

Appendix

AUTHOR AND HER WORKS

Nawal El Saadawi is an Egyptian doctor, novelist, and feminist writer who is well known throughout the world. Born in the village of Kafr Tahla on the banks of the Nile, she began medical practice in rural areas, then in Cairo hospitals, and finally as Egypt's Director of Public Health. In 1972, as a result of the publication of her nonfiction book, *Women and Sex*, she was dismissed from her post as director and also her position as editor of *Health* magazine. Undeterred, Saadawi has continued to publish books on the status, psychology and sexuality of women. Her works, which have been banned by the Egyptian censors and are forbidden in Saudi Arabia and Libya, are now published in Beirut, Lebanon. *The Hidden Face of Eve* is her first book to be translated into English (Saadawi, 1982 : 212).

The complexity of state and ideology, and the exploitation of religion for social and political ends are themes in Saadawi's uncommon exploration of the mentioned nonfiction book, *The Hidden Face of Eve*. There is no attempt to mask the ethic of male superiority and the image of women as dependents. For Saadawi, however,

expression of an economic structure built on landownership, systems of inheritance and parenthood, and the patriarchal family as an inbuilt social unit." Through this book the alliance of class and sex is explored in a manner that underlines the connection between individual and society. In this context neither the private refuge of the couple nor the protective environment of the family escape from the pressures of social reality. Both, in fact, often serve to mask a form of exploitation that makes women vulnerable to the oppressions of both husbands and fathers, on the one hand, and the state on the other.

What makes Saadawi's analysis unique is the juxtaposition of the personal, social and historical dimensions of this question. Her insistence on recognizing linkages between the individual, community, society and state as well as the moving accounts of her personal experiences are atypical of writers on this question.

Simultaneously physician and author of short stories and novels, Saadawi has also published controversial and widely read works on women, sex, and society. Her background, moreover, testifies to the fact that the social origins of the new leadership of the women

movement in Egypt no longer comes exclusively from the upper class. Saadawi is of rural origin, from the village in the Delta Kafr Tahla (as mentioned previously). As she noted in a 1981 interview, "We are different from the Egyptian educated woman who is westernized, who usually ignores where she came from or hides that she came from a village or a poor family. She tries to imitate the West and to belong to the upper class or the middle class. But I think some women in my generation in Egypt now are even proud of their origins."

Rural life, for Saadawi, has never been simply the background that echoes the city lights of Cairo. Her sensibility and experience that has shaped it are rooted in the everyday concerns of working women, from peasants who may be illiterate to urban women propelled by the need to find jobs commensurate with their training, or more frequently, their lack of it. Egypt has not been the sole terrain for Saadawi's efforts as physician or feminist. She was responsible for the women's program of the U.N. Economic Commission for West Asia in Beirut. Earlier she has been in charge of the U.N. program for women in Africa in Addis Ababa.

In these diverse roles and settings Saadawi has the opportunity to consider the status of women and the

conditioning of men and women to accept that status. She has also borne witness and been prime mover in efforts to resist this conditioning and to break out of its social and psychological barriers. Her stand is an activism directed at the liberation of women in the context of a more just social order. It is a position which is as unsparing of mystification on the religious level as it is on the social and political levels. And it is probably this, as much as the controversial nature of her writings that accounts for the fact that she was dismissed as Egypt's Director of Public Health and prevented from publishing the journal *Health*, of which she was editor in chief. (Irene L. Gendzier via Saadawi, 1982:xiv-xv).

Saadawi is a woman writer both of fictions and nonfictions. Of her fictitious works are novels and short stories. Her novels are *A Woman at Zero Point*, *The Chant of the Children's Circle*, *The Absent One*, *Two Women in One*, *The Death of the Only Man on Earth*, *Death an Ex-Minister*, and this one which is being analysed *Memoirs of A Woman Doctor*. Of her short stories are *Little Sympathy*, *I Learned Love*, *A Moment of Truth*, and *The Thread and the Wall*.

SYNOPSIS

S Y N O P S I S

The major character "I", the woman doctor, and her femininity were in conflict since very early on before her female characteristics had become pronounced and before she knew about herself, her sex and origins. All that she knew at that time was she was a girl for her mother used to call her, "Girl!"

The little girl envied her brother very much for things in connection to her mother's different treatments for her and her brother. His hair was cut short, while hers was led to grow longer. She couldn't play as freely as her brother for she was a girl who must consider more things in playing. She couldn't just left the bed as soon as she got up in the morning while her brother could. She was very sorry of these things.

One of the women's maturity characteristics, first mens, and other female physical growths were very disturbing for her. She hated to be female, to be married consequently to be a wife and a mother. Even she protested God for having created her a girl not a bird flying in the air. She, however, was little consoled for her brother couldn't fly either meaning that there was equality between them, girl and boy.

Once she left the flat for the first time without her mother's permission. She went to a Ladies's Hairdresser for cutting her hair short. Seeing her girl in such feature, her mother was strongly angry on her and hit her again and again. The daughter didn't cry, her tears didn't come, and she did not regret at all. In contrast, her eyes stayed open looking into her mother's boldly and firmly. She found this as a victory; victory demands courage and fear only leads to defeat.

She was now a teeager. Her cousin came and would go out walking with her to have a race as they used to do in childhood..In the race, they fell and the cousin kissed her . She firstly enjoyed this but finally got angry and threw his arms off. She was confused of this: she disliked a man, but she needed him actually.

She wanted to be equal with men even to defeat them. Faculty of medicine, then, was the choice. To be a doctor, for her, was identical with honour and respect. She wanted her-mother, father, brother and all people to ask for her help. She would prove that she could hide her weakness by her intelligence.

It was her first encounter with a naked man and she found that in the course of it men lost their dread power and illusory greatness in her eyes. A man had fallen from

his throne and lay on a dissecting table next to a woman. "Why was manhood regarded as a distinction and an honour, while womanhood a weakness and a disgrace?" She argued against her mother and society. In another occasion, she examined the young woman lying under her scalpel on the white marble table who was not appealing anymore.

After performing this duty, she suffered from a hard psychological disorder; she was very confused. As if she would die. She was afraid of dying. Then, she calmed down and breathed deeply. Life went on and she was still alive. She realized that life is simple when one takes it as it comes.

The woman doctor has been too proud of science since it had revealed the secrets of human existence to her and made nonsense of the huge differences which her mother had tried to construct between her and her brother.

Having been working with the same objects, illness, pain and death, the woman doctor found her life boring and lonely. She wanted someone to share experiences and to talk with, a man, but she has not found him.

Her admire to science vanished after she failed to save the life of a woman bearing a child. Science has destroyed her former belief without leading her to any new faith. Finally, she found that she couldn't rely on

anything but herself.

The woman doctor, then, escaped from the science professors and their laboratories, from her mother and the rest of her family. She was now living in a remote village. There she tried to understand life, herself, and everything that have made her uncertain, more deeply. She wanted to be a normal woman, a good child who politely respects her mother, and to feel love.

After a long wait, came to her a man, an engineer, who finally married her. Unfortunately, they couldn't live any longer. They divorced, and she had to live alone again. Society viewed her a strange woman for she lived without a man and behaved differently. She, however, left everything behind and continued to open the practice. Gradually, many people came to her asking for help, and she became closer to them. She found that actually society is weak.

In a party, she met a rather extraordinary man who was an artist with similar characteristics to hers. They found that they seemingly could live together. The woman doctor, at last, felt a very great happiness.