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Contemporary Oriental Literature: A Feminist Orientation

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Literary and Cultural Studies*

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Dedication

*My Dearest Parents,
Everything that I am I owe it to you
This one is for you.*

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Abstract

The Age of Colonialism was the hardest in history; it affected and destroyed whole cultures and civilizations and those of the Orient were of no exception. One of the permanent results that this institution left was the feeling of otherness that touched the colonized more than the colonizer and was later worsened to influence the generations that were next to come, and as a response to it; different disciplines and perspectives emerged such as postcolonial studies and theories of criticism. In the Middle East, as one part of the Orient, the latter has given scholars the opportunity to address their issues their own way and for the first time retell history with their own words, something that colonialism has denied them for a very long time. In the contemporary era and on the same vein of thought, female authors started to direct the situations and problems that are peculiar to them as a people and a gender focusing on feminism that is postcolonial which in return differentiates them from the mainstream rest. The aim of this research is to address one of the most common feminist problems in the Middle East, patriarchy; how it is conducted and institutionalized in the contemporary times based on a postcolonial feminist interpretation of Joumana Haddad's masterpiece Superman is an Arab: On God, Marriage, Macho Men and Other Disastrous Inventions.

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General Introduction

General Introduction

Colonialism that spanned the years of the nineteenth and the twentieth century has, although now it merely exists, transformed the world into a ring where two sides are in a constant battle; the Occident and the Orient have resulted in the aftermath of this historical institution and the relationship between the two have, throughout the years, proved to be uncanny.

During the last years of the twentieth century, this relationship started to be addressed by scholars who felt the need to speak up about the unfairness and the stereotypical judgments that the Occident held against the Orient and that are embodied in different disciplines such as Orientalism that was born in the shadows of the colonial rule, whether it was in literature, media, or any form of artistic expression the East has always appeared inferior, weak, and mysterious and has long been treated as the “other”, thus Postcolonial studies emerged to fight these prototypes and retell the history of the ex-colonized countries all at the same time voicing the people and cultures that make up these countries and have been denied the freedom of speech of many years.

As part of the Orient, the Middle East is the most scrutinized by the West; its people, its cultures, its beliefs and traditions were and still are case studies leading to all kinds of misinterpretations, as Postcolonialism that addressed these common representations; Postcolonial feminism developed as a sub-discipline to direct the stereotypes that are assigned to the Middle Eastern woman and highlight the issues that she regularly confronts in her society, the issues that differentiate her from the standard Western woman that mainstream feminism tends to represent. What most postcolonial feminists and activists used as a means of expression is literature; the body of writing that the Middle Eastern feminist scholars have created not only gave the Arab woman the opportunity to tell her experience and story but it also exposed the Arabic culture in a way that is a lot different than what was shared in western writing. To fulfill the aim of this research that centers on unveiling the most

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controversial feminist question in the Middle East, patriarchy, that still is seen and felt as intense as before, the following research questions were established:

- 1- Are the Middle Eastern societies and cultures oppressive of the Arab women?
- 2- Are the patriarchal issues that Postcolonial feminism fought to diminish and change during the last years of the twentieth century still common in the contemporary times?

In order to answer these research questions, a thorough analysis was conducted on one of the most controversial and challenging books that the Middle Eastern literature carried in the contemporary era, Superman is an Arab(2012) is a semi auto-biographical book written by the Lebanese feminist Joumana Haddad whose aim was to address the situations of the Arab women and how culture plays a great role in molding these situations, the author includes experiences of different women that became targets in their own societies as well as her personal stories which makes this piece of writing reflective of the truth that lays bare in the Arab world, moreover; an application to the postcolonial feminist theory of criticism on this work was a necessity.

The present work is divided into two chapters. The first chapter touches on the historical background that nurtured the relationship between the Occident and the Orient, a history that Edward Said conceptualized as Orientalism, to begin with, then, presents an introduction to Middle Eastern literature and contemporary women's writing, to finally introduce the author of the work in use; Joumana Haddad.

The second chapter is a postcolonial feminist analysis to Haddad's Superman is an Arab (2012) focusing on the concept of patriarchy and its embodiment in the contemporary Middle Eastern society.

**Chapter One:
Orientalism and Oriental
Literature**

1.Chapter One : Orientalism and Oriental Literature

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Chapter One: Orientalism and Oriental Literature

1.1. Introduction

The relationship between the Occident and the Orient has been the subject of different cultural and historical institutions that have shaped it the way it is today, colonialism was the most influential and it consequently triggered the emergence of Orientalism; a discipline which puts this relationship at its core and studies the Orient in particular wholeheartedly. Edward Said addressed the matter and have laid all the characteristics that control the discipline and how it culturally and historically favors the West and overshadows the East initiating a feeling of inferiority in the latter that is still felt in the present day. Postcolonial literature and criticism, then, developed to direct such feeling as well as the long-lasting impacts of colonialism, the authors that adapted this mode of analysis crafted works that are peculiar to them reflecting their own societies, cultures and lives. Moreover, the contemporary times witnessed the rise of female authors and the feminist literature that was created held postcolonial feminist features that point on the issues that they confront daily and which make them different from what mainstream feminism has drawn for the universal woman.

The purpose of this chapter is to first address the discipline of Orientalism and how it affected the Middle Eastern culture and people as part of the Orient, then the literature that developed in the shadows of this discipline to finally present the Middle Eastern women's writing in the contemporary era, with an introduction to the theory that will be later put in use.

1.2. The Orient

The term "Orient" has become the subject matter for different studies and the main focus of the century's hottest debates. This notion officially appeared during the second half of the nineteenth century and academically established itself by the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Geographically speaking, the Orient represents all countries that lay east, holding anything that belongs to the Eastern world. It consists of the Far East, the countries located in East Asia and the Middle East with those countries that are located west of the continent and lately the term the Greater Middle East have been politically created by George w. Bush to include the countries of North Africa.

Historically, the Orient refers to the majority of countries that were at some point in time occupied by western powers. It touches on the French in North Africa, the English in most of the Middle Eastern nations or even the Americans in the Far East. It is the various civilizations that have contributed in the making of the western world, in the construction of its economics, culture and even literature. Edward Said addressed this concept saying that “the Orient is not only adjacent to Europe, it is also the place of Europe’s greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages” (Said 1978: 1). Consequently; and more than ever before, the term “Orient” became strictly related to the nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism.

The concept approached from a cultural stance, however, is more complex, although it covers all what lay East; it is the Middle East which is highly affected by it. In the contemporary world, the attacks on the Arabs are becoming harsher by the minute and this intensified the twisted relationship of the Orient and the Occident insisting on the ideology of the “US” and the “OTHER”, a relationship of domination, power and a rather deviant hegemony. Part of the emphasis on the Middle East in particular is related to the fact that the Far East is competing with the west politically and economically therefore it has in one form or another established itself as a powerful rival, whereas the Middle East, more preferably, the Arabs are still considered as uncivilized, backward and hostile and are very rarely given a chance.

1.2.1. The Middle East

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The Middle East or the Near Orient is a geographical and cultural region located mainly in western Asia but it lately came to include also the countries of North Africa. It is geographically known for its warm climate and the world's largest deserts and is often referred to as the "cradle of civilizations". It was the official home to the ancient Akkadian, Babylonian and Assyrian empires, held the history's most accomplished people including the Egyptians and Persians and more than any other region and it was the setting of different sciences and literatures.

The contemporary Middle East, however, has been the number one target of cultural studies; scholars have made of the region a case study and of its people a sample population. The conflicts between Palestine and Israel, Sunni and Shia or even Arabs and Persians are thought to be the reason behind most of the world's problems, the contemporary world has made the East as Disraeli puts it a "career", drawing conclusions from different mindsets and thus creating a series of stereotypes that are now defining the lives of entire generations.

If these falsified representations have anything in common, it is doubtlessly the fact that none of it was set by the target region and its indigenous population. The Middle East and the Orient in general for that matter has long been represented by Western thoughts which is the basis and the starting point of what Said Edward W. calls *Orientalism*.

1.3. Orientalism

"Orientalism" properly and academically emerged with the growing interest in cultural studies as a field of analysis. The 1900s are the years which nurtured the term and gave it such position and propaganda in the contemporary culture. Orientalism, recently, became the buzzword in different areas of studies conducted by the West more than the East and it sure raised controversial ideologies and viewpoints that are now more than any time before reflected and considered globally.

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1.3.1. Definition

Orientalism as the term implies is a discipline which focuses on the Orient. It imagines, distorts, emphasizes and most of the time exaggerates the distinctions of most commonly the Arab people and their cultures as opposed to that of Europe and the United States and it persuasively insists on seeing these cultures as exotic, uncivilized and most of all dangerous. Edward Said defined this discipline in his book Orientalism as the admission of “the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social description, and political accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, ‘mind’, destiny and so on” (Said 1978: 23). This distorted distinction between the East and the West, although it started to be confronted much later, was embodied in different human activities but in art more than any other.

Orientalism can be simply put as the study of the Orient, scholars from different eras and areas have devoted their time to the expansion of this discipline and the drawn conclusions vary and differ from one another and as vague as this term is it could never have been better explained than within Said’s Orientalism(1978).

1.3.2. Edward Said and the Orient

By the nineteenth century and due to all the questions that resulted from the era of colonialism, the world became divided into two concrete masses that although both were once created equal, they now could never be more different. Just as history and culture, East and West are handmade terms representing the countries that are thought to be superior carrying the name “Occident” and the weaker nations under the name “Orient”. This semi abstract conflict was first and foremost addressed by the pioneer of Oriental studies Edward W. Said in his masterpiece Orientalism (1978) which did not only pave the way for other scholars to develop such discipline but also exposed the western hegemony aiming to open his audiences’ eyes to this unfair segregation.

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Said says that the Orient “was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscape, remarkable experiences. Now it was disappearing; in a sense it had happened, its time was over” (Said 1978: 1). The Orient in the western thought has always been considered as a faraway place one visits to rediscover himself, write stories then return home a brand new man, the sad truth was that home was always the occident and never the other way around.

Said’s Orientalism tries to answer the question of why there are preconceived notions of what kind of people live in the Middle East, what they believe and how they act, how come scholars who have never been to the Orient or met its people are crafting art and literature that highlights images about the region that are very often far away from the truth. Said focuses on the fact that these ongoing stereotypes are not guiltless and naïve but extremely motivated. In an interview for *Media Education Foundation* when asked about his interest in Orientalism Said answered:

My interest in Orientalism began for two reasons, one it was an immediate thing, that is to say, the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, which had been preceded by a lot of images and discussions in the media in the popular press about how the Arabs are cowardly and they don't know how to fight and they are always going to be beaten because they are not modern. That was one immediate impulse. And the second one, which has a much longer history in my own life, was the constant sort of disparity I felt between what my experience of being an Arab was, and the representations of that that one saw in art. (Said 1998)

The representations that one sees in the works of greatest artists such as Delacroix, Gerome and novelists as Flaubert are often misshaped to one’s own perspective which very often have little to do with what is really going on in the Orient or what

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it truly looks like, a matter that Said called “the orientalized Orient” referring to the fact that it is handmade.

Orientalism emphasizes on the fact that the Orient is more than a mere idea or thought but a concrete center with a history, language and tradition of thought inhabited by a people whose civilizations are and will always be greater than the misrepresentations assigned to them by the West, in a sense that it needs to be studied and analyzed wholeheartedly rather than designing a series of assumptions which are often mistaken and written by western scholars who perhaps have never set foot in the Orient.

The relationship between the East and the West is as Said puts it one of power, domination and varying degrees of complex hegemony thus Orientalism focuses on the embodiment of this relationship which is performed as an institution for dealing with the Orient “dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, setting it, ruling over it” (Said 1978: 3), therefore what Orientalism in fact is, a distribution; whether it was geographical, historical, economic or sociological which will always highlight the actuality that the world is made up of two unequal halves: Occident and Orient.

As for literature; Napoleon, Flaubert, Lane, Burton and a lot others have made of the Orient a novel case study, these scholars whose literature is glorified and has never been taken for granted crafted works based on some standard representations about the Orient that they once read or come across. Gerard De Nerval’s Journey to the Orient(1851)and William Lane’s An Account of the Manner and Customs of the Modern Egyptians(1836)give the idea that the Orientals are always the same no matter where you find them although years separate the two works in a sense that unlike the West, the East does not develop. Said stated: “I call such a relation between Western writing and Oriental silence the result of and the sign of the west’s great cultural strength, its will to power over the Orient” (Said 1978: 94) and indeed it was the western literature that mattered most as it matters now, Oriental literary

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production was alien, not interested, tasteless and spiritless to deserve publication which ultimately silenced the Oriental thought. The large mass of Occidental literature was sometimes based on personal experiences and some other time was just based on shallow knowledge of the area, in both cases, however, the result was a body of damaging stereotypes.

The notion of the “other” is probably the most important concern of Orientalism, Said wrote:

Orientalism is never far from what Denys Hay has called the idea of Europe, a collective notion identifying ‘us’ Europeans as against all ‘those’ non-Europeans, and indeed it can be argued that the major component in European culture is precisely what made that culture hegemonic both in and outside Europe: the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all the non-European peoples and cultures. (Said 1978: 7)

The backward, the strange, the inhuman, the bizarre, the shapeless and hideous are all adjectives that were consciously more than unconsciously assigned the Orient and thus classifying it as the “Other” as opposed to the center that represents all what is real and civilized, and this feeling of superiority is what the West used to justify the age of colonialism that targeted the east in the previous century.

All things considered, Orientalism sheds light on the Orient that appears in Orientalism – the discipline. The Orient that has long been defined by a system of representations brought by Occidental learning and unconsciousness, an Orient that became a field of interpretation with its people, civilizations and stances, an Orient that is approached systematically more than anything else as a novel topic of learning that needs to be addressed with a certain level of bias because it concerns the “other” line of the dividing line. Edward W. Said aimed to expose people to this

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harsh reality, that the East with its history and literature will remain western-oriented until addressed not by a westerner but by he who knows, feels and believes in the Orient, an Oriental, thus colonial and postcolonial literature and criticism emerged to respond to what colonialism and Orientalism has long claimed.

1.4. Postcolonial Theory of Criticism

Due to the controversies that took place as a consequence of the colonial era and the growing interest in the Orient that has been subject to all kinds of scrutiny and representations, postcolonial studies and criticism emerged as a novel yet solid field of interpretation addressing the literature, history, and culture that were built on a stereotyped ground naturally defining the East as the ultimate “other” of the civilized West.

Postcolonialism or postcolonial studies is an academic discipline that analyzes, explains, and responds to the cultural legacy of colonialism, as a term, field of study or concept, it appeared during the aftermath of Western colonialism, precisely in the late eighties, to shed light on the effects and consequences that transformed the lives and cultures of whole countries. The Postcolonial theory of criticism represents a critical analysis of the culture, history, literature and even modes of discourse that are subjectively assigned to what came to be known as the third world, the countries of Africa, Asia, South America and the Caribbean, theorists focus on colonialism on the one hand and decolonization on the other to expose the long-lasting psychological, political, cultural and economic effects that determine the lives of the colonized on a regular basis. In the contemporary era, the theory escalated to focus on neocolonialism and its power over the previous colonies as well as their behaviors towards women, language and culture, it became wholeheartedly concerned with how developed countries still control the less developed regardless of the end of the direct colonial rule, this indirect rule of exploitation is shielding itself behind self-serving concepts as globalization while what it truly is but a further intense form of capitalism.

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Postcolonial theory of criticism is very much influenced by the Poststructuralist and Postmodernist idea of de-centering; it tries to move away from the standard claims of literature replacing the colonial metanarratives with counter narratives of resistance, searching for identity, calling for independence, and most of all criticizing the Eurocentric cultural hierarchies. Edward Said, one of the most prominent pioneers of this theory has managed to decipher the western canon analyzing how it depicts the East and shapes it in his works Orientalism(1978) and Culture and Imperialism(1993), Franz Fanon's The Wretched of the Earth(1961) again addresses colonialism developing at the same time the principles that shape the postcolonial theory, his thoughts on Western exploitation are laid bare in this work which made it another controversial piece of literature; "colonialism" he says "is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content... it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it." (Fanon 1961: 154), Fanon argues that colonialism have messed up the national consciousness and the deeply rooted thoughts of exploitation and horror will forever be present controlling the development of the once-colonized individual. Homi K. Bhabha is another postcolonial theorist and his perspectives are too of no difference; his main focus is on the state of being at the borders of two cultures which is exhibited in his masterpiece Nation and Narration(1990). Other theorists' works as Spivak's In Other Worlds (1987) and Ashcroft's The Empire Writes Back(1989) have as well contributed in the making of the Postcolonial theory of criticism all at the same time inspiring rising authors to adapt the same modes and themes in their writings.

One of the theory's main objectives is to fight the concept of the "other" that is cemented in most Western narratives, postcolonial theorist reexamined canonical literary texts and their historical context to reveal how they usually follow a standard colonial ideology that puts them at the top and consequently excludes the rest to the very bottom; Said's rereading of Jane Austen's Mansfield Park, Achebe's of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, Bhabha's of Forster's A Passage to India, Suleri's rereading of Kipling's Kim pinpointed the gaps and fissures that determine the

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Western hegemony over the “other” all at the same time revealing the truthful nature of the colonized and their cultures as a form of rewriting the Western canon.

Born within the same ambiance; postcolonial fiction embodied the perspectives of the theory and was highly influenced by the work of the postcolonial theorists to create novels and short stories that fought colonialism on the one hand and worked to grow out of its shadow on the other. Boehmer defines postcolonial fiction as the “writing that sets out in one way or another to resist colonialist perspectives”, he argues that “to give expression to colonized experience, postcolonial writers sought to undercut thematically and formally the discourses which supported colonization – the myth of power, the race classification, [and] the imagery of subordination.” (Boehmer 2006) which made postcolonial fiction another form of revelation of the horrors of colonialism based on rather personal experiences. It, too, focused on the stereotyping otherness that denied the authors their voices for the longest times and includes a variety of themes and motifs that exposed the truthful side of colonialism while crafting astonishing plots with the most zealous characters.

The Middle East, being victim of the most severe forms of colonialism, introduced a body of postcolonial literature that called for independence and steadily reestablished the nation’s long-lost rights. Colonialism in the Middle East coincide with the Arabic literary renaissance and the rise of the novel and drama in the scope of Arabic literature, what resulted from this merge is a collection of postcolonial writing that embody courage, truth and intellectualism. Postcolonial literature very often used the colonial language to transmit the message behind its stories, along Arabic; Middle Eastern authors wrote in English yet still managed to keep their native characteristics incorporating local folklore and proverb and thus transforming the language that used to subject them to a powerful means of expression. Postcolonial fiction as non-fiction centered on common themes as identity, displacements, otherness, and the colonial horrors committed under the name of civilization, it attempts to restore a connection between the indigenous people and places through description, narration, and dramatization thus reclaiming

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spaces and places and it also seeks to expose the crooked whims and desires behind the colonial discourse aiming to carry on past it and move on, and rather than simply being the body of writing that came after empire it focuses on *postcoloniality* to forcibly give the colonized people their voice and place to start to be seen and treated for their truthful selves not biased by a plethora of stereotypes.

Postcolonial studies, theory, or literature emerged as a response to all the controversies created by Orientalism that puts the East at the center of its emphasis, it tries to deal with colonial and imperial effects that have led a whole people to be deemed less necessary and insignificant, it seeks to assert the richness and validity of these people's cultures to restore the practices and traditions that have been lost as a consequence of colonialism, and most of all it fights to revisit history to include the perspectives of the colonized that have been culturally overshadowed for a very long time.

1.4.1. Postcolonial Feminism

A long history of stereotypes, prejudice and severe judgments and remarks have determined the lives and position of women everywhere excluding them from countless social and cultural contexts which ultimately led to the emergence of feminism in the late sixties and early seventies of the twentieth century in the West. As a movement, feminism gained significance across the three phases or waves that it had beheld, the first was political, the second cultural and the third wave was academic which Toril Moi has classified into: the female, the feminist and the feminine.

In the United States and the United Kingdom it started as a struggle for equality through suffrage groups and organizations with the rise of different feminist authors such as Virginia Woolf, Dale Spender, and Hélène Cixous with works that have established the movement's ground rules leading to its second phase. It, then, became defined by revolts against patriarchy and man-made systems with the aim

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of reconstructing women's identity; Simone De Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1949) became glorified and still is representing a solid reference in feminist studies, De Beauvoir had bold statements concerning the conditions that defined the female as the "other" of her male companion and thus challenging her sex to defy this otherness and change it. Mary Ellmann's Thinking About Women(1968), Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique(1963), Kate Millett's Sexual Politics(1969) and other influencing works have called for feminine academics as a form of rebellion against the literature of their patriarchal societies. Post 1980 marked the third wave of feminism which started to be associated with different disciplines as Marxism, Psychoanalysis criticism and Postculturalism, the movement enlarged to include issues as language and writing. During the long course of feminism's development, calling for gender equality was the main aim, this movement sought to answer the questions of why women are treated less than men, as second class citizens, why they are oppressed personally and culturally and enjoy less opportunities than their male counterparts, it tries; more than any field before; to change the position of the Western woman in society.

Standard, Western, or mainstream feminism however was unconsciously limited to the case of the Western woman and when she, the western, was fighting for equality; women in the third world were fighting for survival and independence from the twentieth century colonialism. Thus Postcolonial feminism emerged as a subfield of postcolonial studies in the late 1980s to address mainstream feminism which has rarely been mindful to women outside the Eurocentric zone, women who belonged to the Orient and were once part of colonized territories, this novel discipline wishes to shed light on the typical problems that the Oriental female confronts every day, the situations and issues that differentiate her as a female and as an Oriental thus rejecting the mainstream movement that limits this female and excludes her from recognition. Chandra Mohanty addressed what triggered Postcolonial feminism in her article *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* referring to mainstream feminism as "Eurocentric feminism" saying that "this mode of feminist analysis, by homogenizing and systemizing the

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experiences of different groups of women..., erases all marginal and resistant modes of experiences” (Mohanty 1984) emphasizing on the fact that the lives, circumstances, and experiences of postcolonial women differ from those of the Occidental thus feminism with a colonial background should embrace and project these differences and make them acceptable across cultures, this mode of thought has upgraded the discipline from a simple subset of Postcolonialism to a rather “intervention that is changing the configurations of both postcolonial and feminist studies” (Schwarz and Ray: 2005), Postcolonial feminism developed to be “an exploration of and at the intersections of colonialism and neocolonialism with gender, nation, class, race and sexualities, subjectivities, work and rights.”(ibid).

Postcolonial feminists stand against the portrayals of the Oriental women as uneducated, docile, ignorant, and victimized so these feminist scholars started to represent themselves and their sex for no one can tell their stories better than them, thus they neglected every thought of feminist generalization and hegemony introduced by mainstream feminism, and all at the same time they disapproved of postcolonial tendencies that put them as gender and as nation in stereotyped positions, consequently; this discipline aimed to remind feminists of the fact that there is more than the label of “woman” to address these individuals, actually other factors play a great role culturally and historically in defining the third world female that need to be taken seriously. It also tends to shed light on the separating binaries that place the Western woman as the primary and the rest as secondary; Spivak on the matter said:

the pioneering books that bring First world’s feminists new from the Third World are written by privileged informants and can only be deciphered by a trained readership... this is the tired nationalist claim that only a native can know the scene. The point that I am trying to make is that, in order to learn enough about Third World women and to develop a different readership, the immense heterogeneity of the field must be

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appreciated, and the First World woman must learn to stop feeling privileged *as a woman*. (Spivak 2003)

Spivak's work *In Other Worlds* (1987) tries to address the fact that there is more than one group, whether cultural or ethnic which makes the discipline that studies women larger and thus must deal with feminisms rather than only one standard form, Spivak urges the western woman to step out of her biased circle in order to see that there are other women with different cultures and stories who like her need to be heard.

Moreover, Third World feminism and its discourse includes the double colonization of women by both colonialism and patriarchy, the Oriental female is not only affected by the difference of the sexes but also with the relationship of domination that connects the East to the West, in the contemporary era however; the first have proved to be the hardest. Raj Kumar Mirsha in her article *Postcolonial Feminism: Looking Into Within-Beyond-to difference* wrote:

The matter of fact is that postcolonial women are to remain passive and continue to bear male-oppressive environments... the postcolonial men re-colonize the bodies and minds of their women in the name of preserving their cultural values. Women since long have been supposed to carry the burden of cultural values. But the same have brought a new life and freshness to the consciousness of women. Postcolonial women today feel and enjoy mental freedom though the bodies appear still colonized by men. (Mirsha 2013)

Mirsha argues that Oriental women, although free from direct colonial rule, unlike men still have to deal with the colonization and racism from their own societies, in modern times, these women have managed to prosper and address their situations

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which gave them more freedom yet they still are controlled by men and the set cultural values that limit them to certain criteria, the author urges women to transform their anger to actions and deeds that will most importantly free them from their cultural and religious chained environments. This form of revolt was expressed through literature that has proved to be the most understanding.

Postcolonial feminist writing challenges the deeply rooted assumptions that are assigned to women in both society and canonical literature, it academically pinpoints the ways in which women with postcolonial backgrounds are continuously stereotyped and marginalized, it moreover; aims to throw light on the complex situations in which sexuality and gender are at the core of racism and nationalism, therefore it does not only focus on postcolonial patriarchal oppression but also analyzes how social inequalities are embedded in any political, social, historical, economic and cultural context. Authors as Anita Desai, Fadia Faqir, Suniti Namjoshi, and Nawal el-Saadawi have crafted works that center on extreme stages of women's experiences and sufferings, their literature moves around contemporary social realities, gender role and position, identity, sexual discrimination and the quest for existence as prominent themes in both fiction and non-fiction writing and aims to reject the images drawn of them expanding their space both literally and symbolically. The body of literature that was published during the second half of the twentieth century up to the present day created *postcolonial feminine ecriture* which is perceived and regarded as a new art hoping for radical change to those who have been denied their voice by both history and culture.

All things considered, Postcolonial feminism seeks primarily to deviate from Western or mainstream views of feminism which tend to generalize and homogenize women's issues claiming that they are the same regardless of the different cultures; it then addresses the differences that characterize the once-colonized female and aims to gain respect and harmony without overlooking customs and traditions. Postcolonial feminist criticism and literature center on the

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double oppressed ex-colonized woman, empower her, and urge her to call for a change.

1.5. Oriental Literature

Literature as a form of expression has luckily long subsisted revealing civilizations, cultures, and the daily lives of different people that existed thousands of years ago, although the term can sometimes be notoriously hard to define, it has forever been regarded as the highest form of art. It is a fact that every location around the world has developed its own form of writing and literature; whether it is written or oral, a country's literary heritage is always praised. The literature that was born around the Mediterranean Sea all the way to the Far East has doubtlessly, historically and culturally, proved to be the richest.

1.5.1. Definition

Oriental literature as the name implies in the literature that belongs to the Orient or the East, it is the literature that stretches along the Mediterranean Sea to as far as Japan. The world's greatest civilizations have been constructed along this line which makes the literatures of the different regions the Orient holds the wealthiest in style, form and genre.

1.5.2. Middle Eastern Literature

Despite the limited geography of the Middle East, there surely is a great diversity of the spoken languages, Arabic is the most common and it is given a rather great significance due to its religious features. Along Arabic, other languages are spoken in the Middle East as well as minority languages that are practiced in its different regions. The diversity of the tongues has developed a rich and complex literature that has long characterized the Middle East more than any other form of art; this literature encompasses countries from Egypt all the way to Iran, and lately has even expanded to include other North African countries.

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1.5.2.1 Contemporary Arabic Literature

As Arabic is the most spoken language of the Middle East, Arabic form of writing has emerged as the Middle Eastern central literature.

After the era of colonialism the focus shifted from colonial literature to postcolonial one, the themes and motifs that the first carried are still felt in the second but the writing became more personal based on individual experiences yet still unconsciously hints at the long-lasting effects of the previous era. The novel as a literary genre indeed flourished with the beginning of the present century, authors like Elias Khoury, Mahmoud Saeed, Mahmoud Darwich and a lot others produced novelistic works that were well received by large audiences and consequently these works were demanded to be translated so they can reach even a larger crowd. The novel however was not the only dominant form of writing, contemporary Arabic literature experienced with form and styles and new literary dimensions were yet to be introduced and challenged, collections of essays and articles started to be published in journals and magazines, some authors even chose to be self published and the revolutionary internet was the perfect means, virtual magazines and writing blogs became so popular and highly influential and more authors started to be noticed due to virtual technology because it provided a safe net and a fair chance for all to have their shot at writing. Moreover, those with a solid background in journalism took advantage of their talent and regardless of the lack of the traditional novel's aspects, the messages being transmitted were more than effective touching sensitive topics. Ahdaf Soueif wrote on *The Guardian*:

Arabic literature is not in crisis; in fact, it has never been more energetic and more varied than today... younger writers are making their mark. Many are writing politically engaged work, others depict an alienation that is itself a comment on the 'now'. From the epic works of Ibrahim al-Koni to the contemplative narratives of Bahaa Taher to the 'puzzle' novels published by Malamih, the bestselling Alaa al-Aswany and the runaway success of the 'blogs' brought

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out by Dar al Shourouk Publishing House, Arabic literature today grapples societies. (Soueif 2008)

The twenty first century witnessed a booming development in the writing industry, whether it is the technological continuous progress or the raising interest in literature as a form of expression authors more than ever are keen to tell their and other's stories and experiences, voice the historically and culturally silenced minorities and aim for a change in the Middle Eastern societies. The means may differ and vary but the conscious and unconscious purpose is and has always been cultural progress.

Along with experimenting with new forms of writing and tackling new themes that have been at some point in time in the Arabic society a taboo to even think about, contemporary literature expanded to include new languages; Arabic writers wrote in different tongues than their mother's and the result was a writing of fiction and non-fiction that crossed the cultural boundaries and reached the four corners of the globe, Middle Eastern literature started to be published in French, Dutch, and other languages but most of all, it started to be published in English; a language that half of the world spoke and the other half surely understood, Arabic authors who wrote in English fashioned a language that was universal but at the same time carries personal experiences and reflects the Middle Eastern culture and environment. The literature that is produced in the present century, thus, managed to reach larger audiences, familiarize the culture and the traditions that nurture this literature and lay them bare for the world to see.

1.6. Contemporary Middle Eastern Female's Literature

By the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first, Arabic literature started witnessing the rise of female authors and novelists who rivaled in both quality and quantity, some wrote for entertainment and some for change but the result was pure females' literature that included powerful women characters that took lead and challenged the stereotypes, something that was quite

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new in a society which has often been in favor of the other sex. Women's writing is first and foremost influenced by society; female authors addressed the issues that their gender confronts in the contemporary Middle East and aim to shed light on the situation of the Arab woman and the impacts of cultural restrictions on her life.

Women's writing in the Middle East come from the richest historical background, female authors, poets and scholars have always existed; indeed they were rarely recognized and overshadowed by their male counterparts but they managed to leave their mark in the course of history. Previous women's works are now taken as leverage supporting every contemporary female author.

The themes and motifs around which past feminist literature circled have changed throughout the years with the change of the environment that supports it, up to roughly nineteen fifties the notion of women's literature was as Widdad Sakkakini puts it: "the literature in which a woman writer expresses her inner feelings and subtle sensitivity in female spheres which are out of man's reach... women's literature describes 'female habits and modes of thinking which no man writer, however talented he might be, could reach'" (Sakkakini 1993). During the years that followed, however, and with the dramatic increase in the number of Arab women writers, larger political and social issues started to be embraced, in addition to love and marriage contemporary Arab female authors shed light within their writing on the dominance of men and their personal roles in society as they entered a more feminist phase.

Etel Adnan, Ghada el-Samman, Nawal el-Saadawi, Fadia Faqir, Joumana Haddad and a handful of other female authors have produced fiction, non-fiction, and poetry written both in Arabic and English with the aim of canceling the clichés and stereotypes that dominate the Arab societies. These females who are often seen as the shadows of their husbands with no voice, personality, or pride have written themselves and their characters into a cosmopolitan society adjusting to every situation their patriarchal environments put them in and accordingly changing the

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lives and status of the millions of Arab women who have been hypnotized by man-made systems. Sophie Chamas in her article *10 Middle Eastern Writers You Should Know* said:

Both male and female writers in the Middle East have long had to contend with social, political and religious forces that consider some ideas inappropriate for public discussion. Unsurprisingly, however, it has always been more difficult for female writers, often subjected to stricter behavioral codes by family, society and government, to engage with supposed “taboos”. (Chamas 2015)

Their otherness and various other factors limit Arab female authors; society, religion, government or even their own environment play a great role in what works are to be published and what topics are to be talked about, indeed male authors too are sometimes restricted but these circumstances are quite often harsher on women. Middle Eastern female authors have shown throughout the contemporary years the audacity to challenge themselves as well as their societies and embrace the unusual, marginalized and silent part of an Arabic atmosphere and turn it into wild contemporary art.

Middle Eastern women are authors, activists, novelists, scholars, journalist and a lot more and despite the limitations that restrict them they managed to stand still and powerful. Expressing themselves through literature these females have proved to be witty and courageous and regardless of the restrictions that shamefully still dominate their smallest dreams they are now more than ever before ready to make a change.

1.6.1. Joumana Haddad

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Among the numerous female authors in the Middle East Joumana Haddad was one of the finest. A Lebanese poet, journalist, author, translator, women's right activist and one of the hundred most powerful Arab women, Haddad has become known for challenging the standard form of Arabic writing which has put her on the spotlight of the toughest controversies, she is best known for her *Jasad*, an Arabic language cultural magazine, which has raised interesting views for it tackles subjects that are tabooed and forbidden in the Arabic society, it however embodies Haddad's spirit as an activist as well as author.

The author's quarterly erotic magazine was first published in 2008 and included bold themes as homosexuality and polygamy which are considered sinful to even think about in Middle Eastern societies, using Ottoman setting and antique photos of Arab men and women; Haddad was keen on publishing her work under her real name regardless of the dangerous outcomes which soon made her under attack by critics, men of religion and politics or even average people who strongly disagreed with her. Aida Edemariam wrote:

Haddad had many critics, not all of them so gentlemanly. They hacked into her website and fill her inbox with threats of rape and murder and stoning, call her debauched, immoral, criminal and wicked... the only threat she admits to being seriously rattled by was a promise to throw acid on her – that caused nightmares, and when, not long after, she suspected she was being followed, she didn't drive her own car or even leave her home in a seaside suburb in Beirut for weeks. (Edemariam 2010)

The threats and the judgments that were thrown at her were due to the buildup tension that Haddad's writing was causing; Haddad did not just challenge government or society, she also threw shades at religion not limiting herself to Islam but incorporating Christianity and Judaism as well, something that made the

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so-religious Arab societies go on full madness treating the author's freedom of speech as a demonic act of a criminal.

Speaking seven languages, Haddad has grown to be well admired in foreign countries; along Lebanon and the Arabic nations, she wrote poetry, articles, and books in different countries and foreign languages which made her audience grow bigger and gave her the opportunity to transmit her feminist messages on an international level. Haddad was once called by a British journalist "the Carrie Bradshaw of Beirut" and the "Oprah of the Middle East" by another, paving her way in the literary world with mini-skirts and aggressive heels she has violated every stereotyped vision thrown at her and at her gender in general. The authors' primary concern is the Arab woman, she is keen on exposing the mistreatments that the average Middle Eastern woman encounters on a regular basis, attacking religion and culture Haddad addresses the stone-age parameters that define the lives of these women in the contemporary era, factually; she lately praised the French burqa prohibition and when questioned about it the author said that "it's not racist; it's about their way of doing things. I respect their separation of religion and state" she continues: "if a man puts it on as well, I accept that it's a choice. But why would she – the woman – be the bearer of this so called traditional outfit? Why? Because she is the object of a temptation and she needs to protect herself and the man from temptation." (Haddad 2011), matters as this make Haddad want to write and craft a feminist literature that aims to make a change, the oppression of the Middle Eastern woman is what triggers this audacious author transforming her to a concrete voice for all the voiceless women of her society.

Haddad is recognized as a standard feminist except in her own country because of her continuous rejection of the label, her latest two masterpieces I Killed Scheherazade: Confession on as Angry Arab woman(2010) and its sequel Superman in an Arab: On God, Marriage, Macho Men and Other Disastrous Inventions(2012) have took postcolonial feminism and mainstream feminism for that matter to their artistic edge; not only does she push every patriarchal Arab society's back against a

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corner, but she also is spiritually calling the Arab women to stand for themselves by reminding them of their rights as females and most importantly as human beings.

Joumana Haddad is considered as “the most hated woman in the Middle East” only because she embraces bold and challenging feminist ideas that stand out from the ordinary yet this did not stop her to aim for radical change; she is planning on starting an interactive website for “Angry Arab Women” to tell their stories and the aim of it is to raise more awareness, Haddad says:

As a woman, you have to feel humiliated, and angry, if you don't feel humiliated and insulted, nothing is going to change. We don't need reconstruction in the Arab world. We need destruction and construction. We can't just try to make it better. We have to cancel it and have a fresh start. I know it sounds utopian. I am not a hero, a heroine, I am not particularly courageous, but I have done this in my own small space. (Haddad 2011)

As such was the author's explication of her novel feminist contribution, Haddad aims to create of the website a safe platform for oppressed women in the Arab world to share their experience and stories thus voicing them directly and indirectly. Moreover, Joumana stated that she is on the verge of starting her own nightly T.V talk show where she plans to host different Arab women who are ready to talk and address the pitfalls of being a woman in an Arab country.

Haddad's feminist journey is far from being over for she just announced her candidacy in the upcoming Lebanese parliamentary elections making her one of the few women who are brave enough to target something as solid as the parliament, all what she is and all what she has done is feminist and whether she is accepted or not, she is willing to continue on defending women's rights and honors putting her sex before her safety and happiness.

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1.7. Conclusion

The relationship of the East and West has existed for the longest times and is celebrated in the contemporary era more than any epoch before, it affected the Orientals; the Middle Easterners more severely; to the point that it messed their unconsciousness which ultimately resulted in more tense generations, civilizations, and cultures. The feeling of otherness and inferiority that these people endured and still do have translated into individual and norm behavior that projects uncertainty, fear, and most of all historically triggered oppression which itself is manifested upon the Middle Eastern woman. Literature have been long around to witness the chaos of this morbid relationship and it now serves as a means of expression for Her, the Middle Eastern, to tell her story of the historical oppression that deems her insignificant as a people on the one hand, and the culture that naturally judges her by her gender on the other.

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2.1. Introduction

The cultural and historical relationship between the Occident and the Orient has initiated a novel field of study that managed to address the effects of the segregation that has long separated the two parts; postcolonial studies emerged to include various areas of interpretation among which feminism took a great part. What differentiates the feminism that was born in a colonial atmosphere is the fact that it deals with issues that are in a form or another specific to the ex-colonized countries, issues that cannot be scrutinized with a mainstream feminist lens. The present chapter will be devoted to the analysis of some of the common problems that the woman in the Middle East confronts on the regular in the present century under the name of patriarchy based on Joumana Haddad's Superman is an Arab(2012) which will be used as a source of and a guide to this interpretation.

2.2. Book Summary

Superman is an Arab: On God, Marriage, Macho Men and Other Disastrous Inventions (2012) is a semi-autobiographical book written by the Lebanese journalist, author, and poet Joumana Haddad, it is the sequel of her previous work I Killed Scheherazade: Confessions of an Angry Arab Woman (2010) which provoked so much controversy making the author one of the most culturally and religiously hated people. As I Killed Scheherazade, Superman is an Arab throws bold accusations at sensitive topics in such conservative societies; religion, God, marriage, culture and customs are all within this work put under a postcolonial feminist microscope and scrutinized beyond limits. Anyone who has once come across Joumana's works will promptly realize that the title of this particular work is far from being a compliment; it rather is a manifestation against the prototypical Arab men who believe that they need to be ultra-masculine, "men of steel" as the author calls them, and never show weakness and vulnerability, Joumana declared that this book "[this] is not a manifesto against men in general. Nor is it a manifesto against Arab men in particular. It is, however, a howl in the face of a particular

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species of men: the macho species, Supermen, as they like to envision themselves. But Superman is a lie.” (Haddad: 2012)

Superman is an Arab is based on the author’s personal experiences; it starts with Jouman’s first encounter with Clark Kent, the comic character known as Superman, whom she admired and fell in love with because he shows sensibility and tenderness but then again she gets acquainted with his other side which is Superman, a macho insensitive man whom she grew to abhor. In an interview for *France 24*; when asked about her preference to Clark Kent although every child and even adult usually falls in love with the hero i.e. Superman, she replied:

Because simply I was much more attracted to the character of Clark Kent; he seemed much more credible to me. He was shy, he had weak points; he was more human in a way. But then every time he became Superman I was turned off by the character of this guy who could hear better than us, think better than us and save the world; and it became more and more evident during the course of my life that what the world needed was less Supermen and more Clark Kent which means that men needed to be more reconciled with their real nature, with their vulnerability and less prone to feel as super heroes all the time. (2012)

The author’s aim in this book is to address those men who are too afraid to be vulnerable therefore they over express their manhood in the form of unconscious and sadly even conscious oppression over their women, Joumana exposes the norm in the Arabic societies; those who want to be heroes and act as such ultimately gaining the upper hand over the other sex and behave in untamed pride and superiority; the “macho men” as Haddad classifies them. This need of attention and ascendancy eventually turns “leaders” to “despots”, “bosses” to “slave owners”, “believers” to “terrorists”, and husbands, brothers, and fathers to “oppressors”.

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Superman is an Arab, however, is not only a manifestation against the norms in Middle Eastern societies, it also is an exposure of the oppressive environments that are developing one day at a time in the Arab world, the book presents facts, status, and personal experiences that agree with the fact that still in the twenty-first century patriarchy is more than common in these societies and it is intensified and worsened and far from disappearing, the stories that lay bare in this piece of writing are evident that the contemporary era is as corrupted and unequal as the eras before, and it is the woman who is petrified the most. Haddad in this work gathers different situations where the Middle Eastern female is victimized by the most banal features of her society that ignore her and treat her unequally as opposed to her male counterpart, the author talks about religious as well as cultural cases where the Arab man controls the last word; as marriage, education, or even honour, she addresses Islam, Christianity, and Judaism for the beliefs they carry and the restrictions they present and how they are often assigned to the woman rather than to the man, she also pinpoints and focuses on the fact that contemporary patriarchy is the product of the macho men as well as the ignorant women; one can never fully blame the man for behaving as dominant when it is the female who encourages him and rarely speaks for herself. Joumana is concerned with the role of the Arab woman as much as the role of the Arab man in establishing and maintaining the present patriarchal world, and aims to make her voice heard to hopefully raise awareness and urge her sex to react to this gender segregation that is affecting them mentally and physically.

Having been translated into thirteen languages; Superman is an Arab turned out to be a wakeup call to women across the globe not only those in the Middle East, the responses that the author received concerning this work have proved that superman is also American, French, or of any other nationality as the experiences and the descriptions shared in it have shown a high level of universality; Joumana commented:

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I am writing about my own society and experiences. But when I travelled around the world, women in France, Germany, Italy and Latin America came to me and said that they were feeling the effects of this macho, patriarchal society, too. That's the beauty of literature, isn't it? You think your problem is specific but, perhaps, it's universal. (Haddad: 2012)

The global acceptance of this work proves that the problem of patriarchy is still present in many parts of the world, some features and statements in Superman is an Arab managed to seize upon the Western woman as much as the Eastern for the feeling remains the same regardless of the different cultures.

Haddad's choice of the Middle East as a setting for this controversial book was not a coincidence but rather based on her and other female's experiences, being a citizen of Lebanon, a country that the world sees as the "Switzerland of the Middle East", was never a favor to her; Patriarchy in this country is as solid as it is in other extremist nations as Saudi Arabia; this is the reason why the author selected noteworthy interpretive topics rather than talking about the standard basic feminists' needs. Joumana argues that "it's not really about whether I can go dancing until 4am; it's about how I can't give my nationality to my children because I am a woman. It's about laws that don't protect me from violence or rape." (Haddad: 2012) this exact point vividly illustrates the aims of Joumana Haddad as well as any postcolonial feminist work that differentiates from mainstream feminist interpretations of the mainstream patriarchal problems.

Every chapter in Superman is an Arab splits into a poem, a rant, and a narrative; from monotheism to machismo and marriage, and on God, politics, and Middle Eastern hierarchies; Joumana Haddad have managed to address most of what is wrong with the Arab societies in the contemporary era and how the same patriarchal issues that have been shed light upon in the beginning of the eighties still, in the present day, very much common and far away from being treated and changed. "It

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is not my key aim to change the world” the author says “what I care about in living and writing. That is my main battle ... And that’s about it.” (Haddad 2012: 19) this kind of literature, however, is what the world truly needs to be changed to the better, this books may not have ended patriarchy in the Middle East; but it sure raised awareness about this immortal unfair institution.

2.3. The Beginning of Middle Eastern Patriarchy

The controversy that the term patriarchy causes is beyond complex, it has been present for several years and it still raises different questions and presents various perspectives that have been severely intensified in the contemporary era. How it is confronted and treated is a more novel topic but the beginning of patriarchy as a feeling, a mode of living, or even a form of permanent dominance can sure be traced over hundreds of years ago.

Joumana argues that every Feminist, gender studies scholar, or even an average intellectual female will agree on the fact that patriarchy was a product that resulted from the process of universe creation, first the earth was created, than the man to live in it, and then the woman to keep the man company and from that moment on, the man set out to hunt and the woman to cook, and the routine never changed; still in the twenty-first century the man wakes up to go to work and the woman to take care of their home and rarely the other way around.

More keen and determinant feminists are often targeting higher powers as the primary source of patriarchy; religion is often described as sexist as it constantly and from the very beginning favors the male and treats him better than the female, these accusations are often illustrated by verses from the holly books; the Bible and the Quran in particular are the most addressed.

²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed

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up the flesh at that place. ²²The LORD Godfashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. ²³The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. (Genesis 2:22)

This verse is taken from the New American standard Bible; and it is the first and the most reached statement that justifies the perspective of these feminists, the thought of the woman being created from the man's rib is considered as the starting point of patriarchy; she was not created as a whole therefore she will remain dependent of the man and he on the other hand will have control over her since she was made from him.

Patriarchy in the Middle East however has rarely if not never been truly initiated by religious standards, beliefs, or diplomacies, although the author in her book mentions the effects of religion on the woman, she tries to highlight it did not initiate patriarchy, and the fact that the latter did not start as a protest against unfair job opportunities, nor did it emerge as a response to political restrictions and boundaries; patriarchy in the Middle East and the Arab countries for that matter begun with untold personal experiences, it was given birth in mediocre societies where the lives of women turned into a morbid struggle for survival; where an average female is forced into arranged marriage with a husband that beats her constantly and the thought of divorce is a faraway dream morally and culturally banned, where men mistreat, exploit and patronize women in every aspect of daily life, where fathers kill their daughters in the name of honour and for the sake of the same name encourage their sons to behave the same way, where a man very often uses his gender as a source of power thus gaining personally and culturally the upper hand over the other sex, it starts, Haddad argues, with fathers who forbid their daughters to go to school because they have turned ten; they are women now and should act as such thus stay home. Yet; patriarchy was never only male, it too gained strength because most mothers teach their sons to be manly and dominant

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and their daughters to behave doll-like and submissive, it emerged because of those women who get heavenly excited with the thought of a newborn son but rarely with that of a daughter, It started with “women who keep silent when these daughters are abused, whether physically or psychologically” (Haddad 2012: 21), it gained strength because of “women who teach other women obedience and submission; women who disdain or hate or fight successful women, women who do not believe in successful women” (ibid), or with women who “encourage their girls to get married at fourteen or be ‘patient’ when their husbands beat them” (ibid). Patriarchy in the Middle East is far more than a simple problem of a man having the upper hand; it rather was born and still is emerging because the female, too, is contributing whether consciously or unconsciously in the making of this patriarchal system that defines her as the “other”.

The response to gender inequality in the West was embodied in the three waves of feminism that spanned the years of the twentieth century until present day, feminists and activists spoke in the name of the female in Europe and the United States aiming the change her cultural, political, and economic status that was in no way near to that of the man, thus women’s suffrage and liberation movements started flourishing during the first half of the twentieth century and for the first time the position of the female in these societies started to change for the better; it might have taken a whole century but it eventually fulfilled dream-like goals. Feminism, however, in the contemporary era grew to gather various perspectives and as a matter of fact, scholars started to address the discipline as feminisms to underscore the multiplicity of the points of view that the term now holds; thus the white feminist stance that was considered as the standard of universality became overshadowed by new forms a feminisms that did not only focus on gender equality but it also tried to shed light on other feminist matters that are more severe and show more seriousness. In the Middle East, as one part of the Third World, Postcolonial feminism emerged as the primary response and manifestation against female oppression, the equality of the sexes was and still is the starting point of this mode of feminism; but the atmosphere that this discipline covers is quite different

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from what a standard feminist truly knows and fights for. Coming from the Middle East and with a postcolonial baggage, feminists as Joumana Haddad strive to address the personal experiences that have caused the beginning of patriarchy in these countries at first, and then tackle the more universal feminist topics, it may sometimes be misleading and confusing but the situations of the oppressed woman change from a culture to another; a Western female in normal cases in the contemporary era rarely fears death by her own father or brother for having been out at night or choosing a career over marriage, but that is not the case for the average Oriental girl or woman with fathers, brothers, and husbands who have been culturally oppressed by colonialism for hundreds of years and very often feel the need to express their long repressed manhood by ruling over the weak chain of their societies, or females who have been victims of religion-bending and restricted by falsified rules; but that is a whole other topic. This is what Haddad tries to address in her work, the personal experiences that make women really feel that they are living in unfair environments; Haddad directs these situations for she believes that the system will never change if its source is still at controversy.

These are the kinds of scenarios that Postcolonial literature as Haddad's Superman is an Arab tries to direct and decipher, situations that need to be addressed by those who have lived in an ex-colonized country and feel the pressure that comes with such morbid history. Feminism that was born in the Orient in general and the Middle East in particular have proved that patriarchy indeed changes from culture to culture, and as any other corrupted institution; it at least needs to be talked about.

2.4. Patriarchy and the Middle Eastern Culture

Culture plays a great role in determining the seriousness and brutality of patriarchy in the Middle East, countries that have been barbarically colonized at one point in their historical time have indeed developed some restrictions and concerns towards their everyday behaviours which certainly have, in one form or another, contributed in the evolution of different oppressive institutions towards the Middle

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Eastern woman; the relationship between culture and patriarchy in the East can never go unnoticed and the illustrative cases that agree with such statement are doubtlessly numerous and they are related to the most simple Middle Eastern traditions or beliefs that Haddad developed in her book and will be further discussed in the course of this paper, they may not appear oppressive but a deep analysis of them will prove the difference.

2.4.1. Honour Killing

One of the most patriarchal acts that have plagued the Middle East for a very long time and that Haddad addresses in her work is honour killing; a concept that has been the primary concern of Postcolonial feminist criticism and regardless of its inhumanity and atrocity it still is practiced in many Arab countries.

Honour killings occur when a member of the family does something that crosses the cultural and religious boundaries in a society thus brings shame to the family, punishment in this case is death by a member of the family usually a father or a brother. The term is ironically self-explanatory; a member of the family is willingly killed if that member violates the honour of this family, ironically again, the family member who is to be killed is rarely a male. Honour killing is usually practiced for different reasons as refusing to engage in an arranged marriage, having a sexual relationship outside of wedlock, dressing in what is culturally inappropriate, renouncing a faith, or even becoming a victim of rape.

Haddad's interpretation of this institution is very sharp, she focuses on the word "honour" which she puts as the most divined notion in the Arab countries; thus the act of honour killing is considered as being necessary and she points out that still in the contemporary era it is highly practiced and even acceptable taking the lives of innocent women every year. Why women and not men? Haddad argues; because still nowadays women are considered to be the holders of the family's honour; holders not in the sense that they have a saying in the matter but rather in the fact

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that *she* who crosses the line of the established cultural restrictions no matter how unfair they are is automatically dishonouring her family and therefore deserves to die as a consequence of shaming their honour. In her heartbreaking book Murder in the Name of Honor: The True Story of One Woman's Heroic Fight Against an Unbelievable Crime; Rana Husseini stated that "beliefs relating to women as the bearers of family honor are still embedded in many people's minds... but these beliefs are about control, not honor" (Husseini: 220), honour killing has from the beginning been a form of dominance; a way a man controls his sister, daughter, or wife to restrict her to his selfish needs under the name of culture Husseini states, there is no honour in killing and there has never been, how are societies in the twenty-first century still encouraging such behavior is truly a grotesque form of irony.

Joumana Haddad in Superman is an Arab has taken this matter into deep consideration presenting facts and statements that expose the hideousness of this unusual type of murder, Haddad focuses on the fact that honour killing is indeed a solid form of patriarchy as it is always the female who is the victim; she states:

Obviously honour killings apply to women but not to men. Have you ever heard of an Arab woman slashing the throat of her brother because he had sex without being married? Another more relevant, and painful, question: do the mothers of the victims act to prevent the crimes, instead of observing a shameful silence in the best-case scenario? (Often they even take the side of the men of the family. (Haddad 2012: 67)

Haddad in her chapter "The disastrous invention of the original sin" has shed light on honour killing treating it as immoral and barbaric, and she too pointed out the hypocrisy of standards in the Arab societies, honour killing, she claims, has never been practiced on men it rather is an institution that is exclusive to women thus it should be considered as patriarchal and oppressive. Joumana, furthermore, directs

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the fact that women are contributing as bad as men in the spread and encouragement of honour crimes; which is a far worse behaviour; an oppressive act committed by women towards their own sex.

According to the United Nations' 2015 figures, five thousand women every year around the world are being murdered in the name of honour, in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Jordan and most of the Middle Eastern countries lives are taken for the dumbest banal reasons; Arab women are being burnt to death, thrown acid at, forced into unwanted marriages, and barbarically beaten and abused to preserve honour; as ridiculous and backward as that sounds; it unfortunately is true. "Imagine your sister or daughter being killed for chewing gum, for laughing at a joke in the street, for wearing make-up or a short skirt, for choosing her own boyfriend/husband or becoming pregnant." (Husseini 2009: 6).

In the same vein of thought; Husseini in her book Murder in the Name of Honor (2009) points out the acts that lead to committing such crimes, some of the decisions or mistakes committed are probably considered naïve and normal in other countries but never in the Middle East. The author gave different examples of this institution, an Iraqi father murdered his own daughter, running over her with his car, for conducting a "too westernized" behaviour, because "she liked make-up... hoped to be able to support herself" (CNN: 2011) and refused to be married to a stranger that he has chosen for her, or in Jordan; an eighteen-year-old man shot and killed his twenty-year-old sister for the possession of a cell-phone that her family did not know about, and she focuses on other crimes that have been registered under honour killing with predators serving little to no sentence for their murders, and the causes may differ from one case to another.

One motive of this institution however, has proved to be the most intense and Haddad focused on this point in particular to show the brutality of this institution as well as the patriarchy that lays behind it, rape in another cause of honour killing; the

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author has shared the experience of a Jordanian girl who has been brutally murdered because her neighbour has sexually harassed and raped her:

Let me introduce you to Maha. Maha was a twenty-four-year-old Jordanian girl who committed the ‘crime’ of becoming pregnant after she was raped by her neighbour. She was therefore killed by her brother for the shame that she brought on the family. She was stabbed repeatedly in the face, neck and back as well as being hacked up with a meat cleaver. The culprit neighbour denied and relocated, and the Jordanian court sentenced the brother to six months in prison, justifying the light sentence by the ‘state of fury’ that caused the brother to act in an irrational way while defending the family’s ‘honour’. (Haddad 2012: 66)

The girl’s fault was that she was raped; sexually harassed and traumatized by her male neighbour who according to the author did not even get a warning from the court or the state, this so-called brother has ended the life of his sister and unborn nephew to preserve honour; but where is honour in this case? What did this innocent girl do to deserve to die with a child inside of her? Where is the honour in letting a murderer and a rapist live happily ever after while a person’s life has been taken so brutally, it truly is horrible to live in a world where the word honour is worth more than a life; but nothing really matters when still in the twenty-first century it is the victim who is punished for being raped under the statement of *shameful behaviour*.

The list of honour killings can go on and on and the reasons why these kinds of killings are perpetrated vary in each case. Robert Fisk in an outstanding article for *Independent* entitled *The Crime wave that Shames the World* has managed to gather different honour killing cases that expose the patriarchy that is becoming more common within the Middle Eastern families. “it is difficult to remain unemotional at the vast and detailed catalogue of these crimes” Fisk says “how should one react to

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a man – this has happened in both Jordan and Egypt – who rapes his own daughter and then, when she becomes pregnant, kills her to save the ‘honor’ of his family?”(Fisk: 2010).

These cases have turned the relationship between the sexes in the same family into a twisted demonic form of control and dominance; a relationship within which women are exploited every day and denied the voice to defend themselves, if this is not barbaric oppression; what is?. Du’a Khalil Aswad, Fisk illustrates, was stoned to death by a group of 2000 men at the age of seventeen for falling in love with a boy from another tribe, and in 2010, a Palestinian stabbed his married sister to death for conducting a “bad behavior”, and different other cases were presented by Fisk in his article that agree with Haddad’s and Hussein’s interpretation of the absurdity which causes these types of killings. In the contemporary times; even in the West, Arab families are still holding on to this morbid tradition, numerous women and girls have been murdered all around Europe and the United States because they brought shame to their families. These are but a few of honour killing cases; Robert Fisk has even mentioned the details of these killings that often proved to be inhuman and savage, the victims are most of the times tortured before killed, some of them are even buried alive and if that does not kill them; they are taken from their grave a reburied again until they die.

Honour killing, and any other honour crime, displays cultural features; in different Arabic cultures honour is a central value, these cultures treat men as the source of this honour and women have no effect on the matter but destroying it; in such a case there is the immediate need to preserve what have been disgraced and destroyed and the only quenching solution and revenge is killing. In most cultures in the East, Haddad claims, killing as a consequence of a shameful behaviour committed by the female is treated with less seriousness for it carries a long-standing cultural baggage thus it is automatically acceptable and justifiable and in the contemporary times, Honour killings have deviated from their standard initiative which is predominantly any sexual activity practiced out of a wedlock, male

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members of the Arab families are using such justifications to oppressively control their female relatives under the name of honour; any culturally restricted behaviour as wearing makeup or choosing education over arranged marriages is seen as a trigger to honour shaming.

All across the Middle East and South Asia, a large number of women are murdered to preserve honour every year and the crimes that are not reported are four times bigger than the ones being addressed, over two thirds of women are victims of atrocious violence on a daily basis and very often by their male relatives and sometimes even female, “women and girls are shot, stoned, burned, buried alive, strangled, smothered and knifed to death with horrifying regularity” (Ms.Pillay: 2010) for the most ridiculous acts that are regarded as the simplest human right in Western countries. Women in the Middle East in particular wake up every day to go to war against their own culture which is their biggest enemy; they are every second under scrutiny, denied their rights as females and as humans and still in the twenty-first century rare are those who are not afraid of the word “honour”, Haddad’s contribution to this matter aims to highlight the intensity of the institution, as a feminist she believes that such cultural occurrences are more worthy of interpretation yet they are often overshadowed by the more controllable matters that feminism tends to focus on.

2.4.2 Female Genital Mutilation

Unfortunately, honour killing is not the only crime committed against women in the Middle East and very far from being so; Female Genital Mutilation is an another form of patriarchy that oppresses the Oriental female from a very young age, it is culturally oriented, dangerous, and may in most of the times put the woman’s body at risk; yet still in this century it is widely practiced as a call to preserve cultures and traditions.

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“about 8,000 women undergo genital mutilation daily” Haddad says “ 97 per cent of women in Egypt are subjected to this atrocity. As for the general number affected in the world, it is about 140 million women and girls” (Haddad 2012: 69); thousands of girls are subjected to this torture everyday and the Middle Eastern woman is of no exception. The process of female genital mutilation centers on the procedures taken to alter and injure, consciously and intentionally, the female’s genital organs for a non-medical reason. It is most of the times of no health or good to the lives of the women and girls who undergo this ancient tradition, it causes bleeding and urinating problems, cysts and complications in childbirth, yet it still is practiced mostly in the Middle East and African hurting young females very often under the age of fifteen regardless of its morbid consequences.

Haddad focuses on Egypt as the Middle Eastern country where female genital mutilation is most practiced; although it has been entitled illegal a decade ago it still is praised and permitted in families and societies as a traditional and cultural act that should be protected. Female genital mutilation, like honour killing, Haddad argues, is considered as a process to preserve the honour, there are a lot of controversies in the contemporary era about whether it is a cultural or religious matter but the references to religion are often overshadowed by the cultural connotations of this process. FGM dates back to ancient African tribes where it was practiced on girls who do not exceed the age of fifteen, the aim of it was and still is to “ensure pre-marital virginity” (Haddad 2012: 69); girls who refuse to undergo this practice are thought to be not valid for marriage therefore mothers over the years have come to prefer having to harm their daughters than not being able to get them married afterwards, and men from a very young age are taught by their society first and their mothers second to never consider a marriage with a woman who has not been cut, and for such reasons Haddad in her book claims that this practice is purely cultural for it is controlled by traditions and beliefs that are manmade thus can be changed.

The health risks that are often a consequence of female genital mutilation, death, the direct violation and of the female’s human rights, the traumatic

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psychological effects that these women have to live with their entire lives, the complications that come afterwards in their adult life, the fact that it is practiced on very young girls who most of the time do not know about it so they are denied the choice and the voice to say no, and a lot more comes as a result of this horrible practice that is still withheld in the twenty-first century, yet what captivates the soul and drives one insane is how this tradition, regardless of its cruelty and backwardness, is culturally permitted and praised, how little boys are taught to be separatists, picky and racist to their own people from the beginning of their innocent lives, how they are told that a woman who has not been cut is not chaste and is living an immoral life so they have to stay away from her, “women who have not had the procedure are regarded as too unclean to handle food and water” (Haddad 2012: 69); Haddad focuses on these wrong standards that have been for a very long time conserved as a form of dominance and control towards the Middle Eastern woman’s mind and body, girls, she pinpoints, are still in the contemporary era being intimately checked before marriage as a symbol of chastity and defined by the cuts on their genital parts and have no right whatsoever to change this unwanted behaviour. Moreover, numerous are the cases where is the mother who takes her own daughter to be cut thinking that it will increase her chances in marriage, numerous are the times when a female ties another female down and stops her from moving or escaping so that a third female cuts her genital parts, various are the mothers who trick their little girls into going to the doctor’s office, which in most cases is the house next door with a elderly women who has picked up this tradition from her ancestors over the years, to be mutilated; Haddad in her book made sure to mention that the woman’s role in the expand and the persistence of female genital mutilation is as strong as the man’s if not stronger, “support for the practice often comes from women themselves” Joumana says “it is the mothers who drag their daughters, usually without their prior consent, to undergo the operation, frequently in unsanitary conditions.” (Haddad 2012: 69), it is the women who teach their sons to reject she who has not been cut because she is not pure and unfitted for marriage, and most of all it is the women who has never, for a second, think of what FGM is doing to their daughters’ bodies, the amount of blood they lose, or how bad it

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physically and mentally hurts, they rather prefer to preserve culture; a culture that has been molded by man to be patriarchal and deems them unworthy of the slightest right of being normal unharmed humans in control of their own bodies, and they on top of that “dare to claim that being treated with such condescension... is their ‘choice’” (Haddad 2012: 69). Haddad’s focus on the role of the female in the persistence of this institution is to show that it might be the man who has created such patriarchal zone of dominance but it sure is the woman who chooses to stay in it.

2.4.3 Institutionalizing Patriarchy under the Notion of Marriage

Marriage is sacred in the Middle East, it is not only a choice or a path that one chooses to cross in his lifetime; it rather is a cultural responsibility that has to be fulfilled, a decision that very often is taken to preserve the tradition of this institution more than any other thing.

The institution of marriage, in its most *normal* cases, is the union of a man and a woman with the aim of starting a family *together*, loving and respecting each other and most of all; completing one another, in the Middle East, however, the natural flow of this institution is rarely followed, Haddad argues that once a man and a woman get married both religiously and lawfully they enter a lifelong circle of dominance where the men holds the upper hand and the woman is to oppressively obey. Arabic marriages in the contemporary era as they were in the old times expect the man to provide for his house and the woman to serve her husband, it may have slightly changed over the years but the core of this patriarchal system remains the same, Joumana states that marriage in the Arab world is a patriarchal institution; “one that promotes male superiority and power over women”(Haddad: 2012) she says; the man is in a position of dominance because he has been supported by social and cultural customs that expect him to behave as such; shame and honour for example, Haddad says, push the man to be the best version of himself that is dominant, in control of his family, and never in need thus

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boys from an early age hold on to this idea of marriage and since it is personally and culturally cemented it eventually turns to a man's identity and reason, whereas the woman on the other hand is culturally defined by her husband and nothing more.

The author wrote:

... An Arab woman does not acquire 'status' in the eyes of society until she gets married and becomes the wife of someone (note that there is a special title for unmarried women, same as in most other languages – Miss – and no equivalent title for unmarried men). 'Spinsters' are treated with pity and condescension. Not to mention that wives are still expected to do most of the household works, even those who have other jobs. (Haddad 2012: 133)

In the Middle Eastern societies, it is marriage that defines the status of the woman; the unmarried female is very often stereotypically classified and judged and for this reason, marriage is romanticized for young girls from the start so they will make it their life goal to get married, mothers tend to teach their daughters how to speak and behave as grown women from childhood so that they will be ready for their husbands once a bit older, Joumana declared that ideas such as pleasing one's husband and treating him with love and respect or obeying him and never raise one's voice when talking to him are planted in little girls' minds preparing them for what will eventually and by nature oppress them, moreover, how fathers treat their wives and how these wives response to it also defines the girl's or the boy's picture of how a family should be; behaviours that are sometimes ignored by the parents are forever marked in the children's memory thus they grow up to behave the exact same way and very often these behaviours tend to be patriarchal.

The system of marriage that states that men are the providers and women must obey has turned this institution into a struggle for survival, the authors argues that the characteristics that make up the institution of marriage has given the man whether he was a husband or a father the power to mold the woman's life in various

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shapes and forms for it deviated from its natural meaning to include irrelevant situations that can, in most cases, be solved otherwise. The author again gives the example of rape which is in different Arabic countries settled by marriage, a kidnapper of a minor, Haddad says, can escape prosecution if he marries his victim and this law has been used to justify rape as well, the aim of marriage in this case is to preserve the family's honour; it is not for the sake of the victim who was kidnapped or raped nor is it done out of sympathy or love, marriage is forced upon a traumatized girl so that her father and her brother can look the others eye to eye without any shame or judgment. Joumana gives the case of a Moroccan girl that has endured the same situation and the consequences were not in her favour; Amina, a sixteen-year-old, has committed suicide by poisoning herself with rat poison after she was forced to marry her rapist to preserve her family's honour, her so-called husband hit her on the regular and although she has talked to her mother about it all she got was a poor advice to be patient so she was left with no other choice but to put an end to her life, cases as such make marriage patriarchal in the Middle East, Haddad's aim was to reveal the patriarchy that controls this institution in the contemporary era and how the behaviours that most wives think simple or normal affect their lives as well as those of their children.

2.4.3.1. Child Marriage

On the same stream of thought child marriage became more than common in the Middle East, "over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides" (Haddad 2012: 136) Joumana says; in the Middle East and North Africa one out of five girls are married before the age of eighteen, in some of these countries; girls are even forced to get married by the age of ten to men who are the age of their fathers and they can do nothing about it. Practitioners of child marriage, Haddad argues, promptly link it to religion focusing on the point that the prophet Mohammed (PBUH) has married his wife Aisha when she was nine and he was at that time fifty-two; he is the messenger of Allah so men should follow his steps thus child marriage must be well perceived and praised, many studies in the contemporary era have, however, laid

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evidence that states that Aisha was married to Mohammed at the age of nineteen, but it is hard to change a perspective that has existed for the longest of times and is strengthened by religious beliefs within a people who have historically and culturally proved to be the most stubborn.

The health risks that result from child marriage are numerous and again it is the female who is most affected, the book presents a lot of cases that have ended up by the death of the bride in a very short time; some have bled to death and others have chosen to put an end to their miserable lives by their own hands. In some Arabic nations as Yemen; little girls by the age of ten and eleven are taken out from the playground and put in their husband's houses who are in most cases twice their age if not more, a little girl that has spent most of her times outside playing is put in a situation that will eventually traumatize her mentally and damage her physically; a ten-year-old exposed to a certain level of intimacy is wrong and will remain wrong no matter how hard the parents try to beautify the institution of marriage or how many religious verses they can collect, Joumana illustrated with the case of a Yemeni girl who has been forced into an arranged marriage that depicts the savagery of this common behavior; "one particular tragic case" Haddad says "is that of thirteen-year-old Yemeni child bride Ilham Mahdi al Assi who died in 2010, three days after her wedding, after she was tied down, raped repeatedly and left bleeding to death by her 'loving' husband'." (Haddad 2012: 136); and still now in the modern times such immoral behaviours are justified by religion while nor Allah nor his prophet have once uttered that killing an *innocent, harmless* soul was acceptable just because it is religiously oriented.

Again, women are as responsible as men in the promotion and the existence of child marriage, mothers are as guilty as charged, the author argues, for forcing their daughters to get married at a young age fearing they will not get married at all or that society will judge them for making it to the age of twenty without a husband, the Arabic culture glorifies marriage as being the highest social status for the female thus girls are pressured to enter marriage young, it is the mothers who romanticize

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this institution to their daughters and talk them into giving up their education, careers and lives once the right husband comes along, it is the mothers who prepare their daughters for their wedding nights and give them all sorts of patriarchal advice so they will live happily with their husbands, it is the mothers who advise their daughters to be patient when their husbands hit them because, according to them, that is the course of a marital relationship and everybody goes through such phases, it is the mothers who encourage their husbands to accept a marriage proposal as soon as possible so their daughter will be the first to get married in the village thus honouring her family, and it is women who are encouraging other women to live in misery as long as it is hidden under the notion of marriage for everything is in the eyes of the Arabic society acceptable except the unmarried woman.

Picture a fifteen-year-old girl with four children on her lap and a man who has just turned seventy by her side, can you call that a family? There is no honest culture, religion, politics, or even a slight feeling in the right person's soul that sees such picture and feels that nothing is wrong with the world, yet still in the twenty-first century in a region that is supposed to be peaceful for it is all what its religion proposes; there are girls who are being forcibly held by their so-called husbands, girls who are forced to quit school no matter how brilliant they are, and girls who do not get to celebrate their fifteenth birthday because they are too busy nursing their children and obeying their husbands all at the same time, when a father in the West holds his daughter's hands to the movies another in the East is holding his daughter's hand to take her back to her husband from whom she keeps escaping fearing that he would one day beat her to death.

2.4.4. Hypocrisy and the Middle Eastern Standards

The cultural and religious restrictions that make the Middle Eastern environment have put some barriers concerning the behaviours of the people, yet these restrictions; although praised and considered very necessary, are very often ignored mostly by the patriarchal sample that has established them in the first place.

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Haddad states that the hypocrisy that occurs in countries where women are forced to stay at home, where relationships outside wedlock are considered sinful, and the female body is regarded as the holder of the family's honour and should be well preserved, i.e. covered from head to toe, reflects nothing but the wrongfulness of the Middle Eastern standards, what really happens in Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and very possibly every other Middle Eastern country is the opposite of what is promoted as the true face of these countries' culture.

As an example of this hypocrisy, the author addressed the exploitation of women in the popular culture which is very common in the Middle East especially in the contemporary era, the technological revolution and the continuous influence of the West have largely contributed in the development of the Arab television; the programmes aired vary and have proved to be effective and reflective of the regions' culture.

Haddad claims, for a part of the world that disapproves of the slightest acts that do not go by the *book*, the measures that are taken for television production have definitely shed light on the hypocrisy that is ruling these countries, "... Billboards, TV advertisements and music videos all display a highly charged sexuality... you can't even see publicity for a fridge without a half-naked woman lying on top of it, supposedly luring you into buying it." (Haddad 2012: 71)

Joumana claims that touristic advertisements in particular are the strongest advocate for women exploitation; the female figures that appear in such clips are far away from the realistic picture of the norm in the Middle Eastern societies but regardless of that, this type of advertisements are pretty common and many people actually agree of them as being the most effective for business. The director that approves of such promoting methods may have a wife that has never seen the beach because she is supposedly meant to stay at home and take care of her children, the average male that enjoys such advertisements and actually goes to the advertised location hoping to find the type of women that appear in the picture may have a

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dead sister that he has *honourably* killed for being once late or having chosen a career over a husband. Haddad actually tries to reflect the twisted standards of these men who enjoy the freedom that is being exposed in television; they are not against the women who are physically used to promote some banal things that can be promoted just as easily other way, Arab men are never against women exposing their bodies in the beach or being independent and powerful whether economically or politically or cultural or in whatever field there is, they are not against women who challenge the stereotypes and live their lives the way they want, the Middle Eastern man is not against any of that as long as these women are not his relatives, the authors claims that as long as she is not his wife, daughter, or sister she is allowed to do whatever she wants to do and be whoever she wants to be; he has absolutely no problem with it.

Another action that projects the hypocrisy of the Middle Eastern standards is sexual harassment; Joumana says “sexual harassment has reached such epidemic levels in the Arab world that it can be listed as an Arab national sports, with no laws to protect women from it” (Haddad 2012: 80), she argues that it has reached its highest level in the contemporary era and of course it is the woman who is most petrified. Again she directs how Middle Eastern countries that have a common habit of covering their women for the sake of protecting and preserving them, countries that are extremely restricted by culture more than religion; where the female’s body is considered as the strongest symbol of honour and a bearer of the family’s pride and dignity; sexual harassment may come as a shock for most people outside the Arabic sphere; how come societies that have long shown extremism towards the woman in every field of life have some of the highest percentages of sexual harassment, it may surprise the native as well for everyone thinks that harassment may happen once or twice every now and then and is totally controllable but sadly that is far away from being true, “in Egypt alone, 98 per cent of foreign female visitors and 83 per cent of Egyptian women experience sexual harassment.”(Ibid) Joumana says; some justify such statistics by the numerous number of women who “seek attention” by not covering themselves and behaving different from what is

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deemed proper, but the harassment that a female who does not wear a scarf gets it about the same of the one who does gets; it is not a matter of what the woman is wearing, the author states, because she could be covered from the top of her head to her tiniest toe and still be inappropriately approached and sexually harassed.

Sexual harassment in the contemporary times has transformed into an illness; it not only agrees with the idea that the standards that entire generations are raised on are tinted with hypocrisy; how come he who puts a scarf on his wife, sister, and daughter aiming to protect them from the outside world sexually harasses other women in the streets, but it also represents a form of violent patriarchy; men continuously harass women to remind them that their places are at home not outside, Mr Sadek said on *BBC* that “ male patriarchal culture does not accept that women are higher than men, because some women had education and got to work, and some men lagged behind and so one way to equalize status is to shock women and force a sexual situation on them everywhere” (Sadek 2012) and some men in Saudi Arabia have admitted that they target women cashiers in supermarkets so they feel threatened and leave their jobs, so it is not just a sick pathetic behaviour that can be common in Western countries as well, it is a monopoly game to dominate and control, it is more of a twisted mental disease that embody patriarchy and projects it on every woman’s hope to walk peacefully outside, ride the bus, get a job, or any other of her most banal hopes for that matter.

2.4.5. Middle Eastern Man’s Perspective

A study conducted by the U.N Women Agency in 2016 has shown that two-thirds to three-quarters of men in the Middle East believe that the primary role of women in Arab countries should be caring for their households, men in the Middle East still hold the traditions of their parents and are keen on keeping them; the idea of women belong in the kitchen is very common among in these societies and consequently it developed to a form of patriarchy with no motives whatsoever just the need of superiority.

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Haddad has illustrated with divorce as a vivid example of the cultural stubbornness that shapes Arab men's perspective, although it concerns both sides of the marriage, she states, it is the woman who is touched by the aftermath of this institution. Being divorced in an Arab society is a shameful act for women but it is absolutely normal for men; society has never judged them for breaking up their marriage and they rarely find difficulties in entering another one as soon as possible. Women on the other hand are, first of all, blamed for their divorce even though it, most of the time, is not their faults, then; as soon as their divorce is final they get disqualified as "good" women and "marriage material" and promptly pushed to a margin that deems them unworthy of a normal and non-judgmental life. These clichés are becoming common by the minute in the Middle East and they are motivated by the man's wrongful perspectives; the author claims that men omit the thought of marrying a divorced women from their heads because divorce means that the woman did something wrong; she may have neglected her husband, disobeyed him, or did something that stands out of the marriage sphere yet ironically, many of the divorces in the Middle East are born out of emotional and physical abuse; Haddad has clarified the fact that women who choose divorce are choosing to save their own lives from the institution of marriage that is destroying them and not their families nor their societies are willing to provide the slightest help. She exemplifies with Fatima al-Khulaidi, a Yemeni who got married at the age of fifteen to a man who abused her continuously throughout their marriage and her family refused to let her get a divorce for the shame that she will bring to the family, it was until she got to the United Kingdom when she was able to get divorced and still her father refused to let her pursue one in Yemen so she is obliged to stay in a foreign country for her own safety. In most of divorce cases the woman proves to be harmless and naïve and very often the victim of physical abuse, yet it is she who gets most discriminated by the individual and the patriarchal society for that is nothing that can ruin the reputation of a Middle Eastern woman more than divorce and it is all because she gets classified as "bad" by men who refuse to treat her as normal just because she went through a divorce and supposedly destroying her own family

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while these men are the same ones who discreetly abuse their wives causing them to consider the same path that these women have chosen to take.

Divorce is not the only institution driven by the mainstream perspectives in the Arab countries, Haddad says, women in the Middle East are now exposed to different standpoints that oppress them as much as standard patriarchy does and they are very commonly conducted by manmade thoughts, women who do not *religiously* cover their heads, female workers and leaders, women who independently have a saying, women who choose to swim out of the norm, women who choose to be equal in a marriage, women who support their families, women who put their careers above everything else, and a lot of different categories of Arab women who have slightly deviated from the “natural” aiming for a better life, are culturally shut down as being a shame for society because men choose to discriminate them by refusing to marry them if they were once divorced, oppressing and silencing them in marriages, treat them less necessary when working, and simply reject them if they show the smallest possibility of being independent from their male counterparts. Joumana has recounted her personal experiences with men who keep their standards, no matter how twisted they are, and how these standards have proved to be not only a means of oppression but also a rough form of segregation:

I had been dating him [Mister X] for three weeks, when the news of a horrific crime shook the country. The corpse of a nineteen-year-old girl had been found in a secluded forest. She had been kidnapped, raped, then beaten to death as she was driving back home from a night out with her friends. The news naturally came up in our conversation on that day. Mr. X commented “that’s what happens when parents let their daughters go out at night”. That’s it. Not one word about the rapist criminal. Not one comment about the failure of our

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security system. To him, the culprit was obvious the victim herself. (Haddad 2012: 77)

This is one of the many examples that confirm that men's perspective in itself patriarchal, the situations may differ and the atrocity of these situations may vary in level but men's perspective will remain oppressively stagnant as long as the female is still on the *daring* side of the norm.

2.5. The Battle of the Sexes

Man versus woman is what resulted from the long cultural segregation of the sexes, the patriarchal system that was solidly rooted during the previous years up to the contemporary era regardless of its motives and initiatives have separated the man from the woman creating a long lasting hatred that is now projected more than any time before. The battle of the sexes has become the buzzword in the present century; on the one hand, women who have been once oppressed, yet managed to grew up to be more independent and self-sufficient have willingly developed a kind of rejection and hatred towards the other sex; their reasons are quite clear and their common goal is the call for equality, on the other, men who were brought up in male-controlled families and were taught from their young ages to treat their female members less important and molded into a standard form (the majority of the Middle Eastern men have sadly been raised in such a way) have found it difficult to accept the thought of a woman stepping out of that standard image that has long been drawn for her and molding in her own new shape because their unconscious need for superiority became threatened by those women who refused to be culturally tamed and chose to be man-free and on their own, thus this queer battle between the two sexes begun with a side calling for equality and the other refusing to settle for such thing. This battle however has developed to take an even wrongful path, women have turned into extremists and men kept on neglecting the other sex's demands which made it impossible to understand and tolerate one another when simply understanding and tolerance is all what it takes to shut down the patriarchal

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system in the Middle Eastern countries. The woman is in need of the men and the man is of the woman; it is as straightforward as that, there is no religion or culture that willingly states otherwise and if only a few start to think for the sake of humanity for a second the Arab societies will be a lot different. There is absolutely nothing wrong with a woman who supports her family; there is no shame and no dignity will be violated, as much as there is nothing wrong with a man who protects his woman; a man who is afraid that something will harm her so he every now and then tells her to avoid going places or be home at certain times; this is not patriarchy and it never was and she, who does not differentiate between love and oppression, has more issues to deal with than equality.

Men need to accept the fact that women can be free for they are disciplined, that women can work and take care of their husbands and houses at the same time, that women can be leaders and rulers and have their own careers, dreams, and goals, that they can be strong yet gentle, so educated yet humble, so fierce yet compassionate, men need to learn that there is no need to put a woman in a cultural or personal box; a woman needs to be limitless because a good woman knows her limits. Women, in return, need to understand that freedom does not mean rebellion, it does not mean rejecting the other sex, and it certainly does not mean disobeying a father, a brother or a husband, she needs to understand that there is nothing wrong with serving her companion or taking care of her family; she is not oppressed if she cooks or cleans and she is not unnecessary if she puts her family first; it is not a matter of control it is a plain matter of priority. Comprise is what moves us along; there should be no self and other in a marriage or a family, no need of superiority or dominance only acceptance and open-mindedness. There should be no extremism in expressing feminism, in the end women are different than men and this difference should be celebrated not forced to imitation; feminists and females in general do not need to act or think like men in order to transmit their message of equality; they are created with delicate bodies and sensitive souls for a reason and women should embrace their feminine qualities because they will not make a change if they are too busy being someone else. How can we live in peace when we are in a constant battle? the

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war between the sexes has until now proved nothing, and the Middle Eastern societies in particular should embrace the subtle co-existence of their genders regardless of the traditions and the bended religions, they have already suffered from Western segregation for the longest times there is no need to start a segregation from within.

2.6. The True Nature of Patriarchy in the Middle East

What is interpreted in Superman is an Arab and how the author conducted her work and expressed her ideas have drawn the conclusion on the nature of patriarchy in the Middle East, the institutions that are driven by this word and the traditions and beliefs that are often expressed oppressively have illustrated how, in the Middle East, patriarchy is practiced by nature, how it is born in different families tinting their behaviours thus position them regularly. The same institutions and practices that existed decades ago are still present in the Middle East and intensely project patriarchy as they did before, and the contemporary times, as this works shows, are far from putting an end to it as oppression is still felt everywhere a woman goes. Joumana Haddad says:

We'd like to think that it is extinct, but it is not. We'd like to think the Arab revolutions are about to bring an end to it, but nothing is more uncertain, as one monster seems to be replacing another. We'd like to think that it is disappearing, but it not even endangered. It is everywhere, still. Prowling like a silent ogre. Despite all the fights for women's rights, despite the demonstrations, the laws, the civil liberties granted, the so-called 'wind if change', the seeming equality in some parts of the planet. (Haddad 2012: 20)

As much as one likes to think that patriarchy has extinguished during the last century and due to the reforms and laws that the previous era withheld, it still exists,

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and still in the present day there are women who are killed and assaulted and mistreated in the name of patriarchy and little is done about it.

Haddad has managed to show the severity of this institution in the Middle East, how it tints different aspects of our most natural behaviours and is still neglected and not much talked about, how men as well as culture control the position of the woman in the Middle East and how these women are denied their rights and freedoms, patriarchy has transformed men to monsters and women to prisoners and in the process, the first have forgot the real meaning of manhood and it has been a very long time since the second expressed femininity without being judged and consequently oppressed.

2.7. Conclusion

Postcolonial feminist theory of criticism emerged during the late years of the 80s to address issues that were common in the in the third world. In the Middle East in particular and after the examination of Haddad's literary master piece, the problems that the Middle Eastern woman faced such as arranged or child marriages, female genital mutilations and other issues have proved to outlive history and culture to still be present in the twenty-first century and the patriarchy that existed in the Arab societies during those times is still persistent; maybe in a different shape but its effects are as horrible as they were decades ago, and they will remain as such until both the man and the woman consider a change from within then reflect it on their societies.

General Conclusion

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The age of colonialism has made a radical change in the world, it affected people, traditions, civilizations, and culture and what was born and raised under its name is a plethora of stereotypical vocabulary and judgmental images and accusations that are meant to strengthen one side of the colonial redundancy and weaken the other. As a response to the unfairness of this historical institution; authors coming from ex-colonized countries with a heavy colonial baggage sought to retell their history using their own words, consequently; the literature that was crafted during and in the aftermath of Western colonialism has doubtlessly established a strong ground for the body of writing that was yet to come. In the Middle East, where civilizations are the richest and colonialism was the hardest, literature flourished as an effective means of expression addressing all kinds of situations and describing their cultures in their own ways.

In the contemporary times, the intellectual population widened to include the weakest chain of the Arabic nations, women, who have been silenced historically by colonialism and culturally by their own people yet different gender, thus feminist literature and women's writing took part in the Middle Eastern literary canon tackling issues that are affecting the lives of the female and the cultural restrictions that are assigned to her by her own society.

Superman is an Arab(2012) by Joumana Haddad is one of the most unusual yet ravishing works that the Middle Eastern literature and culture witnessed in the contemporary era, Joumana's main aim was to address the inequality that the Arab world still maintains in the present day and how it is affecting the positions and the lives of the Arab women every day. This work confirms that patriarchy, as one feminist problem, is more than common in the Middle East and that the patriarchal issues that the female confronted decades ago are still persisting and carrying the same effects.

The aim of this research was to detect patriarchy in the Middle East in the contemporary era, and the results that were drawn after analyzing the proposed work wholeheartedly concur with the established research questions. Patriarchy is present and common in the Middle East and the oppressive institutions that were studied, in the second chapter, are institutions that have been oppressing the Middle

General Conclusion

Eastern woman for decades, they might have slightly changed or diminished in number and practice but they are still maintained in the Arab societies and fully embraced by people and families who are keen on keeping their traditions, of course; these institutions affect the woman more than the man thus they transformed in a kind of patriarchy that not only restricts the female and forces her into a cultural box but it also deems her less necessary than her male counterpart and at the same time defining her life in every field and every way.

Just as the second chapter confirmed the persistence of patriarchy in the Middle East, the first one gave a historical scope to the features and occurrences that nurtured the Middle Eastern culture and fostered the oppressive environments that make up the Arab world in the contemporary era.

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