

Asta's Framework Conferralism Analysis of Women's Bodies in The Hidden Face of Eve by Nawal El -Saadawi

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Abstract:

This article aimed to discuss the concept of women's bodies that Nawal el Saadawi wrote and portrayed in her book *The Hidden Face of Eve*, by using the conferralism framework introduced by Asta, an Icelandic contemporary philosopher. A literature review method with a feminist approach was used in this research to reveal phenomena that happened in women's life and also to conduct non-exploitative research. The findings in this research are, Asta offers a conferralism framework to stress that social properties that are enforced on a person, likely have another person's power in it. Conferralism gave a firm new insight into the enforcement of social categories to an individual, it helps to uncover women's experiences from Nawal el Saadawi's writing. Where women's bodies are strictly attached to some properties and restricted to only exist in some areas.

[Artikel ini bertujuan untuk membahas konsep tubuh perempuan yang ditulis dan digambarkan oleh Nawal el Saadawi dalam bukunya *The Hidden Face of Eve*, dengan menggunakan kerangka conferralism yang diperkenalkan oleh Asta, seorang filsuf kontemporer Islandia. Metode literature review dengan pendekatan feminis digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk mengungkap fenomena yang terjadi dalam kehidupan perempuan dan juga untuk melakukan penelitian non-eksploitatif. Temuan dalam penelitian ini adalah, Asta menawarkan kerangka conferralism untuk menekankan bahwa properti sosial yang dipaksakan pada seseorang, kemungkinan memiliki kekuatan orang lain di dalamnya. Conferralism memberi wawasan baru yang tegas tentang penegakan kategori sosial pada individu, membantu mengungkap pengalaman perempuan dari tulisan Nawal el Saadawi. Dimana tubuh perempuan terikat erat dengan beberapa sifat dan dibatasi hanya ada di beberapa wilayah]

Keywords :

Asta, Conferralism, Nawal el Saadawi, Women's Bodies



A. Introduction

Feminist discussions about women's bodies were still ongoing until today. Simone de Beauvoir opened this discussion in 1949 with her book 'The Second Sex', when she stated that "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman".¹ Continued by the psychoanalyst feminist, Luce Irigaray, who discussed women's bodies by contested academic writing that was considered masculine, discussed women's bodies with poetic language to bring back women's bodies the way they were—before patriarchy.² Various problems become triggers to discuss women's bodies. In the feminist movement, they discuss bodies being free from the objectification they faced. On the other hand, there are some one-sided assumptions about women's bodies.³ These assumptions are mainly brought by capitalism and patriarchy, which put equality behind them and have the power to get profits from those oppressive systems.

Up until now, the idea that capitalist society, and patriarchal society imposed upon women is still there. They are putting women in some boxes and it proves that women are still bounded by some constraints in their life. Nawal el Saadawi wrote that media have a big influence on shaping women and how society wants women to look like.⁴ This idea that was shaped by another party still gives tons of burden for women, in other words, what Nawal wrote years ago has still become a problem to this day. It can be concluded that way by Asta's conferralism which is a contemporary framework but it fits perfectly with the problems Nawal depicted in *The Hidden Face of Eve*. Conferralism also gave us new glasses to look at various problems in women's life. We use conferralism which focuses on the ideas that the system enforces to exist. By combining these two paradigms, we hope that it will explain how women's bodies are depicted today and what the ideas that are conferred upon women.

¹ Simone de Beauvoir dan H. M. Parshley, *The Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 1997), 385.

² Aquarini Priyatna Prabasmoro, "Feminisme Sebagai Tubuh, Pemikiran Dan Pengalaman" Presented on Forum Studi Kebudayaan, FSRD ITB, December 27, 2005), https://pustaka.unpad.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/feminisme_sebagai_tubuh.pdf, 2-3.

³ Pinky Saptandari, "Beberapa Pemikiran tentang Perempuan dalam Tubuh dan Eksistensi," *BioKultur* II, no. 1 (2013): 54.

⁴ Nawal el Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 151.

In the academic field, Nawal's *The Hidden Face of Eve* opened a lot of clarity about women's burdens. By combining the pictures from Nawal with Asta's conferralism, we believe that a new viewpoint will be revealed. Raw experience and pictures from Nawal opened up a lot of new insights about women. It can help other researchers to broaden this topic to their own explanation and understanding.

In this paper, we conducted the research using a library research method with a feminist approach. This approach is used by feminist researchers to expose events in women's lives and to conduct non-exploitative research.⁵ It differs from general research in way that qualitative research with a feminist approach expresses where they are standing explicitly. The feminist approach challenges conventional views in research, where the majority of it is male-biased.⁶ The feminist approach is used in this research so that it can explain the experiences that Nawal el Saadawi portrayed in her book, most of which include exploitation without adding more exploitation. In the feminist approach, women's experiences and their observations are accepted as a form of knowledge. Through this feminist approach, the invisibility of women's experience and knowledge is raised⁷. By conducting this research, we are hoping that these experiences that we analyze and reveal, will be seen.

B. Women's Bodies and Their Burdens

Categories or boxes that society expect us to endure can be disclosed using Asta's conferralism. It explains that the aim of debunking myths about social construction is to dissect the categories designed by society and to disaffirm the excuse that "social categories are natural" believed by an individual, communal, or certain people in a system to justify their oppressive actions. Dissecting the categories also serves the certainty that

⁵ Gayle Letherby, *Feminist Research in Theory and Practice* (Buckingham: Open Univ. Press, 2003), 6.

⁶ Shulamit Reinharz, *Metode-Metode Feminis Dalam Penelitian Sosial*, ed. oleh Sita Arupurnami, trans. oleh Lisabona Rahman (Jakarta: Women Research Institute, 2005).

⁷ Brigitte Holzner dan Ratna Saptari, "Research Approach" *Dalam Brigitte Holzner, Gender Methodology in Agricultural Project* (Netherland: Departement of Gender Studies in Agricultural, Weagning University, nd.).

enablement and constraint will always follow categories that are conferred on a person or group of people.⁸

Related to the categories that can be conferred upon us from social construction, Kamla Bhasin mentioned some categories that a certain gender should fit into. She wrote that in reality, what is considered natural and what is constructed is hard to differentiate.⁹ This emphasized that categories that are conferred on a person or group of people in a society should not be normalized.

On this natural or constructed account, Sally Haslanger also mentioned that society has that kind of effort to tell us and justify which one is natural and which one is not. These traditional efforts result in a sexist institution and also in an institution that portrayed women as inferior beings by nature. And at the end, the features they forced us to have are manifested until they became a product of social force.¹⁰ This unnecessary social force is a form of social construction legitimation act that will always affect those who are inferior. People in power are asserting their dominance and projecting unnecessary properties onto people who do not have power; it gets worse when they take profit from this and continue to oppress people while telling them to "behave" the way they expected.

In *The Hidden Face of Eve's* first chapter, sub-chapter 10, under the title 'Distorted Notions About Femininity, Beauty, and Love', Nawal el Saadawi debunked every property and expectation that are conferred on women—or Arabian women, to be precise. She exposed the passivity of women that society shaped and expected of women. This property burdened women. It also made women struggle to express themselves. In the end, women rely on their physical looks to be considered human in certain societies. Furthermore, the media pushed certain standards for how women should appear. Women should follow those standards and, without realizing it, they are sexualized and become objects of society.¹¹

⁸ Asta Kristjana Sveinsdóttir, "The Social Construction of Human Kinds," *Hypatia* 28, no. 4 (2013): 716–32.

⁹ Kamla Bhasin, *Understanding Gender*, Nachdr., Kali Primaries (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2009), 4.

¹⁰ Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (New York, NY, United States of America: Oxford University Press, 2012), 148–149.

¹¹ Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 151.

Therefore, society and people in power dictated women's roles. Women do not have the same chance to discover themselves and their bodies thoroughly, and women are also bound with burdens. This results in restricting women's ability to exist, expresses themselves, and have connections with some people as they want to. The dictations vary in each culture. In this account, Angela Davis told that her visit to Egypt gave her a realization that most women—either in different cultures or in the same culture—had not yet realized and understood the layers of oppression from misogynist actions that had happened¹². This is a form of the systemic consequence of social construction legitimation in which women are constrained by culturally specific dictations. Therefore, culture can be an institution that imposes a constraint on women to escape from patriarchy.

Aside from the culture that forces women to act and look a certain way, patriarchy, and capitalism encourage a different form of enforcement. There are so many unreasonable standards that women should have, and these standards are justified by the mass media, as seen in the *Nova* and *Nyata* tabloids, in which the contents of the mentioned tabloids encourage the normalization of women's domestication.¹³ Another form of enforcement towards women to look a certain way appeared in a body spray advertisement in which it controlled how women should appear, and women became a commodity.¹⁴

As explained before, passive traits that are considered normal for women's characteristics are enforcement of society and not a natural one. Nawal el Saadawi explained that, in the end, women do not have a lot of choice except to make sure that their outer body or physical appearance is smooth, as what the system expects them to appear. Society enforces this view that becomes internalized that the most important thing for a woman is their body and some 'special' treatment is necessary to maintain their body as it is. Be it a newspaper or entertainment media as advertisements and magazines, depict some kind of imagination about women's bodies; that its skin should be pampered with some kind of care, and its lips should be

¹² Angela Yvonne Davis, *Women, Culture & Politics* (New York, NY, United States of America: Vintage Books, 1990), 110.

¹³ Endah Siswati, "Representasi Domestikasi Perempuan dalam Iklan," *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, Vol. 11, no. 2 (2015): 192.

¹⁴ Rizki Fitriana, "Perempuan dan Sensualitas: Bentuk Komodifikasi Tubuh Perempuan Melalui Body Images Yang Dikonstruksikan di Dalam Iklan AXE," *Jurnal Unair*, Vol. 1, no. 2 (2005): 1.

colored with a certain color, as Nawal said in her writing, "... She therefore as no alternative other than to occupy herself with this outer bodily envelope, to massage it, to ensure that it remains smooth to the touch, to remove the rough hair that grows on it from time to time, sometimes to expose its nakedness, and at others to cover it up according to changes in fashion".¹⁵

Representation and assumptions about beauty become distorted. Society has its own perception and continues to be commercialized by mass media for its own engagement and relevancy. This becomes internalized by women as their consumers, and without further consideration, those perceptions suppress women to comply with the burden of their physical appearance. Fair or white skin, smooth skin free of 'imperfections', and 'naturally' red lips are physical characteristics that force a person to be perceived as a beautiful woman or woman in general. The research results and the discovery must be the answers, or the research hypothesis stated previously in the introduction part.

In current research conducted in California University by Molly Silvestrini, it aligned with Nawal el Saadawi's point that women are burdened to fit into some boxes and media is one of the influencers of this burden. Molly Silvestrini conducted this research with various background of students and revealed that media representation centered around the values of 'whiteness' or values that sticks too close to white people and this caused a hurtful consequence for people that are not considered fit into that standard. This also attacked someone's confidence and their values. One of the interviewees said that "... the idea that everyone should see this race as the most attractive, and everyone else is made to feel inferior...".¹⁶

The research mentioned above can be seen as an example of burdening some properties to women. This burden, which was justified by society, permeated and remained in ideas held by an individual, a community, or an institution—even women themselves. The feeling of being inferior is caused by the burdens from society that are thrown irresponsibly at women, restricting them from expressing themselves and their whole existence in a lot of situations and conditions. This is a never-ending problem.

¹⁵ Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 151.

¹⁶ Molly Silvestrini, "It's not something I can shake': The Effect of Racial Stereotypes, Beauty Standards, and Sexual Racism on Interracial Attraction," *Sexuality & Culture*, Vol. 24, no. 1 (2020): 11, 18.

The media's beauty standards are influenced by capitalism and patriarchy, which are ruling our lives. Women are depicted in certain shapes or certain characteristics to influence and give profits or enablement to the ruling system. From the influence of media created for women, the capital owners of the related products are getting big profits. They are trying as hard as possible to set certain standards for women to satisfy the male gaze in a patriarchal culture. But, at the same time, they are feeding the idea inside the male gaze's mind, even though they know the idea is not how reality is. Women are bearing a heavy burden simply because capital owners want to maximize their profits, which feeds the above-mentioned idea of the male gaze. On the other hand, this system is attacking women who exist independently or women who are fighting for their rights just because the reality is not what their ideas told them about women. Consequently, this construction they built is a trap for women. In a patriarchal world, women will always become an object.

Other than enforcement from society and media, Nawal el Saadawi also mentioned capitalism as a system that contributed to burdening women. She mentioned that capitalism does not care about what people need as long as they get a big profit. Eventually, women are becoming commodities in a capitalist society. Nawal gave us a picture where women become stars in advertisements where they are shown along with provocative things at that time, and women's bodies are sexualized, involving men in that advertisement. She also reminds her reader about capitalist products that take advantage of the sexual needs of Arabic society at that time, they are taking advantage of strong religious beliefs by continuing to channel funds to those who hold strong and fanatic religious values. But on the other hand, they are using women and sexuality as commodities in the commercialization of their products, putting aside what they impose on religious values above.¹⁷

Nawal emphasized that, in the end, women are not complete human beings in a capitalist society dominated by men. Women will be considered a commodity. Women are becoming certain jewels or clothes, or harshly, women are only their reproductive organs. These are some assumptions that

¹⁷ Sa' dāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 152-153.

are considered normal, that women are empty humans. Women are being reduced to a part or a certain instrument.¹⁸

Women's existence will be limited by the burdens they have to carry. The conferred properties to women are serious and real matters. Back to Asta, she said that all of a sudden, we are placed in a certain category without knowing who put us in that, and most of those categories are not what we want to be in. Suddenly, we got constraints and enablement from those categories.¹⁹ Certain property that is conferred upon us have significance in our social life and most of the time the significance is unjust and oppressive.²⁰

C. The Enforced Properties and Why Does It Oppress Women

As mentioned above, they attribute women to a category, assuming they are passive human beings. In her book, Nawal addressed how femininity, or femaleness, is attributed to the categories of weakness, indecisiveness, and naive. On the other hand, masculinity or maleness is the opposite, which is attributed to mastering determination, initiative, strength, and decisiveness.²¹

Women are attributed to having rigid femaleness or femininity. To the point where women that are not passing through or do not fit into the boxes available, are not complete women. Women who stand alone, who have a strong determination for their future, are oftentimes ignored or alienated. Women's future is limited to marriage and bearing children. When a woman boldly resists a relationship or something that they are not comfortable with, this woman is thrown into the category of disobedient woman, or even worse, they are considered the ones who caused the problem. Society thinks this is not a serious problem. Society is justifying these constraints and enforcement on women, where women are pressed into narrow boxes and they do not have any choices to move.

Justifying the enforcement of gender roles on women is not only justified by culture and society but it is also justified by science as a product of patriarchal society. Science has a part in pushing women further and helps

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 155.

¹⁹ Asta, *Categories We Live by: The Construction of Sex, Gender, Race, and Other Social Categories* (New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18.

²⁰ Ibid., 46-47.

²¹ Sa'dāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 160.

to justify women's roles. Nawal emphasized that science's discourse helps justify what is natural for women. Science's discourse tells us what is natural and what is not, what can be interchanged and what cannot. They are telling us that women have to be pregnant, bear children, and take care of their children because of women's reproductive organs and their biological 'nature'. Indirectly, they are repressing women in domestic areas only. Women are limited by what science has told us about, where women have to bear and take care of their children. Their existence is limited to being mothers and wives. Women have to be happy when they are able to bear children.²²

Nawal's mention of *Sin El Ya'as* or we can be interpreted as the age of no hope, clarifies Nawal's mention of *Sin El Ya'as*. When she wrote that "the value of a woman deteriorates with age," she meant that women only live up to their menopause. After menopause, women have reached the end of their productivity or their lives, and they are entering that age of no hope.²³ With this box that is given by society to women and the box of biological demands on women, it is justified that a woman's life is to be a being that is passive, naive, and also with those biological restrictions mentioned above. Therefore, women are being constrained and pushed to fit into irrational boxes.

Aside from the impact mentioned above, religion also plays a role in putting women inside a certain box. In her book, Nawal wrote that "one of the primary weapons used to keep back the revolt of women and youth against the patriarchal system and its values is the misuse of Islam and its doctrines".²⁴ Living in a place with very strong Islamic values, she experiences these fitting into some boxes firsthand. With a strong religious value, capital power, or someone with standing who wishes to profit from this situation. They are using a religious excuse that is supposed to be kind to all human beings, to a distortion in exploiting women, causing women to be marginalized and have a hard time actualizing themselves.

This profit-seeking party is using religious excuses, with an appeal to "return to Islamic doctrine" when they only want to maintain the exploitation that gives them profit. They are using the ignorance of people who do not know what is really happening. Eventually, this becomes hell for

²² Ibid., 162.

²³ Ibid., 158.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 176.

marginalized people, but heaven for the party.²⁵ With ease and no further thinking, they are using religion's excuses about caring and saving people when they contribute to harming, ruining, and pushing the values at the same time.

In previous research conducted by Taufik about women, Islam, and poverty, he mentioned that religion is supposed to be an encouragement—for those who are assumed to have standing in religious matters—to prioritize resisting marginalization. If religion is not a source of change, it means that religion is reduced to something that has no significant meaning in life.²⁶ It can be understood that religion is supposed to be a place that encourages a new spirit of reform and quells oppression. From the research above it can be derived that religion should not play any part in being another kind of tool that helps maintain exploitation, domination, and justify oppression.

Furthermore, the preceding points emphasize that the discussion of constraints imposed by conferred properties is a form of oppression. Oppression itself is a concept that stresses domination, where the justification of oppression is passed down through abusive and dominating behavior²⁷. Oftentimes, this oppression comes from a misogynistic system that wants to impose patriarchal norms on women are structured, at the point where women are influenced collectively. In previous research conducted by Chynthia A. Stark, pointed out misogynist gaslighting and psychological oppression. Women are unwillingly bound by categories that are imposed by anyone, until they experience inconvenience. They eventually think that this inconvenience they experience is a normal thing, and even criticize women who stand up for themselves to fight against the inconvenience. They think that this inconvenience is something they have to experience and it is reasonable for women to go through, as they face it most of their lives²⁸.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Taufik Taufik, "Kemiskinan, Perempuan, dan Agama," *KALAM*, Vol. 10, no. 2 (2017): 145.

²⁷ Adillah Dwi Saputra, "Gender Oppression and Women Violence in Paula Hawkins 'The Girl on The Train,'" *LITERA KULTURA*, Vol. 08, no. 02 (2020): 83, 85.

²⁸ Cynthia A Stark, "Gaslighting, Misogyny, and Psychological Oppression," *The Monist*, Vol. 102, no. 2 (2019): 221–35.

Reasoning things by compulsion and assuming that is how it should have been is very disturbing and tiring when we learn about it. Women imposed a future and what should or will happen to their bodies on them without their consent. One sided control that is imposed on women with any kind of excuse is a justification for one-sided domination that marginalizes and harms women. Women are controlled in such a way as to satisfy a party that should not be satisfied in the first place. Sometimes, women are alienated from the public sector for the reason that they are created to bear children and take care of domestic work. But when the profit-seeking party needs more workers, women are encouraged to go out of their houses to work. At a certain time, women are repressed to cover most of their bodies, but at another time, women are sexualized because the profit-seeking party shaped their bodies to feed irresponsible views and imaginations about women. In the end, this system and structuralized oppression are so layered that we are not able to tell what is oppressive and what is not.

Some of the properties mentioned above will be dissected using Asta's conferralism framework. The dissection that we attempt on several base properties is expected to generate new perspectives and contribute to raising awareness about properties that are conferred on women, which is a burden and oppression for women who are also pushed to the limit in most of their lives.

D. Conferralism Analysis to Properties Enforced to Women

In this article, Asta's conferralism is used to analyze the women's experience depicted by Nawal el Saadawi in her book. Conferralism is a framework used by Asta to address social categorization in a society. With the wide paradigm in a variety of social placements, Asta proposed conferralism as a paradigm in a variety of social placements to emphasize social properties that are conferred on an individual and involve others as conferrers.²⁹ Conferralism framework provided a daring and novel insight into conferring a social category on an individual, allowing the women's experience depicted by Nawal to be fully understood. Asta also explained that a property that is conferred upon someone can be influenced by a property that exists in others, and basically, conferralism emphasizes that a property that is imposed by someone is given by other people. And this

²⁹ Asta, *Categories We Live By*, 2.

property is a social status that includes constraint and enablement in one's behavior.³⁰

Asta mentioned that the conferralism framework is an abstract scheme, which has to be filled for each property.³¹ Conferralism attempts to track what burdens a person or group of people. An individual may not have a property that is conferred upon them, but the most important thing is that this individual is taken to have this property and the social status that follows.³² Asta also mentioned that social property is a complex phenomenon. Some properties might be conferred by an authority or institution, and other properties could be conferred by someone who has standing compared to people who are burdened with the properties.³³

Asta gave two pictures³⁴ that differ in accordance with the conferrer; institution or communal. In her account, when P or the conferred property is an institutional property, and if P is conferred with the scheme below, she describes in the following profile:

Conferred Property: P

Who : a person, entity, or party in a position of authority.
What : conferring explicitly by speech act or another public act.
When : in an exact particular situation (there are witnesses, or in a particular place); we could address this as a particular institutional context.

Base Property: one or more properties imposed on someone, or expected to be taken, or attempted to be tracked by a party with authority.

While in the communal property, P is a communal property if P is conferred with the scheme below, she describes in the following profile:

Conferred Property: P

Who : a person, an entity, or a party with legal standing.
What : their conferral, implicitly or explicitly, by means of attitude or behavior.
When : in a specific context

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 3.

³³ Ibid., 21.

³⁴ Ibid., 22.

Base Property : the property or properties that the authorities, consciously or unconsciously, are attempting to track in the conferral

Here, we will be focusing on dissecting these properties conferred upon women that are depicted in Nawal's book which is putting them in certain boxes within the picture described in the conferralism framework above.

Emphasizing what Asta mentioned, some properties are easily identified as conferred base properties. And it is possible that some properties are seen as not conferred base properties, but when they are seen with careful attention or thoroughly, these properties can be questioned or analyzed further. Also, some properties are still up for debate whether they are conferred or not.³⁵

Concerning the aforementioned, it can be assumed that if a property is not seen as a conferred base property for an individual or group of people, then those conferring this property are unaware of the conferring or enforcing properties to the conferred. This is what we are trying to underline: enforcing or conferring some base properties on women is normalized and justified—where it should not be. And this is what we will dissect in this section.

Here, the dissection of an individual to fit a box of assumptions to be a certain type of woman will be explained. With the first context is imposing certain physical appearances and certain behaviors on someone to be considered as beautiful and good woman.³⁶ This context will be depicted from two conferrers: institution and communal.

The conferred property is a 'good and beautiful woman' if they have certain base properties. Here, mass media as an institution in society is playing a big part in conferring women with a lot of standards. This will be dissected in the picture below:

a. Institution

Conferred property: A Woman (A)

Who : party behind the media and the party with certain authority (e.g.: reporter, news editor, and content creator or content manager in the media).

³⁵ Asta Sveinsdóttir, "Essentiality Conferred," *Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 140, no. 1 (2008): 135–48.

³⁶ Sa'dāwī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 152, 159.

- What : expectations and assumptions depicted and aired by the media that a woman who is beautiful and good is a woman with certain base properties they gave.
- When : in an advertisement, in a post, in a certain content, or in a certain context.
- Base property : properties conferred upon A that institution expected A to have to be accepted as a beautiful and good woman. The A has to have fair skin, slim or have a certain body type and shape, color A's lips with certain colors, stay at home, take care of A's children, and A is considered as a passive individual³⁷.

In the picture above, when it is communal who are the conferrers. To be A in a certain communal will be dissected in a picture below:

b. Communal

Conferred property: A Woman (A)

- Who : someone or group of people with standing in the communal.
- What : expectations and assumptions that are normalized and justified in the communal.
- When : in everyday life (e.g.: between neighbors and social interaction) in a certain context.
- Base property : properties conferred upon A that the communal expected A to have to be accepted as a beautiful and good woman are having fair skin, maintaining a slim or a certain body type and shape, A is a housewife that takes care of A's children, never come home in a late hour, prioritize A's home needs, and taking care of A's house by themselves.³⁸

From the two pictures above, the base properties and expectations that are conferred upon women can be understood as being either imagination or fulfilling the ideas of the institution and communal. Women are bound by restrictions and burdens. With the commercialization of women's bodies in some media—whereas most of it is utopian dreams—women who live in the real world are burdened with tons of standards to be the 'A' mentioned above.³⁹ Not to mention that to be A with a variety of base properties that

³⁷ Ibid. p. 151, 152, 159 & 162.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 152, 159 & 162.

³⁹ Ibid., 155.

are enforced by an institutional or communal idea, women in the real world have to carry the burdens of their imagination. In this context, we can say that women's burdens are never-ending burdens.

For the next picture, we will try to dissect the base properties that are enforced to be conferred on a woman (B) that is a 'real' or 'whole' woman. In this context, we are still trying to dissect the picture with two conferrers: institutional and communal.

a. Institution:

Conferred property: A woman (B)

Who : party behind the media and the party with certain authority (e.g.: employee at a certain institution or content manager in a certain media)

What : assumptions or expectations that a woman is not B (that is considered as a whole woman) if they do not have base properties below.

When : in a certain act, certain depiction in a media, or in a certain context.

Base property : properties that B ought to have to be conferred or considered as a 'whole' or 'real' woman that B is a woman with a certain age, certain behavior to themselves or their partner and their family, B has a feminine appearance with a certain body shape, and work privately or mostly stay at home.⁴⁰

b. Communal:

Conferred property: A woman (B)

Who : an individual or a group of people that have standing in a certain communal.

What : assumptions or expectations that a woman is not B (that is considered as a whole woman) if they do not have base properties below.

When : in everyday life (e.g.: response to media's content in a certain communal, or in a certain meeting in the communal)

Base property : properties that B ought to have to be conferred or considered as a 'whole' or 'real' woman that B is a woman

⁴⁰ Ibid., 152, 159, 162.

with a certain age, certain behavior to themselves or their partner and their family, B has a feminine appearance with a certain body shape and with a 'healthy' reproductive system, and work privately or mostly stay at home.⁴¹

From the pictures mentioned above, conferred property or expectations imposed upon women in order to be considered as B or a 'whole' and 'real' woman, women will always carry many burdens. Their appearance is controlled and commercialized by irresponsible profit-seeking parties. Now their bodies and private lives are also limited and even sexualized. We will explain and dissect one by one the base properties that are conferred upon B below.

As mentioned above regarding Nawal's writing about Sin El Ya'as, to be considered as B, an individual has to be at a certain age for a certain context. Even though, in the research mentioned, newer generations of Arabic (Palestinian) women are considering midlife as something natural, it is still to be discussed that they still have limited access to healthcare. Women's midlife is marked by menopause, which is layered with stigmas, at the point where women "normalize something abnormal".⁴²

Related to Nawal's explanation about Sin El Ya'as, women's menopause is still having a big impact on society until today, in another study written by Davina C.Y. Ling, William C.W. Wong, women in China believed that menopause was a source of problems in their marriage because menopause caused significant changes in their hormones and physiology, which decreased their comfort in sexual intercourse and caused their partner to seek comfort elsewhere⁴³. Another study found that talking about menopause symptoms is taboo in Asian culture, so women avoid discussing them even with their closest friends or family, and they struggle to find a healthcare provider who is open about this type of talk and does not stigmatize them further.⁴⁴ Back to Nawal, what she explained about Sin El

⁴¹ Ibid., 155, 159.

⁴² Doaa Hammoudeh, et al., "Age of Despair or Age of Hope? Palestinian Women's Perspectives on Midlife Health", *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 184 (Juli 2017): 108–15.

⁴³ Davina C.Y. Ling, William C.W. Wong, and Suzanne C. Ho, "Are Post-Menopausal Women 'Half-a-Man'? : Sexual Beliefs, Attitudes and Concerns among Midlife Chinese Women," *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, Vol. 34, no. 1 (2007): 23.

⁴⁴ I A Paramitha and R Nuzuliana, "The Perspective of Asian Women Towards Menopause: A Systematic Literature Review," in *Healthy and Active Ageing* (1st

Ya'as is not only what was mentioned above or that newer generations are considering Sin El-Ya'as as something natural. Women, on the other hand, are burdened with maintaining a certain body shape and certain behaviors in order to give or serve their husbands and sexual pleasures.⁴⁵

Speaking of Sin El Ya'as and how women imagined acting to become a real women up until now, in another research conducted by Retoliah with a strong religious value, they are putting women into the one who has a more submissive role in a relationship.⁴⁶ In the same research, the researcher justified the domestication of women by telling us that "when the husband comes back from work and is tired after struggling to earn a living, the wife should welcome him with a smile and affection that helps him feel at ease after work. So, both parties will achieve what they need", but then, the research proceeds to list seven 'mother roles' in a household.⁴⁷

Citing Nawal, "Honorable love is love built on such justice and equality.", also "One of the conditions of true love is an exchange and a necessary condition for exchange is a balance, an equality between the two partners." Nawal emphasized that love is not something involving power in the relationship, where there is higher and lower in the relationship. In her writing, Nawal also stressed about women in Arab who are constrained mentally, sexually, and physically. They have no other choice except to wait for the 'man' to do the action first, and they will just wait for the action to be imposed upon them.⁴⁸

Some views above about the submissive role of women give us a viewpoint where, besides culture that confers property to women, religious views also have a significant role in this matter. A lot of people legitimate domestic abuse, as depicted in Nawal el Saadawi's book or studies mentioned above, with religious excuses that are not supposed to be justified. Women had no standing in a certain context, and properties such as submissive and passive conferred by institutions and communal brought constraints, limits, and abuse to women's lives.

International Respati Health Conference (IRHC), Yogyakarta, Universitas Respati Yogyakarta, 2019).

⁴⁵ Sa'dawī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 157-158.

⁴⁶ Retoliah, "Perempuan Dalam Manajemen Keluarga Sakinah," *Musawa*, Vol. 7, no. 1 (2015): 5.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

⁴⁸ Sa'dawī, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, 149-151.

As dissected above, to be B, an individual is supposed to have some base properties that they are supposed to have, such as a certain body shape or certain appearance. Stressing on Nawal's discussion, the media is using women for commercials and women are becoming commodities. Women are becoming commodities as they are depicted as sensual beings. Their bodies are being sold in some shapes and some properties as the profit-seeking party and capital owners want.⁴⁹ To be B, an individual should have passed some conditions. Women are burdened with the expectation of maintaining their identity. At the same time, women are sexualized and commodified, with some parties' ideas and imaginations brought into the real world and utilized by parties with standing or authority, irresponsibly throwing out the opportunity for women to socialize.

Furthermore, regarding domestication and limiting women to work in private, Nawal mentioned that in marriage, to be considered as B, men with standing in that context conferring properties on a woman to be the B. Where women are conferred with base properties to commit to serving him, to being an instrument for his needs, to bearing his children, to taking care of the family, and to working in private.⁵⁰ With these conferred properties, women's freedom of movement is limited. Women are expected to welcome their husbands with a smile, to carry such burdens, to always be alert in their home without considering their own wellbeing, or even to act gently without any anger, even though they are tired.

These roles that imposed to certain gender by system as culture, institution or communal, we could say as never-ending problem. Whereas mentioned by Asta, that gender is a megasocial role that affects our social roles when we are supposed to find ourselves in society. This demonstrates that gender role provides us with the systematical and structural aspect within gender itself⁵¹. Asta added that the basic feature of an individual is significant in social life and in a certain context, and that feature is something constructed. Nevertheless, an individual who is given the feature has their own choice to oppose what is conferred upon them (in this section, Asta emphasized the rejection of the gender concept that is conferred on an individual). However, not every act of opposing succeeds.⁵²

⁴⁹ Ibid., 153-155.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 157.

⁵¹ Asta, *Categories We Live By*, 75.

⁵² Ibid., 76.

Lastly, a citation from Asta's book will be presented below. "Consider the communal feature of being a woman, for example. On the view advocated in this book, there is no answer to the question, Are you really a woman? There is no real way of being a woman, and there is no being a woman simpliciter. Being a woman is a social status to be had in a context, and one may have it in some contexts and not others. And, as mentioned before, the fact that one does or does not have the status in a particular context does not mean that one ought or ought not to have that status. A separate normative argument is needed for such a claim".⁵³

E. Conclusion

Claims that some properties that are conferred on women are natural and that those are how women are supposed to be are proven wrong. With the explanations above, completed with dissecting each property using the conferralism framework, it gives us a fresh viewpoint that is relatable and easily applied to today's era. Conferralism gives us new insight into the claims or properties that are given by society, authorities, or individuals with standing. And oftentimes, we are not aware of it. Conferralism also helped us dissect each point very well, easily, and thoroughly. The framework gives us an awakening that these properties or this particular context are not supposed to be justified and normalized.

Conferred properties, which came from profit-seeking parties and parties with authority or standing, are explained in the sections above, which address that the conferred or imposed properties are very harmful and give limitation to women's lives. Women are being constrained and limited in a lot of aspects of their lives. Women have no freedom to choose their own path in life. Supported by various research about women's experiences, it proves that women are collectively affected by the enforcement. Whether biologically, physiologically, or mentally, most of their lives are burdened by the ideas and imaginations of society. [.]

⁵³ Ibid, 1278.

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