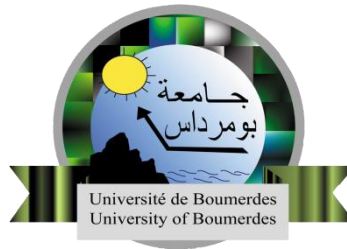


**People's Democratic Republic of Algeria**  
**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**  
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**Deconstructing the Institution of Marriage in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*  
(1967) and Lynda Chouiten' *Une valse* (2019)**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's  
Degree in Anglophone Literatures and Civilisations**

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## **Declaration**

We hereby declare that this thesis is entirely the result of our investigation and that due reference or acknowledgement is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

July, 2023

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Signature

**Naziha FRIHI**

Signature

## Dedication

### **Naziha FRIHI**

This thesis is dedicated to Me who never lived as a ghost and held on to achieve all this, and get to this level and never quit besides to all struggles, if there is anything that i've written, it was only possible that i had myself by my side, and because of the love and support that my family and friends made for me. And maybe I made a mistake but yesterday me is still me.

*My mother* who gave me this life and said never give up on your dreams thank you mom your daughter is strong because of your words.

My friends, who never fail to make me laugh and happy. *SOUNDOUS, FATI, ZINA, SAMAR, MARIA, AMIRA, KHADIJAH, SARRA, REKAYA, ROUFAIDA*, I really appreciate it and I love you all.

---

### *MISSIOURI Lydia*

I honestly and with honor dedicate this work to myself and to the little me within.

*My beloved Mother* who has been my unwavering support since my earliest days, my lovely best friend. I am forever grateful for everything you have done for me, for us. I will always cherish the memories we made together, thank you.

*To my father and my five brothers, Nassim, Anis, Sami, Karim and Ilyes*, thank you.

*To my sweet adorable sister-in-law Lina and her kind mother*, thank you for letting me be filled with luck and pleasure to have a unique sister.

*To my sister-in-law Amira* thanks for being a good trust worthy friend.

Lastly, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the person who brought so much joy and happiness into my life, Kitchenwoman.

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## Abstract

Due to the dominance of men in their societies, Western and Arab women are often depicted as objects and symbols that have lost their right to voice their opinions. To bring their voices to the forefront, a number of female writers in both regions resort to sexual liberation and rebellion against society. Margaret Atwood and Algerian author Lynda Chouiten deconstruct the traditional idea of marriage in their respective works, *The Edible Woman* (1967) and *Une Valse* (2019). Accordingly, this thesis deals with how the two novels undermine the consecrated institution of marriage and patriarchal power. Drawing on the theories presented by Arab feminist Nawal El Saadawi's *The Hidden Face of Eve* theory and the Western theories of Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, and Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Both authors depict the rebellion and resistance of their female characters. Through their fictional personas' education, body image, sexual desires, and desire to divorce, they show how women can be affected by various issues.

**Key terms:** Feminism, Deconstructed Marriage, Patriarchy, Feminine Revolutions, Supervision.

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## **General Introduction**

Patriarchy, a term frequently used to describe the historical dominance of men in both public and private spheres, carries with it the weight of centuries of gender-based oppression. It is a social construct that has resulted in women being viewed primarily as objects of male desire, their sole purpose often reduced to physical appearance, sexual availability, and domestic servitude. This framework has created a gender hierarchy that is deeply inequitable, with women often relegated to a secondary status, viewed as "other" in relation to men. As a result, women's lives are often confined to the household, subject to male domination, while men enjoy greater freedom and control in the outside world. It is essential to recognize that violence against women is not an individual problem but a societal one, rooted in this system of male dominance. By acknowledging the ways in which patriarchy has been institutionalized, we can begin to work towards a more just and equitable society for all.

In an effort to dismantle patriarchy, women have taken action to assert their worth and intellect. This has led to the rise of a social and political movement known as feminism, which advocates for gender equality and women's rights. Over time, feminism has evolved beyond its original focus on women's suffrage and property ownership, and now encompasses a wide range of issues that affect all humans. According to feminist writer Bell Hooks, feminism is “ a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression.” Its primary goal is to challenge and break down gender stereotypes, eradicate patriarchal attitudes, and put an end to physical and emotional violence against women.

Women writers have played a crucial role in the development of feminist thought throughout history. Across cultures and nations, female authors have often portrayed their female protagonists in a way that challenges masculine traditions and challenges the notion of women as mere sexual objects. By giving voice to their own experiences and struggles, these writers have developed a level of awareness that allows them to deconstruct the historical



submissive image of women. In rejecting the idea of patriarchy and the passive image of women, a number of Arab female writers, including Asia Djebar, Nawal El Saadawi, and Ahlam Mosteghanemi, have employed feminist approaches in their narratives to advocate for equal gender relations. Through their work, these writers have contributed to the broader feminist movement, inspiring women around the world to fight for their own rights and agency.

Margaret Atwood and Lynda Chouiten, two renowned writers from vastly different corners of the world, share a remarkable trait their literary works are imbued with a profound sense of feminine empowerment. Despite their divergent socio-cultural backgrounds and linguistic differences, both authors espouse a staunch feminist stance against patriarchal norms. Their female protagonists embody a fierce determination, strength, and revolutionary spirit, serving as a powerful means to voice their feminist concerns and challenge societal norms. Through their works, they dismantle the traditional notions of marriage and maternity, paving the way for a more equitable and just society for women.

This study seeks to explore the unorthodox representation of the highly esteemed institution of marriage by feminist writers Margaret Atwood and Lynda Chouiten. These two authors challenge the traditional image of marriage as enforced by male hegemony and deconstruct the accepted canon where men maintain the powerful leading role in society, while women are relegated to marginalized bystanders. Through their characters, they accentuate and magnify the voice of freedom, rebellion, and the breaking of social norms within every female. Additionally, they strive to eliminate the generalized and stereotypical image of women as only fit for the domestic space. The research will delve into the literary techniques used by the authors to subvert the traditional role of marriage and gender relations, highlighting the importance of feminist literature in promoting gender equality and challenging societal norms.

Margaret Atwood is a distinguished Canadian poet, esteemed lecturer, and celebrated novelist, who has made an indelible mark in the literary world through her insightful feminist perspective. Atwood's literary works delve into a wide range of topics including gender and identity, myth and religion, the power of language, climate change, and "power politics." Her impressive repertoire includes several noteworthy publications, including her debut poetry collection "Double Persephone" in 1961, followed by "The Circle Game" in 1964 and "The Animals in That Country" in 1968. Atwood's remarkable novels include *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), *Lady Oracle* (1976), *Life Before Man* (1979), *The Edible Woman* (1967), and *Surfacing* (1972), amongst others. Her notable works have been adapted into films and television series, including the critically acclaimed adaptation of *The Handmaid's Tale*. Atwood's exceptional contributions to literature have garnered numerous accolades, including the prestigious Governor General's Award, a testament to her unparalleled talent and unwavering dedication to her craft.

Margaret Atwood's debut novel, *The Edible Woman* (1967), explores the societal expectations and gender roles imposed upon women in patriarchal societies. The novel centers around Marian, a young woman working in consumer marketing, who questions her identity and relationships with others, including her fiancé, friends, and a man she meets through work. Atwood vividly depicts Marian's internal struggles and her attempts to break free from the expectations imposed upon her by both Peter and society at large. The novel is a powerful commentary on the ways in which patriarchal structures can limit women's agency and self-expression, and how women can resist and push back against these structures in order to live on their own terms.

Lynda Chouiten is an Algerian author who writes in French and has become a prominent voice in Algerian literature. In 2013, she earned her PhD in specialized literature from the National University of Ireland in Galway. Her work is characterized by a strong

perspective and a commitment to challenging violence against women. Chouiten's first novel, *Le Roman des Pôv'Cheveux*, was published in 2017 by El Kalima editions and was a finalist for the Mohammed Dib and L'Escale d'Alger Prizes. Her second novel, *Une Valse*, was published by Casbah Editions in 2019 and won the prestigious Grand Prix Assia DJEBAR. She recently published her third novel, *Des rêves à leur portée*, in 2022. Her contributions to the ongoing search for Algerian identity have been impressive, and her writing serves as a powerful vehicle for feminist activism. Through her work, she urges readers to question the prevailing cultural attitudes that perpetuate gender-based violence and inequality. Her unique perspective and bold voice have made her one of the most exciting writers working in the French language today.

Lynda Chouiten's *Une Valse* (2019) is a thought-provoking novel that delves into the complex experiences of women in patriarchal Algerian society. The story revolves around the character of Chahira Lahab, a talented yet troubled stylist who struggles to reconcile her own aspirations with the societal pressures placed upon her. Through Chahira's character, Chouiten provides a powerful critique of the traditional gender roles and expectations that are imposed on women in Algerian society. Her story is one of silent determination against her mental illness, oppressive family, and the male-dominated society she lives in. Despite her struggles, Chahira's talent as a tailor shines through, and she surprisingly finds success in the finals of a prestigious fashion design competition in Vienna, Austria. Through Chahira's journey, Chouiten highlights the strength and resilience of women who are able to overcome societal barriers and follow their dreams. Accordingly, *Une Valse* is a poignant and inspiring work that sheds light on the struggles and triumphs of women in Algerian society. Chouiten's writing is both powerful and evocative, and her ability to capture the complexities of human emotions and experiences is truly remarkable.

The topic of the study is highly significant and holds great relevance in the contemporary era. Both Margaret Atwood and Lynda Chouiten's works are significant in terms of addressing the issues of abuse and unfavorable stereotypes against women that continue to prevail in patriarchal societies. By focusing on these themes, the study aims to highlight the writers' feminist views, which are characterized by their rejection of traditional gender roles and expectations.

Furthermore, it is important to note that Atwood and Chouiten come from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds and speak different languages, yet they share a common feminist attitude that transcends these differences. Their works illustrate a shared struggle against patriarchy, which is a pervasive social system that perpetuates inequality and discrimination against women. Both authors use their literature as a form of protest to voice their feminist concerns and advocate for gender equality.

In particular, the study analyzes the ways in which Atwood and Chouiten's literature subverts the conventional ideals of marriage, which have historically been utilized to control and oppress women. Through deconstructing these notions, the authors challenge patriarchal norms, empowering women to break free from traditional gender roles and expectations. This study is significant in that it sheds light on the feminist perspectives of two contemporary writers and encourages critical thinking and discussion on issues of gender, power, and inequality, thus offering valuable insight into the current discourse on these important topics.

The literary works of *The Edible Woman* and *Une valse* hold great significance as Atwood and Chouiten skillfully weave a tapestry of thought-provoking themes related to women living within patriarchal systems. These novels have been subjected to extensive critical scrutiny since their initial publication, with reviewers from diverse backgrounds and schools of thought offering multifaceted analyses of the selected works.

In her analysis of Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*, Lucia Alexandra Tudor focuses on the metaphor of consumption and its implications in a modern consumer society. On the other hand, Sofia Sanchez-Grant examines Atwood's treatment of female space and the cultural significance of eating disorders. However, this study aims to demonstrate how Atwood deconstructed the patriarchal conventions of marriage and motherhood in the novel.

While no critics have specifically studied the novel *Une Valse*, some French thesis have explored its themes. LAMANI Hayat's thesis on violence in the novel argues that domination is expressed through physical and symbolic violence, while also highlighting the protagonist's experience of violence and abuse in her childhood and youth. In contrast, this study focuses on the protagonist's evolution in the face of violence and her struggle for independence in a patriarchal environment.

Another thesis by Latachi Imene examines madness as a theme in *Une Valse*, arguing that the protagonist's mental illness is a result of living in an absurd and patriarchal society. "[. . .] son enfance et sa jeunesse sont marquées par une rude violence infligée et par ses parents et par une société conservatrice" (9). In accordance with the heroine's life, it is to be concluded that her childhood and youth were merely drained with physical violence by her parents, and mental abuse and judgment by society. However, this study emphasizes how the protagonist's struggle with mental illness is a reflection of the challenges faced by women in society, and how they can still maintain their freedom and agency.

This thesis will be structured into three main chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter, entitled "The Historical Background," will explore the origins and evolution of feminist thought and literature, with a particular focus on the portrayal of Maghrebian and Western women in patriarchal societies and male-authored works of fiction. Through this analysis, the aim is to shed light on the ways in which literature has both reflected and shaped

our understanding of gender and power dynamics, and to identify the key influences that have informed the work of the novelists under examination.

The second chapter, titled "Deconstructing Marriage in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*," will examine the ways in which Atwood's novel challenges traditional notions of marriage and female identity. Drawing on the theories of both Western and Arab feminists such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949), Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), will analyze the strategies employed by the protagonist Marian to subvert patriarchal norms and reclaim her agency.

The third chapter, "Deconstructing the Conventional Image of Marriage in Lynda Chouiten's *Une Valse*," will focus on the representation of marriage in Arab literature, specifically in Chouiten's novel. In this chapter, we will explore the ways in which Chouiten's female protagonist, Chahira, challenges traditional gender roles and the ideal of marriage as a patriarchal institution. Through this analysis, we will draw on the work of Western feminist scholars such as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) and the essay *A Room for One's Own* by Virginia Woolf to contextualize Chouiten's subversive strategies within the broader feminist movement.

Finally, a conclusion to summarize the key findings of the investigation and the highlighted ways in which the works of Atwood and Chouiten offer powerful critiques of patriarchal authority and the conventional institution of marriage. By examining the themes of gender, power, and identity in these two novels, in hope to contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which literature can challenge and transform social and cultural norms.

## Chapter One

### Socio-cultural and Biographical Contexts

In the initial chapter of this thesis, an in-depth analysis is conducted on the representation of Magherbian and Western women in both patriarchal societies and masculine literary narratives. Additionally, the chapter explores concepts such as marriage and feminism, while also critically evaluating Lynda's *Une Valse* Chouiten and Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman* with respect to their biographical backgrounds. Finally, a brief yet comprehensive conclusion summarizes the crucial points and ideas presented in this chapter.

#### 1. Depiction of Women in Patriarchal Societies of the Maghreb and Western Worlds

The representation of women in Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies is a significant and complex issue that has been explored by numerous scholars and writers. According to feminist scholar Dr. Nawal El Saadawi, "The oppression of women knows no ethnic or national boundaries, true, but that does not mean it takes identical forms in different parts of the world" (37). This statement highlights the fact that while the oppression of women is a global phenomenon, the ways in which it manifests in Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies may differ in how Women are sidelined and socially excluded, they have their names and identities removed and are expected to be submissive housewives.

In Western patriarchal societies, women have been subjected to gender-based discrimination and oppression for centuries. The feminist writer Simone de Beauvoir famously stated that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (295). This quote emphasizes the idea that femininity is a social construct rather than a natural state, and that women are socialized to conform to societal expectations of how they should behave and present themselves. These expectations often include men are in charge of running their

society and holding positions of authority, while women are constrained to subservience to men, where they dominated women and children to the home due to the "mothering" claims and biological "child bearing" (Hatmann 138).

In Maghrebian patriarchal societies, women face similar challenges to those in Western societies, but with the added layers of cultural and religious expectations. According to scholar Lila Abu-Lughod, "The veil functions as a kind of badge of identity, marking out a distinct community whose values and behaviors are different from those of others" (15). This quote highlights the importance of the hijab as a symbol of cultural and religious identity for Muslim women, but also the ways in which it is often viewed by Western societies as a sign of oppression and backwardness. This system, in which men control and subjugate women, is predicated on the idea that men are superior and women are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy (Suliman 5).

Despite these differences, both Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies are characterized by gender inequality, with women facing systemic discrimination and oppression. In both contexts, feminist writers and scholars have played a crucial role in shedding light on these issues and advocating for women's rights. As feminist author Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie states, "Gender as it functions today is a grave injustice. I am angry. We should all be angry. Anger has a long history of bringing about positive change" (12). Similarly, Badran argues, "Islam is not inherently oppressive towards women" (11), highlighting that women's lives as Muslims have actually enhanced their feminism.

In conclusion, the representation of women in Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires continued attention and analysis. Through the work of feminist writers and scholars, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which gender-based discrimination and oppression operate in these societies, and work towards creating a more equitable and just world for women.



## **2. The Portrayal of Female Characters in Literary Narratives Dominated by Masculine Perspectives**

The representation of female characters in masculine literary narratives has been a subject of critical analysis for decades. Many scholars have examined the ways in which female characters are often constructed as objects of male desire, and how they serve to reinforce patriarchal power structures. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui Montent*, Sadegh Hedayat's *The Blind Owl*, and Rachid Mimouni's *Le Printemps n'en Sera que plus Beau* are viewed as ultimate illustrations for Western and Maghrebian societal sphere for objectifying women in literary works.

In F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, the character of Daisy Buchanan is constructed as a symbol of the American Dream, and as an object of desire for the male protagonist, Jay Gatsby. As the literary critic Linda Wagner-Martin notes, "Daisy is not only an object of male desire; she is an object of a particularly corrupt form of male desire" (60). This quote emphasizes the ways in which Daisy's character is used to reinforce traditional gender roles and power dynamics. In fact, "I hope she'll be a fool — that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." (GG 24), in this quote, Daisy's friend Jordan Baker remarks about Daisy's hopes for her daughter. The statement implies that women are better off being ignorant or naive, emphasizing the limited roles and expectations society places on them. It highlights the patriarchal belief that women should prioritize their appearance and conform to societal expectations rather than pursue knowledge or assert their independence. This quote demonstrates the constraints of patriarchy on Daisy's autonomy and reinforces the prevailing gender dynamics in the novel.

Similarly, In Mouloud Feraoun's *Les Chemins qui Montent*, Dahbia is subjugated to the objectifying gaze of the men around her, as indicated by her disclosure that those who desire her only wish to contaminate her purity: "Les jeunes qui me désirent ne cherchent qu'a

me salir"(69). This statement emphasizes how Dahbia is dehumanized by being reduced to nothing more than a simple sexual object. Similarly, her mother confesses that, while everyone desires her, no single young man is ready to marry her, underlining the mismatch between her appeal and her perceived appropriateness for a committed partnership: "tout le monde la désirerait, mais aucun jeune homme n'en voudrait faire sa femme"(23). Zahia Smail's critique emphasizes Feraoun's portrayal of Dahbia's objectification and the cultural restraints put on her, which feed a cycle of dehumanization and constrained agency (187). By highlighting the negative effects objectifying women has on their identities and interpersonal connections, Feraoun's portrayal sheds important light on the negative effects of this practice.

In addition, through his 1937 novel *The Blind Owl*, Sadegh Hedayat employs symbolic scales to portray female characters in a stereotypical manner, depicting them either as ethereal angelic beings or harlots. He seems to rely on physical attractiveness and attributes, such as the wearing of a "black dress," to create his female personas. Despite the novel's strong female protagonists, Hedayat displays an obsession with femininity and exhibits "reactive misogyny." He does not depict his female characters in active communication situations, resulting in confusion between the wife, cousin, and ethereal girl. The protagonist/narrator views the nanny character with contempt, degradation, and humiliation, and describes her as the least educated, intelligent, and shallow (Najafibabanazar 193) she is described as the least educated, intelligent and shallow person. Nonetheless, she does have some room and voice in the narration to fuel the narrator's contemplative emotions "If the bitch my wife had shown any interest in me I should never have let Nanny come near me in her presence" (BO 69). In contrast, his wife (the protagonist) is marginalized despite her presence; she is absent from the narration and speaking zone. Moreover, the protagonist suspects his wife has affairs with all men in his neighborhood and hating her for that without any clear evidence for this unfaithfulness, " I looked around to make sure that none of her

lovers was there... I was ashamed of all my unfair suspicious" (ibid 118). In *The Blind Owl*, Sadegh limits women's access to any actual physical appearance or any public communication.

Alternatively, *Le Printemps n'en Sera que plus Beau* by Rachid Mimouni, shows a social imbalance in terms of social standing and agency through the portrayal of female characters. Some women hold privileged positions in society, but others are limited to domestic responsibilities like mothers and spouses. The work, which has fifteen female characters and eleven male characters, is notable for having a higher proportion of female characters. Although there are more female characters than male, only three of them have names, while the others are simply identifiable by their occupations or family ties. This numerical advantage is therefore countered. This name difference emphasizes how clearly male and female characters differ in terms of social position and level of agency.

According to Hamid Kouadria Despite the fact that there are fewer male characters in the book, they are given undeniable social standing, important positions, and even without names, two of them take on the role of narrator figures, which gives males the monopoly on speech (32). Notably, Djamila, who is presented as a stunning lady who draws a lot of male attention, has a passive role in the story, with the male characters deciding what she does and how important she is. In contrast to their male counterparts, women are portrayed in *Le Printemps n'en Sera que plus Beau* as subordinate figures with lesser social position and less agency. According to Khouadria, the story shows Hamid as the main character who enjoys multiple relationships, while Djamila, a beautiful female character, has a lonely childhood and has no control over the plot and must rely on the deeds of male characters to determine her status as a heroine(40). Mimouni's portrayal emphasizes the domination and control that males have over women and reflects the patriarchal traditions and socioeconomic injustices that are present in the environment he portrays.

In conclusion, the portrayal of female characters in works of literature written by men, such as Rachid Mimouni's *Le Printemps n'en Sera que plus Beau*, *Les Chemins qui Montent* by Mouloud Feraoun, *The Blind Owl* by Sadegh Hedayat, and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, is a complicated and nuanced problem that need critical analysis. These works provide insight into the development of female characters as objects of male desire, while also maintaining patriarchal power systems, propagating stereotypes, exposing women to the male gaze, and displaying varied degrees of sexism. However, it is crucial to note that not all masculine literary narratives follow these patterns, since male authors have created diverse and nuanced female characters. By acknowledging the shortcomings and negative repercussions of these depictions, we may work to create a more inclusive and broad spectrum of representations of women in literature, challenging stereotypes and developing good attitudes towards women in both the arts and general society.

### **3. An Examination of the Institution of Marriage in Patriarchal Maghrebain and Western Societies**

“Marriage, like death, is a debt we owe to nature,” wrote the French writer François de la Rochefoucauld. This quote emphasizes the idea that marriage is a natural and inevitable part of human existence, and that it carries with it certain obligations and responsibilities. The concept of marriage as a duty to nature is present in many cultures and societies, and can be seen as a way of justifying the institution of marriage as a fundamental aspect of human life.

Indeed, it is a significant aspect of both Western and Maghribain patriarchal societies, but there are varying expectations and traditions surrounding it. In Western societies, the concept of romantic love and individual choice plays a significant role in the formation of marriages. However, as feminist writer Kate Millett states, “Marriage is a social relation. It is not a private matter. It is a social contract which has public and political significance” (Millett, 37). This quote emphasizes the idea that marriage is not simply a personal decision

but has broader societal implications, particularly for women who have historically been subjected to gender-based discrimination and oppression within the institution.

In Maghrebian patriarchal societies, marriage is often viewed as a means of upholding cultural and religious traditions, and as a way of securing social and economic status. According to scholar Lila Abu-Lughod, “Marriage remains one of the most important institutions in [Maghrebian] societies, where it is closely tied to the idea of the family and the clan as the basic unit of social organization” (783–790). This quote highlights the importance of marriage in Maghrebian societies as a means of maintaining social cohesion and stability.

However, despite these differences in the cultural and societal expectations surrounding marriage in Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies, both contexts are characterized by gender inequality within the institution. As the feminist writer Bell Hooks states, “ In patriarchal culture, men are especially inclined to see marriage as a license to own and control women ” (85-94). This quote highlights the ways in which marriage can be used as a tool of oppression for women within patriarchal societies, where they may be expected to conform to traditional gender roles and be submissive to their husbands.

The patriarchal nature of marriage is further reinforced by societal and legal norms that reinforce gender roles and expectations. According to scholar Susan B. Boyd, “Marriage in Canada reinforces gender stereotypes, solidifying women's economic dependency and subordination to men” (73-92). This quote highlights the ways in which marriage is often presented to women as a means of achieving societal validation and security, rather than as a choice based on individual desires and needs.

Furthermore, the institution of marriage can perpetuate harmful stereotypes and expectations about gender and sexuality. As scholar Fatima Mernissi notes, “The ideology of virginity and sexual purity is central to the Muslim patriarchal system” (125-133). This quote

highlights the ways in which traditional cultural and religious beliefs surrounding marriage can lead to harmful attitudes towards women's sexuality and autonomy.

In brief, the institution of marriage in both Western and Maghrebian patriarchal societies is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires critical examination and analysis. Through the work of feminist writers and scholars, we can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which gender-based discrimination and oppression operate within the institution and work towards creating a more equitable and just world for all individuals, regardless of their gender, sexuality, race, or religion. As scholar Lila Abu-Lughod states, “Feminism is about challenging power, not empowering individuals” (Abu-Lughod). By challenging the patriarchal structures and attitudes that perpetuate inequality within the institution of marriage, we can work towards creating a more just and equitable society for all.

#### **4. Exploration of the Motivations for Authoring *Une Valse* and *The Edible Woman***

The emergence of feminine writing in Algeria can be traced back to a society where women's voices were silenced. It emerged as a remedy to heal the wounds caused by patriarchal authority, social injustice, and violence in all its forms. Indeed, Lynda Chouiten is an Algerian author and literature professor originally from Tizi-Ouzou. She was awarded a scholarship by the Irish government and went to Galway, Ireland, in September 2009 to prepare for a Ph.D. in literature. After a three-year stay, she returned with her degree and resumed her teaching position at the University of Boumerdes. Chouiten has also written several articles and two academic books: a study of Isabelle Eberhardt's work and a collective work on the concept of authority. Indeed, the author resides within a patriarchal society and directly witnesses the discrimination that women face in their daily lives. Consequently, she herself becomes closely associated with the victims of this issue. In response, Lynda

Chouiten writes *Une valse* as a means to illuminate the challenges confronted by Algerian women, providing a voice for the voiceless and shedding light on an issue that often remains neglected within the Algerian milieu.

Margaret Atwood was born in Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. Since her family did not possess a permanent residence, she experienced her youth traveling around. During World War II, they relocated to Toronto, where Atwood earned honors degrees from Harvard and Radcliffe College before leaving without completing her dissertation. When she saw that Americans had a negative perception of Canada and even thought it was invisible and didn't exist, she went through a culture shock (Howells 03). Men exerted strong influence over society in her village. Postwar feminist groups were attempting to deconstruct the patriarchal concept of family and femininity at the time; they did not want to be merely a mother, wife, or housewife, and the only option was to be employed in a job that had no prospects for advancement. They did, though, believe that they should have been given more opportunities. "No woman is permitted to read. They are prohibited from working, spending money, or driving. This is the purest form of patriarchal authority " (Atwood). In the case of Atwood Feminism is unquestionably about recognizing women as whole, equal persons and emphasizing the losses they have suffered as a result of living suburban lifestyles. Although in her book *The Edible Women*, one fictional female character's subliminal resistance to her social destiny manifests as a hysterical eating disorder, the sociology is highlighted through the private language of this character.

At the conclusion of this chapter, comprehensive concepts regarding the position of women who are subject to patriarchal rule and how they are portrayed in male literary traditions are offered. This chapter also provides a thorough explanation of how marriage is defined in the Maghrebian and Western cultures, as well as information regarding Chouiten and Atwood's histories and the inspirations for their respective works.

## Chapter Two

### Deconstructing Marriage in Margaret Atwood's *The Edible Woman*

This chapter analyzes Margaret Atwood's novel, *The Edible Woman*, through the lens of Western feminist theories, such as Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. The study's objective is to examine how the novel's female characters are depicted in the context of Western patriarchal culture. Marian, the main character in Atwood's novel, questions social conventions and overturns the ideas of marriage as an institution and motherhood as a legal obligation. The study looks into how Atwood challenges and destroys conventional gender standards and traditions in her novel.

This chapter has been bifurcated into two parts. The initial segment of this chapter focuses on the theme of "Depiction of Western Women in a Patriarchal Society," which explores the impact of male domination and Western patriarchy on female characters in Margaret Atwood's novel. In this part, Betty Friedan's investigation of the problems married women confront and Simone de Beauvoir's thesis that women are viewed as "the other" are both referenced. The exploitation of women is demonstrated through Atwood's treatment of female characters including Marian, Clara, Ainsley, and the office virgins. In the meanwhile, Peter and Len's personalities and the organization they work for serve as examples of the patriarchy's strength. The focus of the second portion of the studied work, titled "Forms of female resistance against patriarchal oppression" focuses on Marian, the main character's attempts to confront and dismantle the traditional standards that define and constrain married women. The feminist theory of Simone de Beauvoir, which emphasizes the value of women creating their own methods for challenging patriarchal standards and exercising critical thought about society expectations, is used to evaluate this section. It is possible to see



Marian's battles with her body image, eating problems, and illicit relationships as acts of revolt against patriarchal norms and the institution of marriage.

### **1. Depiction of Western Women in a Patriarchal Society**

In *The Second Sex*, Simone De Beauvoir maintains that males are the dominant gender in society and that they have privileges and authority over women. She contends that males have traditionally defined what it means to be human, claiming that "[A woman] is for man a sexual partner, a reproducer, an erotic object" (85), and that women have been consigned to a subordinate role. De Beauvoir states that a system of "the other" has subjugated women by characterizing them as "not-men" thereby establishing them as inferior and submissive. Inequalities between the sexes are reinforced by legal and economic frameworks, socialization, and education, as well as by this system. In her novel 1967, Margaret Atwood explores the plight of women living in a patriarchal society. By utilizing the depictions of female characters who work at the Seymour Survey Company, Atwood shows how these women are oppressed by being required to forgo their maternal rights in order to preserve their employment. In order to avoid unforeseen pregnancies, Mrs. Bogue, the department director at Seymour Survey, sought to hire either "unmarried women" or those who had already passed the age of "unpredictable pregnancies"(EW 176). Mostly because she thinks that being pregnant is seen as betraying the organization (ibid 26). The way Seymour Surveys are structured reflects the patriarchal nature. Marian, the protagonist, perceives her workplace as an ice cream sandwich that is unstable and ready to be consumed. In this instance the upper crust is a reflection of the opulent offices of the managers and psychiatric professionals who control and abuse workers. while the bottom crust is made up of equipment that creates surveys, which generate consumers. Moreover, women work and do tasks including gathering, transcribing, and assessing surveys for household goods in the middle layer, which is seen as the human and feminine part of the business (Roles 6-7). Marian, a consumer

analyst at Seymour Survey Company, is hampered in her professional development because of gender stereotypes that characterize women as "office virgins", similar to Emily, Lucy, and Millie, who are also victims of the company's patriarchal structure, in which males are deemed superior and women are assigned to inferior positions. Women are relegated to the bottom of the organizational chart because they are forbidden from going near the men's floor and are anticipated to quit the business at some time in order to fulfill conventional gender norms.

As per Friedan, in the *Feminine Mystique* the conventional nuclear family ideal placed a strong emphasis on males as the household's main contributors, while women were supposed to find fulfillment in their duties as wives and mothers (44). This assumption pushed women to emphasize their roles as housewives and mothers above everything else. Therefore, rather than pursuing a profession or other personal goals, their main objective was to find a decent spouse and have children. It was traditional for women to prioritize their home responsibilities over any prospective careers or occupations; this assumption was known as the "occupation: housewife"(47) model. In *The Edible Woman*, Clara is depicted as Marian's depressed friend who is pregnant with her third child. She is portrayed as "just a housewife" (EW 40-41) who is financially reliant on her husband, Joe Bates, and lacks control over the mundane aspects of her life (ibid 39). Clara rarely leaves her home and has limited communication with others, often waiting for her friends to provide her with entertainment. Friedan criticized American society's patriarchal framework, which she claimed caused gender disparity and prevented women from reaching their goals. She coined the phrase "the problem that has no name" to characterize the dissatisfaction and frustration felt by many middle-class women who were constrained to household tasks and had little prospects for intellectual and professional progress.

Clara is a representation of women who have been forced into traditional domestic roles and have lost their sense of purpose and direction in life. "Clara's life seemed cut off from her, set apart, something she could only gaze at through a window" (EW 135). This statement emphasizes Clara's feelings of emptiness and unhappiness. It suggests that Clara's life lacks meaning and fulfillment, and that she feels trapped and unfulfilled due to her limited opportunities and the expectations placed upon her as a woman. As a wife and mother, which society expects of her, Clara's identity is determined by these responsibilities. Her existence, she declares, revolves solely around her family and her mother's responsibilities. Emily Martin examines how language shapes our understanding of reproductive experiences, particularly highlighting how pregnancy is often framed as a medical condition or something that happens to women rather than an active choice or personal experience (77). Clara has thus become disconnected from her own needs and sense of self, which results in an empty and unfulfilling experience. She exhibits passive conduct and is unable to make independent decisions, as evidenced by the fact that she agreed to have another kid despite not wanting to. Her maternal responsibilities have become all-consuming, leaving little room for her own identity or personal growth.

In Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman*, Len, a key male character, serves as an example of patriarchal attitudes toward women. Len's attitude that women were created to be used and his acceptance of exploiting them for his personal gain are both made clear that "Female body is an object of sexual pleasure and it has to be enjoyed and thrown out" (Ansari 151). His behavior with women throughout the book reveals a predatory character and a propensity to view them as things to be used rather than as living, thinking, feeling beings. Len is consequently portrayed as a very alarming individual who personifies negative qualities of masculinity that feminists seek to oppose and defeat. The pressure that society puts on women to adhere to traditional gender norms and expectations may be seen in

Ainsley's assertion that "no woman has fulfilled her femininity unless she's had a baby" (EW 166). By expressing this opinion, Ainsley draws attention to the difficulties women have while trying to defy social norms and forge their own paths in life. One example of her disregard of conventional standards is her wish to bear children outside of marriage. It is possible to see Ainsley's opposition to marriage as a feminist critique of patriarchal expectations that restrict women's freedom of choice and agency. The difficulties women have in balancing cultural norms and patriarchal power systems can be seen as a manifestation in Ainsley's decision to have a sexual relationship with Len. Although Ainsley is expressing her decision-making autonomy, she is nevertheless constrained by gendered power relations and cultural standards. Despite his past of abusing women for his own amusement, Len accuses Ainsley of exploiting him for his body. He declares that his response is a perfect illustration of the double standards present in patriarchal countries "The little slut. Getting me into something like this." (EW 166). which emphasizes his sense of being wronged and his lack of responsibility for his actions. Len's reaction might also be understood as a reflection of his fear of losing control and dominance over women, given that Ainsley's pregnancy undermines his authority and strengthens the idea that women should have autonomy over their bodies and reproductive decisions. Moreover, Len believes that Ainsley's education undermines his masculinity and upholds the stereotype that women should be intellectually inferior to men and submissive to them. Ainsley concerns the detrimental effects of raising a kid without a father, so she finally complies with conventional expectations by looking for a father for her child. This is indicative of the pressure society places on women to adhere to traditional gender roles and the notion that parenting would be lacking without a male role model.

In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir makes the case that males in society enjoy power and privilege over women and that they frequently objectify women for their own

amusement. According to what she says "Humanity is male, and man defines woman not in herself, but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being"(15). can be tied to the novel's heroine Marian. Marian experiences discrimination as a woman in an era of patriarchy, notably from her fiancé, Peter. She is one of several female employees at the corporation, and because of the unjust treatment she experiences, she feels alone and cut off from her work. Marian explains how she was informed about her responsibility to join the Pension Plan when she started working at the firm. "I had been told about the Pension Plan when I joined the company"(EW 22). The fact that only female employees are subject to this rule raises the prospect of prejudice or discrimination based on gender, which is echoed in the patriarchal culture in which she lives. Marian herself points out. As part of her employment, she is responsible for converting the sometimes extremely technical and complicated language contained in questionnaires prepared by psychologists into more accessible English that may be easily comprehended by both the inquirers and responders concerned. Marian conveys on the experience and states that "Sometimes I wonder just which things are part of my job" (Ibid 20). These incidents highlight the ambiguity of Marian's job duties, the difficulty of crossing the lines between her planned chores and unforeseen demands, as well as the conflict between her obligations as a professional and her sense of self.

In order to show how cultural norms and traditional gender roles may lead to male domination in relationships, Margaret Atwood utilizes Marian's relationship with Peter. Marian feels restricted and helpless while she tries to express her own goals and individuality. Peter exhorts her to marry and have children in accordance with socially accepted gender stereotypes. Marian's metaphorical eating problem, which causes her inability to ingest food, represents her experience of being overwhelmed by Peter's expectations, as he attempts to regulate her diet and criticizes her choices. This is illustrated in the book when she refuses to eat the food on her plate because she perceives it to be flesh

and blood, much to how Peter eats Marian (Day 36). Her obedience to Peter's requests indicates the power dynamics at work in their relationship. Peter expects Marian to meet his needs, including being sexually accessible to him anytime he wants, and sees marriage as a way to accomplish his ambitions. In their sexual connection, Peter seeks to control Marian and refuses to accept a subordinate role. This supports the novel's overarching theme of masculine dominance, and is supported by the statement, "Come into the bathroom, ... I much prefer the bed and I knew the tub would be too small and uncomfortably hard and ridgy, but I hadn't objected" (EW 64). This quotation highlights Peter's desire for domination by demonstrating his reluctance to play the position of a submissive in their sexual relationship.

Women are frequently under social pressure to uphold strict beauty standards, which reinforces the gendered power structures in society that place men in a dominant position and women in a submissive one. Marian, who is uncomfortable being forced into the beauty shop, "felt as passive as though she was being admitted to a hospital to have an operation." (EW 218) exemplifies the passive position that women are generally required to perform in such settings. Her engagement party serves as an illustration of how society expects women to conform to traditional gender norms, including the requirement to dress up and use cosmetics to attract attention from males. Despite Marian believing she is acting on her own volition, in fact she responds to Peter's dominance by keeping mute and passively accepting his rule this occurrence shows how the patriarchal system intrudes on female spaces to rule and control women's bodies (Sanchez-Grant 85). Marian is victimized by the need to uphold patriarchal conventions and win Peter's approval, as seen by the red dress she wore to her engagement party, which looked great for Peter but gave Marian the impression that she was acting differently (Kriebernegg 61).

In *The Edible Woman*, Marian's sense of self and agency is progressively eroding, making her feel disjointed and detached from reality. As she puts it, "She is hardly able to

recognize herself in a mirror" (Kriebeneegg 60). This suggests that she is finding it difficult to define her identity in light of her engagement to Peter and that she feels trapped and powerless in her current situation. By writing in the third person, Marian conveys a feeling of distance from her own experiences, as if she is seeing things from a distance." She then withdraws from narrating her own story in the first person, intentionally alienating herself to mitigate destruction" (Roles 279). She formerly referred to herself in the first person singular, but now uses "she" to identify herself, showing a separation from her sense of self and identity.

Ultimately, Margaret Atwood's story shows the difficulties that a young woman has while attempting to maintain her identity and power in a society that enforces traditional gender stereotypes and patriarchal domination. By exposing the patriarchal power structure and the subservient positions played by female characters. The male characters, such as Peter, coworkers, and Len, are crucial to the growth of the protagonist and the investigation of masculine dominance, control, and social expectations in relationships as Atwood examines topics of gender roles, relationships, and identity. However, female characters like Clara, Ainsley, and Marian are presented as weak and constrained to acting as spouses, mothers, and sexual objects, reflecting the repressive gender norms and societal expectations imposed on women.

## **2. Forms of Female Resistance against Patriarchal Oppression**

In her revolutionary work "The Second Sex," Simone de Beauvoir believes that women must build their own forms of revolt in order to resist patriarchal conventions and tackle the multifarious oppressions they experience. She emphasizes self-awareness and confidence as being essential components for women to achieve true liberty. According to Beauvoir, women can only attain genuine equality and fulfillment by developing their

capacity for critical thought, challenging conventional norms, and rejecting old gender roles. This notion is encapsulated in her quote: "Man is a human being with sexuality; woman is a complete individual equal to male, only if she too is a human being with sexuality. To renounce her femininity is to renounce a part of her humanity" (642). Women may set the path for cultural reform by embracing their femininity and rejecting traditional constraints. In order to free women from dependency on males and patriarchal systems, Beauvoir also emphasizes the importance of economic and social freedom for women. She emphasizes the value of female solidarity and calls on women to band together to fight patriarchal tyranny.

In Margaret Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman*, the protagonist Marian engages in a range of modes of insurrection as she experiences an identity crisis and struggles to resist societal expectations and gender stereotypes. Marian is appalled by Peter's blatant contempt for the value of animal life, as evidenced by his comments and actions during a hunting expedition. The statement, "Wham. One shot, right through the heart" (EW 73). displays his apathy for killing and disrespect for the worth of the animal's life. He takes great pleasure in recounting the violent and graphic scene, highlighting the chaos and the brutality of his deeds. His statements imply that he finds satisfaction in exercising authority over and control over the life and death of another living being. He shouts, "There was blood and guts all over the place. All over me, what a mess, rabbit guts dangling from the trees, god the trees were red for yards" (ibid). Marian's response to Peter's hunting tale was strong and guttural, and it caused her to withdraw to a toilet stall and sob. She didn't understand her own response, thinking it was ludicrous and unlike anything she had ever done (EW 74-75). Besides that, "[She] had to get out... [she] let go of Peter's arm and began to run... [she] was running...[she] was surprised to find [her] feet moving, wondering how they had begun, but [she] didn't stop" (76-77). Marian's instinctive and spontaneous withdrawal from Peter's presence, followed by her awareness of her own bodily movement, are both illustrated in the



aforementioned remark. Her actions reveal her desire to break free from Peter's influence and reclaim her personal freedom.

Her eating problem is seen as a form of defiance against social norms as well as a way to express her independence and dissatisfaction with her life. This is seen by the manner in which her food aversion gradually develops and becomes obvious when "[she] was wondering whether [she] could face an egg." (EW 89) the morning following her engagement, during breakfast. Marian is unintentionally defying society standards of feminine identity that she has previously embraced (Howells 58). The fact that one of Peter's stories has influenced Marian's psyche implies that he wields power and influence over her. During dinner with Peter, Marian observes how skillfully he cuts the meat, yet finds violence in connection with him incongruous, indicating her struggle to reconcile her attraction to him with his aggressive tendencies (EW 158). Her anorexia is a direct result of her rebellion against Peter since she denies herself food and narrows her environment to a certain extent before rejecting anything outside of it. Her body carries out this rejection, as stated in the quotation: "Her body had cut itself off. The food circle had dwindled to a point, a black dot, closing everything outside"(ibid 268). Undoubtedly, Marian feels controlled by Peter, who embodies the conventional patriarchal husband, prompting her to seek acceptance elsewhere. William Keith contends that Duncan serves as Marian's spiritual guide, representing her intuition and intellect and giving her a nontraditional knowledge in contrast to Peter's (41). Marian's burgeoning connection with Duncan, which began as covert encounters at the laundry and has since grown more intimate and intentional, gives her the opportunity to face and resist the patriarchal restraints that have been confining her life. Marian is able to claim her individuality and identity by rejecting her typical position as an obedient and organized wife who upholds Peter's expectations and challenging the influence of both Peter and Duncan, who stands for a distinct and unorthodox viewpoint.

As a means of overcoming the oppressive patriarchal system and Peter's controlling influence over her, Marian symbolically rebels by baking a cake in the likeness of a woman resembling herself in a red dress. The cake serves as a metaphor for women's objectification and subordination under male dominance. It reflects Peter's perception of femininity and his desire to control and consume women. The statement "she wished she had bought some birthday candles" (EW 281) can be interpreted as an indication of Marian's determination to challenge and defy patriarchal norms. This signifies that Marian is willing to take action despite feeling unprepared or uncertain about the potential consequences. Furthermore, Marian's statement "Very appetizing. And that's what will happen to you; that's what you get for being food" (ibid 281) suggests that women who allow themselves to be objectified and treated as consumable objects will ultimately fall prey to the patriarchal system and be destroyed by it. Marian exposes Peter's actual goals of dominating and controlling her from the beginning of their relationship. "You've been trying to destroy me,"(EW 283) she says, emphasizing the detrimental impact Peter's behavior has had on her. Marian is regaining control of the conversation and influencing it in her favor by saying that she has substituted him (ibid 283). She is now an active participant in their power struggle rather than being a victim of Peter's manipulation. This shows that Marian has gained a better knowledge of the mechanics of power and control in their relationship and is now taking efforts to reject and defeat Peter's attempts at dominance. Peter acknowledges Marian's agency and liberty by choosing to depart without eating any of the cake. This gathering is a significant step forward in Marian's fight against patriarchal conventions. She eventually reaches a point where she can declare her own identity and aspirations without regard to what the males in her life expect of her. Marian reclaims her agency and hunger by eating the cake herself, both literally and metaphorically. She won't allow herself to be used as a male object of desire or eaten by a man. A crucial turning point in Marian's life was when she realized "[she] was

thinking of [herself] in the first person singular” (ibid 287). As a result of her growing knowledge and resistance to the patriarchal conventions that have thus far controlled her life, she has finally learned to put her own needs and wants above those of others, particularly males. In essence, this declaration marks the start of Marian's path towards self-awareness, autonomy, and self-assertion as well as her capacity to oppose the repressive systems that had previously controlled her life.

In her novel *The Edible Woman*, Margaret Atwood utilizes themes of body and food to demolish the traditional view of marriage. Atwood demonstrates Marian's revolt against patriarchal societal conformity and her quest to reclaim control of her life and her identity as a free woman by using Marian's struggles with a serious eating disorder and a sexual liaison. Marian's refusal of the conventional expectations of what it means to be an "edible woman" represents her rejection of the male-dominated culture and the rules that govern her existence.

In conclusion, Margaret Atwood illustrates the oppression and marginalization of Canadian women in the patriarchal culture. At the same time, Marian, a character played by Atwood, demonstrates how these women might overcome this tyranny by going against society norms and tearing down romanticized notions of motherhood and marriage.

## Chapter Three

### Deconstructing Marriage in Lynda Chouiten's *Une Valse*

In the culminating chapter of this thesis, the critical analysis centers on Lynda Chouiten's *Une Valse*, with a keen eye on the feminist theories espoused by Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, Virginia Woolf's, and *A Room of One's Own* and *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World (2007)* by Nawal El Saadawi. The discussion revolves around the portrayal of women living in Maghrebian patriarchal societies, showcasing Chouiten's ability to craft a compelling female character who challenges the established norms of masculine authority and deconstructs the celebrated institution of marriage. By doing so, Chouiten has contributed to the feminist discourse on gender and power dynamics, making her work a vital contribution to the ongoing dialogue on women's rights and emancipation.

This chapter is a captivating exploration of the complex and nuanced portrayal of Algerian women in *Une Valse*. Divided into two sections, each with its own unique focus, this analysis reveals the subtle yet powerful ways in which patriarchal culture and traditions dominate and exploit female characters in Chouiten's world.

In the first section, "Depiction of Maghrebian Women in a Patriarchal Society," Chouiten illuminates the insidious ways in which women are subjugated and oppressed by patriarchal structures. She depicts how male characters in the novel exploit and control the female characters, highlighting the injustice and inequality at play. She relates to Betty Friedan's theory to demonstrate how societal expectations force women to conform to a narrow set of gender roles, preventing them from achieving true independence and self-realization. Through the character of Chahira, a courageous and resilient female heroine,

Chouiten provides a powerful voice for the women who struggle against patriarchal oppression.

In contrast, the second section, "Forms of Female Resistance against Patriarchal Oppression" offers a refreshing and inspiring vision of female empowerment and liberation. Here, Chouiten creates a female character, Chahira, who defies societal expectations and dismantles patriarchal domination through her career as a stylist and as a single woman. Drawing inspiration from Virginia Woolf's theory, Chouiten champions women's creative expression and urges them to reject the masculine depictions. Chouiten's portrayal of Chahira serves as a model for women who seek greater opportunities and independence.

With insightful analysis, this chapter offers a compelling and thought-provoking examination of the complex and dynamic representation of Algerian women in Chouiten's *Une Valse*. It sheds light on the pervasive effects of patriarchal culture and traditions and inspires hope for a future in which women are free to achieve their full potential.

### **1. Depiction of Maghrebian Women in a Patriarchal Society**

Like the *Feminine Mystique* that Friedan described, Arab societies often impose restrictive gender roles and expectations on women, limiting their opportunities for education, employment, and political participation. Women in these societies may be pressured to prioritize their roles as wives, house maids and mothers over their personal ambitions and desires.

Lynda Chouiten's novel *Une Valse* effectively conveys the condition of Algerian women living in a male-dominated society. Through her female characters, the author illuminates the ways in which masculine authority is used to exploit women. The protagonist, Chahira, is a poignant example of a woman living under the oppressive weight of the patriarchy. Her childhood and youth were marred by the brutal violence inflicted by both her parents and a conservative society, leaving her trapped in an environment of abuse and

oppression. Indeed, in Algerian society, as in many others, the father holds absolute power in decision-making, while the mother guards the family's honor, particularly for daughters. It is pointed out that Rabéa, Chahira's mother, discovers an explicit poem in her daughter's notebook and without bothering to ask for an explanation, she informs Chahira's father, Kader. This event triggers a tumultuous chain of events that forever alters Chahira's life, resulting in both physical and mental abuse, stating:

Tu vois le genre de lectures qu'elle fait, celle que tu as envoyée s'instruire ! Ah, elle est belle, son instruction ! On comprend mieux, maintenant, pourquoi elle a toujours le nez plongé dans les livres ! Et on appelle ça la grande poésie. Poésie du péché et de la honte, oui ! ( Chouiten 41).

The mother expresses disapproval of Chahira's reading choices, suggesting that the poem she was reading is morally corrupt and a waste of time. Her tone is critical and judgmental towards Chahira's interest in reading. Moreover, Chahira is subjected to a brutal punishment by her father, who beats her without giving her a chance to defend herself or explain the situation. She is condemned and punished severely without any thought or consideration, highlighting the injustice of the situation. As the author stated, “ Malgré les rougeurs et le corps martyrisé de sa fille, sa colère n'était pas tombée. Il aurait voulu la fouetter encore et encore ; mais il s'était arrêté aux premières gouttes de sang qui avaient giclé du maigre bras violenté” (9). This passage illustrates the cruelty and injustice that Chahira experiences at the hands of her father, a mere bloody situation.

Chahira's punishment didn't end with the reprehensible torture inflicted by her father, as he took further measures by putting an end to his daughter's education. Hence, Chahira's multiple physical abuses deeply affected her, causing her to develop a psychosis, leaving her to confront all the ghosts that besiege her thoughts, but her family shows no mercy towards her. “D'ailleurs, ce n'était pas vraiment le genre de la maison, de soutenir les membres en

difficulté” (33). The heroine claims that the family is not one to support members who are going through hard times, implying a lack of empathy and care towards each other. Chahira's mother becomes even more hateful, calling her crazy and good for nothing, widening the emotional distance between them, while her father, brother, and sister consider her to be out of her mind and not knowing what she's doing,

Ils accoururent tous parents—le frère, la sœur et les et l’assiégèrent. Elle voulut les éloigner, mais ils lui tinrent les poignets, la neutralisèrent, la mirent à terre. Elle essaya de hurler à nouveau ; le père lui mit la main sur la bouche : -Ferme là, naal din yemmak, tu fais de nous la risée des voisins. [. . .] Sa mère en profita pour lui donner des petits coups hargneux sur la tête. (68).

Considering this aspect, Chouiten elaborates that in such a contemptuous society, being a woman is not a desirable position, as women are perceived as inferior beings who do not deserve any consideration. They are solely meant to obey and ensure reproduction, and are never deemed capable of anything more dignified.

In the novel *Une Valse* nearly all female characters are trapped and subjected to societal contempt and discrimination, particularly Chahira and her mother who are frequently portrayed as victims of their gender in a patriarchal society. Mostly, it explains Rabea's reactions toward her daughter, in fact it arises from deeply entrenched patriarchal biases and negative attitudes from men. Indeed, mothers are not necessarily abusive in the conventional sense. They have been brought up with certain values that make them believe that what they are doing to their daughters is "for their own good". However, the consequences of such actions can still result in their daughters being mistreated.

Friedan argues the idea that women's primary role is as wives and mothers was a myth that kept women from reaching their full potential. She contends that this narrow gender role not only oppresses women but also harms their mental and physical health. She acclimates

that in patriarchal society that “Women had been confined to the home and to domestic tasks, and their value had been measured solely in terms of their ability to serve men and bear children.” (49). Accordingly, Chouiten points that being a woman is not very desirable in such a contemptuous society, as women are often perceived as inferior beings who are not worthy of respect or consideration. This is indeed the case for almost all of the female characters in the novel *Une Valse*, including Chahira and her mother, who appear frequently. They are portrayed as being subjects to the same societal biases and prejudices that limit their opportunities and constrain their choices, reflecting the challenges faced by many women in similar circumstances. For instance, Rabéa belongs to an older generation; therefore she succumbs to the harsh conditions of said generation. In addition, she is subjected to a strict set of societal rules that particularly limit the freedoms of women. These limitations, imposed upon her from a young age, have had a profound impact on her life experiences and perspectives.

The impact of patriarchy on Chahira's life is profound and deeply concerning. Her mother's actions serve as a stark reminder of the oppressive and harmful nature of patriarchal norms. Instead of providing guidance and support, Chahira's mother resorts to physical and verbal abuse, belittling her daughter for expressing any independent thought or opinion. Thus, her mother's constant reminders of societal expectations surrounding marriage and motherhood only serve to reinforce the narrow and limiting roles that patriarchal structures have assigned to women. This pressure to conform to traditional gender roles can be suffocating and detrimental to women's autonomy and personal growth. It is clear that Chahira's mother's behavior is symptomatic of a larger issue of patriarchal oppression. It is essential to recognize and address the harmful effects of patriarchy to create a more equitable and just society for all. Thus, Chouiten illustrates the male figures in her work as the dominant patriarchs within their families, exercising power and control, much like the



characters Atwood employs in *The Edible Woman* to depict the imposition of patriarchy on women.

“Et tu as le culot d’ouvrir la bouche, en plus ! tu n’as pas honte ! Tu as quarante ans, tu ne comprends donc pas ? Celles qui ont ton âge ne sont pas mères mais grand-mères ! grand-mères entends-tu ? Et toi, tu es là à rêvasser comme une gamine !” (76) This dialogue suggests a strained relationship between the mother and Chahira, with the mother expressing disappointment and frustration towards her daughter for not conforming to societal expectations of motherhood and aging. The mother's tone is condescending and dismissive, implying that the daughter's dreams and desires are insignificant and immature compared to her own beliefs about what is appropriate for a woman of her age. This reinforces the patriarchal norms and gender roles prevalent in Algerian society, where women are expected to prioritize marriage and motherhood over their own aspirations and independence.

Expanding on this idea, it can be argued that society as a whole also contributes to the prevalence of maternal symbolic violence within the household. This is because societal norms and values often reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes, which can lead to mothers feeling pressure to conform to certain expectations and norms regarding their parenting styles. For example, mothers may feel that they must be strict and punitive with their children in order to be seen as "good" mothers, or they may feel that they must prioritize their children's obedience and compliance over their emotional well-being. Additionally, cultural norms and attitudes towards mental health and emotional well-being may also contribute to the normalization of symbolic violence, as many people may not recognize the harmful effects that emotional abuse and manipulation can have on children. Overall, it is important to recognize the role that societal factors can play in perpetuating maternal symbolic violence, and to work towards creating a culture that values compassion, empathy, and respect in parenting practices.

De Beauvoir argues that throughout history, women have been subjected to various forms of subjugation and oppression, either as slaves or as vassals, implying a relationship of dominance and subservience. This suggests that women have been relegated to subordinate roles, with limited power and agency in comparison to men. “Woman has always been, if not man's slave, at least his vassal; the two sexes have never divided the world up equally; and still today, even though her condition is changing, woman is heavily handicapped...” (Beauvoir 9). In brief, the statement underscores the historical and ongoing inequality experienced by women, highlighting the need for continued efforts to challenge and change the existing patriarchal structures and norms

Both Chouiten's work and Atwood's novel *The Edible Woman* depict female characters in a state of domesticity, dependency, and silence. Atwood highlights the subordination and inferiority of her heroines who are forced to accept societal and male-imposed expectations, even when they lack the desire to fulfill their roles as wives and mothers. Similarly, Chouiten's female characters are portrayed as passive and submissive, allowing the male characters to control their lives and subjecting them to violence. Both works suggest that women are expected to adhere to traditional gender roles and fulfill their prescribed duties.

Ultimately, the novel *Une Valse* by Lynda Chouiten provides a compelling portrayal of the oppressive conditions faced by Algerian women living in a patriarchal society. Through her depiction of female characters, Chouiten highlights the ways in which masculine authority is used to exploit women, with the protagonist Chahira serving as a particularly poignant example. The novel provides a powerful commentary on the injustice and discrimination faced by women in a patriarchal society, highlighting the ways in which gender-based hierarchies can limit opportunities for education, employment, and political participation. Chahira's story in the novel illustrates the enduring effects of physical and

emotional abuse, including the development of mental health issues like psychosis. It also highlights how even well-intentioned mothers can perpetuate mistreatment of their daughters by conforming to patriarchal norms.

## **2- Forms of Female Resistance against Patriarchal Oppression**

Virginia Woolf contends that women have been denied the ability to explore their full creative potential due to these societal constraints, which have often relegated them to the roles of wives and mothers, rather than creators and thinkers. In her *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf makes a powerful case for the importance of giving women the freedom and resources they need to cultivate their own unique perspectives and artistic voices.

Considering the theory at hand, Chouiten exposes her heroine as a tenacious and determined character who refuses to be held back by the restrictions placed upon her by both gender and societal norms. She demonstrates a strong resistance to the patriarchal system and actively seeks to establish her own autonomy and self-reliance throughout the course of the novel. In that latter, the author deconstructs the institution of marriage by exploring it through the thoughts and actions of the protagonist. As a means of coping with her oppressive reality, Chahira retreats into her imagination and creates imaginary boyfriends. Through these imaginary relationships, she is able to explore and express her deepest sexual desires in a way that is not possible within the confines of her society's strict gender roles and expectations. “ Son lit se mit soudainement à ahaner sous les secousses passionnées que lui infligeait un mystérieux amoureux. Soudain, un fourmillement dans le bas-ventre et une petite douleur. Puis, petit à petit, une sensation grandissante de plaisir. La plénitude, l'extase. Tout était plus calme, plus heureux ; elle s'endormit sereinement dans les bras de ce nouvel amant. ” (51).

The passage appears to describe a sexual encounter experienced by the character, which can be interpreted as a representation of her desires and inner conflicts. It is an exploration of female sexuality and the challenging of societal norms regarding sexual behavior.

Spoken by Virginia Woolf, “Lock up your libraries if you like; but there is no gate, no lock, no bolt that you can set upon the freedom of my mind.” (Woolf 63). This quote reflects her belief in the power of the human mind to break free from the constraints of society and culture. Woolf is essentially saying that no matter how much someone tries to restrict or limit access to knowledge, ideas, or creativity, the human mind is inherently free and cannot be contained or controlled. Indeed, Chouiten's protagonist rejects the traditional societal pressure to get married and instead seeks to carve out her own space free from patriarchal norms. Through her thoughts and inner desires, she yearns for a life of peace and comfort, but realizes that she must create it for herself rather than waiting for someone else to provide it. Ultimately, she asserts her independence and refuses to be confined by the limitations imposed on her by society. In fact, her innermost desires contradict her real-life experiences, where she's unable to find solace or comfort in the arms of others. Thus, she sets herself free to pursue a life that's authentic and true to herself. The protagonist's lucid dreaming of various boyfriends can be seen as a form of escapism from the reality of her constrained life. By creating these imaginary relationships, she is able to break free from the societal norms and expectations that restrict her agency and independence.

Moreover, the act of dreaming can be seen as a way of challenging the patriarchal system that devalues women's desires and pleasures. By expressing her deepest sexual desires in the realm of her imagination, the protagonist is able to assert her own agency and autonomy over her body and sexuality, which is often denied to women in traditional gender roles. Overall, the protagonist's actions can be interpreted as a form of feminist resistance against the restrictive societal norms that limit women's freedom and agency. It shows how women can use their imagination and creativity to break free from patriarchal structures and assert their own identities and desires. As stated through the novel : “ Ces deux-là étaient les seuls fantômes à résister à leurs désirs de mâles qu’elle alimentait à son corps défendant. Le

corps en feu, ils n'osaient pas se rapprocher d'elle [ . . . ] ” (Chouiten 21). This sentence describes the protagonist's experience with two male characters who resist their desire for her, despite her own physical longing for them. The phrase “à son corps défendant” suggests that the protagonist's desire is involuntary or against her will, and the description of her body as “en feu ” emphasizes the intensity of her physical longing. However, the two male characters are described as “fantômes” or ghosts, which could indicate that they are not real or that they are somehow out of reach. Additionally, the phrase “ils n'osaient pas se rapprocher d'elle” indicates that they are hesitant or afraid to approach her. Thus, refusing to submit to the desires of these men, the protagonist is asserting her own agency. This can be seen as a feminist act, as she is refusing to be objectified and instead is striving for autonomy and self-determination. She is challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms that dictate how women should behave and interact with men. By refusing to be objectified or pursued solely for sexual gratification, she is asserting her autonomy. In a way, this resistance represents her taking control of her own body and desires, rather than conforming to the expectations and desires of men.

Furthermore, Chouiten demonstrates Chahira's story as a prime example of how women face a constant struggle to be recognized as equal to men in society. Despite her family's attempts to suppress her ambition and force her into subservience, Chahira refuses to accept the status quo. She recognizes that her talents and dreams are just as valid as any man's, and she is determined to pursue them no matter the cost. Moreover, Chahira's decision to become a stylist challenges the traditional notion that women are only valued for their looks and domestic skills. She refuses to conform to societal expectations of what a "decent lady" should be, and instead chooses a career that allows her to express herself creatively and assert her independence. By doing so, she reclaims agency over her own body and rejects the patriarchal notion that women exist solely for the pleasure and service of men. Indeed, in her

book, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, Nawal El Saadawi argues that women must develop their own strategies to rebel against patriarchal norms and acknowledge the various forms of oppression they experience. El Saadawi emphasizes the importance of self-esteem and confidence as crucial elements for women to achieve genuine liberation. She contends that in order for women to exercise their autonomy effectively and lead fulfilling lives according to their own standards, they must cultivate the ability to think critically, challenge conventional wisdom, and resist patriarchal traditions. This concept is embodied in the following quote: "The educated emancipated woman, she is liberated... women seeking a career or a job" (377).

Accordingly, Chahira's decision to leave her family in pursuit of her dreams is a bold statement against the violence and oppression that women often face within their own homes. Her determination to break free from a toxic and abusive environment is an act of empowerment, demonstrating that women have the right to live without fear or intimidation. Through her actions, Chahira becomes a beacon of hope for women everywhere, inspiring others to stand up against gender-based violence and fight for their own freedom and autonomy. In fact, throughout her *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, Mary Wollstonecraft suggests that: "Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience." (53). They highlight the transformative power of knowledge for women. By expanding women's minds and providing them with education, they can break free from the confines of societal expectations and refuse to be subordinate to men.

Chouiten's portrayal of Chahira also highlights the power dynamics at play within patriarchal societies, where women are often oppressed and silenced. Through Chahira's determination to pursue her career as a stylist, Chouiten challenges the traditional gender roles that are imposed on women in Algerian society. Chahira's success in the contest in Vienna not only represents her triumph over the challenges and obstacles she faced, but also serves as a powerful symbol of resistance against the patriarchal structures that seek to limit

women's opportunities and agency. Furthermore, the fact that Chahira leaves her household to pursue her dreams and ambitions is a clear indication of her refusal to accept the subjugation and humiliation imposed on her by her family. This act of rebellion is significant in the context of feminist discourse, as it demonstrates the importance of women's agency and their right to make choices for themselves, free from the constraints of patriarchal norms and expectations. Chouiten's portrayal of Chahira is a powerful representation of a feminist heroine who challenges traditional gender roles and norms, and who refuses to be silenced or oppressed. By empowering her protagonist through her success and determination, Chouiten highlights the importance of women's agency and the need for society to recognize and respect their right to pursue their dreams and ambitions. In short, Chahira's story is a testament to the power of feminism and the resilience of women in the face of adversity. Her refusal to be held back by societal expectations or the constraints of her gender is an inspiration to all those who seek to challenge patriarchal norms and promote gender equality.

By refusing to adhere to the traditional roles and expectations placed upon her as a woman, Chouiten's heroine becomes a symbol of resistance against the patriarchal society in which she lives. Thus, the novel also sheds light on the societal pressures that force women to conform to a particular image and behavior, as Chouiten's heroine faces constant scrutiny and judgment from her own family and community for her unconventional ways. This highlights the societal expectations and the rigid gender norms that women are forced to adhere to, limiting their freedom and autonomy. Overall, Chahira, a woman who has suffered mistreatment and violence throughout her life, is about to embark on a journey to Vienna to participate in a fashion competition. Despite being marginalized and beaten by her family and society, she is determined to travel alone, without a man accompanying her. She stands up against the traditional beliefs that she has always despised and decides to pursue her dream.

With a strong spirit of defiance and determination, she sets off on her journey, ready to show the world that she is capable of achieving anything she sets her mind to.

Chouiten's *Une Valse* portrays a feminist message that challenges the traditional gender roles and norms placed upon women in society. Through her protagonist's rebellion and empowerment, the novel urges women to pursue their own aspirations and desires, regardless of societal expectations and patriarchal pressure.

*Une Valse* by Lynda Chouiten and *The Edible Woman* by Margaret Atwood share common themes of female empowerment and rebellion against patriarchal society. Both novels feature female protagonists who reject societal norms and expectations placed upon them, with Chouiten pursuing her career as a stylist and Marian rejecting the institution of marriage. In both novels, the female protagonists embark on journeys of self-discovery and self-expression. Through their respective pursuits, Chahira as a stylist and Marian in her rejection of marriage, they seek to define and assert their own identities outside of societal expectations. Their actions challenge the notion that women should conform to predetermined roles and instead encourage the exploration and expression of their true selves.

Moreover, both characters use their sexuality as a means of empowerment, with Chahira engaging in escapism through lucid dreaming and Marian expressing her sexual desires through an affair. Indeed, both novels run into the exploration of female sexuality and its role in personal liberation. Through their actions, both Chahira and Marian challenge traditional gender roles and assert their independence and freedom as women. The exploration of sexuality becomes a means for these characters to assert their agency and challenge the sexual double standards imposed by patriarchal society.

In sum, Chouiten's literary work challenges the traditional gender roles and patriarchal norms imposed on women in Maghrebian societies. She sheds light on the struggles and limitations faced by women in such societies, and her heroine stands as a symbol of



resistance and liberation. Through Chahira's determination to pursue her dreams and reject the institution of marriage, Chouiten advocates for women's agency and autonomy. By breaking away from the stereotypical image of passive and submissive women, Chouiten empowers her female characters and sends a message of hope and possibility to all women.

## General conclusion

Through an examination of Margaret Atwood's, *The Edible Woman* and Lynda Chouiten's *Une Valse*, this thesis investigated the depiction of women in patriarchal civilizations. By drawing on the theoretical perspectives of feminist academics such as Simon de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Virginia Woolf, and Nawal El Saadawi, the thesis illustrates how these female authors deconstruct the conventional structures of marriage and motherhood, which are often viewed as sacred in patriarchal society. Through a comparative analysis of the two novels, the thesis points out the similarities in the challenges faced by women in both Western and Maghrebian societies, and argues that the representation of women in these novels provides valuable insight into the struggle for gender equality and liberation in patriarchal societies.

The dissertation delved into male dominance and female subjection in a patriarchal culture, addressing the notion of patriarchy and institutions such as marriage and motherhood from many scholars' views. This has increased women's awareness of the need to stand up against masculine power in order to realize their rights, with the feminist movement developing as a doorway to women's rights. Female writers, such as Margaret Atwood and Lynda Chouiten, have been chastised for their sexist treatment of female characters as mere props or tokens. Furthermore, both authors criticize the institution of marriage by depicting how it confines women's duties to their homes and private spaces while denying them equal rights in the public arena. They also aspire to dispel stereotypes of women as solely potential wives and caregivers by presenting female characters that defy conventional norms and emphasize their bodies, learning, and personal interests.

This thesis provided a thorough examination of how Atwood and Chouiten represent inequality and persecution of women in their works. These authors' portrayal of female

characters emphasizes male characters' authoritarian imposition and the power relations that occur in prejudiced and persecuted communities. Despite their cultural disparities, both novels' heroines have one thing in common: they are all vulnerable to societal authority. The books *The Edible Woman* and *Une Valse* investigate patriarchal social norms in both Maghrebian and Western cultures. Women are compelled to adhere to social expectations that prioritize marriage as a revered institution. Upon marriage, women are regarded as the belonging of their husbands and are expected to exhibit docility, reticence, and domestic prowess. This involves the management of the household, fostering familial ties, childbirth, child-rearing, and assuming all associated duties.

The writings of Atwood and Chouiten question male-dominated cultural conventions which constrain women's liberties and entitlements in Maghrebian and Western societies. Their portrayal of female characters displays women who are supposed to comply with traditional roles as spouses and expectant mothers feeling excluded and abused. These female characters are designed to satisfy male desires by stressing their femininity and physical attractiveness, and they are expected to ignore their own wishes for independence. Men are represented as energetic and self-sufficient, holding superior social positions, and frequently regarding women as things to be utilized and abused. While women are sexually restrained and their bodies are seen as the property of males, men assert the right to place themselves at the top of the social hierarchy where they are free to follow their wants without interference. Atwood and Chouiten are interested in demonstrating the amount of male control and authority over female characters through their literature, while also campaigning for women's rights and independence and questioning societal expectations put on women. Their works criticize cultural standards that perpetuate gender inequality and injustice, while also presenting a vision for a fairer and just society.

The female protagonists Marian and Chahira, created by Atwood and Chouiten, symbolize a shift from the conventional view of women as being under the control of males in patriarchal societies. Both authors criticize marriage as a traditional institution connected with the private sphere and domestic labor. By stressing their heroines' feminine traits, gender identity, and intellectual output, Atwood and Chouiten underline the necessity of female empowerment. The two novels convey their characters' defiance of unfavorable perceptions about married women, as well as their distinct means of resistance. The heroines' travels involve them grappling with difficulties like thoughts of desire, perseverance, self-independence, eating disorders, and sexual affairs as women struggle to reclaim their identities and liberate themselves from male authority and patriarchy.

This thesis has furnished significant insights into the concept of patriarchy and shed light on the techniques employed by Atwood and Chouiten to deconstruct the traditional notions of marriage and motherhood, which have long been upheld as venerated and highly crucial institutions within patriarchal societies. As such, this research can serve as a valuable foundation for future studies and investigations into the topic at hand.

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## Résumé

Dans les sociétés occidentales et maghrébines dans lesquelles elles ont vécu, Margaret Atwood et Lynda Chouiten ont été confrontées à des cultures dominées par les hommes, où les normes et les valeurs patriarcales prévalaient. En tant qu'écrivaines, elles ont exploré la présence prédominante du contrôle masculin et de l'oppression des femmes. Leur objectif était de sensibiliser les femmes à leurs droits et de remettre en question les attentes sociales qui leur étaient imposées. À travers leurs œuvres, notamment *The Edible Woman* (1967) et *Une Valse* (2019), Atwood et Chouiten ont cherché à déconstruire les stéréotypes et à autonomiser les femmes, tout en prônant l'égalité entre les sexes.

En s'appuyant sur les théories féministes, ces auteurs ont remis en question les structures traditionnelles du mariage et de la maternité, mettant en évidence le besoin pour les femmes de résister et de redéfinir leur place dans la société. Leur travail examine comment des féministes telles que Simone de Beauvoir, Betty Friedan, Virginia Woolf et Nawal El Saadawi ont contribué à déconstruire les notions conventionnelles du mariage et de la maternité dans les écrits de Margaret Atwood et Lynda Chouiten. À travers leurs romans, elles dépeignent des personnages féminins qui défient les attentes sociales et surmontent divers conflits, tels que les désirs, la persévérance, l'indépendance et les troubles alimentaires et sexuels. Ces femmes aspirent à retrouver leur identité et à se libérer du pouvoir des hommes et des structures patriarcales.

**Mots clés:** Féminisme, Déconstruction de mariage, Patriarchie, Révolution Féminine, Supervision.

## ملخص

في المجتمعات الغربية والمغربية التي عاشنا فيها، واجهت مارغريت أتوود وليندا شويتن واقعا مسيطرا من قبل الذكور، حيث سادت القيم الأبوية والتوقعات المحددة للنساء. ككاتبتين، استكشفتنا واقع التحكم الذكوري واضطهاد المرأة. كان هدفهما هو رفع الوعي بحقوق المرأة وتحدي القوانين الاجتماعية المفروضة عليها. من خلال أعمالهما، بما في ذلك رواية المرأة الصالحة للأكل (1967) وكتاب رقصة الفالس (2019)، سعنا أتوود وشويتن لتفكيك الصور النمطية وتمكين المرأة، والدعوة للمساواة بين الجنسين.

بالاستناد إلى المفاهيم النسوية، أعاد هؤلاء الكتاب تقييم هياكل الزواج التقليدية والدور الأمومي، مؤكدين أهمية أن تتمكن المرأة من المقاومة وإعادة تعريف موقعها داخل المجتمع. تتناول أعمالهم النقاش حول كيفية مساهمة النسويات مثل سيمون دي بوفوار وبيتي فريدان وفيرجينيا وولف ونوال السعداوي في تفكيك النظريات التقليدية للزواج والأمومة في أعمال مارغريت أتوود وليندا شويتن. تصوّر هذه الروايات شخصيات نسائية تتحدى التوقعات الاجتماعية وتتخطى التحديات المختلفة، بما في ذلك الرغبات، والإصرار، والاستقلالية، والاضطرابات الغذائية والجنسية. تسعى هؤلاء النساء لاستعادة هويتهم وتحريرو أنفسهن من سطوة الذكور والتصورات الأبوية.

الكلمات الدالة: النسوية، تفكيك الزواج، المجتمع الأبوي، ثورة المرأة، الإشراف.