

Politics of Desire in Ahdaf Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun*

By Isam Shihada

In Ahdaf Soueif's *The Eye of the Sun*,¹ the protagonist Asya's emotional journey sheds light upon many sensitive and complicated issues, such as desire, sexuality, love and mutual understanding, all of which constitute the basis for a healthy relationship and a solid viable marriage. Furthermore, this article focuses on serious questions posed by Asya's story. Do married Arab women have the right to speak out about sexual needs? Can marriage based only on love ensure happiness? Should or can the married woman feel only for her husband even if she feels lonely and sexually unsatisfied or should she suffer in silence to uphold a socially sanctioned marriage? The patriarchal Egyptian society from where Asya comes, holds certain views concerning marriage, fidelity, infidelity, love and feelings rooted in economic, legal, and political structures, as well as social and cultural institutions that oppress women through the assertion of male power, dominance and hierarchy. In other words, Asya's journey moves through the complex process of unfolding desires, sexual, social, economic, and political and how this is shaped by the character herself and all that surrounds her.

In The Eye of the Sun examines the politics of Asya's quest to combine love and desire with the entanglement of patriarchal domesticity, family and religion. Within this context, Suad Joseph defines desire as the broad range of experiences of wanting, erotic and non erotic (Joseph 2005). In this study, we would like to use the broader term of desire which covers the erotic and non erotic since desire *In the Eye of the Sun* always "exists in a context of politics, history and geography all of which are intermeshed." (Massad 1999:74)

For Suad Joseph, the patriarchal organization of familial culture means the privileging of the assertions of desire by males and elders and a sense of responsibility by females and juniors to assimilate and act upon the assertions of desire by males and elders (Joseph 2005). For example, Asya's desire to marry Saif Madi is met with her father's objection, who insists that she should not marry until she finishes college. "For these grave things it is best to wait" (Soueif 1992: 146).² Her decision to marry Saif at the age of eighteen is also challenged by her mother, Lateefa Mursi, who is supposed to have more faith in her daughter's decisions rather than playing a conformist role.

But you can't make such an important decision just like that. You can't determine the rest of your life suddenly one night when you are not yet eighteen. And I felt suddenly and for the first time in my life that I was wiser and stronger than she was, and I kissed her and said, 'Don't worry, Mummy. I know what I am doing. (108)

It is worthy to note that women in many parts of the Middle East continue to be staunch supporters of traditions and social relations that constrain and limit women's lives (Kandiyoti 1988).³ The most critical role of the mother is to uphold the patriarchal image of women. Since it is the mother's explicit role to bring up her daughters according to the values and standards of society, she herself must not adopt any constructively critical attitudes toward those standards. In other words, women are not encouraged to think independently. Parents rather decide for them what "they will eat, when they will eat, what they will wear, how they can plan." (Rubenberg 2001:82) depriving them from the right to decide and choose for themselves.

Moreover, Asya's quest to combine both desire and love is resisted by her future husband, Saif, who refuses to consummate their sexual desires before marriage despite Asya's insistent requests.

*Please, Saif, I want you so-'
I want you too, Princess, but-
'No. Please . Please I want you inside me-
One day I'll come inside you-
No . Not one day, Saif. Now. Please. You want me. I know you do. And I want you so much.
And it's right, I know it's right-'
No, it isn't.'
She sat back. 'Why? Why isn't it?'"
'Because we are not married.' (190) .*

Interestingly enough, the moment their passionate love receives patriarchal social sanction, it has stopped to be the organizing principle of their relationship. That is seen through the failure of sexual consummation on the wedding night as narrated through the conscience of Saif.

I braced myself and gave two strong shoves, and I felt her tremble all over, and she started pushing with her heels against the bed to try and unhook herself, and she was whispering frantically that she couldn't bear it and she couldn't breathe and could I please stop just for a moment for one moment - and I lifted myself off and let her go and she rolled over on her side away from me and curled up into a little ball and pulled the sheet over herself and lay there trembling . I lit a cigarette and lay on my back smoking and after a bit she uncurled herself and came to lie against my side and I knew that she was crying so I stroked her hair and she said she was sorry oh she was so sorry . And after a bit, with her face

3

against my arm, she asked do you want to - do you think we - I just really did not know - and I said hush, it doesn't matter, it does not have to be tonight. (258)

This scene reflects both the fear and the psychological pressure Asya undergoes, taking into account that Asya as an Arab woman has been taught nothing about sexuality since it is a taboo subject not allowed to be discussed. In this regard, Simone De Beauvoir argues that the wedding night changes the erotic act “into a test that both parties fear their inability to meet, each being too worried by his or her own problems to be able to think generously of the other. This gives the occasion a formidable air of solemnity.” (443)⁴. To add further, the subject of the patriarchal concepts of sexuality takes us to Asya’s memories of her childhood and the restrictions imposed on her by her patriarchal father who dictates how she should act, move, and dress. For instance, one can observe Asya’s father’s furious reaction when he sees her dancing and shaking her head in front of the mirror.

Daddy would freak out if I just shook my head in front of the mirror. Remember the day he saw me tossing my hair around when I was ten and I had to go the same day and have it cut? And I had to wear it short for seven years after that until I went to university? And how he came home one day and heard me practicing the *zaghrouda* and almost sacked Dada Zeina on the spot? (351)⁵

This scene highlights the patriarchal views towards women’s sexuality, seen as an extension which is to be controlled and kept under surveillance, since women are seen as a menace to the social order and that they may bring shame to the family.

However, for Asya, the failure to consummate the relationship functions as "an indefinite detriment of the combining of love and desire" (Massad 1999 :76). In other words, the unconsummated relationship signals Asya's journey toward loneliness, toward questioning the validity of marriage, toward wanting and desire out of wedlock which has been aggravated by the indifferent attitude of her husband, Saif, who travels all the time leaving her for long periods without at least caring about her emotional and sexual needs in spite of her pleading. This is presented in the scene when Saif calls Asya to tell her, “I am leaving Damascus tomorrow”(341). He calls her and hangs up the phone before Asya can finish her sentence and express her terrible loneliness. “Oh, Saif, it’s *horrid*. I can’t begin- Saif? Hello? Hello? Oh-.” (341)

Asya’s feelings of loneliness acutely intensify when they are together after long periods of separation and loneliness, shivering under a thin blanket in a small room waiting for her husband to finish his

reading. “She would be patient while he read, and she would count her blessings, for here he is with her. No longer alone.”(392). She waits. Saif throws the magazine to the floor, switches off the light and whispers “Good night, Princess.”(392). An indifferent behavior which makes Asya, out of loneliness, want to touch his back with her finger tips and say,

Could you? Please? Turn round and hold me?' ' Oh, sweetie, sweetie. Go to sleep.' ' Please ? Just for a minute?' And he would turn round, and big and solid and sweet-smelling, would hold her close for maybe five minutes, then he'd ask lightly, 'Is that enough? Can I go to sleep now?' And patting her hip or arm or whatever was nearest he would murmur, ' Good night, Princess,' and he would turn over, and in minutes he would be a sleep. And she would lie awake and hold down the loneliness that threatened to turn into a full –blown panic. (392)

Here, Souief sheds the light upon the psychological pain and feelings of despair and loneliness felt by Asya in a marriage which is supposed to liquidate such feelings and assure an emotional and sexual satisfaction.⁶ To add more, we observe the psychological confusion and pain Asya feels to the extent that she starts questioning whether Saif loves her or not. “Now she watches him. I know you love me. But you don't want me. You did once, but you don't any more. But stop. Stop, she tells herself. Be grateful. You *are* grateful. Grateful that he loves you enough to come and live here with you. Think what it was like just four months ago and be grateful.” (392-3) She goes to question further why Saif stops loving her, why he should be here with her, why nothing really happens when he is really here but to be repulsed by him many times.

But to be repulsed, turned away so many times – but that is what he thinks *you* did to *him*- at first. But she *wants* to want him. She badly wants to want him. She wants him to *make* her want him; make her want him like she used to. But he won't. He will have nothing to do with it at all. So what's the answer, then –*what?* Wait. There *will* be an answer, of course there will. Just wait. One thing at a time. (393)

Here, we find the psychologically tormented Asya waits to find an answer to her question. Asya's word "Wait" poses tangible questions for every woman. Is marriage a trap which is hard for women to extricate themselves from? Do feelings die once they are licensed and socially sanctioned by a patriarchal society? In other words, Asya finds herself in a frustrating situation where she feels that she has painfully been trapped. Within this context, De Beauvoir argues that

the husband respects his wife too much to take an interest in his wife's psychological well being that " would be to recognize in her a secret autonomy that could prove disturbing, dangerous; does she really find pleasure in the marriage bed? Does she truly love her husband? Is she actually happy to obey him? He prefers not to ask; to him these questions even seem shocking." (473) . These questions indicate the unspoken sufferings of many married women like Asya .

In addition to Asya's suffering is her unexpected pregnancy "You are pregnant. You're a married woman and you are pregnant. Yes, but we've hardly - I mean nothing much has really - I mean it can't possibly be" (261). Asya's reaction reflects her desire not to have a child now since things are not going well with Saif as they hardly sleep with each other and, at the same time, she doesn't want to accumulate her problems by living on pretence that she is the happily perfect wife when she is not. That is clearly highlighted through her sober consciousness. "It is *fraudulent*. And the worst sham of all is how they pretend they're normal people with nothing at all odd about their marriage. Not how they pretend to the world- that is necessary- but how they pretend to each other. This is the worst bit. He is living this lie and forcing her to live it too. *That's* what he is doing - continually." (444)

Accordingly, the struggle between what the patriarchal societies expect of women to do and what women want continues. For instance, Asya's desire not to have a child has been challenged by the patriarchal culture surrounding her which glorifies the role of the married woman as a mother.⁷ That is observed in the conversation between Tante Soraya and Dada Sayyida and Asya ,

You've always been clever and sweet,' Tante Soraya said , 'and now you will give us a beautiful clever sweet little girl just like you and she will be the first grand child in the family just as you were the first child.' Asya had shrugged. Asya had known there was no more to be said. Dada Sayyida filled the little silence. "Children are the ornament of life," truly it was said. Dada Sayyida had seven children, two of them blind. Tante Sorya glanced at Asya's face ' Smooth it out now and stop frowning. This is the greatest gift God can give a human being, and you receive it like this? (267)

However, Asya's resistance not to be complacent or silent about her painful, distressing situation has been manifested in facing her husband with the reality of their stalemate marriage. An attitude which informs arguably of Asya's feminist consciousness of her needs. "I think if we made sure that when we are together we're really really together. That we'd -do things, and- talk, and stuff- you know, we

should be all right, really.’ ‘Of course we will be all right.’ Because it would be such a shame....”
(397-8)

In spite of facing him, Saif takes Asya’s feelings and the painful situation she lives in for granted. He is ignorant of her dreams, nostalgic yearnings and the emotional climate in which she passes her days. “Man fails to realize that his wife is no character from some pious and conventional treatise, but a real individual of flesh and blood; he takes for granted her fidelity to the strict regimen she assumes, not taking into account that she has temptations to vanquish, that she may yield to them.” (Beauvoir : 473) . Here, we may say that Saif is a symbol of the patriarchal man who just thinks of himself and his work and what ever progress he has is just a blessing for his wife. That is seen through his continuous and cold behavior in bed which has left its deep impact on Asya’s inner psyche “When he switches off the light, she turns back to the view outside. She knows that if she goes to bed nothing will happen.” (409). Hence, she wouldn’t wait for him anymore in despair to be touched or loved and “whisper to him to hold her, ‘just for a moment.’ She will never do that again.”(409)

Resisting her own painful situation, Asya has stopped blaming herself for the frigidity in their relationship. “*She* isn’t the reason they are not sleeping together anymore. Not any more. She can’t be blamed for that anymore. She’s done everything she could possibly do to show that she wants to – and she’s stopped because he doesn’t want to know.” (420). But Saif’s arrogant and cold behavior towards Asya drives her to speak out about her real deep suffering without fear asserting her own desire and resilience not to accept her painful situation. “But you don’t care. You don’t care about me one bit as long as I don’t bug you. I could drop dead or take a lover or anything and you wouldn’t care.” (424) but he provokingly assures her that will never happen. She retorts back “And that is something else you know, is it? Why *should* you assume you know everything about me? Everything about how I will react on anything? Particularly given the –given that it is not something we have ever talked about-’.” (424) All feelings of hopelessness and despair has led Asya to think of the meaning of both her married life and the real purpose behind waiting itself, to live on hope that something might happen. In other words, it is a moment of truth or revelation to her manifested in one question: “All of life reduced to this?” (352). She waits for attention, emotional care, love and a husband who respects and communicates with her.

A husband who turns his back on her every night , who speaks of looking forward to the day when, in the courtesy of advancing years, they will address each other as 'Asya Hanim' and 'Saif Bey' and take gentle strolls round the garden of the house he will build for them in the desert- and wait to die. And what about life? What about all the years that still has to pass? Emptiness. And then age, and then the only end of age .How will she bear it? What can she do? She cannot claim

coercion. No one forced her to do anything .She chose. She chose English Literature, she chose Saif Madi, she chose the north of England. (353).

We can observe that something substantial is missing in Asya's married life She questions what is the meaning of living in pain and suffering. Undoubtedly, her thoughts shed the light upon the unspoken sufferings of many women who suffer within the confines of marriage and accept their painful destiny silently.

Soueif's *In the Eye of the Sun* stands as an example where desire is taught and practiced in the context of intimate patriarchal relationships. Religion also serves as a critical component of women's identity as well as providing highly significant legitimating for the subordination, oppression and positioning of women. (Hale 1997). For instance, Soueif takes us deeper into Asya's psychological struggle as a lonely married woman. She wonders whether it is fair to desire and think of another man other than her husband. Within this context, Nawal el Saadawi argues that Islam made marriage the only institution within which sexual intercourse could be morally practiced between men and women. "Sexual relations, if practiced outside this framework, were immediately transformed into an act of sin and corruption." (1980 : 139)⁸. Asya's tormented soul is revealed when she imagines another man in her bathroom and struggles to dismiss these thoughts. "In the candle –lit bathroom she talks to the face she sees in the mirror; the face whose eyes have grown bigger and darker, whose lips have grown fuller and softer, whose whole aspect is more flushed and curved and smooth than she has seen it for a long, long time. She says ' Why?' and she says, ' It is not fair,' and she whispers,' Stop it, oh, stop it.'" (390). A struggle between recognizing her own desire and how the patriarchal society and its oppressive culture, symbolized by her mother and relatives, shape for her the concept of desire and sexuality. "All your life they tell you – that a woman's sexuality is responsive, a woman's sexuality is tied up with her emotions. Her mother says she has never thought of any man that way except her father. Dada Zeina claims she had never desired any man but her husband – and then only because he had taught her." (390)

For Rubenberg, women attain honor primarily through passive conformity and dishonor falls exclusively on women. The discourse of honor functions to reinforce and reproduce the hierarchical structure of the family, while the dialectic between the individual and society functions quasi-automatically to maintain the institutions of the social order. Society has a variety of means from

gossip (*namima*) to honor killing to enforce the honor code. (Rubenberg 2001)⁹ Asya's words portray the inner psychological struggle between her own authentic desire as an individual and the patriarchal concepts of desire which dictate how a married woman should desire, feel, and think.

To elaborate further, it brings to the surface the concept of sexuality¹⁰ and desire¹¹ in the Middle East where desire is organized in a patriarchal family culture that values the family above the person. Joseph states that "desire often became invested as a property of relationships rather than singularly the property of a person in a society in which the most important asset of ownership was not one's self but one's web of relationships." (2005: 79). In this regard, both girls and boys are explicitly taught to put the interests of the family before the interests of the individual. Most girls "are discouraged from having independent opinions or expressing ideas that contradict parents' admonitions." (Rubenberg 2001:79-80)

However, in an act of resistance of her painful situation, we find Asya think of Mario, one of Saif's friends , which indicates her quest to look for desire out of wedlock which she lacks miserably in her own marriage. "Look at her : in Italy she is friends with Umberto but desires some unknown man with a broken nose who is handling a blonde in a corner – even while she is in love , in *love*, with Saif ; and tonight, to want to press up against Mario, to want his hand to slide down from her waist-oh."(391). After thinking of more than one man other than her husband, she has met Gerald Stone, an English man, with whom she has a complicated affair. An affair which has a sweet taste at the beginning but ends in frustration due to the absence of genuine love. Here, one may take a closer look at Asya's inner feelings after sleeping with Gerald. When she wakes up, she surprises herself of how well she has felt all night without any single feeling of guilt, confusion and fear. "expecting to wake up to the cold finger on the heart; to the weight of the rock of doom settling on her chest: guilt, fear- confusion would surely coalesce into one mass that would settle inside her and prevent her from even breathing – but there is nothing: she surprises herself by how well and how peacefully she has slept." (550). One may argue that Asya's inner feelings may reflect not only a sexual satisfaction which she has never experienced before with Saif but also a defiance of what is traditionally expected of a married woman. For a woman to be moral that means " she must incarnate a being of

superhuman qualities : the“ virtuous woman” of Proverbs, the “perfect mother,“ the honest woman”...Let her think , dream , sleep , desire , breathe without permission and she betrays the masculine ideal.” (Beauvoir 474)¹²

It is also important to contend that Asya’s experience with Gerald, though sexually liberating, has helped her discover that those feelings of desire only can't make her so happy without love. Therefore, she has come finally to face the bitter truth which is to choose between a hopeless love with Saif or unsatisfying relationship with Gerald, an inner struggle which has left its heavy toll on her physical and mental health. “I just want this to stop. I am so tired, and there is not a single night when we go to sleep before four, and I am just exhausted, and I don’t want this to be happening here any more.” (560)

Asya’s courage and stark honesty by being always true to her pulse and inner feelings in her constant resistance of the patriarchal society’s suffocating culture is also manifested when she has confessed to her mother about her own affair with Gerald Stone. When her mother, Lateefa Mursi, asks her if she doesn’t feel worse or guilty sleeping with this man, Asya surprises her by saying that it is her business and something which is private that belongs to her only. Besides that, she doesn’t feel guilty since Saif doesn’t care about her in this way anymore. “No. I don’t It's as if sleeping with him is – private- it's *my* business... 'What do you mean it's *your* business? Isn't it a matter of concern to your husband if you sleep with another man?" But Saif doesn't care a bout me in that way – any more.” (568)

Here, this reply represents Asya’s resistance to the patriarchal culture imbibed by her mother’s teachings based on hypocrisy and pretence. In other words, a lie which is called marriage, as in Asya’s case, cannot be accepted silently to please society, at the expense of her own identity and individuality. Asya seeks to assert her own identity which the patriarchal society always tries to blur and takes it for granted by searching for self actualization through practice rather than theory having the agency and will to fulfill her needs without being afraid of how she will be viewed by society.

Asya's life was tangibly beset by appalling patriarchal limitations which she has to resist continually. For example, with her husband Saif, we notice a long sequence of choked sexual impulses followed by a merciless torture and humiliating interrogation of Asya when he finds out

about Gerald . '-You actually suggested –you suggested-' Asya is silent. "You asked him to fuck you?" "You asked him to fuck you?" Saif, all I meant was- "You asked him?" Saif- "Just answer me straight: you invited him to fuck you? "It was not like that-" Just answer yes or no.' (page 666). Ironically enough, we find Saif expects from Asya to be a traditional, silent, obedient wife " I expected my wife to be loyal. I expected my wife to have some sense of honor. I expected."(623) but, at the same time, he is not ready or willing to give her the emotional companionship she needs. "This is not fair,' cries Asya. For years I begged you- I begged you – to make it happen-and you *wouldn't*." (623). In other words, he traps Asya in a painful situation where he can "neither be with her as a husband nor let her go as woman." (Said 2001: 409)

Instead, he batters and shames her in a humiliating manner poignantly shown when Asya's mother sees her battered daughter' face. "He did this to you?" she says. ' He did *this* to you?'... The bruise has faded to a sort of olive green shading off into yellow along the borders; the eye itself is almost completely open again with only one red splotch radiating out from the inner corner." (667) . Asya's impasse and pathetic situation resolves when she decides to free herself from both Saif who "is no longer her friend or any part of her life." (775) and Gerald for whom she makes it clear that she cannot live like this anymore "Gerald. I am not going with anyone. I don't *want* to go with anyone. I *want to go on my own*." (717).

One may say that certain values of escape are open to women but in practice they are not available to all.¹³ Asya's story sheds the light upon the unspoken sufferings of married women who are silenced out of fear of divorce or the social stigma of the patriarchal society, in particular, the Arab societies, patriarchal societies which victimize women through blurring their identities and the necessity to fight against the patriarchy and its suppressive culture like Asya. Asya conveys a message to all women that self actualization is more important than living on pretence to please the patriarchal society at the expense of one's own identity.

To conclude, one comes to understand that in spite of her failed marriage with Saif and a disastrous affair with Gerald , Asya has eventually attained her own individuality and self- actualization of one's self , a woman who is able to draw her own destiny and move forward to serve her community positively without the suffocating restraints of a frustrating and hopeless marriage. Asya eventually

completes her doctorate and then returns to Egypt, not only to teach English literature at the American university in Cairo, but to work in a program offering help to the Egyptian village women. A step is courageously taken by her in spite of the domestic pressures in a patriarchal Arab society where marriage is seen as a fundamental foundation of society and where divorced or separated woman are looked upon with little respect.¹⁴ In other words, a price Asya has to pay to assert her own identity rather than suffer in silence even if it implies facing the menaces and aggression of society since for a woman to regain her self respect is much more worthwhile than pleasing the male dominated society.¹⁵

Notes .

1. Ahdaf Soueif's honesty in exploring the sexuality of the Arab woman, a topic which has been rarely handled before with too much frankness, has led to the banning of her novel in many Arab countries. Please see Mehrez, Samia. "The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative." *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics*. 20 (2000): 168-185. Edward Said has called Soueif as one of the most extraordinary chroniclers of sexual politics now writing. Please see Said, Edward. *Times Literary Supplement*. 3 (December, 1999) 7. Within this context too, Hanan Al Shaykh's *The Story of Zahra* is also banned in several Arab countries for exploring taboo topics. Evelyne Accad says that *The Story of Zahra's* "explicit sexual descriptions, its exploration of taboo subjects such as family cruelty and women's sexuality and its relation to the war, caused such a scandal that the book was banned in several Arab countries." (1990: 44-5). Please see Accad, Evelyne. *Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East*. New York: New York University Press, 1990.

2. Suad Joseph defines patriarchy in the Arab context as the prioritizing of the rights within kinship values which are usually supported by religion. (Joseph 1993, 1994). She goes further to argue that patriarchy is powerful in the Arab world because age-kinship values and relationships are crucial socially, economically, politically, ideologically and psychologically. Please see Joseph, Suad. "Connectivity and patriarchy among urban working class families in Lebanon." *Ethos*. (1993):21-24. Please see Joseph, Suad. "Brother/sister relationships: connectivity, love and power in the reproduction of Arab patriarchy." *American Ethnologist*. (1994):50-73. For Cheryl Rubenberg, familial patriarchy, with its rigid aged and gendered hierarchies, its discourse of honor and shame, its relations of domination and subordination, and its myriad punishments, controls women's bodies, minds and behaviors and their entire lives. Please see Rubenberg, A. Cheryl. *Palestinian women: Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2001. Please see Tucker, E. Judith. "The Arab family in history." "Otherness" and the study of the family." in Judith E. Tucker (ed). *Arab Women: Old Boundaries, New Frontiers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993. Tong, Rosemarie. *Feminist Thought: A Comprehensive Introduction*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

3. All references will be henceforth taken from Soueif, Ahdaf. *In the Eye of the Sun*. UK: Bloomsbury, 1992.

4. Cheryl Rubenberg argues that “ it is women who teach girls the rightness or the truth of their traditionally defined roles, responsibilities, relations, and restrictions. Mothers provide their daughters with things that are *haram*, *eib*, and *mamnoua*.” (2001:79). Please see Rubenberg. A. Cheryl. *Palestinian women: Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank* . USA : Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2001. Furthermore, Hisham Sharabi argues that the problems in the Arab political order (for example, the absence of personal freedom, democracy, pluralism, and civil societies) are a consequence of, among other factors, the hierarchical relations that originate in the family. Please see Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy : A theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988. Kandiyoti, Deniz . "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society*. 2. (1988) : 274-90.

5. Arab women are not taught about their bodies and their sexual life. Regardless of age, women enter marriage in complete ignorance of such fundamental issues. Hence, “making love” in the sense of mutually satisfying pleasurable part of married is rare. (Rubenberg 2001) . Please see Rubenberg. A. Cheryl . *Palestinian women: Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank* . USA : Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2001. For further information, please see Joseph, Suad . "Study of Middle Eastern Women

International Journal of Middle East Studies. 18(1986) : 501- 48. Ahmed,

Leila. "Arab Culture and Writing Women's Bodies ." *Feminist Issues* . 9. (1989) : 41-55.

Hatem , Mervat . "The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems : The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt t." *Feminist Studies*. 12. (1986) :251-74.

6. Zaghrouda : Ululation - along joy- cry uttered by women on happy occasions. Please see Soueif, Ahdaf . *In the Eye of the Sun*. UK: Bloomsbury, 1992.

7. Simone De Beauvoir argues that the tragedy of marriage that it not only fails to assure woman “the promised happiness...but it mutilates her ; it dooms her to repetition and routine . (1989 : 487) .

Please see De Beauvoir , Simone . *The Second Sex* . USA : Vantage : Books Edition , 1989. Please

see Tucker. E. Judith . “The Arab family in history.” Otherness” and the study of the family.” in

Judith E. Tucker (ed) . *Arab Women : Old Boundaries , New Frontiers*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.

8. Concerning Asya’s sudden pregnancy, Beauvoir argues that many women become mothers and grandmothers without ever having experienced the orgasm or even any sex excitement at all. (Beauvoir 1989.) Please see De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex* . USA : Vantage: Books Edition, 1989. Inhorn C. Macia . *Infertility and Patriarchy: The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996.

9. According to Nawal El Saadawi , woman was therefore considered by the Arabs as “ a menace to man and society, and the only way to avoid the harm she could do was to isolate her in the home , where she could have no contact with either one or the other.” (1980:136) Please see El Saadawi, Nawal *The Hidden Face of Eve : Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata . London : Zed Books , 1980. Within this context , Rubenberg argues that gossip is the primary process by which society enforces the honor code on the individual . What women fear most is being talked about ...a girl's prospects are entirely dependent upon her reputation, the mere hint of dishonor can ruin a girl's life. (2001). Please see Rubenberg . A. Cheryl . *Palestinian women : Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank* . USA : Lynne Rienner Publishers , Inc, 2001. You can also see Sandra , Hale . *Gender Politics in Islam : Islamism , Socialism , and the State* . Boulder : West view Press , 1997. Please see Badran , Margot . *Feminists , Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of the Modern Egypt* . Princeton , NJ : Princeton University Press , 1995. Bouhdiba , Adelwahab . *Sexuality in Islam* . London: Routledge & Kegan Paul , 1985. Majid , Anouar. “The Politics of Feminism in Islam .” *Signs* 23:2 (Winter , 1998) : 321-361.

10. El Saadawi says that there are certain moral standards for females and others for males, and the whole society is permeated by such double moral standards. At the root of this anomalous situation lies the fact that "sexual experience in the life of a man is a source of pride and a symbol of virility; where as sexual experience in the life of women is a source of shame and a symbol of degradation." (1980:31). Please see El Saadawi, Nawal *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata. London: Zed Books, 1980. Please see Jowkar, Frouz "Honor and Shame: A Feminist View from Within." *Feminist Issues*. 6 : (1986) : 45-65. Cann, Arnie, Mangum, Jessica and Wells, Marissa. "Distress in Response to Relationship Infidelity: The Roles of Gender and Attitudes about Relationships." *The Journal of Sex Research*. 38:3 (Aug, 2001):185-190. Treas, Judith and Giesen, Deirdre. "Sexual Infidelity among Married and Cohabiting Americans." *Journal of Marriage and Family*. 62:1 (Feb, 2000) : 48-60.

11. For Suad Joesph, in the West, we experience the individuating process while in the Arab world, identity is experienced as "relational connectivity". Kinship relations give rise to identity through relationality and connectivity within the family group. Connectivity involves "relationships in which a person's personal boundaries are relatively fluid so that the individual understands her" self" to be constituted by "significant others"." (1999 :12). Please see Joseph, Suad. "Introduction: Theories and Dynamics of Gender, Self and Identity in Arab Families." In Suad Joesph (ed) *Intimate selving in Arab Families: Gender, Sel f, and Identity*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999. Barakat, Halim. "The Arab Family and the Challenge of Social Transformation." In *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of challenge*. (ed). Elizabeth Warnock Fernea, Austin : University of Texas Press, 1985. Butler, Judith. "Desire." In Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. (eds). *Critical Terms for Literary Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995. 369-386. Brooks, Geraldine. *Nine Parts of Desire: The Hidden World of Islamic Women*. New York : Anchor, 1995.

12. Concerning morality, El Saadawi argues that moral values are in fact the product of social systems or, more precisely, of the social system imposed by the ruling class with the aim of serving certain economic and political interests, and ensuring that the situation from which that class draws benefit and power is maintained. (1980). Please see El Saadawi, Nawal *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata. London: Zed Books, 1980. Please see Badran, Margot. *Feminists, Islam, and Nation : Gender and the Making of the Modern Egypt*. Princeton, NJ : Princeton University Press, 1995.

13. Patriarchy mandates that females be denied the possibility of an independent life experience outside the family confines. The more confined a woman can be kept, the less exposure she has, and the less she is able to think for herself, the less likely she is to challenge her husband's authority and decisions. (Rubenberg 2001). Please see Rubenberg, A. Cheryl. *Palestinian women : Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2001. Kandiyoti, Deniz. "Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society*. 2. (1988) : 274-90.

14. For De Beauvoir, In the country, especially, the chains of marriage are heavy, and the wife must somehow accommodate herself to a situation from which she cannot escape. Some, full of importance, become tyrannical and shrewdish matrons; some become complaisant, masochistic victims and slaves of their families. (1989). She argues further that the celibate woman is to be explained and defined with "reference to marriage, whether she is frustrated, rebellious, or even indifferent in regard to that institution." (1989 :425). Please see De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Second Sex*. USA: Vantage: Books Edition, 1989. For El Saadawi, The great majority of Arab women ...are still "terrorized by the mere word 'divorce' which means hunger, no home, and the unrelenting remarks of those around them." (1980:205). Please see El Saadawi, Nawal *The Hidden Face of Eve : Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata. London: Zed Books, 1980.

15. "For girls , marriage is the only means of integration in the community, and if they remain unwanted, they are, socially viewed, so much wastage .This is why mothers have always eagerly sought to arrange marriages for them." (Beauvoir 1989 :427) . Please see De Beauvoir, Simone . *The Second Sex*. USA : Vantage : Books Edition , 1989.
16. For El Saadawi, freedom has a price, a price which a free woman pays out of her tranquility. A woman always pays a heavy price, in any case, even if she chooses to submit. She pays it out of her health, her happiness, her personality and her future .There fore, since a price she has to pay, why not the price of freedom than that of slavery? . I believe that the price paid in slavery even if accompanied by some security, and the peace of mind that comes from acceptance, is much higher than the price paid for freedom, even if it includes the menaces and aggression of society. (Saadawi 1980) . Please see El Saadawi , Nawal *The Hidden Face of Eve : Women in the Arab world* . Trans . Sherif Hetata . London : Zed Books , 1980.

Works Cited.

Accad, Evelyne . *Sexuality and War: Literary Masks of the Middle East*. New York : New York University Press , 1990.

Ahmed , Leila . "Arab Culture and Writing Women's Bodies ." *Feminist Issues* . 9. (1989) :41-55.

Badran , Margot . *Feminists , Islam, and Nation : Gender and the Making of the Modern Egypt*. Princeton , NJ : Princeton University Press , 1995.

Barakat , Halim ."The Arab Family and the Challenge of Social Transformation ." In *Women and the Family in the Middle East: New Voices of challenge* . (ed) . Elizabeth Warnock Fernea , Austin: University of Texas Press , 1985.

Bouhdiba , Adelwahab . *Sexuality in Islam* . London : Routledge & Kegan Paul , 1985.

Brooks , Geraldine . *Nine Parts of Desire : The Hidden World of Islamic Women* . New York : Anchor , 1995.

Butler, Judith. " Desire." In Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin. (eds) . *Critical Terms for Literary Study* . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, (1995) : 369-386.

Cann , Arnie , Mangum , Jessica and Wells , Marissa. " Distress in Response to Relationship Infidelity : The Roles of Gender and Attitudes about Relationships ." *The Journal of Sex Research* . 38:3 (Aug, 2001):185-190.

De Beauvoir , Simone . *The Second Sex*. USA: Vantage Books Edition, 1989.

El Saadawi , Nawal. *Women in Muslims Family Law* . Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1980.

_____, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab world*. Trans. Sherif Hetata. London: Zed Books, 1980.

Hatem , Mervat ."The Politics of Sexuality and Gender in Segregated Patriarchal Systems: The Case of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Egypt." *Feminist Studies*. 12. (1986) : 251-74.

Inhorn C. Macia . *Infertility and Patriarchy : The Cultural Politics of Gender and Family Life in Egypt*. Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press , 1996.

Joseph, Suad. "Learning Desire : Relational Pedagogies and the Desiring Female Subject in Lebanon ." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* . 1:1 (2005): 79

_____. "Study of Middle Eastern Women: Investments, Passions, and Problems." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* . 18(1986) : 501-48.

_____, "Brother/sister relationships: connectivity, love and power in the reproduction of Arab patriarchy." *American Ethnologist*.(1994) : 50-73.

_____, "Introduction: Theories and Dynamics of Gender, Self and Identity in Arab Families." In Suad Joesph (ed) *Intimate selving in Arab Families : Gender , Self, and Identity* . Syracuse: Syracuse University Press , 1999.

Jowkar , Frouz "Honor and Shame : A Feminist View from Within ." *Feminist Issues* . 6: (1986) : 45-65.

Kandiyoti , Deniz ."Bargaining with Patriarchy." *Gender and Society*. 2. (1988) : 274-90.

Majid , Anouar. "The Politics of Feminism in Islam ." *Signs* 23:2 (Winter, 1998) : 321-361.

Massad , Joseph . "The Politics of Desire in the Writings of Ahdaf Soueif." *Journal of Palestine Studies*. 18: 4 (Summer 1999): 74-90.

Mehrez , Samia . "The Hybrid Literary Text: Arab Creative. *Alif : Journal of Comparative Poetics* .20 (2000): 168-185.

Rubenberg . A. Cheryl . *Palestinian women : Patriarchy and resistance in the West bank*. USA: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc, 2001.

Sharabi , Hisham . *Neopatriarchy: A theory of Distorted Change in Arab Society* . New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

Said , Edward . *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* . London : Granta Books , 2001.

_____, *Times Literary Supplement* . 3 (December, 1999) : 7

Sandra , Hale . *Gender Politics in Islam : Islamism , Socialism , and the State* .Boulder : West view Press , 1997.

Soueif , Ahdaf . *In the Eye of the Sun* . UK : Bloomsbury , 1992 .

Tong Rosemarie . *Feminist Thought : A Comprehensive Introduction* . Boulder, CO:
Westview Press , 1988.

Treas , Judith and Giesen , Deirdre . “Sexual Infidelity among Married and Cohabiting Americans
.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* . 62 :1 (Feb , 2000) : 48-60 .

Tucker. E. Judith . “The Arab family in history .” Otherness” and the study of the family .” in
Judith E . Tucker (ed) . *Arab Women : Old Boundaries , New Frontiers* .
Bloomington: Indiana University Press , 1993.