emerged during the 1960s-1980s and addressed issues concerning legal inequality, the societal role of women, and the accompanying cultural disparities. It also confronted matters that are more contentious.

The Second Wave originated in the United States, rapidly disseminating throughout the Western world. According to Dominelli, this "movement emerged in the aftermath of World War II as numerous women entered the labor force, challenging prevailing conceptions of women's roles within the family, workplace, and society" (Dominelli, 2002, p.87).

To be specific, the protests associated with the Miss America Pageants in 1968 catalyzed this wave of feminism. These protests aimed to demonstrate how women participating in pageant competitions were paraded like commodities, underscoring the underlying belief that a woman's appearance held greater significance than her actions, thoughts, or intellectual capabilities (Soken-Huberty, 2022, p.12). The pageant competitions were perceived as perpetuating a patriarchal narrative that prioritized women's physical appearance. Feminists regarded such events as degrading to women. Their peaceful actions conveyed the feminists' message,

commercialized their beliefs, and denounced the patriarchal and assertive beauty culture that targeted women (Soken-Huberty, 2022, p.13).

The primary objective of this wave was to raise awareness about gender-based violence, domestic abuse, marital rape, sexism, and patriarchal norms. Additionally, it sought to illuminate inequalities in the workplace and advocated for the legalization of abortion and access to birth control. Both white and non-white women, in both Western and developing nations, spearheaded this wave of feminism (Soken-Huberty, 2022, p.10).

During this period, political feminism gave rise to various offshoots, including socialist, Marxist, and ecological feminism. Several slogans emerged as a result of feminist activism, each highlighting different political and cultural inequities. Slogans such as "The Personal is Political" and "Identity Politics" underscored the interconnectedness of race, class, and gender oppression (Soken-Huberty, 2022, p.15).

Liberal feminists were intrigued by numerous conceptual and theoretical frameworks. Initially, Simone de Beauvoir's assertion, "one is not born a woman but becomes one" (de Beauvoir 1949, 273), resonated widely among activists, serving as a rallying cry for efforts to challenge conventional notions of femininity (p.03). Feminist authors such as Alice Walker, Betty Friedan, and Laura Mulvey authored the core works that encouraged third-wave feminism to appear. Friedan's seminal work, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), was influential, especially in the western society. In fact, feminists' inspiration was driven by different theoretical perspectives, including poststructuralism, deconstruction, and psychoanalysis.

The second wave of feminism advanced upon the achievements of the first wave. Its overarching goals encompassed the attainment of reproductive equality, the promotion of

women's financial independence, the rectification of disparities within the workplace and wage structures, and the mitigation of domestic violence through the establishment of shelters catering to abused women.

### **1.3.1 Gender Equality and Role Challenges**

Feminists during this period focused on passing the Equal Rights principle, which would give civil rights to all people regardless of gender, and it was passed in 1972 (American Psychological Association, 2022). Equally important, another vital point is equality in the workplace. Women's work had always been undervalued in which endless restrictions fell upon them as women were not allowed to choose their employment or the field in which they could work. Restrictions were based on education and physical, or mental ability. Many work fields were uniquely preserved for men as females were regarded as incapable of doing such jobs, regardless of the reason. Hence, the objective of this wave of feminism was to put women's careers first (Jaggar, 1983, p.12).

Employers had the right to fire pregnant women for "inconvenience" up until 1978 (Holst-Peterson and Rutherford, 2022, p.10). Feminists fought for legal protection in the workplace to stop harassment and discrimination. Another aspect of work that they focused on and demanded their rights in was equal salary. All fields of work paid women much less than men, even when doing the same thing.

Some of the women's demands in this wave included standing up against domestic violence. For instance, they opened shelters for abused wives and rape centers for victims. As Emmaline Soken-Huberty (2022) mentioned that, "In 1972, the first emergency rape line opened in Washington, D.C. the next year, the term 'domestic violence' was used for the first time at a

UK Parliament address. Feminists also pushed for changes to the law" (p.01). Mohajan (2022) writes, "Although women have gained political rights in the first wave of feminism, they still feel confined to domestic chores as mothers and housewives" (p.02). Their demands were simple: to be independent, make their own choices, and have a voice when it comes to their private or marital life, both in public and at home.

Challenging social stereotypes about women was second-wave feminism's main goal. For eternity, women were set up to be wives, have children, and nurture the household while the man worked for a living. Women who did work outside their houses were perceived as stepping into masculine roles. These traditional gender roles were not serving women, as most of them did not choose to live that way; they were obliged to. Feminist activists gave much thought and interest to the analysis of how gender roles restrict women. They wanted to be the voice of the voiceless: those who were not content with these stereotypical gender roles (Mohajan, 2022, p.09).

Feminists of this period perceived domestic violence as a threatening and serious problem that needed to be addressed. Continuing on the issue of gender roles, since women were 'supposed' to be obedient and subordinate, they were expected to keep quiet when it comes to domestic violence as it was normalized as an act for men to be in control of their women. Second-wave feminists did their best to shed light on this particular issue.

#### **1.4 The Third Wave of Feminism**

Feminism's third wave appeared in the 1990s and 2000s as a solution to the perceived inconvenience of the previous movements. This wave is seen both as a preservation of the second wave and a key to overcoming its limitations. Central to this wave was the assertion of women's agency and power, challenging traditional gender norms. Pop culture, in particular,

began featuring more assertive and dynamic female characters, reflecting this shift (Mohajan, 2022, p.03).

Intersectionality, sexual identities, and changing stereotypes about women in media and language were key concerns of third-wave feminists. Rebecca Walker's 1992 article *Becoming the Third Wave* popularized the term, with many third-wave feminists being daughters of second-wave activists (Munro, 2013, p.22-25). Building upon the groundwork of previous waves, third-wave feminists garnered increased recognition, power, and rights over the years.

This wave focused on gender, sexuality, and intersectionality, introducing the concept of male privilege and advocating for a feminism that honors diverse experiences and challenges categorical thinking (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2005, p.17). It emphasized individualized feminism, allowing women to define their own identities.

The diversity and complexity of third-wave feminism led to numerous subcategories, including Grrl feminism, Lipstick feminism, girlie feminism, riot grrl feminism, and cybergrrl feminism (Krolokke and Sorensen, 2005, p.15). Rhetorical strategies such as performance, mimicry, and subversion defined this wave.

Globalization significantly impacted third-wave feminism, altering power dynamics and broadening women's perspectives and interests. The movement became more inclusive, acknowledging the diverse experiences of women across different backgrounds.

#### **1.4.1 Intersectionality**

Intersectionality, a term coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, demonstrates how the intersectionality of various discrimination forms is done to affect individuals' life (Hawk, 2016). This concept encourages inclusivity in the fight for gender equality.



Intersectional feminism recognizes that women's experiences vary based on factors such as race, ethnicity, class, and religion. It explores the intersections of different forms of oppression, such as racism, sexism, and homophobia, and how they affect women's societal status (Hawk, 2016, p.12).

Literary speaking, embracing intersectional feminism benefits female writers by promoting diversity and inclusivity. It gives the minority to represent themselves, enriches storytelling, and challenges the monopoly of the main narratives.

Chimamanda Adichie's exploration of the concept of the "single story" underscores the importance of diversity in voices within literature. Exposure to a various perspective is crucial to further empathy and our understanding of the world around us.

Lastly, readers like the stories which they feel they relate to. The diversity of writers leads to more honesty in their writings. Humans need to connect with others emotionally, Hawk (2016) posits that:

stories are all about overcoming our biggest obstacles [...] it can be social deals that make you feel less than human. And once we know there are others like us there, we don't feel alone. We feel encouraged to reach our dreams, break barriers, and heal real-life wounds" (p.42). Correspondingly, literature is a media that transmit the suffer of others. It is about raising empathy and getting a level of affinity from literature.

## **1.5 Postcolonial Feminism**

### **1.5.1 Definition of Postcolonial Feminism**

The narrative of women and oppression stretches endlessly, lacking a definitive beginning or conclusion. It parallels the struggles of feminism and postcolonialism, both rooted in the fight

against oppression. As Ashcroft (2011) highlights in *The Empire Writes Back*, feminist perspectives increasingly intersect with postcolonial criticism, with theorists like Jean Rhys and Toni Morrison drawing analogies between the domination of women and that of colonized subjects.

An illustrative example of this overlap lies in the marriage market, where women lacked agency in choosing their partners or determining their living arrangements. This experience echoes that of slaves and colonized individuals, suggesting a shared subjugation under patriarchy and imperialism. Indeed, as Ashcroft (2006) suggests, both systems exert analogous forms of dominance over those they deem subordinate.

In "*Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in Relation to Postcolonial and Feminist Theories*," Tyagi (2014) underscores the necessity for mainstream postcolonial theory to grapple with gender issues. This pressure exerted by postcolonial feminist theory highlights the imperative of considering gender dynamics within broader discussions of colonialism and oppression.

The convergence of feminism and postcolonialism is further articulated by scholars such as Rivkin and Ryan, who liken postcolonialism to the concept of patriarchy in feminist thought, both indicative of systems of domination. In "*Colonialism and the Figurative Strategy of Jane Eyre*," Susan Meyer (1991) emphasizes the coalition between the ideologies of male and colonial domination, illustrating how postcolonial feminist literature aimed to challenge societal norms perpetuated during imperial and colonial eras.

Central to postcolonial feminism is its recognition of the diverse experiences of women, particularly those from the Global South and marginalized communities. Prior to the emergence

of this framework, Western feminism often overlooked the concerns of women of color, advocating for rights primarily within their socio-political context. Postcolonial feminism seeks to rectify this oversight by situating feminist theory within specific cultural contexts and amplifying the voices of marginalized women worldwide.

### **1.5.2 Intersection of Gender and Colonial History**

Patriarchy and colonialism are viewed as two sides of the same coin, with both systems operating in comparable and overlapping ways. In 1988, Holst-Peterson and Rutherford introduced the term "Double Colonization" to describe the dual oppression experienced by colonized women, who are subjugated both by colonialism and by patriarchal society (1988, p. 23).

The concept of Double Colonization focuses on the intersection between gender and colonial history, particularly the assertive treatment of certain groups within postcolonial societies. It examines how the oppression of women is compounded by the intersection of race and gender, highlighting their experiences within these systems of domination (Holst-Peterson and Rutherford, 1988, p. 25).

Postcolonial feminist theories center on political oppression and patriarchy, highlighting their convergence. Both discourses share a commitment to challenging established hierarchical systems, dominated by white males and rejecting the supremacy of masculine power and authority. Imperialism and patriarchy are characterized as phallogentric ideologies that subjugate and dominate their subjects, with women often bearing the brunt of this oppression.

The notion of the "Male Gaze," (1975) popularized by Laura Mulvey underscores the oppressive nature of patriarchal and imperial systems. Women and colonized individuals are objectified and stereotyped within these systems, their identities obscured and diminished.

Postcolonial feminism sheds light on the gender dynamics within colonial contexts and exposes the exploitation of marginalized and silenced groups by governmental and systemic forces. Scholars such as Shenmugasundaram emphasize postcolonial feminists' efforts to challenge oppressive power structures based on race, nation, and empire, addressing issues of gender, class, and sexuality across interdisciplinary fields.

Ultimately, racializing mainstream feminist theory and gendering colonialism and postcolonialism are key objectives of postcolonial feminism, seeking to dismantle systems of oppression and advocate for the rights and voices of marginalized communities.

### **1.5.3 The Impact Colonial Legacies on Gender Dynamics**

Colonial legacies have a deep and wide-ranging effect on gender dynamics, especially as it relates to Indigenous women. Indigenous civilizations were subjected to patriarchal institutions brought by colonialism, which weakened women's traditional responsibilities and status. In addition to the removal of Indigenous women from their land, the denial of identity and status has resulted in social exclusion, poverty, increased susceptibility to violence, and engagement in. Furthermore, colonial policies perpetuated gender inequity by excluding Indigenous women from community decision-making processes (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2008).

Furthermore, by undervaluing their unpaid domestic work, discounting their paid employment, and establishing power disparities based on race and other distinctions, colonialism and capitalism have harmed all women. These structures have impeded women's collective

advancement by legitimizing uneven privileges and fostering divisions among them. Indigenous women still carry the emotional and physical scars from colonization, which include the imposition of new lifestyles, the horrific residential school and Sixties Scoop experiences, and other lingering effects on their sense of self. Initiatives like women's sharing circles, which offer places for empowerment and healing, are among the attempts to address these effects (Meade & Wiesner-Hanks, 2008).

In conclusion, by imposing patriarchal norms, maintaining disparities, and weakening the social fabric of Indigenous communities, colonial legacies have had a profound impact on gender dynamics. In post-colonial nations, acknowledging and resolving these legacies is essential to advancing gender parity and women's empowerment.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the advocacy for women's equal rights spans generations, with feminist theory fundamentally challenging the idea of a universal and uniform view of womanhood, emphasizing the vital necessity of incorporating race into gender analyses. Feminist studies encompass a diverse array of writings, reflecting a spectrum of perspectives and viewpoints. Inequality, harassment, discrimination, exclusion, exploitation, powerlessness, violence, and abuse against women remain central concerns across all waves of feminism, transcending cultural and economic contexts. Despite centuries of activism and the evolution of feminist movements through various waves, the struggle for women's rights persists, particularly for those in the Global South. Postcolonial feminism emerges as a groundbreaking concept, exposing the dual oppression experienced by women in colonized nations, where imperialism/colonialism and patriarchy intersect to compound their marginalization.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **Egyptian Feminist Literature: An Overview**

## **Chapter Two: Egyptian Feminist Literature: An Overview**

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## **Introduction**

Egyptian feminist literature stands as a rich tapestry woven with the voices and experiences of women striving for empowerment, equality, and liberation. From the early expressions of Arab women poets to the contemporary works of renowned writers such as Nawal El Saadawi. The literary landscape reflects a dynamic interplay between individual narratives, societal norms, historical context, key themes, and the profound impact of writers. Through the examination of this vibrant literary tradition, the resilience, creativity, and unwavering commitment of Egyptian women to assert their identities are uncovered. This chapter explores the intricate interplay between individual narratives, societal constructs, historical contingencies, and the profound impact of literary canon.

### **2.1 Definition of Egyptian Feminist Literature**

The emergence of the term "feminist literature" dates back to the first half of the nineteenth century in the West. Mary Eagleton defines women's literature as:

The literature that seeks to uncover the special self-aspect of women away from those aspects that literature has long been concerned with. It is the literature that accurately expresses the special character of the female experience in isolation from traditional concepts and embodies her experience in life (cited in Khatib, pp. 1-3, 2019).

Bell Hooks, in her book *Feminism Is for Everybody* (2000), defines feminist literature as "writing that addresses gender oppression and the liberation of women. It includes any literary work that seeks to empower women and promote gender equality" (p.7). To sum up, feminist literature encompasses works that aim to reveal the distinct aspects of women's experience,



separate from traditional literary themes, while also addressing gender oppression and advocating for the empowerment and equality for women.

According to Hartman (2011), Feminist literature in the Arab world started when women used poetry, prose, and other forms of expression to write about their feelings, political positions, and ideas on their issues. One of the most important literary works is Al-Khansa's poems. Her literature explores the heritage of Arab women's literary contributions. She focused on themes such as sophistication, emotional depth, and mastery of language, making her works a cornerstone of Arabic poetic tradition.

Arab feminist literature has been influenced by Western feminist literature, impacting the social and political position of women in the Arab world and changing perceptions of gender roles. The influence of Western intellectual and literary thought has contributed to the development of feminist consciousness. The feminist movement in Egypt is one of several movements that emerged in the Arab world, raising awareness about social forces and discrimination against women. The Egyptian Feminist movement brought about changes and improvements that led to progress and development in Egypt. Women of different social classes explored new opportunities available to them under new political conditions in Egypt (Nazelee & Khattab, 1996).

Egyptian feminist literature is not isolated but rather intertwined with the larger tapestry of Arab literary and intellectual movements. Over time, the Arab world has witnessed a dynamic interplay between literature, culture, and socio-political realities, which has made Arab literary expressions, social movements, and intellectual endeavors diverse from ancient times to the present. It can be noted that Arab literature is often characterized by vibrant voices advocating for social justice.

## **2.2 Historical Context of Feminism in the Arab World**

Understanding the historical context of feminism in the Arab world is essential for the socio-political, cultural, and intellectual dynamics that have shaped the experiences and struggles of women. From the pre-Islamic era to the present day, Arab society has witnessed women's engagement, resistance, and advocacy across various domains. Throughout history, women have played diverse roles within their societies.

The development of feminism in the Arab world dates back to the pre-Islamic era, known as Al Jahiliya. Mocbil (2023) argues that this period was marked by violence, tribal conflicts, and patriarchal norms. These characteristics resulted in discrimination and limited freedoms for women. Women held varied roles, determined by tribal norms. While some women had authority, others faced restrictions. Women participated in public debates and competitions, showcasing their intellectual prowess. Despite societal variations, women's active engagement in public life and cultural expression highlighted their significance. These early expressions of women's abilities laid the foundation for later contributions to Arab literature and culture.

The emergence of Islam wrought a profound transformation in Arab life, particularly in the status of women. Jawad (2003) asserts that women experienced a significant reassessment of their societal standing, coupled with conferred rights to inheritance, education, and participation in public life. The teachings of the Holy Quran advocated for the fundamental rights and dignity of women as Quranic verses address gender relations between men and women in fostering societal morality and progress. Islamic principles underscored the spiritual and moral equality of men and women. It affirms their shared humanity and inherent worth in the eyes of God. Ann Cathrin Riedel (2013) says that Islam's recognition of the complementary roles; of men and women, departs from prevailing norms. It advocates for the equitable treatment and empowerment of

women within society. Islam elevates and safeguards the rights of women. Thus, it heralds a new era of gender equality and social justice. Far from being passive recipients of patriarchal norms, women actively engaged in trade, poetry, and decision-making within their tribes.

Throughout history, Arab women have navigated complex social, cultural, and political landscapes. They faced both internal and external challenges in their quest for self-expression and gender equality. During the Ottoman period, Hadad (2019) reports that Arab women faced significant challenges in asserting their voices and participating in literary and feminist discourse. Arab women grappled with societal constraints and external influences. Patriarchal norms prevailed and education became more accessible, leading to a rise in educated women. Women writers engaged in feminist criticism, despite obstacles shaped by cultural, historical, and religious contexts. Despite challenges, Arab women exhibited resilience and determination in advocating for equality and rights against patriarchal norms and colonial influences.

### **2.2.1 Modern Arab Feminist Literature**

In the late nineteenth century, as nationalist sentiments surged, Arab feminists addressed a wide range of issues in their literary works: including gender equality, family laws, education, and social expectations. Booth and Cooke (2002) argue that this convergence became evident through the establishment of new Arab women's journals in Cairo and Alexandria. There, women injected perspectives into nationalist debates and activism. During Egypt's national revolution from 1919 to 1922, the feminist nationalists advocated for societal restructuring which gave a space and voice for women's rights to spread.

Correspondingly, Egyptian women spearheaded a social movement under the banner of the Egyptian Feminist Union. Mokalled (2016) states that their efforts expanded beyond national

borders as they convened pan-Arab meetings in Cairo in 1938 and 1941, which culminated in the formation of the Arab Feminist Union in 1944. Across the region, Palestinian women maintained a strong nationalist stance amid challenges, while Sudanese women organized a feminist force during the mid-1950s War of Independence. Similarly, Algerian women navigated their respective struggles for independence, with several emerging as feminists in the aftermath.

The mid-1980s witnessed a resurgence of Pan-Arab feminism with the establishment of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA) under the leadership of Nawal El-Saadawi in Cairo. According to Moghadam (1998), this movement countered reactionary forces seeking to curtail women's rights and roll back progressive family laws. It was often associated with Islamic conservatives symbolized by the veil. Despite challenges, Arab feminists like Fatima Mernissi, Nawal El-Saadawi, and Amina Said advocated for women's rights. They resisted regressive societal norms. Their perseverance highlighted the tradition of Arab women's intellectual engagement and contestation.

### **2.2.2 Contemporary Arab Feminist Discourse**

Contemporary Arab feminist discourse has started since the first struggles and achievements of Arab women. Golley (2004) claims that modern Arab feminists build upon the earlier activists who challenged patriarchal structures and advocated for gender equality and women's rights. From the rise of pan-Arab feminism in the mid-1980s, women confronted the persisting challenges and obstacles in the Arabian Peninsula. These feminists remain at the forefront of driving societal and political transformation.

Moreover, these activists and feminists continue to lead social and political change. They increased awareness across the Arab world. Accordingly, El-Saadawi, Mernissi, and Said

confronted conservative forces and upheld women's rights. Additionally, the proliferation of women's literary works highlighted the perspectives and experiences within the Arab feminist movement. Arab female writers and activists pushed boundaries and redefined gender norms. Thus, Contemporary Arab feminists contribute to reshape cultural narratives and promote inclusive and equitable societies across the region (Al Atiyat, 2020).

### **2.3 The Role of Egyptian Women in Society**

The contribution of Egyptian women has been significant, focusing on advocating for women's rights and fostering awareness of feminist thought and its core themes. However, this contribution has faced several challenges due to contrasting perspectives within society, with some embracing the influence of other civilizations in Egypt. Women's associations have traditionally concentrated on charitable endeavors, often led by women from aristocratic or ruling backgrounds. While charity work is important, it is insufficient for advancing women's rights and status within society as a whole.

Mhajne (2022) says that Egypt stands out among Arab nations for its abundance of women's associations. The establishment of the first women's educational society in 1881 underscored the commitment to promoting awareness of women's rights. These associations addressed various issues such as women's inferior status and campaigned for reforms in personal status laws. By the 1940s, amidst resistance against imperialism, Egyptian women's movements began to mature, focusing on issues like polygamy and women's access to education.

Similar movements emerged across other Arab countries, with Egypt witnessing the founding of the Egyptian Women's Party and the daughters of The Nile, which was associated in 1942 with DuriyaShafiq, a feminist figure. These associations advocated for full political

equality between men and women in an Arab-revivalist context. Despite criticism for elitism, this movement courageously confronted opponents of women's progress, linking women's liberation to the broader struggle against colonialism (Hiam Elgousi, 2016).

In colonized nations, women found themselves entering domains previously monopolized by men, whether through their involvement in independence movements or as wage earners in newly introduced production units under colonial influence. Despite limited opportunities, women's education illuminated the importance of educational attainment for their empowerment and emancipation (Margot Badran, 2001).

In Egypt, the women's movement displayed heightened political consciousness and prioritization of women's issues. However, the participation of women in public life was heavily restricted and overseen by the male-dominated power structure. Women who sought involvement in public affairs were only permitted to do so through official women's organizations sanctioned by the regime, aligning their discourse with that of the ruling men who largely ignored women's issues.

According to Cathlyn Mariscotti (2008), modernization initiatives in reform-oriented Arab nations aimed to shape citizens according to a particular societal concept. While politicizing motherhood within nationalist movements represented progress for women, it came at the cost of recognizing women as individuals. Primary concerns regarding women's issues revolved around prevalent social problems, notably widespread illiteracy, particularly among women, across Arab countries. Various social movements, including political parties, trade unions, and women's associations, have made education a central focus.

The role of Egyptian women has evolved. It was characterized by the establishment of educational societies in 1881 and the formulation of organizations advocating for women's rights. Egyptian women have, thus, demonstrated resilience and political awareness. They prioritized women's issues and demanded equality between men and women. Moving forward, efforts to dismantle patriarchal structures, promote education, and empower women economically and politically are crucial for achieving true gender equality. Egyptian women paved the way for a more equitable society by continuing to challenge societal norms and advocating for women's rights,

## **2.4 The Key Themes of Egyptian Feminist Literature**

Egyptian feminist literature represents the voice of women advocating for liberation, questioning women's rights, and empowering women's status. It serves as a pivotal challenge to entrenched patriarchal structures and advocates for gender equality, reflecting women's struggles and contributions to reshaping societal norms.

### **2.4.1 Women's Liberation and Self-Confidence**

Women's liberation and self-confidence are central themes in Arab feminist narratives, where female writers prioritize the feminine self, placing women at the core of their works. Ahmed (1992) argues that resistance against masculine norms and the portrayal of men as sources of challenges contribute to increased self-confidence for women. Modernist psychologists view literary works as reflections of human experiences, cultural legacies, and mixed sexual tendencies. Authors draw from these influences to shape their literature, influencing readers' perceptions. Emphasizing women's liberation underscores literature's transformative power in challenging norms and empowering women to assert their identities.

#### **2.4.2 Criticism of Social Norms**

Women's literature critiques social norms established by men, advocating for women's freedom and engaging with societal complexities and national concerns. Joseph (2000) claimed that Female writers prioritize exploring the feminine self and resisting masculine norms. According to Schulz (2017), societal norms evolve unconsciously, influenced by authority.

#### **2.4.3 Feminine Self-Exploration**

Modern Arab feminist narratives focus on exploring the feminine self, centering women in texts, and challenging traditional gender roles. They delve into women's identities, emotions, and experiences within social and cultural contexts, addressing societal issues and psychological aspects of literary creation (Khatib, 2019).

#### **2.4.4 Advocacy for Women's Rights**

Egyptian feminist literature advocates women's rights and equal citizenship. Moghadam (2003) says that women writers asserted their rights during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Feminist literature played a dual role, advocating for women's education and rights. Despite significant contributions from feminists like El Saadawi, men have often dominated both historical and contemporary contexts. The term "Literary Writing by Women" aims to provide a more encompassing label for their contributions.

#### **2.4.5 Historical and Political Context**

Influenced by historical and political transformations, Egyptian feminist literature reflects the changing status of Arab women, from the late Umayyad era to the Ottoman era, and the impact of Western feminist movements. It advocates for Arab women's liberation and calls for social change and equality (Khatib, 2019).



In conclusion, the themes of Egyptian feminist literature represent a multifaceted exploration of women's experiences, struggles, and Egypt's political landscape. They underscore the interplay between individual agency, social norms, and historical contingencies, serving as a testament to women's resilience and determination in carving out spaces of agency and belonging in an evolving world.

## **2.5 Nawal El Saadawi: Literary Background**

Nawal El Saadawi (1931 -2021) is an Egyptian writer, activist, and physician who is renowned for her feminist writings and lectures which condemn discrimination against women. She garnered international attention, acclaim, and even death threats. She advocates women's rights as she is affected by her personal experiences and work as a doctor, particularly in rural Egypt, where she served women. El Saadawi emphasized the importance of her medical education, which she applied to her writing and activism.

Her holistic perspective on life, blending creativity with science, defined her approach. Despite facing early pressure for an arranged marriage, she pursued education and earned a medical degree from Cairo University in 1955. El Saadawi shared her own experience of undergoing female genital mutilation (FGM) as a child. She advocated against the practice in her writing and speeches. Following medical school, she balanced her medical career with writing. She published her first collection of short stories in 1957. She even wrote while earning a master's degree in public health from Columbia University in 1966(Nawal El Saadawi, 2012).

However, her views led to professional setbacks. She lost her position at the Ministry of Health after publishing controversial works like *God Dies by the Nile*. She pursued research and advocacy roles, including advising on women's development programs for the UN. Under

President Anwar Sadat's regime in 1981, she was imprisoned and continued to write, *"Memoirs from The Western's Prison"* on toilet paper while incarcerated. Nawal El Saadawi wrote over fifty novels, non-fiction works, and plays. She was a pioneering figure in the realm of transnational feminism. This, in fact, makes her a symbol of courage who inspires others to advocate for women's rights. El Saadawi founded the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA), where she advanced women's involvement across different domains (Saiti, 1994).

Surviving by her daughter, Mona Helmy, and son, Atef Hetata, El Saadawi's legacy continues to inspire generations of activists. One of her most-known novels in English is *Women at Point Zero* which gained recognition as a prominent example of Arab feminist literature both in the Arab world and the West. Among her non-fiction works, *"The Hidden Face of Eve"* stands out as influential and widely read in the Arab world. El Saadawi authored several other books in English, including *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor Searching*, *God Dies by The Nile*, *The Circling Song*, *Death of an Ex-Minister*, *She Has No Place in Paradise*, and *"The Fall of The Imam"*. She also contributed essays and articles to publications such as *"Woman and Islam"* in *Women's Studies International Forum*. El Saadawi's research in Qanatir prison and local medical facilities in 1973 led to the publication of *"Women and Neurosis in Egypt"* in 1976. Many of El Saadawi's associates faced imprisonment for their political beliefs, including her husband, who spent thirteen years in jail, and El Saadawi herself, who served a four-year prison sentence. This personal and professional background influenced her choice of setting themes in her works, highlighting issues of repression, gender exploitation, and societal injustices (Jūrj Tarābīshī, 1988).

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Egyptian feminist literature unveils a rich tapestry of narratives, echoing the diverse present day, women writers have defied societal constraints, challenged oppressive norms, and advocated for gender equality through the power of their words. Through their poignant prose, compelling poetry, and insightful critiques, they have illuminated the path toward social justice, empowerment, and liberation. In embracing the complexities of human experience, confronting entrenched injustices, and envisioning a more equitable world, Egyptian feminist literature transcends its temporal and geographical boundaries, inviting us to join in the ongoing quest for equality, dignity, and freedom.

### **CHAPTER THREE**

**Representation of Women in *God Dies by the Nile*  
and *Women at Point Zero***

## Chapter Three: Representation of Women in *God Dies by the Nile* and *Women at Point Zero*

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## Introduction

Women's experiences in the Arab world vary according to the culture, traditions, and social policies in each country. In some places, women enjoy advanced rights and equal opportunities in education, work and political participation, while in other places they may face challenges such as discrimination and restrictions on their personal and social freedom. Egyptian women, especially rural women, have faced and continue to face harsh social conditions that many activists may consider unjust and against women's rights. Nawal El Saadawi, as an Egyptian writer and activist, presented an image that she considers a reflection of what women experience in patriarchal Egyptian society. Thus, the present chapter will examine the representation of Arab women in two novels namely, *Woman at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile* by El Saadawi and explore female resistance against patriarchal norms and social discrimination.

### 3.1 Themes of Insignificance and Empowerment in *Women at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile*

In *Women at Point Zero* by El Saadawi, the protagonist Firdaus travels a great distance from a meaningless state to one of strong fortitude and empowerment. The experiences of innumerable women who have been silenced and oppressed by patriarchy, are reflected in this novel. The story of Firdaus offers a moving examination of concepts like resilience, female empowerment, and defying social norms. El Saadawi highlights the transformational power while also shedding light on the widespread injustice faced by women in Egyptian society and beyond through her powerful presentation. This Chapter explores Firdaus's development, looking at her rejection of social conventions, her claim to autonomy, and the journey's larger ramifications for women's empowerment and social injustice.

In El Saadawi' *women at Point Zero* (2007), Firdaus's transformation from insignificant state to one of resolute resilience and righteous fury is depicted in great detail. Firdaus, who is initially shown as a marginalized individual in Egyptian culture, represents the experiences of innumerable women who have been silenced and turned invisible by patriarchal oppression. Firdaus mentions that no one asks about her opinion:

Do you prefer oranges or tangerines? I tried to reply but my voice failed me. No one had asked me before whether I preferred oranges or tangerines. My father never brought us fruit. My uncle and my husband used to buy it without asking me what I preferred. (El Saadawi, 2007, p.50).

The quote is about oranges and tangerines but the writer means the women's voices, ideas, thoughts, and opinions. Firdaus wrestles with feelings of helplessness and despair as she faces the brutal reality of her life because of her experiences with abuse, exploitation, and incarceration.

The turning point of Firdaus's life is when she realizes her real worth and starts to face society's boundaries. This idea can be clarified by the representation of "The Big Black eye" as a reflection of Firdaus' imagination whenever she comes to get turning point in her life. The eyes can represent the restrictions of social norms that bound the woman's life. Firdaus states:

and my eyes looked into her eyes: two rings of pure white, surrounding two circles of intense black that looked out at me. As I continued to gaze into them, the white seemed to turn even white, and the black even blacker, as though light flowed through them from some unknown magical source which was neither on the earth nor in the heavens. (p30).

Firdaus was terrified of those big black eyes and she used to hide her face whenever she faces them. She adds: "like the fear of death, or like death itself. I tensed the muscles in my back and face to stay the shiver and overcome this feeling to terror which had swept my whole being. For after all, I was not confronted with a hand holding a knife or razor, but only with two eyes, nothing' but two eyes"(p44). Nevertheless, as the story goes on, Firdaus experiences a significant metamorphosis that is fuelled by her growing defiance and sense of power. Firdaus uses her wrath as a catalyst for change, directing her frustrations into acts of resistance against the forces that want to oppress her. She is no longer willing to be a passive victim of society's standards the quote which represent this idea is found in the page 95" she no longer hopes for anything or desires anything she no longer fears anything for everything which can hurt her she has already undergone". Firdaus shows herself as a powerful force to be reckoned with when she reclaims her voice and asserts her autonomy, upending the basic tenets of the patriarchal system that aims to keep her on the margins." I raised my hand even higher than he had done, and brought it down violently on his face"(p,104). This quote shows how the character of Firdaus is transformed from a weak character to a strong one. There are other examples that highlight the same idea which is "I realized that I had been afraid, and that the fear had been within me all the time until the fleeting moment when. I read fear in his eyes." (p,104).

Firdaus's journey is centered on her bold challenge to societal standards that uphold gender subordination and inequity. Firdaus upsets the established order by rejecting gendered norms and societal expectations, revealing the underlying inequities present in Egyptian society, since women often have been marginalized in Egyptian society such as what is mentioned in the following quote "How can you be one of the masters? A woman on her own cannot be a master"(p,104). Her defiance of patriarchy's rules acts as a catalyst for women throughout the world to recover



their agency and fight for their due place in society. Furthermore, Firdaus's empowerment goes beyond her personal emancipation to include the empowerment of women in general. She becomes a symbol of inspiration and hope for long-marginalized and downtrodden women via her deeds of resistance and rebellion, the same idea can be observed in the following quote which show" I knew why they were so afraid of me. I was the only women who had turn the mask away and exposed the face of their ugly reality" (p,110). Firdaus's tale acts as a spark for change, against those who would silence them and fight for their rights with unshakeable resolve as the coming quote which represent the powerful personality of Firdaus' 'I don't want to be any body's slave"(p,103). In conclusion, *Women at Point Zero* examines the idea of empowerment and incitement via the prism of Firdaus's transformation from insignificance to wrath and resistance. Firdaus upends the existing quo and spurs a movement for greater social justice and gender equality through her disobedience of social standards and support of women. Her experience is a potent example of the transformational potential of resistance and the resilience of the human spirit in the face of injustice.

The economic policies and cultural effects of both the British and American governments in Egypt have worsened gender inequality and the exploitation of women. In *God Dies by the Nile*, rural communities like the one along the Nile are exploited by capitalist interests, who are frequently supported by foreign powers. This results in social unrest and economic suffering. Characters like Zakeya demonstrate how women, who are already oppressed under patriarchal frameworks, suffer the most from this exploitation when their labor is undervalued and taken advantage of by male relatives and landowners. El-Saadawi describes Zakeya:

Her body no longer stood upright. It was bent over the hoe as she dug away in the soil. Her eyes did not look at the ground, were not fixed to her feet. They were the same. They had not

changed. They were raised, fixed to some distant point with the same angry defiance that looked out of them before. And the blows of her hoe seemed to echo with an anger buried deep down as she lifted it high up in the air and swung it down with all her might into the soil(El-Saadawi, 1985, p,2)

In this passage, Zakeya's actions and bodily position are described in a way that sends a strong message about women's exploitation. Zakeya appears to be living a life of forced labor and servitude based on her hunched-over position, her relentless hoe effort, and her intense work ethic. Her body hunched over the earth represents the weight and labor that women like her, who are usually exploited and undervalued, bear while working in menial or agricultural jobs.

Despite the pervasive oppression, *God Dies by the Nile* celebrates moments of resistance and empowerment. Characters like Fatheya embody defiance against the status quo, advocating for justice and equality through her actions and teachings. Her courage and resilience mirror the spirit of resistance that fuels revolutionary movements, where individuals mobilize to challenge oppressive regimes and demand social change. Fatheya says: 'I will not abandon him to the care of anyone else. People have no mercy in their hearts and he's an innocent child who has done no wrong.' (p,105)

Fatheya's dedication to justice and equality is evident in this passage, where she specifically calls for the protection of an innocent child. Fatheya shows her conviction in the intrinsic worth and dignity of every person, regardless of their circumstances, by refusing to give the child up to the care of others. She works to create a more just and equitable world where everyone's rights and dignity are honored by standing out for what is right even in the face of societal opposition or indifference.

The novel emphasizes instances of female resistance and empowerment despite the widespread effects of colonialism and Westernization. Characters who stand up for women's rights and defy patriarchal standards, such as Zakeya, represents the spirit of resistance against both domestic and foreign oppressors. The novel makes the case that women may regain their agency and confront the exploitative institutions that have been sustained by colonial legacies and foreign interventions through their voices and deeds.

‘No, Sheikh Zahran,’ she answered quickly. ‘I know nothing. And myson Galalis certainly not the one who stole these coins (p,130).

Sheikh Zahran is quickly confronted by Zakeya, to which she replies, "I know nothing." Her unwavering support for her son and her determination to back down in the face of unfair accusations are evident in her statement, "And my son Galal is certainly not the one who stole these coins." Zakeya defends her son and affirms her own power and independence as a woman by claiming his innocence. Zakeya's statement is more significant in this context than just refuting the claim of stealing. It represents her defiance of the oppressive powers that want to destroy her and her family. Zakeya confronts the patriarchal systems that uphold injustice and inequality by opposing Sheikh Zahran, an important member of the community.

### **3.2 Reflections on Female Position in the Arab Literature**

#### **3.2.1 Firdus; Characterization of Arab Femininity**

In *Women at Point Zero*, the character of Firdaus, who must negotiate a challenging terrain of cultural norms and societal expectations, comes to life as a potent symbol of struggle against patriarchal oppression. Firdaus encounters and subverts the deeply ingrained oppressive structures that aim to silence and imprison her.

This chapter explores Firdaus's complex personality, focusing on her refusal to conform to social conventions and her disobedience of demands that infringe upon her agency. The chapter aims to highlight Firdaus's transformation from a victim to a resilient woman by analyzing significant events in her life, including her experiences of abuse and enslavement, her defiance of social norms, and her unwavering determination.

Firdaus, is a powerful representation of the fight against patriarchal oppression. Initially portrayed as a victim of societal conventions and structural injustices. She represents the predicament of innumerable women exploited and marginalized in Egyptian culture. Firdaus's father treats her and her mother in a very subjugating way: "I was so hungry that I could not cry. I sat in front of him watching as he ate, my eyes following his hand from the moment his fingers plunged into the bowl until it rose into the air, and carried the food into his mouth" (El-Saadawi, 2007, p,18).

The discrimination between men and women is obvious in the novel. Firdaus states that: "When one of his female children died, my father would eat his supper, my mother would wash his legs, and then he would go to sleep, just as he did every night. When the child that died was a boy, he would beat my mother" (p. 17). These early experiences of mistreatment and enslavement act as wake-up calls, causing her to doubt the validity of the patriarchal systems that aim to limit and dominate her. Firdaus progressively asserts her agency as she confronts the repressive forces that seek to silence her and confine her to the role of a helpless victim.

Mistreatment and enslavement is largely depicted in the novel. Firdaus is sexually abused by her uncle who is supposed to protect her. Firdaus describes her abused childhood:

My gelabeya often slipped up my thighs, but I paid no attention until the moment when I would glimpse my uncle's hand moving slowly from behind the book, he was reading to touch my leg. The next moment I could feel it travelling up my thigh with a caution, stealthy, trembling movement"(p, 13).

Additionally, when she became young girl had nineteen years old, she was forced to marry Sheikh Mahmoud, who also made her experience other kinds of insults. As an example of her bad experience is what she faced in her marriage life. She said:" One day he discovered some leftover scraps of food, and started yelling at me loudly that all the neighbours could hear. After this incident, he got into the habit of beating me whether he had a reason for it or not" (p, 46).

Moving to Bayoumi, a coffee shop possessor, who helped Firdaus flee from her husband's house. At the beginning she thought that Bayoumi was different from all the men that she had faced before. However, he abuses her with his friends and take advantage of her, here are some examples of what Firdaus faces with Bayoumi:

" But he jumped up and slapped me on the face, saying, how dare you raise your voice when you're speaking to me, you street walker, you low woman."(p, 52). [...] " He would come back in the middle of night, pull the cover away from me, slap my face, and then bear down on me with all his weight. I keep my eyes closed and abandoned my body" (p, 53).

Firdaus's rejection of cultural conventions that uphold female inequality and subjection is fundamental to her metamorphosis. Firdaus challenges the dominant narratives that demand silence and subservience from women, claiming her right to self-determination and refusing to take part in her oppression. These ideas can be seen in the novel when Firdaus refuses to stay with her husband whenever he beats her: "On one occasion he hit me all over with his shoe. My

face and body became swollen and bruised. So, I left the house and went to my uncle" (p,46). Her choice to confront her oppressors and declare her independence is a pivotal moment in her empowerment path because it represents her rejection of letting patriarchal forces minimize her.

In fact, the moment of realization that occurs whenever Firdaus grasps the true nature of things and people is a form of challenge and rejection of societal norms. When Firdaus realized the meaning of money, she realized her worth as well as her value, which make her no longer afraid of no one and nothing. She said: "From that day onwards I ceased to bend my head or to look away. I walked through the streets with my head held high, and my eyes looking straight ahead. I looked people in the eyes, and if I saw someone count his money, I fixed it with an unwinking gaze" (p,73). Additionally, the moment when she decides to choose the occupation that she wants, paying no attention to social norms and rules: "Now I was aware of the reality, of the truth. A successful prostitute was better than a misled saint. All women are victims of deception" (p, 94).

Firdaus's unwavering dedication to her agency and self-empowerment highlights her transition from a victim to a symbol of resistance. Firdaus proves to be a formidable example of a woman who can overcome hardship and remain resilient by taking charge of her own story and destiny. She not only questions the established status quo but also encourages other women to claim their agency and rights in a patriarchal culture through her bravery and tenacity.

Throughout the novel, Firdaus tends to answer the question of what makes women valuable in the Arab world. She asks Sharifa, "am I really of any value Sharifa?" (p,58). She is lost and unable to give a meaning to her social reality. This loss in fact reflects El Saadawi's misunderstanding of life as she writes: "I realized that as a prostitute I had been looked upon with more respect, and been valued more highly than all the female employees, myself included"

(p, 81). Unfortunately, El Saadawi's feminist thoughts blinded her from choosing the right way to portray this female journey toward freedom and equality.

### **3.2.2 Symbols of Patriarchy in *Women at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile***

#### **3.2.2.1 The Symbolism of the Prison**

In *Women at Point Zero*, the prison is a potent metaphor for the social limitations that confine the spirit and the body. Firdaus's imprisonment inside its icy, merciless walls makes the jail a symbol of the various ways society tries to repress and control those who dare to question its standards. Fundamentally, the prison represents societal boundaries; it is a physical representation of the gendered, cultural, and social standards that set limits on personal freedom and acceptable behaviours. When Firdaus wants to go with her uncle to his university, he tells her that there is no place for women in El Azhar: "I will go to El Azhar to study like you. Then he would laugh and explain that El Azhar was only for men" (p,14).

The prison is a sobering reminder of what happens when someone challenges the status quo and the pinnacle of the fight against these oppressive forces. This idea is exemplified by the words of the police officer whom Firdaus meets after she leaves Sharifa's house: "You are a prostitute, and it's my duty to arrest you, and others of your kind. To clean up the country, and protect respectable families from the likes of you. But I don't want to use force. Perhaps we can agree quietly without a fuss. I'll give you a pound: a whole pound. What do you say to that?" (p. 67). The quote shows how men are manipulating all the rules of government to what suit their desire.

In addition, the prison reflects the unequal distribution of power in society by acting as a hub of power dynamics. Firdaus is subject to the authority of those who control her destiny

within its walls, whether they be masculine figures in charge of her life or the guards who maintain discipline. She was also forced to get married to Sheikh Mahmoud, then she decided to run away. But she couldn't out of fear: "My feet ran down the stairs, but her voice continued to echo in my ears until I reached the bottom, and walked out into the street. As I advanced over the pavement, I could still hear it coming from somewhere behind me. I turned round, but could see no one" (p. 42). Firdaus at the mercy of those in authority over her, the prison thus turns into a miniature version of the patriarchal system that rules Egyptian society.

The prison's symbolism in Firdaus's battle against social conventions and gender norms is closely linked to her relationship with this oppressive establishment. Firdaus, being a woman who defies social norms, becomes a victim of the very systems she is trying to overcome. However, Firdaus can maintain her feeling of agency and rebellion despite being confined to a cell, standing her ground against the oppressive powers that would silence her. Moreover, Firdaus's imprisonment highlights how gender and power relations interact, with women like her being disproportionately impacted by social restrictions. Firdaus's resolve to resist the patriarchal conventions that aim to stifle her is further strengthened as she faces the limits of her freedom and grows increasingly conscious of how her gender affects her place in the social order. Finally, the prison's symbolism in *Women at Point Zero* provides a deep commentary on the power structures and societal restraints that influence Firdaus's journey. The novel illustrates how society attempts to control and repress anyone who dares to resist its standards, especially those who challenge gender norms and power relations, through Firdaus's struggle against the prison's walls.



### 3.2.2.2 Nile Symbol

Throughout the novel, the Nile is used as a potent symbol to convey both the cyclical nature of Egyptian history and the challenges faced by its people. By emphasizing Egypt's ongoing tradition of revolution and resistance, El Saadawi grounds her critique of the rich fabric of Egyptian identity through the use of the Nile's symbolism. The idea highlights the Nile's significance as a symbol of continuity by emphasizing its everlasting presence. It also invites readers to consider the deeper meanings that are enshrined in its waters. El Saadawi describes:

Zakeya continued to walk with the buffalo behind her, her legs moving at the same unchanging pace, as unchanging as the set looks on her face, as the immobile waters of the river to her left, as everything else in these last moments of the night. But to her right there was a slow shift as the mud huts started to pass behind, and the fields emerged before her eyes like a green ribbon laid out parallel to the Nile (El Saadawi, 1985, p.2).

In *God Dies by the Nile*, The Nile River is also portrayed as a symbol of continuity. The description of Zakeya strolling alongside the buffalo, her legs flowing at a steady pace, is a reflection of the Nile's everlasting flow. Zakeya's gait and attitude do not seem to be impacted by time or outside factors, much as the river is still a constant. This implies that the Nile, which has remained a major aspect of Egyptian society for ages, symbolizes continuity and stability.

The novel makes the argument that patriarchal systems in Egyptian society were strengthened by British colonial control and then American influence. Traditional gender norms and hierarchies were frequently enforced by colonial rulers to keep control over the communities they had colonized. The Sheikh, who uses religious authority to defend his dominance over women, is one example of a character that embodies the attitudes and actions that bear the scars of colonial patriarchy. El Saadawi writes:

‘No, it’s I who decide. But what can I do if she can’t see sense?’

‘What can you do?! Is that a question for a man to ask?’ responded Sheikh Zahran, even more heatedly. ‘Beat her. Don’t you know that girls and women never do what they’re told unless, you beat them?’ (p,21)

In this passage, Sheikh Zahran uses religious authority to establish his superiority over women. He says that even if it means using physical force to exact obedience, it is his right as a man to make that decision. His remarks are indicative of the patriarchal attitude that permeates the culture portrayed in the book, where men use gender norms and religious beliefs to defend their dominance over women.

### **3.2.3 Political Awakening and National Revolution**

In *God Dies by the Nile*, El Saadawi takes readers to a society on the verge of upheaval. A harsh critique of the political and social inequities that have long afflicted Egyptian society, the novel is set against the backdrop of a small rural community tucked along the banks of the Nile. In the face of entrenched power systems, El Saadawi reveals the complexity of political awakening and national revolution through a cast of brilliantly drawn characters and a tale that pulsates with intensity.

ElSaadawi's depiction of the Nile village community functions as a microcosm of Egyptian society, exposing the systemic inequities and entrenched power structures that are present at every level. Through oppressed and exploited people like Hamida and Zakeya, the story challenges the abusive power dynamics that the ruling class upholds. This criticism strikes a deep chord with the complaints that drive revolutionary movements, in which the voices of the underprivileged call for responsibility and structural change.

*God Dies by the Nile* highlights the oppressive and abusive power dynamics of the ruling class as it is mentioned in the novel about the mayor:

He was, above the law, even above the moral rules which governed ordinary people's behavior (p, 98)

If he closed his eyes for a single second they would play a trick on him, or get out of him whatever they could. But he had his eyes wide open, and he knew how to convince them that he could hear them breathe as they slept, and that if any one of them even so much as thought of playing trick, of wagging his tail, he would cut it off for him, and cut his head off with it, too. (p, 98)

The abovementioned quotations imply that people in positions of authority are exempt from accountability and enjoy impunity. This reveals a society in which the governing class is exempt from ethical and legal restraints and can act as they choose, while the general populace is held to rigorous legal and moral obligations. It emphasizes how privilege and power are distributed unequally, with the ruling class maintaining its hegemony by oppressing and abusing the weaker classes.

The novel is not afraid to call out religious and cultural organizations for their continued support of oppression. As it is represented through the character of the Sheikh, El Saadawi reveals the hypocrisy of religious leaders who use their position of power for private benefit. The work is in line with revolutionary movements that support the detachment of religion from the state and the empowerment of oppressed communities by questioning the sacredness of long-standing religious conventions.

Zeinab tied the corner of her shawl around the few coins some of the neighbors had collected for them to pay for the bus and tram fares, as well as the five piastres for the amulet and silver coin of ten piastres which was the price she was supposed to pay in order to know what Allah wanted her to do. Zakeya muttered a few words as though talking to herself: 'Even God wants us to pay Him something. Yet He knows we own nothing, my child.' (p,80)

In the passage, Zeinab is depicted as getting ready to pay for religious services, which include receiving an amulet and guidance from God. The reference to the neighbors' contributions, however, draws attention to the family's financial hardship. Zakeya's whispered comment about paying God even though he had nothing highlights the hypocrisy of religious leaders who take advantage of the poor for their own gain. It highlights the contradiction between religious teachings, which frequently place a strong emphasis on kindness and generosity, and the deeds of individuals who take advantage of other people's faith while ignoring their difficulties.

### **3.2.4 Zar Ritual and Subversion**

El Saadawi deftly incorporates the Zar rite into *God Dies by the Nile*, using it as a potent symbol of rebellion and a springboard for the heroine's political enlightenment. As Zakeya navigates the restrictive patriarchal institutions of her society, the Zar ritual—a traditional healing ceremony performed in regions of the Middle East and North Africa becomes a transforming experience for her.

In the novel, the Zar ritual functions as a kind of rebellion, giving women a platform to express their agency and question patriarchal expectations. Women like Habiba are marginalized and silenced in the male-dominated society in which their voices suppressed by inflexible gender

norms and religious dogma. Nevertheless, Zakeya and other women discovered a way to rebel against society norms and took back their independence by taking part in the Zar ceremony.

Zakeya finds that the Zar ceremony liberates and empowers her, enabling her to rise above the limitations of her harsh surroundings. She gains a sense of empowerment and independence that she cannot get anywhere else from the ritual's euphoric trance-like states and the drum's musical rhythms. Zakeya faces her own internalized oppression in this elevated state of consciousness and starts to imagine an alternative reality for her community and herself as she states: 'Aunt, you are better already,' she said in a low voice, full of reverence. 'Look how you are walking!' And the old woman responded, 'My body no longer feels heavy. O God, verily Thou art generous and bountiful.' (p,90)

Here, in this passage, Zakeya illustrates how the Zar rite changed her. Her observation that her aunt is treated with reverence suggests a significant shift in her outlook and demeanor. Her acknowledgment of her aunt's better health, pointing out in particular how she walks differently, implies that she has been freed both mentally and physically from the things that had been weighing her down. The aforementioned quotation elucidates the transformative impact of the Zar ceremony on Zakeya and her aunt, providing them with the means to transcend the limitations of their repressive surroundings and attain spiritual rejuvenation and liberty.

Zakeya's political awakening is sparked by her involvement in the Zar ritual, which causes her to start questioning the unfair power structures that control her community. She sees the possibility for group action and social change as she observes the women's support and solidarity throughout the ceremony. She has a life-changing experience with the Zar ritual that makes her

realize she can rebel and resist the powers that want to silence her. Zakeya describes: “A group of women were circling around the steaming pot as though dancing. Their breasts and their buttocks shook up and down to the powerful beat of a drum, and the long tresses of their loose hair whirled round and round” (p,72).

The scene shows a group of women taking part in the Zar ritual. The way the women are described as dancing around the sizzling pot conveys a sense of camaraderie and solidarity among them. These ladies manage to establish a place where they can freely express themselves and support one another despite the repressive atmosphere in which they live. Together, these women show collective power and perseverance by carrying out the ritual. Because of their common experience, they become more powerful and resist the powers that would oppress them. This scene emphasizes the value of community and solidarity in opposing repressive structures and discovering epiphanies and moments of empowerment.

In *God Dies by the Nile*, El Saadawi examines how ineffective traditions like the Zar ceremony are at opposing the powers of capitalism, patriarchy, and religious thoughts. The Zar ritual can empower and resist, but in the end, it is unable to overthrow the firmly established power structures that dominate Egyptian culture.

For a moment she thought that her aunt had fallen sick again. She clasped her hand and said, 'Lie down, please lie down, Aunt. You are tired. Since they took Galal away you have not slept.' But the fearsome look in her eyes was still there, almost like a madness, and her voice continued its hoarse whisper. 'I know who it is. I know, Zeinab. I know.' 'Who is it?' asked Zeinab at a loss, and still shivering all over. It's Allah, Zeinab, it's Allah,' she said in a distant tone although her mind had strayed far away (p,135).

Zakeya's aunt still displays indications of pain and worry despite the ritual; her loud whisper and the "fearsome look" in her eyes are testament to this(p,135). The conversation between Zakeya and her aunt indicates that the aunt may be confused or living in delusion. She says that Allah is the reason she is still suffering, implying that the ceremony did not bring her the comfort or closure she was hoping for. This suggests that the Zar ritual may not be able to resolve the characters' problems or treat the fundamental problems in a way that will last. In general, this quotation emphasizes how the Zar ceremony is not able to significantly alter the lives of people like Zakeya's aunt or lessen their suffering. It implies that while customs and rituals could provide momentary solace or relief, they might not always deal with the underlying causes of pain or bring about long-lasting change.

### **3.3 Discussion and Results**

Critical analysis, however, points out possible weaknesses in El Saadawi's representation. Firdaus's story highlights the difficulties Arab women encounter, but it could also come under fire for its exclusive portrayal. El Saadawi's focus on Firdaus's story may have obscured the variety of Arab women's identities and experiences, giving rise to a limited representation of their difficulties and agencies. Furthermore, the portrayal of Firdaus's experiences lacks intersectionality, which raises questions about ignoring the nuanced realities of oppression that Arab women confront, particularly the ways that race, class, and sexuality overlap.

El Saadawi's portrayal of Firdaus has drawn criticism for possibly feeding prejudices and oversimplifying the nuanced lives of Arab women. The way that Firdaus is portrayed—as a victim who defies her circumstances may reinforce deterministic narratives about the agency and empowerment of Arab women while ignoring the complexity of their experiences. Furthermore, El Saadawi may overlook positive portrayals of Arab women's resiliency, strength, and

community support if she concentrates only on Firdaus's hardships, neglecting to recognize the variety of ways that Arab women deal with and oppose patriarchal oppression. The simplifying of societal dynamics, having patriarchy represented as a single, unchanging force, may also make it difficult to appreciate the complexities of gender dynamics inside Arab communities and the difficulties Arab women confront.

In summary, El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero* provides an insightful analysis of gender inequality and resistance, but it is unable to fully convey the richness, diversity, and intersectionality of Arab women's experiences. The one-dimensional portrayal of Firdaus, the absence of intersectionality, the reinforcement of stereotypes, the exclusion of positive representations, and the simplifying of societal dynamics are all legitimate points of contention raised by critics. narrative strategies must become more inclusive and complex to guarantee a thorough comprehension of the challenges and agency faced by Arab women in the face of patriarchal oppression.

El Saadawi's portrayal of Arab women in *God Dies by the Nile* is also inaccurate in representing Arab Women. While she effectively depicts the struggles of women like Zakeya against patriarchal, capitalist, and religious oppression, her focus on the limitations of traditional customs like the Zar ceremony could be seen as overlooking the resilience and agency of Arab women. The emphasis on the temporary relief provided by rituals, like Zar, El Saadawi might unintentionally perpetuate the stereotype of Arab women as passive victims without agency to challenge oppressive systems effectively. Additionally, the portrayal of the religious figures using Islam to justify patriarchal practices could be viewed as negative stereotypes about the role of religion in Arab women's lives, without adequately acknowledging the diversity of religious interpretations and practices among Arab women. Overall, while El Saadawi's works



shed light on important issues facing Arab women, it may also fall short in providing a nuanced and comprehensive portrayal of their experiences and agency.

## **Conclusion**

Through an analysis Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* and *God Dies by the Nile*, provide nuanced narratives about the erroneous portrayal and cultural prejudices around women. Female social reality is unveiled in the examination of how women are represented in the Arab world. A complex picture of women's roles, difficulties, and agency is revealed through the portrayal of Firdaus and the prison's symbolism in *Woman at Point Zero*, as well as the political awakening and rebellious rituals shown in *God Dies by the Nile*. The importance of El Saadawi as an author and activist highlights the theme of empowerment and insignificance, illuminating the intricacies and paradoxes inherent in Arab society's attitude toward women.

It becomes clear that these literary works act as a mirror, challenging prevalent narratives and pushing for a more equal and genuine depiction. They reflect the harsh realities and systematic injustices faced by Arab women. To sum up, these works are regarded as a call to confront and destroy the patriarchal structures that continue to oppress and marginalize women in the Arab world and beyond, resolutely expose the false representations supported by societal norms and emphasizes the urgent need for change.

## General Conclusion

A critical analysis of women's representations in literature has long been conducted, particularly in regions where women's lives were greatly impacted by social and cultural norms. In the Arab world, Nawal El Saadawi was recognized as a trailblazing feminist writer who used her writing to analyze and evaluate the difficulties faced by women. Her works *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* presented vivid pictures of women's resistance to patriarchal oppression and societal conventions.

Examining how Arab women are portrayed in *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi was the main goal of this study. The study aimed to determine the extent to which El Saadawi's depictions of Arab women's lives accurately reflected the complexity of those lives through an analysis of these novels. The goal of this analysis was to provide readers with a thorough grasp of how these literary works affected feminist discourse and whether or not they were able to accurately portray the variety of realities that Arab women had to deal with.

Accordingly, chapter one provided a comprehensive overview of feminist literary theory, examining its evolution and significance. It explored three waves of feminism: historical, gender equality, and intersectionality. The chapter also explored postcolonial feminism and its interaction with colonial legacies, offering valuable lessons for future research. Additionally, chapter two explored Egyptian feminist writing, focusing on themes, development, and well-

known writers. It explored the historical background, women's roles, gender inequality, and women's empowerment. Nawal El Saadawi's contributions were highlighted.

Nawal El Saadawi examines issues of social constraints, gender inequality, and empowerment as they apply to the lives of Arab women via the prism of feminist literary theory. Her writings contextualize the experiences of Arab women within historical and societal frameworks while addressing issues such as patriarchal oppression and resistance. A detailed analysis conducted within the study's setting determines the extent to which Saadawi's depiction of Arab women accurately reflects the real circumstances facing Egyptian women. Using historical background, feminist literary theory, and an analysis of Egyptian feminist literature, the study seeks to assess the veracity and accuracy of Saadawi's portrayal. This method will help in comprehending the intricacies of Egyptian women's lives as well as the connections between feminism, literature, and sociocultural dynamics.

When one examines the way El Saadawi portrayed Arab women, one finds that while she incorporated a feminist perspective into her works, there are subjective components related to the role and place of Arab women in Egyptian society that may have influenced how she portrayed these women. Even though El Saadawi regularly promotes themes of empowerment and the struggle against patriarchal oppression in her narratives, there are instances in which she may have given an erroneous or incomplete image of Arab women's lives by oversimplifying or stereotyping them. Because of this, even if El Saadawi's feminist viewpoint offers a perceptive examination of the challenges faced by Arab women, her portrayal of these problems could not always accurately reflect the variety of their experiences.

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## الملخص

تبحث هذه الدراسة في كيفية تمثيل المرأة العربية في روايات السعداوي وتقيم ما إذا كانت هذه التمثيلات تتناقض إلى حد ما مع واقع هؤلاء النساء. تهدف هذه الدراسة التي يجري التحقيق فيها إلى تحليل كيفية تمثيل المرأة العربية في العملين الأدبيين لنوال السعداوي موت الرجل الوحيد على الأرض وامرأة عند نقطة صفر. والهدف من الدراسة هو تحديد كيف تعكس صور السعداوي الزائفة لحياة المرأة العربية والتعقيد الفعلي لهذه الحياة من خلال تحليل هذه الروايات. ويستكشف أيضاً صحة تصوير السعداوي، مع التأكيد على العلاقة بين الأدب، والأنوثة، والسياق الاجتماعي والثقافي لمصر. الدراسة تستخدم النهج النوعي الوصفي التحليلي بالنظرية النسوية لتحليل روايات السعداوي، مركزة على تمثيل المرأة في كلتا الروايتين. هذه الدراسة قد استخدمت نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار ووجهة نظر نسوية. وهكذا، فإن الروايتين تقدمان تحليلات ثاقبة للصعوبات التي تواجهها المرأة العربية وتقدم الخطاب النسوي، ولكنهما تعطيان أيضاً صورة مقيدة وربما مشوهة لحياة المرأة العربية. وقد يؤدي ميل السعداوي إلى المبالغة أو الإفراط في تبسيط هذه الأحداث إلى



تجاهل رواياتها لتنوع الحقائق والتعقيدات التي تعاني منها المرأة العربية، وعدم إعطاء صورة كاملة عن هوياتها ومشاكلها المعقدة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** المرأة العربية، والآداب المصرية، والتمثيل، ونوال السعداوي، والأنوثة.