

PHILOSOPHICAL INTERROGATION IN DECONSTRUCTING ANDROCENTRISM IN GEORGES TARABICHI'S CRITIQUE: A CASE STUDY OF MOHAMED DIB'S TRILOGY AND NAWAL EL SAADAWI'S TWO WOMEN IN ONE

Dr. Djebbari Farouk¹, Dr. Benkouider Achour²

¹University of Batna 1 (Algeria), E-mail: farouk.djebbari@univ-batna.dz

²Lecturer 'A', University of Ouargla (Algeria), E-mail: achourbenkouider@gmail.com

Received: 02/2025, Published: 04/2025

Abstract:

Engaging with the intellectual legacy of Georges Tarabichi necessitates a critical examination of his extensive and multifaceted corpus, spanning translations, literary criticism, and philosophical criticism. His intellectual journey exhibited significant ideological shifts, realignments, and transformations — a hallmark of eminent philosophers advocating for diversity within their philosophical projects. Central to Tarabichi's critical project is his deconstruction of androcentrism in Arab societies, particularly deconstruction of *masculinity and its ideological constructs* in Algerian author Mohamed Dib's trilogy and the exploration of *Nawal El Saadawi's female archetype and the myth of uniqueness* in her narrative *Two Women in One*. He engaged with these texts with incisive intellectual rigor and extensive cultural insight.

Employing a methodological apparatus drawn from contemporary philosophical praxis—displacement, subversion, and transcendence—Tarabichi mobilized psychoanalytic and philosophical heuristics to interrogate the symbolic architectures of these literary works. His critical exegesis culminated in a structuralist critique of patriarchal androcentric society, unveiling the ideological mechanisms underpinning hegemonic masculinity, particularly within the Arab intelligentsia. For Tarabichi, the June 1967 defeat was emblematic of a broader crisis of masculinity, rooted in patriarchal dominance that systematically suppressed alterity, pluralism, and diversity.

Keywords: Philosophical interrogation – Criticism– Androcentrism – Psychoanalysis– Mohamed Dib – Nawal El Saadawi.

Introduction

The patriarchal androcentric order is predicated on male hegemony, effectuating the exclusion and socio-cultural erasure of women. In Arab societies, this dominance is entrenched within a patriarchal structure that extends beyond the subjugation of women to encompass an epistemic and symbolic order centered on paternal authority. This framework is manifest not only in familial relations but also in political decision-making and the overarching axiological and cultural systems that structure societal norms.

Georges Tarabichi emerges as one of the preeminent Arab intellectuals who critically engaged with the problematics of androcentrism within Arab culture, asserting that Arab societies experience systemic epistemological stasis, underpinned by a profound crisis of consciousness and historical regression. Given the inextricability of literature and philosophy, Tarabichi's literary criticism is profoundly informed by contemporary philosophical methodologies, particularly those rooted in psychoanalysis and structural critique. His critical project interrogates the manifestations of virility and hegemonic masculinity within aesthetic and semiotic structures, adopting a skeptical and

deconstructive approach. This study examines his critique of masculinity and patriarchal ideology through a close reading of two literary texts: *The Trilogy* by Algerian writer Mohamed Dib and *Two Women in One* by Egyptian novelist Nawal El Saadawi.

Through his psychoanalytic and philosophical interrogation of these narratives, Tarabichi exposes the undercurrents of female disparagement and critiquing the prevailing virility-centric paradigms that dominate the Arab intellectual and imaginative discourse. In this context, several critical questions arise: What are the historical foundations of androcentrism in Arab culture? What methodological and analytical tools did Tarabichi employ to interrogate and dismantle the repressed structures of patriarchal domination? How does his critique expose the ideological underpinnings of female subordination while simultaneously deconstructing the hegemony of virility-centered discourse through his reading of Dib's *Trilogy* and El Saadawi's *Two Women in One*?

This study is structured as follows:

1. **Genealogy of Male Hegemony in Arab Culture**
2. **Psychoanalytic Approach and the Deconstruction of the Repressed from Tarabichi's Perspective**
3. **Deconstructing Androcentrism and Misogyny in Tarabichi's Examination of Mohamed Dib's *Trilogy* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Two Women in One***
 - 3.a. Critique of masculinity and the ideological construction of virility in Mohamed Dib's *Trilogy*.
 - 3.b. Critique of androcentric regression in Nawal El Saadawi's *Two Women in One*.

Conclusion.

1. Genealogy of Male Hegemony in Arab Culture

Androcentric hegemony in traditional societies permeates social, economic, and cultural domains, shaping the state apparatus as well as familial and individual dynamics. In Arab societies, this hegemonic structure is characterized by rigidity, insularity, and deep-seated contradictions that undermine social cohesion and exhaust intellectual and moral capital. This internal fragmentation engenders a devalued self-perception among individuals, reinforcing a pervasive sense of inferiority and epistemic stagnation. If the traditional Arab patriarchal system remains resistant to modernization, it is because it remains entrenched within archaic power structures, sustaining a state of structural inertia, developmental regression, and an absence of self-reflexive agency necessary for systemic transformation¹.

As a socio-historical construct, androcentric hegemony is not a static phenomenon but the product of specific civilizational, historical, and geographical contingencies. Its formation is deeply linked to the desert environment and the pastoral economy, which gave rise to an entrenched patriarchal order that has governed Arab social structures for centuries and continues to shape contemporary realities². The tribal system, emerging from these historical conditions, can be traced to the pre-Islamic period, where authority was consolidated through the *sheikhdom* model. While Islam introduced the concept of the *ummah* as an alternative to tribal allegiances, the tribal framework remained structurally dominant, preserving its influence over social and political formations within Islamic civilization. The foundational logic of this system, rooted in tribal solidarity (*asabiyyah*),

¹ Ibrahim Al-Haidari, *The Patriarchal System and the Problematic of Gender*, Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut, 2011, p. 2.

² Ibid.

fosters an absolute identification between the individual and the tribe, which, in turn, assumes full responsibility for its members' political and social standing. This dynamic reinforces the primacy of the extended family as the cornerstone of social organization³.

The tribal order operates on the principle of indivisibility, wherein the tribe functions as an expanded familial entity composed of interconnected clans, sustaining its hegemony through a dual axis of control: paternal authority over the family unit and systemic male dominance over women. Within this framework, the prevailing discourse is that of the patriarch, whose authority remains unchallenged. The decline of the Arab-Islamic state, culminating in the Mongol conquest of Baghdad in 1258, can be understood in part as a consequence of the tribalization of power, where fragmented loyalties and local allegiances reinforced socio-political stagnation, particularly through their entrenchment within extended kinship networks and economic hierarchies⁴.

In the modern era, despite the influx of modernization and structural transformations, the Arab state remains fundamentally incomplete, with its institutions lacking full maturation. The concepts of *nation*, *citizenship*, and *identity* remain largely abstract, failing to attain substantive institutionalization. Furthermore, the structural composition of the family has undergone only superficial modifications, retaining a fundamental resemblance to the tribal model of pre-Islamic Arabia. While modernization has introduced external transformations, the underlying behavioral norms, value systems, and epistemic structures remain deeply resistant to change. More critically, the patriarchal order is not merely a socio-political construct but a *psychological formation*, shaped by historical and civilizational determinants that sustain its continuity⁵.

The patriarchal system that persists in contemporary Arab societies is a hybrid formation—neither a purely traditional nor a fully modernist structure. It embodies an incongruous synthesis of pre-modern and modern elements, resulting in a structurally incoherent social order that does not conform to either classical models of patriarchy or contemporary paradigms of governance⁶.

At the heart of this patriarchal structure lies the systemic exclusion of women. This exclusion is not merely a socio-political reality but a deeply embedded epistemic and unconscious construct, manifesting in the persistent negation of female agency. Even when the rhetoric of women's liberation is invoked, it often remains performative rather than substantive, failing to effect structural change. The fundamental epistemic crisis of Arab society is its inability to conceive itself outside the framework of masculinist dominance, rendering femininity functionally peripheral to its self-definition. The absence of gender parity thus constitutes a central impediment to democratic transformation, as genuine egalitarianism cannot be realized in the absence of gender equality. In this regard, Arab intellectual Hisham Sharabi articulates a critical epistemological rupture necessary for overcoming this impasse, asserting that: "*No structural transformation or genuine emancipation can occur without dismantling patriarchal authority—both as a symbolic construct and as an institutional power—and without the liberation of women in both discourse and practice.*"⁷

2. Psychoanalytic Approach and the Deconstruction of the Repressed from Tarabichi's Perspective

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Hisham Sharabi, *The Patriarchal System and the Problematic of Arab Society's Underdevelopment*, translated by Hisham Shreih, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, pp. 15–16.

⁷ *Ibid.*

Psychoanalytic criticism in literary studies is a product of modern intellectual developments, with numerous scholars integrating psychoanalysis into their literary analyses, including figures such as Abbas Mahmoud Al-Aqqad, Mohammed Nouhi, Mustafa Sweif, and Shaker Abdel Hamid. Before delving into Tarabichi's critical philosophy—rooted in psychoanalysis as a means of interrogating the repressed within Arab culture—it is essential to first delineate the psychoanalytic method and its relevance to literary criticism.

Psychoanalysis emerged as both a theoretical framework and a therapeutic method with the Austrian physician Sigmund Freud, who applied it to the treatment of neuroses. This approach seeks to excavate repressed emotions and unconscious drives, bringing them into conscious awareness before subjecting them to analytical scrutiny⁸. Freud is credited with theorizing the unconscious, asserting that deep-seated desires exist within every human being, continuously striving for fulfillment but restrained by the *superego*—the internalized moral, social, and religious norms that enforce repression.

As a result of this repression, individuals seek alternative channels for expressing unconscious drives, such as dreams, delirium, and artistic production. Art, in this sense, functions as a sublimatory and compensatory process, allowing the artist to externalize what remains unrealized in the social sphere⁹. Freud was the first to subject literature to psychoanalytic interpretation, maintaining a profound interest in literature and poetry. He considered poets uniquely endowed with the ability to articulate their emotional experiences with exceptional depth, positioning them as intermediaries between the obscured domain of instinctual drives and the structured domain of rational knowledge¹⁰.

With the rise of psychoanalysis as a methodological tool for decoding psychological phenomena by tracing them back to unconscious structures, Arab critics sought to appropriate this framework in their study of literary texts. This integration fostered a strong relationship between psychoanalytic criticism and literary analysis, providing new interpretative possibilities for engaging with literary works.

In discussing the intersection of psychoanalysis and literary criticism, Saad Al-Yazghi, in *The Critic's Guide*, highlights the methodological breadth of psychoanalysis, describing it as a framework encompassing multiple interpretative trajectories. Psychoanalysis, he argues, enables the tracing of human psychological development through the dual processes of analysis and interpretation¹¹. Within literary studies, psychoanalysis functions on two levels: first, by examining the creative process itself, and second, by analyzing the literary text as a self-contained entity. The former concerns how a literary work reflects the author's psychological reality—an inquiry situated within the domain of psychology—while the latter explores how an author's subjectivity informs the text, which is central to literary criticism, particularly when engaging with texts rich in symbolic ambiguity¹².

The intersection between psychoanalysis and literary criticism lies in their shared objective of uncovering the latent, the unspoken, and the repressed—whether in the cultural domain or within the individual subject. This analytical framework extends to the writer's psychology, their

⁸ Abdullah Abu Haif, *Modern Arab Literary Criticism*, Arab Writers Union, 2000, p. 178.

⁹ Youssef Oughlissi, *Methods of Literary Criticism*, Jisour Publishing and Distribution, 2010, p. 21.

¹⁰ Ahmed Hirach, *The Psychological Approach in Modern Arab Thought*, Diwan University Press, p. 14.

¹¹ Saad Al-Yazghi, *The Critic's Guide*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 2000, p. 332.

¹² Ali Jawad Al-Tahir, *Introduction to Literary Criticism*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 1st ed., 1997, p. 426.

relationship with their text, and the implicit ideological structures embedded within their creative output.

Georges Tarabichi positioned literary criticism as an epistemological instrument for interrogating ideological structures embedded within Arab cultural and intellectual discourse. His critical engagement reflects a steadfast commitment to psychoanalysis as a methodological framework, enabling the deconstruction of latent ideological formations that shape literary and cultural production.

Initially, Tarabichi's critical approach was informed by Marxist ideological critique. During the 1970s, he sought to consolidate his ideological commitments by integrating psychoanalysis with other contemporary hermeneutical frameworks, including semiotics and symbolic interpretation. However, his critical methodology evolved significantly: while his early works (until 1983) maintained a psychological-ideological orientation, his *Nawal El Saadawi and the Unconscious* (1984) marked a paradigmatic shift, wherein psychoanalysis began to supplant ideological critique as his dominant analytical lens. By the publication of *The Novelist and His Hero* (1995), Tarabichi had fully established psychoanalysis as the primary epistemic framework through which he engaged with literature.

His methodological fidelity to psychoanalysis is evident in his assertion that it serves as *a point of departure rather than a point of arrival*. Rejecting any reductionist tendency to confine literary texts to their psychological determinants, Tarabichi argued that psychoanalysis functions as an instrument for revealing textual polysemy and exposing otherwise inaccessible interpretative dimensions¹³.

Tarabichi operationalized psychoanalysis as a *hermeneutic and diagnostic apparatus*, enabling the deconstruction of the ideological substrata underpinning Arab literary and intellectual discourse. His engagement sought to unveil the epistemic structures that perpetuate discursive rigidity and impede intellectual renewal in Arab thought.

At the core of his psychoanalytic critique is the thesis that Arab intellectuals themselves orchestrated the *massacre of heritage*, a phenomenon he diagnosed as symptomatic of *collective neurosis* rooted in a *narcissistic wound*. From a psychoanalytic perspective, Tarabichi argued that this neurosis manifested acutely within the Arab intelligentsia, which, in its reaction against Eurocentrism, paradoxically produced an *inverse centrism*—a reactive Arabocentric¹⁴ discourse that remained structurally derivative rather than epistemically autonomous.

In *Arab Intellectuals and Heritage: The Psychoanalysis of a Collective Neurosis*, Tarabichi delineates his commitment to methodological rigor and scientific objectivity. His analysis scrutinizes the ideological configurations of the Arab intellectual elite, diagnosing the psychological tensions that surface in postcolonial Arab discourse, particularly in the aftermath of the June 1967 defeat. He identifies two dominant reactionary tendencies in response to this epistemic rupture: *passive resignation* and *regression*¹⁵.

From Tarabichi's perspective, literary texts are ideologically saturated—there is no such thing as an ideologically neutral text. The critic's function, therefore, is to *excavate both the manifest and latent*

¹³ Georges Tarabichi, *The Oedipus Complex in the Arab Novel*, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1982, p. 5.

¹⁴ Mikdad Abboud, *Georges Tarabichi and the Problematic of Authentic Criticism*, Damascus Center for Research and Studies, 2017, p. 5.

¹⁵ Georges Tarabichi, *Arab Intellectuals and Heritage: The Psychoanalysis of a Collective Neurosis*, Riad El-Rayyes Books and Publishing, London, 1st ed., 1991, p. 11

ideological structures embedded within a literary work. However, he cautions against an exogenous imposition of ideology critique, insisting instead that ideological analysis must emerge from an *endogenous* engagement with the textual corpus itself. His critical philosophy is encapsulated in his assertion that the objective is to *decipher the text rather than foreclose its interpretative potential*¹⁶. By deploying psychoanalysis as a mechanism of literary critique, Tarabichi sought to dismantle entrenched discursive taboos and expose ideological distortions within literary and cultural production.

Tarabichi frequently confronted accusations of methodological reductionism, a critique he categorically refuted. He maintained that such a charge could be levied against any critical approach, including structuralism and historical materialism. His methodological ambition was not to collapse literary texts into psychological determinants but to engage with the *dialectical interplay between psychological and ideological structures* in shaping literary production.

A recurrent critique of psychoanalytic literary criticism is that it is most effective when applied to deceased authors, given the methodological challenges of analyzing a living writer's unconscious. Tarabichi, however, problematized this assumption by posing fundamental epistemological questions:

*"Must we always wait for a writer's death before we can engage critically with their work? Is critical silence not a far more severe narcissistic wound than any interpretative intervention? And is not the act of writing itself an implicit self-exposure to discursive scrutiny and hermeneutic engagement?"*¹⁷

3. Deconstructing Androcentrism and Misogyny in Tarabichi's Examination of Mohamed Dib's *Trilogy* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Two Women in One*

Georges Tarabichi's intellectual trajectory was initially anchored in literary criticism, wherein he systematically deployed methodologies from contemporary philosophical critique. His analytical framework was shaped by a *dialectics of displacement, subversion, and transcendence*, operationalizing psychoanalytic and philosophical hermeneutics to interrogate the symbolic economy, narrative structures, and ideological underpinnings of the two novels. His engagement was not limited to textual exegesis; rather, it constituted a radical *deconstruction of androcentric hegemony*—a discursive formation that sustains patriarchal dominance within Arab sociocultural and intellectual frameworks.

Given the epistemic centrality of Tarabichi's critique, the following key questions emerge:

- What are the structural configurations and semiotic articulations of androcentrism in Mohamed Dib's *Trilogy* and Nawal El Saadawi's *Two Women in One*?
- What methodological and epistemological instruments does Tarabichi mobilize to subvert and disarticulate patriarchal dominance?
- How did Tarabichi engage with these novels through a philosophical lens?

3.a. Critique of Masculinity and the Ideology of Virility in Mohamed Dib's *Trilogy* (*The Big House, The Fire, The Loom*)

¹⁶ Georges Tarabichi, *Complete Critical Works*, Madarek Publishing, Dubai, Vol. 2, 1st ed., 2013, p. 12.

¹⁷ Georges Tarabichi, *Ibid.*, Vol. 3, p. 11.

Georges Tarabichi initiates his epistemological deconstruction of masculinity in Dib's *Trilogy* by engaging critically with a statement emblematic of hegemonic virility:

"He is a man, truly a man. He is now an old sheikh, but no one can deny that he has been a man all his life and remains one."

Tarabichi identifies this declaration as symptomatic of an entrenched ideological construct, which he interrogates through a systematic critique of the reception history surrounding Dib's work. He argues that literary critics who framed *The Trilogy* as a historical document or testimonial narrative misread its ontological orientation, overlooking its autobiographical self-positioning. According to Tarabichi, "this novel does not chronicle Algeria except insofar as it chronicles its protagonist's adolescence, spanning from age ten to fifteen."¹⁸

By centering their analysis on *Omar al-Dziri*, the protagonist, critics reinforced androcentric epistemology, not only at the narrative level but also within the critical imaginary. Tarabichi critiques this methodological deficiency, contending that it reduces the literary text to a sociological report rather than engaging with its aesthetic, narratological, and ideological underpinnings. Such an approach, he argues, negates the novel's discursive function, failing to recognize that it does not merely seek to document historical events but rather reanimates them through a subjective, masculinized focalization¹⁹.

Extending his critique, Tarabichi situates Dib's *Trilogy* within the framework of postcolonial narrativity, observing that unlike many Arab novels where secondary characters are mere narrative appendages, Dib's work allocates significant space to figures such as *Hamid Seraj*, *Bad A'douch*, *the Commander*, *Akacha*, and *Hamadouch*. However, any critique that prioritizes these peripheral subjectivities while neglecting the central protagonist is, according to Tarabichi, methodologically impoverished. Such a critical approach, he argues, dissects the extremities of the text while neglecting its ideological nucleus, leading him to categorize Dib's work as a "Third World novel."²⁰

Tarabichi's critical prelude to the trilogy reflects his diagnostic approach, aiming to uncover the repressed and unspoken dimensions within Arab cultural consciousness, particularly its fetishization of virility and hegemonic masculinity. The novel's male protagonist, serving as Algeria's representative figure, encapsulates these themes.

Tarabichi's hermeneutic strategy foregrounds the latent structures of hegemonic masculinity embedded in the discursive architecture of *The Trilogy*. He asserts that *The Big House*, *The Fire*, and *The Loom* constitute an Algerian narrative construct, but one that is fundamentally framed through Omar al-Dziri's phallogocentric lens. Algeria, as represented in the text, is not a polyphonic national space but rather a masculinized domain filtered through a singular, gendered consciousness.

This androcentric prism manifests explicitly in Omar's antagonistic relationship with the maternal figure, which is bifurcated into two distinct yet structurally analogous archetypes:

1. The Biological Mother (Ayni) – A site of deprivation, restriction, and negation of sustenance.

¹⁸ Georges Tarabichi, *Complete Critical Works*, Vol. 3, p. 15.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

2. The Symbolic Mother (France) – Represented as a coercive entity imposed through colonial pedagogy.

This maternal conflation engenders what Tarabichi diagnoses as a neurotic crisis²¹.

The hegemonic virility that dominates *Dib's Trilogy* functions as an ideological apparatus that annihilates female agency, reinforcing a paternal order devoid of female presence as an autonomous subjectivity. This is most evident in Omar's denigrating perception of his mother, who is cast as a repressive, emasculating figure. Her symbolic castration of the male subject is textualized through her denial of nourishment, wherein the absence of bread becomes a semiotic marker of maternal insufficiency²²:

"Ayni poured steaming soup into a large metal bowl. It was nothing but fragmented noodles and vegetables—nothing else. No bread. She had no bread. Omar yelled: 'Is this all? Soup without bread?' Ayni replied, 'We have no more bread.'"

Moreover, Ayni's linguistic aggression and punitive discourse are symptomatic of internalized patriarchal structures, wherein she replicates the dominant authoritarian order through verbal discipline and corporeal punishment:

*"Omar... Omar. Come back. May Fever strike you. Omar. Come back if you don't want me to cut you to pieces."*²³

Despite being subject to patriarchal oppression, Ayni internalizes and reproduces the mechanisms of male hegemony, embodying what feminist psychoanalysis terms the patriarchal maternal function. As a paradigmatic Oriental woman, she endorses male sovereignty, continuously deferring to male authority figures, whether it be her deceased husband, who left her economically disenfranchised, or her dependent brother, who is financially sustained by his wife.

Nevertheless, despite this economic precarity, Ayni remains ideologically invested in the perpetuation of the androcentric order, projecting the future of patriarchal continuity onto her son, Omar:

"When will Omar grow up and ease some of this burden?"

In stark contrast, the daughter is structurally effaced, reduced to a non-productive entity whose only function is consumption. The surveillance of female sexuality within the text reinforces a paternalistic paradigm, wherein female agency is not only denied but subjected to hyper-regulation:

*"A girl cannot be trusted; she must be fed, but once she reaches adolescence, she becomes worse than a snake. If you look away for even a moment, she will commit some foolish act."*²⁴

Although *Dib's Trilogy* includes female characters, the narrative structure systematically reaffirms patriarchal ideology, ensuring that the paternal order remains the epistemic and ontological foundation of the text. While women exist within the textual space, their presence is entirely subsumed within the discursive logic of male dominance.

3.b. Critique of androcentric regression in Nawal El Saadawi's *Two Women in One*.

²¹ Georges Tarabichi, *Complete Critical Works*, p. 15.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 19.

²³ Mohammed Dib, *The Big House*, trans. Sami Al-Droubi, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1968, p. 48.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Nawal El Saadawi's discourse promotes the emancipation of both women and men from centuries of traditional domination, systemic subjugation, distortion, and the suppression of genuine sexual realities—realities that, in her view, transcend simple male-female binaries. Drawing on biological and physiological evidence, she maintains that pure maleness or pure femaleness is biologically untenable. She argues for an intermingling of sexual organs and hormones, whereby men retain embryonic vestiges of female organs, just as women preserve residual male traits. Through fluctuating androgenic and estrogenic levels across various stages of life, El Saadawi concludes that essentialist claims of absolute gender distinctions are fundamentally flawed²⁵.

Further reinforcing her argument, El Saadawi posits that femininity is the primary biological origin, appealing to botany—where the pistil (the female organ) endures longer than the stamen (the male organ)—and to zoology, where a hen safeguards its offspring, as evidence of female primacy. She then extends this biological determinism into historical narratives, positioning her thesis within a scientific-rationalist epistemology²⁶.

Georges Tarabichi engages critically with the symbolic architecture of *Two Women in One*, paying particular attention to its protagonist, Bahia Shaheen. He declares his methodological bias explicitly:

“Our critique will align with the woman within the woman in order to confront the man within the woman.”

Tarabichi identifies this “man within the woman” as a pervasive internalized androcentrism, evidenced in Bahia Shaheen's rejection of her own femininity and her broader aversion to womanhood. El Saadawi herself articulates this inner turmoil, describing Bahia's sense of alienation:

“They belong to one species, and I belong to another... The word ‘female,’ whenever it reached her ears, rang as an insult or a shameful stigma. It was as if an unspoken voice continuously echoed: ‘Who said I’m female? Who said I’m a girl?’”²⁷

Tarabichi confronts what he regards as El Saadawi's biologically anchored essentialism, contesting the novel's presentation of female identity as an inherently burdened or compromised state from which the protagonist feels compelled to escape. He argues that Bahia's negation of her gender identity signals an epistemological collapse, as she relinquishes her claim to authentic feminist subjectivity by aspiring to adopt masculinity.

Central to Tarabichi's critique is the paradox that emerges when a woman seeks to transcend her own femininity by aspiring to embody a masculine ideal. He insists that such an ontological repudiation of one's gender effectively nullifies personal subjectivity:

“If one denies the right to be what one inherently is, one forfeits any meaningful identity.”

In Tarabichi's estimation, Bahia Shaheen's desire to “become a man” is not a legitimate liberation strategy but, rather, an unwitting capitulation to the very androcentric framework she initially rejects. By assuming a masculine persona, Bahia internalizes and reproduces phallogocentric norms, effectively legitimizing the patriarchal hegemony that she ostensibly seeks to dismantle.

²⁵ Nawal El Saadawi, *Studies on Women and Men in Arab Society*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1990, p. 200.

²⁶ Ali Aboud Al-Mouhamadaoui et al., *Philosophy and Feminism*, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st ed., 2013, p. 65.

²⁷ Nawal El Saadawi, *Two Women in One*, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 1975, p. 32.

While El Saadawi positions Bahía's nascent masculinity as a form of resistance against patriarchal oppression, Tarabichi contends that true female emancipation requires maintaining and valorizing a distinctly feminine subject-position. He maintains that a woman cannot dismantle patriarchy by adopting its very apparatus—namely, the masculine identity—as doing so merely reinscribes the hegemony of virility.

In this regard, El Saadawi's text inadvertently reinforces androcentric norms, conflating masculinity with power and, in the process, negating the potential for a critically autonomous feminist consciousness. For Tarabichi, such a narrative trajectory re-entrenches patriarchal structures rather than subverting them, exemplifying a thematic collapse into the very androcentric order that the protagonist—and by extension, El Saadawi—purports to resist.

Conclusion

This paper has undertaken a critical interrogation of androcentrism in Arab societies through an analysis of literary and artistic representations in *Mohamed Dib's Trilogy* and *Two Women in One* by Nawal El Saadawi. By employing psychoanalytic critique, the study has engaged with one of the fundamental epistemological barriers hindering Arab thought—namely, the hegemony of patriarchal ideology over the cultural, intellectual, and literary landscape, particularly in the aftermath of the June 1967 defeat.

According to Georges Tarabichi, Arab intellectuals, instead of confronting structural crises, entrenched themselves within a discourse of masculinity and virility, reinforcing its manifestations across social, economic, cultural, literary, political, and familial domains. This androcentric entrenchment has perpetuated a civilizational and ethical deadlock that continues to shape contemporary Arab societies. Tarabichi emerges as an intellectual dissident who sought to deconstruct monolithic paradigms and advocate for epistemic plurality, rejecting all forms of dogmatism and insularity. However, this intellectual liberation remains contingent on a dialectical confrontation with the self, followed by a critical reconciliation with cultural heritage and value systems, as a prerequisite for engaging in meaningful discourse with the Other.

References

1. Ibrahim Al-Haidari, *The Patriarchal System and the Problematic of Gender*, Dar Al-Saqi, Beirut, 2011.
2. Hisham Sharabi, *The Patriarchal System and the Problematic of Arab Society's Underdevelopment*, translated by Hisham Shreih, Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut.
3. Abdullah Abu Haif, *Modern Arab Literary Criticism*, Arab Writers Union, 2000.
4. Youssef Oughlissi, *Methods of Literary Criticism*, Jisour Publishing and Distribution, 2010.
5. Ahmed Hirach, *The Psychological Approach in Modern Arab Thought*, Diwan University Press.
6. Saad Al-Yazghi, *The Critic's Guide*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 2000.
7. Ali Jawad Al-Tahir, *Introduction to Literary Criticism*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, 1st ed., 1997.
8. Georges Tarabichi, *The Oedipus Complex in the Arab Novel*, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1982.
9. Mikdad Abboud, *Georges Tarabichi and the Problematic of Authentic Criticism*, Damascus Center for Research and Studies, 2017.
10. Georges Tarabichi, *Arab Intellectuals and Heritage: The Psychoanalysis of a Collective Neurosis*, Riad El-Rayyes Books and Publishing, London, 1st ed., 1991.
11. Georges Tarabichi, *Complete Critical Works*, Madarek Publishing, Dubai, Vol. 2, 1st ed., 2013.

12. Mohammed Dib, *The Big House*, trans. Sami Al-Droubi, Dar Al-Tali'a, Beirut, 1968, p. 48.
13. Nawal El Saadawi, *Studies on Women and Men in Arab Society*, Arab Institution for Studies and Publishing, Beirut, 2nd ed., 1990.
14. Ali Aboud Al-Mouhamadaoui et al., *Philosophy and Feminism*, Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st ed., 2013.
15. Nawal El Saadawi, *Two Women in One*, Dar Al-Adab, Beirut, 1975