Submission and Subversion: Patriarchy and Women's Resistance in Twentieth-Century Egypt

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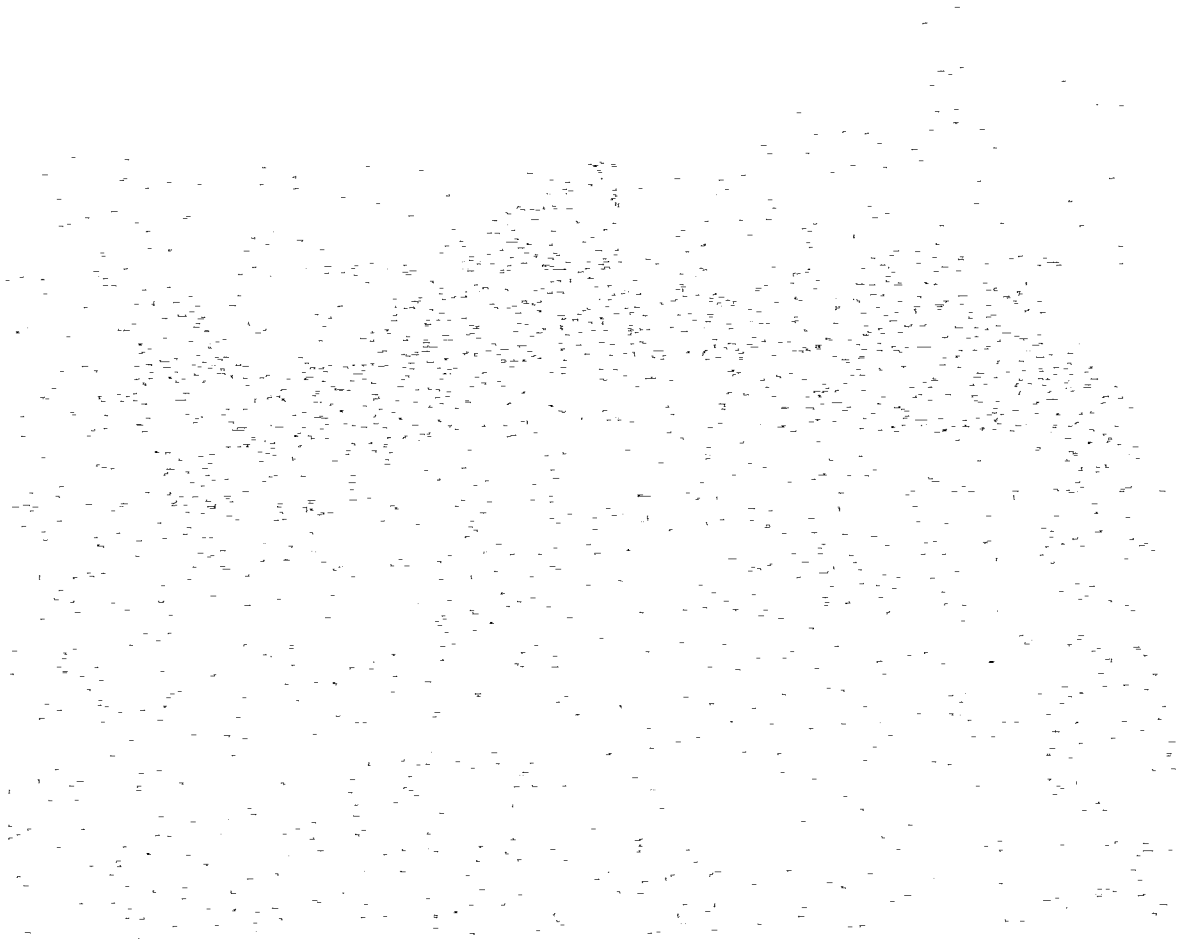

ABSTRACT

In this thesis, patriarchal domination and women's resistance in contemporary Egypt are examined from three converging perspectives: historical, sociological and literary. Emphasis is placed on social and psychological conditioning, which aims at rendering women submissive, as well as on women's internal struggle with their alienation and their attempts to subvert the authority of their oppressors. In Chapter One a modest portrait of political and social change in twentieth-century Egypt is sketched. A comparative chronology is put forward in which political events are juxtaposed with the achievements and failures of organized women's movements and with the publication of well known novels. Chapter Two addresses some central questions concerning the production of the concept of a *feminine nature*, its maintenance and its effects in patriarchal societies in general and in Egypt in particular. Finally, Chapter Three is a textual analysis of three novels by the Egyptian feminist, writer and psychiatrist, Nawâl al-Sa'dâwî. Al-Sa'dâwî's works have been selected because they present the progressive movement of three women from relative submission to total subversion, and also because her fiction and the reactions of some critics to it manifest salient aspects of the often subtle oppression of women.

RÉSUMÉ

Dans cette thèse, la domination patriarcale en Égypte contemporaine et la résistance que lui opposent les femmes sont étudiées selon trois perspectives convergentes historique, sociologique et littéraire. L'accent a été mis sur le conditionnement psychologique et social qui vise à rendre les femmes soumises, ainsi que sur la lutte intérieure de ces dernières contre l'aliénation, lutte qui s'ajoute aux tentatives de subversion de l'autorité masculine. Le premier chapitre donne un bref aperçu des changements sociaux et politiques qui ont affecté l'Égypte au vingtième siècle. Il s'agit donc d'un exposé chronologique dans lequel les événements politiques sont juxtaposés aux gains ou aux échecs des organisations de femmes, de même qu'à la publication de romans bien connus. Le second chapitre analyse la production du concept de *nature féminine*, ses conséquences et la façon dont il est maintenu dans les sociétés patriarcales en général et en Égypte en particulier. Enfin, le troisième chapitre consiste en une analyse littéraire de trois romans de l'écrivaine, psychiatre et féministe égyptienne Nawâl al Sa'dâwî. Les oeuvres de al-Sa'dâwî ont été choisies parce qu'elles montrent le changement progressif de trois femmes qui évoluent d'un état de soumission relative à celui de subversion totale; de plus, les romans de al-Sa'dâwî et les réactions qu'ils suscitent chez certains critiques en disent long sur la nature souvent subtile de l'oppression des femmes.

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Preface

When commenting on the attraction of the *Thousand and One Nights*, Borges once said that "one knows that entering that book one can forget one's own poor human fate."[1] Indeed the tales present to the modern reader a fantastic universe for which reality constitutes a simple point of departure, but at the same time, one senses that the escapism offered by the beautifully and infinitely interlocking narratives is fleeting, for with the conclusion of the various tales, the reader is confronted with the harsh reality of their all-too human morals. From the very outset, even before the ingenious Shahrazâd begins to weave her life saving tales, it is evident that the moral and social values of the epoch prevail in the imaginary realms of the *Nights*. There is no escape from the way in which the medieval text presents women. It is hard to imagine that women reading the tales are able to forget the problems of their human condition. Rather, they are faced with the simultaneous idealization and denegration of their gender. Shahrazâd, herself, represents the archetypal woman; she is the model of feminity, to which all women should aspire and which all men should desire. Her fidelity, chastity, wisdom and procreative capacity (she produced three male children while telling the tales) are coupled with a willingness to submit to male domination. In fact, Shahrazâd is both submissive and subversive; she surrenders and wants to liberate. By accepting to marry the Sultan Shahriyâr, Shahrazade hopes that she will succeed in reversing the monstrous order of the day. Through a skillful use of language she attains her objective, but she is forced to sacrifice herself to the sultan. Yet she only subverts one injustice against women, and does not profoundly alter the status quo. In effect, she possibly reinforces the prevalent alienating notions that *all* women should be faithful, chaste, pure, beautiful, submissive and self-sacrificing.

As will be illustrated in the ensuing analyses, in patriarchal societies, submission is considered a natural condition and any attempt by women to escape it is viewed as a deviation from the norm, a subversion of the natural or divine order. The thoughts and actions of individuals who do not contest the subordination of women, who defend it through a passive acceptance of the culturally determined norms of "feminine" behavior, are signs of patriarchy's success. Women and men who counter the gender-based social laws are inevitably considered subversive. Thus, there is an antinomic tension between submission and subversion which arises as a direct consequence of the impossibility of being neutral with respect to women's subjugation in patriarchal cultures. By examining

patriarchal domination and women's resistance in contemporary Egypt from three converging perspectives (historical, sociological and literary), I want to illustrate the dynamic exchanges between the marginal and the central, between the individual and the institution, between the cultural and the natural, between the unconscious and the conscious, all of which inform the submission/subversion antinomy. In Chapter One, the history of women's resistance is presented within the context of the changing cultural practices and political conjunctures of twentieth-century Egypt. Chapter Two is a selective study of social institutions which maintain the patriarchal order and women's perceptions of how those institutions have an impact on their lives. Finally, in Chapter Three, I explore the expression of resistance and repression in three novels by the Egyptian feminist, writer and psychiatrist, Nawâl al-Sa'dâwî. I have selected al Sa'dâwî's works because they represent the progressive movement of three women from relative submission to total subversion and also because the works and the reactions of some critics to them manifest interesting aspects of women's resistance and patriarchal oppression.

One final point needs to be addressed before moving on. Despite efforts to conduct a rigorous analysis and avoid distortions, I am afraid that in at least one notable area this work can be criticized. My limited access to Arabic sources and a reliance on translations are significant problems which must be recognized. Any study of the Middle East which fails to consult primary sources in the original languages has its limitations, and I readily admit the limitations of my work. However, I have tried as much as possible to compensate for this failing by an exhaustive reading of books and articles written by Arab women and available in English. The growing body of literature by Arab women scholars published in western languages provides indispensable points of view and new insights into the problems and achievements of Arab women. The work of these scholars, along with that of their non-Arab female colleagues, is having a salutary effect on Middle Eastern Studies as a discipline, dispelling sexist and orientalist myths and presenting the western world with a more balanced and informed critique of patriarchy in the Arab world. While I do not wish to and indeed cannot claim to speak on behalf of women, my analysis — from the perspective of an Arab male educated in the West — offers nonetheless a self critical look at some aspects of Arab culture and at the same time inserts itself in the reexamination of Middle Eastern Studies, particularly with regard to so-called women's issues.

Chapter One: Politics, Novels and Women's Movements in Twentieth-Century Egypt

A general overview of contemporary western historiography on the Middle East reveals growing specialization as many scholars choose to treat a limited subject in greater detail rather than to compose colossal works of a pseudo-encyclopaedic nature. Political studies, economic, social and cultural histories, each of which may be further divided into dense periods and microscopic topics have become the academic norm. There are evident advantages to specialization which need not be elaborated here, but it should be stressed that a narrower approach requires the historian to present as precisely and as completely as possible the circumscribed field in which he or she is conducting the study. Clearly, certain items must be omitted; however, it has regularly been pointed out by feminists, anti-racists and anti-elitists that the repetition of the same omissions from one work to the next, from one historian to the next, often indicates underlying cultural prejudices. Literary studies of the Egyptian novel in the sixties or seventies which fail to include a single reference to women writers display unabashedly what the author deems worthy of mention.[2] Such studies should possibly mention the words "male novelists" or "novels by men" in their titles in order to be more precise. This type of unacknowledged selection contributes to the distorted vision which perceives women on the margin of history. Problems posed by this myopia make it extremely difficult to evaluate the real contributions of women to politics, social change and cultural traditions. Since the late 1960s and early 1970s conscientious scholars have made efforts to correct the situation by examining material that has generally been disregarded and by publishing works that demonstrate the significant roles played by women throughout history.[3] In Middle Eastern and Islamic studies, enormous progress has been made, yet there are still many areas that might benefit from revision, particularly those which have previously been considered the bastions of male scholarship, such as political science, economics and literature.

In the following brief survey I have tried to sketch a modest portrait of political and social change in twentieth-century Egypt. A comparative chronology is put forward in which political events are juxtaposed with the achievements and failures of organized women's movements and with the publication of specific novels, chosen because their high position in the "official" literary history of Egypt has made them more susceptible to influencing the Egyptian public. As one might expect the "great" novels which are central

to the Egyptian literary tradition have almost invariably been written by men, but the partiality (sexism) of history-making remains a factor with which women have to deal in most cultures. Through this chronology I hope to evoke the interaction between political, social and cultural phenomena and to illustrate both the roles played by women and the centrality of questions concerning women in contemporary Egyptian history

In 1914, Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal published the novel *Zaynab* Considered by many historians of modern Arabic literature to be the first non-historical Egyptian novel,[4] the principal theme of the work underlines the rigidity of social norms of the epoch Haykal criticizes the limits placed on male-female interaction and traditional marriage customs. His protagonists, Ḥâmid and Zaynab are victims of the imposed conventions which ultimately prevent most women and many men from determining their own destiny The mood of Haykal's novel typifies the frustration experienced by many Egyptians who, in a paradoxical manner, torn between convention and apparent innovation, sought the emancipation of women without exceeding the boundaries prescribed by religious law and cultural traditions

Prior to the publication of *Zaynab*, a number of Egyptian men and women had discussed and written about the status of women in their society. One of the earliest publicized expressions of social reform can be found in the two books by Qâsim Amîn, *Taḥrîr al-mar'a* and *Al-Mar'a al-jadîda*, published in 1899 and 1901 respectively These works drew attention to issues concerning women and led to a polemical public controversy between reformists and traditionalists.[5] Later in 1910, Malak Ḥifnî Nâṣif presented her ten points to the National Assembly, yet, despite their conservative nature, all the points were rejected.[6] Controversy and the lack of rapid progress did not prevent a clique of upper and upper-middle class women from pursuing a modest agenda In the years just before the First World War at least four magazines had been established by Egyptian women and in 1914 the Education Union of Women was founded. The magazines and the Union provided contexts for this small group of women to discuss openly various social and cultural matters. Only after the war did a politically organized women's movement emerge, aligned with the nationalist movement led by Sa'd Zaghlûl and the Wafd. From 1919 until 1924 women like Hudâ Sha'râwî, Nahawiyya Mûsâ and Sayzâ Nabrâwî mobilized other women from their class in support of the Wafd's demand for the termination of the British protectorate. This was a volatile period in which women were noticeably active [7] organizing and participating in protests against the British The women viewed their efforts as a considerable contribution to the struggle for independence

and expected to receive some form of recognition. In 1920 when the Wafd returned from a trip to London for negotiating the British withdrawal, Hudâ Sha'râwî wrote indignantly to Zaghlûl on behalf of the Wafdist Women's Central Committee denouncing the Wafd leadership's neglect of women's roles in the fight for independence.[8] Zaghlûl replied apologetically, yet in 1924, when the new constitution was promulgated and the Wafd came to power with Zaghlûl as prime minister, women were excluded from the political process. This was partly due to the sexism inherent in the political system adopted from the Europeans who did not include women in their political apparatus; both the foreign political system and the Egyptian politicians maintained paternalistic prejudices against women. However, the exclusion of women was also a result of the self-imposed limits of women whose ideological adhesion to the principles of Egyptian nationalism and personal alienation hindered their pursuit of complete equality.[9]

The importance of this era in the evolution of women's status lies not so much in the minor reforms with respect to labour, education, marriage and divorce laws,[10] as in its nascent qualities for the organization of women's movements. It is during these years, at the beginning of the century, that one sees the emergence of upper and upper-middle class women from the *harîm* and their move into the nation's public life, symbolized in Hudâ Sha'rawî's and her colleagues' unveiling in 1923.[11] The year 1924 marks the end of the initial developments which, until then, had remained generally limited to a group of elite women who worked with the Wafd and later founded the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923. Their principal preoccupations differed in many ways from those of the majority of women.[12] That is not to suggest that the early achievements of the Feminist Union were not important in eventually effecting changes for the numerous rural and urban working-class women. Rather, in the first stage, the priorities of the Feminist Union stemmed from its members' experiences as wealthy, educated women far removed from the masses of uneducated women, many of whom had never worn the veil and were not familiar with life in the *harîm*.

In the public sphere of activity, the women of the Feminist Union were increasingly involved in improving the health and social conditions and educational levels of Egyptians. Between 1925 and 1935, while ineffective parliamentary politicians did little to change the economic and social situation, these women turned their attention to developing institutions and welfare services to help the urban working and rural peasant classes. Women from the various social strata participated in establishing a network of cultural and educational programs. Thus a second phase in women's social emancipation

and political mobilization was in process, contributing to the formation of a generation of women at the grass-roots level who were more prepared politically to challenge the gender based prejudices of their society.[13] This emerging generation sustained the gains of their predecessors and worked to ensure that progress continued to be made. In 1928, women were admitted to the Egyptian University (Cairo), and in the 1930s a group of women returned from studies abroad with degrees in various professional fields which previously had been the privileged domain of men.[14] As a result of women gaining greater access to higher education they became more and more involved in political activity which was often organized by students.

By the mid 1930s the political climate had become more intense as opposition to the mainstream parties expanded their popular support. The communist party, the *Ikhwân* and the Young *Miṣr* movements challenged the hegemony of the parliamentary politicians, the king, and the British army whose continued presence was imposed on Egypt according to the 1936 treaty. The British were thus in a position to use coercion to maintain the advantageous status quo.[15] The internal turmoil accompanied by the growing discontent over the problems in Palestine - particularly during the rebellion between 1936 and 1939 influenced the repoliticization of Egyptian society in general and the women's movements in particular. In 1935, women began to advocate their right to vote and in 1938 at the Eastern Feminist Conference in Cairo, women discussed ways they might assist the Palestinians.[16] Throughout this period, although women remained outside of formal politics, they constituted an important element in student movements and alternative political groups. Their roles in these movements would increase through the war years and into the late forties.

From the time of Haykal's publication of *Zaynab* until the outbreak of the Second World War there were certainly some women novelists, but as mentioned above, women's works have often been neglected by critics and historians and therefore remain unknown, in spite of their literary merit. Consequently, when one attempts to study the emergence of the Egyptian novel in the 1920s and 1930s only men's names appear consistently in the secondary sources. Ṭâhâ Ḥusayn, Mahmûd Taymûr, Mahmûd Ṭâhir Lâshîn, Ibrâhîm al Mâzinî, and Tawfîq al-Ḥakîm figure prominently in literary histories of the Egyptian novel. Most of them have enjoyed critical acclaim in the Arab world and to a certain degree in the West, where some of them have had works translated. Many historians like to underline the formative role of this generation of writers, who apparently were responsible for pushing the novel towards the centre of the modern Arabic literary

tradition. Much of the writing of this period tends to be autobiographical, notably Ṭâhâ Ḥusayn's *al-Ayyâm* (1935) and al-Mâzinî's *Ibrâḥîm al-Kâtib* (1931). Some of the other works, particularly Lâshîn`s *Ḥawwâ' bilâ Âdam* (1934), reveal a precocious awareness of social issues, especially those concerning women,[17] while others, such as al-Ḥakîm's *'Awdat al-rûḥ* (1933), romantically explore nationalistic themes.[18] In many ways this period in the evolution of the novel parallels the historic phase in which the women's movement found itself before the war. In both cases a battle was taking place between the proponents of cultural and social change and the defenders of tradition, who, in the literary circles, viewed the novel as an unacceptable form of expression and, in some political and religious groups, considered the emancipation of women to be a western innovation that would eventually cause the demise of Islam. Moreover, both novelists and women activists were aspiring to gain recognition from the "establishment." On the one hand it was cultural recognition that was being sought while on the other hand it was political recognition. By the beginning of the Second World War, novelists had attained a prominent place in the cultural tradition, yet women remained excluded from the political system - and the "official" literary history.

The Second World War is a watershed in Egyptian history. During and after the war anti-colonialism, pan-Arab nationalism, socialism and feminism were synthesized in the political and creative thought of a number of Arab ideologues, writers and activists. Britain's and France's dwindling capacity to dominate their overseas colonies was becoming apparent in the wake of the First World War and when the Second World War had ended, Arab political leaders and activists realized that the once omnipotent European metropoles had fallen to the level of second-rate powers. The changes in the international balance of power and numerous internal factors contributed to sustaining the radicalisation of Egyptian society which had begun before the war. The period from 1940 to 1945 is sometimes described by historians[19] as an interruption in Egyptian history, an era when all political activity within the country came to a stop as the British military occupied the areas which were nominally outside of its control. However, the weakness of the government and the British army's preoccupations with the war in Africa and the Middle East allowed the social and political forces of the late thirties to expand their influence. Many Egyptian women and men took part in anti-fascist movements and organized political opposition to the British through the underground communist party.[20] After the war the communist and Islamic movements found a receptive public which was disenchanted with the official parties. Despite Egypt's admission to the United Nations and the creation of the League of Arab States in 1945, the political opposition continued to confront the mediocrity of the

ruling authorities. Finally, the creation of Israel and the Arab defeat in 1948 revealed the feebleness of the Arab regimes and their lack of real independence, undermining all efforts to maintain control.

Simultaneously, new women's groups were founded to address the mounting problems; in 1944, Hudâ Sh'râwî established the Arab Feminist Union in order to deal with issues concerning women in the various Arab countries, in 1945, women in the Marxist movement created the League of Women Students and Graduates from Universities and Egyptian Institutes with an age ła that aimed at encouraging women's participation in radical politics; in 1948, Durriyya Shafîq formed *Bint al-Nil*, which in 1951 organized a major demonstration of women who occupied parliament for several hours demanding the right to vote;[21] and also in 1951, the Women's Committee for Popular Resistance came into being and through it women took part in the anti colonial struggle taking place in the canal zone.[22]

The emergence of these women's movements were part of the overall politicization of Egypt in the late 1940s and early 1950s. In 1951, the incompetent parliament was regularly coming under attack by the different political and social groups. The political scenario grew more and more unstable, eventually leading to the government's abrogation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in October 1951. A series of conflicts ensued between the British military and Egyptians in the canal zone, adding to the revolutionary mood.[23] The colonial period appeared to be finally drawing to a climax. In July 1952, the Free Officers moved quickly to take control of the country, ousting the king, and later abolishing the monarchy and dissolving the political parties of the old regime.[24]

During the volatile post-war years several novelists produced works which revealed their mastery of the genre. Realism had emerged triumphant over romanticism, and was exploited to criticize various aspects of Egyptian social and political life. A young generation of novelists who had started to write in the 1930s was highly prolific in the 1940s, leaving an impressive mark on the literary history of Egypt. The works of Najîb Maḥfûẓ (b. 1911), Bint al-Shâṭi' (b. 1912) and Luwîs 'Awad (b. 1915), to name only a few of the younger writers, illustrate the growing preoccupations of the period. Even some of the older writers, such as Ṭâhâ Ḥusayn and Yahyâ Ḥaqqî participated in the consolidation of a social realist trend.[25] Moreover, it is in these years that "commitment" develops as an important force, inspiring writers to compose works with evident social and political significance. The notion of commitment led eventually to a debate which erupted in the 1950s between intellectuals who upheld idealized beliefs that literature was

an end in itself and should not be manipulated in the pursuit of political objectives, and other writers and critics who perceived it as an appropriate means for expressing political thought and social criticism.[26] It was the committed writers who proved to be more aware of the historic processes taking place in Egypt and that a major rupture with the past was imminent

For many Egyptians the Free Officers' revolution constituted precisely that break with political traditions of the past Through it, Egypt moved from a pseudo-constitutional rule to a populist form of government which quickly became identified as Nasirism.[27] A number of social and economic reforms were undertaken in order to create a more egalitarian society for which nationalism would be the unifying force. However, women were still excluded from direct participation in politics, that is, until 1956 at which time the new constitution was promulgated, giving women the right to vote and the right to hold public office In 1957, elections for the National Assembly were held and, for the first time in Egypt's modern history, women were elected. Two women, Râwiya 'Aṭiyya and Amîna Shûkrî, were chosen for seats in Cairo and Alexandria respectively.[28] Yet the regime's commitment to radical social transformations was extremely ambivalent. This is made clear by Anwar Sâdât's statements in the same year as the elections:

> .. I believe in the values I learned in my village and was brought up with. Working is the duty of the man, and secrets of my work should not be discussed at home.

Therefore, concerning his wife, he continues with the following:

> ...she has no time except for bringing up our children. This is a great responsibility which is no less important than any social or political work. In fact it is the main responsibility in building a society. Now I believe that educating girls is more (important) than educating boys. We should provide the girl with a weapon with which she could defend her needs and right to live.[29]

Thus, Sâdât articulates the prevalent discourse on women's position in society: first, women (his wife) have the responsibility of raising children and therefore, probably do not have time for anything else; second, this occupation is valorized in theory, justifying men's insistence that women accept mothering as their primordial purpose in life; and third, only as a consequence of this valorization, it becomes important that women be

educated. Though Sâdât's ideas are not entirely contradictory, one senses in them the tension between the desire to preserve traditional values - those of the village - and the need to modernize through universal education.

Regardless of the attitudes of government officials, women's social and political liberation followed an inevitable course in the 1950s as education levels rose, giving more women the means to defend their rights and the ability to seek employment in fields that had traditionally been denied them.[30] One should note that the achievements of women in these years were attained not necessarily because of government reforms, but sometimes in spite of them. Furthermore, they were attained almost uniquely through the efforts of women, either as individuals or in groups. In general, the government did little to alter the living conditions of the masses of women, except indirectly through some of the economic reforms, principally those changes which occurred as a result of the land reform.[31] Only in words did the government try to change the conventional notions about women's position in society. Moreover, the emerging indigenous feminist movements which had developed in the 1930s and 1940s lost their autonomy in the 1950s as the centralized bureaucracy expanded its control over the various socially and politically based organizations.[32]

The theoretical emancipation of women along with the Bandung Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in 1955 worked to bolster Nâṣir's image and the regime's legitimacy on the international level, while the land reform (1952), the nationalization of the Suez Canal (1956) and the defence mounted against the tripartite attack (1956) consolidated the Free Officers' authority at home. The 1950s represented a dynamic period, and even though many Egyptians were aware of the regime's intolerance of oppositional political formations, which revealed its authoritarian character, they believed in Nâṣir's capacity to strengthen their nation. Optimism was further enhanced by the prospect of uniting the fragmented Arab nation around the Pan-Arabist ideals espoused by Nâṣir and incarnate in the brief union of Egypt and Syria in 1958. Temporarily buoyed up by the revolution, Egyptian cultural life expressed critical analysis of the past.

Notwithstanding the resistance of some writers of the older generation, novelists of the fifties were clearly *committed* to the ideals of the revolution. This commitment was a logical development from the earlier period of novelistic expression, and complemented the regime's apparent dedication to the social and economic amelioration of the country. According to Sabry Hafez:

> A look at the major realistic novels of the fifties, will reveal that their common characteristic is their concentration on the basic preoccupations of the time. The conflict in these novels always centres on problems of a patriotic nature. The social, intellectual, economic, or political themes interweave, somehow, with the national cause, and contribute to its development. Patriotic concerns provide the focal point in most novels, and the writer's attitudes are perpetually directed against his country's enemies and the obstacles which stand in the way of Egypt's progress.[33]

Many of the novels reflect the writers' aspirations for the future but more important is their bleak perception of the pre-revolutionary era. Writers such as 'Abd al-Raḥmân al-Sharqâwi, Yûsuf Idris and Laṭîfa al-Zayyât in their novels *Al-'Arḍ* (1954), *al-Ḥarâm* (1959) and *Al-bâb al-Maftûḥ* (1960) respectively, use realism to elaborate the political optimism which prevailed in the early revolutionary years.

In the sixties contradictions in the theory and practice of Egyptian politics under Nâsir became evident as the government pursued an etatist programme that aimed at rapid modernization.[34] Funds were obtained through the nationalization of some of the major private sector holdings, an educated bureaucratic class was emerging from the universities and new steps were taken to render the society more egalitarian.[35] Between 1961 and 1963 these measures appeared to be reasonably successful; however, the rather conservative bureaucratic bourgeoisie was not committed to the application of state policies.[36] This is particularly true with respect to those reforms which aimed at advancing the position of women. For instance, the National Charter of 1962 states:

> Woman must be regarded as equal to man and she must therefore shed the remaining shackles that impede her free movement, so that she may play a constructive and profoundly important part in shaping the life of the country.[37]

Despite the apparent progressiveness of this declaration it betrays a misunderstanding of the causes inhibiting women from "free movement"; indeed, many obstacles prevented women from participating more openly in society but it is significant that the "shackles" are spoken of as if they were imposed without having an agent, not recognizing that it is cultural notions about women which consciously and unconsciously block women's progress in society. The Charter does not seem to be addressing the problem in an

effective manner. Consequently, one might ask to what degree it was intended to have any effect.

In her study of the "Position of Women in the U.A R " Nada Tomiche demonstrates that during the early sixties extremely sexist attitudes continued to differentiate the official treatment of boys and girls. She presents data which shows that it was common practice in rural areas for girls between six and fifteen years of age to work in the fields while boys of the same age group went to school According to the laws on compulsory education (which concerned boys and girls), officials had the power to arrest the children's fathers if they did no send their children to school, but in most cases the law was only enforced for boys. Similarly a report in 1964 revealed that women in Qana (a town in upper-Egypt) often worked in the local factory but did not go to school [38] Thus while boys and men were making progress academically and economically, many women remained unaware of their rights and vulnerable to exploitation Nonetheless, as overall economic conditions began to improve some lower-middle class women were able to profit from the education and employment opportunities[39] but never to the same extent as men from the same social background [40]

The lack of support for fundamental reforms concerning the status of women can be deduced quite easily from the official position on changes to the Personal Status Laws which Nâṣir personally considered to be outside the realm of politics, belonging to that of religion and sociology.[41] And in 1967 when these laws were the subject of a reform project only minimal alterations were recommended [42] The text presented to the National Assembly confirms the persistence of patriarchal notions, in spite of the important gains made by women and their significant contributions to the advancement of the country

It is worth noting that although socialist-oriented countries tend to have more progressive views of women's roles in society, among men of the political right and political left one encounters sexism, for it cuts across ideological lines, "progressiveness" in economic policy does not therefore imply progressiveness in matters concerning women. This may partially account for Dodd's findings in his study of "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic" which shows that although young males were aware of the Charter's position on women's role in the formation of the society, many of them did not support it On questions as fundamental as women's right to work outside the home more than 40% of the teenage males who responded said they did not approve, and over 50% thought that men should be paid more than women for the same work.[43]

It has already been mentioned that in the early 1960s the Egyptian government adopted various socialist policies in order to overcome the major economic obstacles to modernization, at the same time it pursued its pan-Arabist goals, despite the failed union with Syria which came to an end in 1961. From 1962 to 1967 the Egyptian army was involved in a costly war in Yemen. These factors coupled with structural problems in the political system, poor application of industrial and social programs and a rapidly growing population had adverse effects on the economy and the society as a whole. By the mid-sixties the situation in the rural areas had deteriorated markedly as corruption increased among the government officials[44] and the poorer land owners and farmers fell prey to the exploitation of those who had access to the bureaucracy.[45] In 1965 agricultural revolts broke out and continued into the following year.[46] At the same time attempts were made by the clandestine *Ikhwân* to subvert the government,[47] but they were unsuccessful and the government retaliated by arresting important members of the organization. Among the members arrested was Zaynab al-Ghazâlî,[48] a prominent Islamic activist who has supported women's involvement in politics and defends the orthodox position of Islam on women.

Political opposition mounted increasingly and the regime began to lose its popular support. In 1967, when Israel attacked the Arab states on its border, Egypt was at a low point. The rapid conquest of Egyptian territory was a devastating blow to Nâṣir's power and sparked a series of government level purges, particularly among the military elite.[49] Unrest, which, even before 1967, had begun to put pressure on the regime, questioning its legitimacy and its methods of obtaining objectives, became all the more acute after the defeat, erupting in 1968 in mass demonstrations. Measures were taken by the state to pacify the demoralized masses, for instance, the "March 30 Programme" entailed a liberalization of the economy and a slackening of political oppression.[50] Many historians[51] argue that the decisions made in these years, just prior to Nâṣir's death in 1970, opened the door to the political and economic path that his successor followed and thus indicated, in practical terms, the end of the revolution.

Throughout the sixties a number of exceptional novels were published by writers who illustrate a growing interest in formal questions relating to the narrative. Stream of consciousness is used more and more effectively to elaborate the psychological dimensions of the novels, which are characterized by the internalization of the action, the condensation of the plot and a shortening of the length of the novel format. The works of Maḥfûẓ, Sun'allâh Ibrâhîm and Edward Kharrâṭ manifest these tendencies in their powerfully

imaginative portrayal of Egypt under Nâṣir. Maḥfûẓ's *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilâb* (1962) and *Mirâmâr* (1967) as well as Ṣun'allâh Ibrâhîm's *Tilka al-rā'iḥa* (1969)[52] are two good examples of how some authors succeeded in creating texts that are based almost entirely on the psychological dynamics of the characters. Although these works continue to reveal commitment, it tends to be more discreet, as emphasis is placed on the character's thoughts rather than on his actions. Physical plot seems to be almost incidental as the real events are those which occur in the character's mind. Similarly themes appear more subdued as form takes on greater significance, yet philosophical concepts related to existentialist inquiries seem to emerge as the thematic basis of these works. Some motifs, notably in *Miramâr*, reflect the author's concern for social issues, but generally the novels present a mood of confusion and the incapacity to act, particularly the incapacity to act according to one's ideals as is the case with protagonists in *Al-Liṣṣ wa-al-kilâb* and *Tilka al-rā'iḥa*. The role of women in these works is still poorly defined and it is often difficult to distinguish the author's values from those of the society he is representing. Although women are sometimes depicted in ways that counter traditional ideas and negative stereotypes, some male authors continue to overlook the fundamental problems faced by women in their society and attribute to their female characters qualities that are all too often identified with a "feminine nature."

Notwithstanding conscious and unconscious opposition from various groups and individuals, by the beginning of the 1970s the Egyptian social, cultural and political traditions had been transformed considerably. Since the first quarter of the century, a process of social change was in operation whose effects can be observed in the growing roles played by women in Egyptian public life.[53] The emergence of elite women from the *ḥarîm* and from the isolation of the domestic sphere of activity, followed by their partial integration into the political system as voters and representatives demonstrate the extent to which women — particularly upper- and middle-class women — have succeeded in attaining some of their objectives. However, in 1971, the constitution, which was promulgated, represented a temporary regression, for it states in Section 2, Article 11 that "the state shall be responsible for maintaining the balance between woman's duties toward the family and her activity in society as well as maintaining her equality with man in the fields of political, social, economic and cultural life, without detriment to the laws of the Islamic *Sharî'a*."[54] If one compares this statement with that which offers women "compatibility between her role in society and her duties in the family"[55] found in the constitution of 1956 (and later slightly reformed by the Charter in 1962) it becomes clear that although women were successful in advancing their positions, the political leaders and

certain segments of the population lagged behind, clinging to values which prevented the society from being truly egalitarian. Historians sometimes account for early proclamations of this type, which invoke Islam as the guiding force, by referring to the internal political context. Leftist elements, led by 'Alî Ṣabrî were challenging the president's authority,[56] therefore Sâdât issued declarations which aimed at rallying behind him the Islamic right and other anti-socialist groups. After the symbolic triumph in the 1973 war had confirmed Sâdât's legitimacy internally, and his relations with the United States and later with Israel became more intimate, he distanced himself from the radical religious forces. The important changes to the Personal Status Laws which were initiated under Sâdât will be considered below in detail, but at this point in the chronology it should be underlined that the ambivalence and demur in the official discourse of the early seventies did not prevent women from continuing their struggle for complete equality. By 1976 the percentage of women enrolled in university had risen to 43.2 per cent of all students;[57] while on the political level, women maintained a presence in government posts. For instance 'A'isha Râtib and Amal 'Uthmân were named to the Cabinet as Minister of Social Affairs in 1971 and 1977 respectively; however, it is not insignificant that this post had generally been held by women since 1962 when Nâsir first appointed a woman, Dr. Ḥikmat Abû Zayd to it.[58] Other women capitalized economically on the opportunities offered by the open-door policy initiated in the mid-seventies. Individual women from the upper and upper-middle classes were able to pursue their business ambitions in the capitalist climate which was oriented along western consumerist lines.[59] One study of the lives of working women claims that for elite women:

> The new economic situation has tended to narrow the distance between the domains of wife and husband. More and more husbands are participating in the managerial aspects of the domestic unit. Tight money supply has made it necessary for the husband and wife to work out the household budget together.[60]

Many of these economic changes, however, did not have a positive effect on peasant and urban working-class women, who in the face of rising prices were often forced to seek employment outside the home to help sustain the family and at the same time carry the entire weight of the domestic chores.[61]

In the mid-seventies as Sâdât moved closer to a negotiated peace settlement with Israel and towards complete economic dependence on the United States,[62] a variety of contradictions came to the surface. Internationally Sâdât was approaching the high point

of his career, while internally the riots in 1977 revealed his lack of control at home.[63] In those years women, who opposed the status quo for political reasons, such as Nawâl al Sa'dâwî, or on religious grounds, such as Zaynab al-Ghazâlî, tended to have a limited impact on the society, whereas women who knew how to enter the system, working within the conservative and capitalistic framework, often succeeded in promoting their careers and businesses through the exploitation of their government contacts.[64] Thus in 1979, when Sâdât's position seemed the strongest internationally following the Camp David Agreements, he was moved, as a tactical measure to bolster his image as a liberal, to reform the Laws of Personal Status.[65] No doubt international opinion was one of the factors that influenced Sâdât's decision to alter the laws; for women had struggled unsuccessfully since the 1940s to bring about reform, yet it was only as the U N declared International Decade of Women approached its midpoint that politicians in Egypt and throughout the world — began at least symbolicaly to acknowledge women's potential to influence politics.

According to the new laws women were guaranteed more economic security they were given the right to work outside the home without first having the permission of their husbands; in cases of divorce, child support by the husband was made obligatory if the wife retained custody, alimony payments were extended for women who did not want to be divorced or who were divorced without justifiable reasons, and the man who divorced his wife was forced to find suitable housing for his ex-wife if she kept the children.[66] Some minor reforms indirectly limited polygamy and unilateral divorce.[67] but several women in parliament and feminists felt the changes were not satisfactory, although they generally admitted that the new laws represented some progress.[68] These legislative changes were paralleled by a series of structural alterations to the political system, in the same year thirty seats in the People's Assembly were reserved for women and on local councils women were entitled to 10% to 20% participation.[69] It is important to remember that women had been fighting for political representation since the middle of the century and although these reforms constituted a step forward – dubious in some cases the immediate impact was again limited to those women who, due to their social background, were in a position to benefit from the economic security and the political opportunities They had to be married to wealthy men in order to take advantage of the rights to alimony, child support and housing and generally they had to be educated in order to defend those rights in court or hold political office. Obviously the majority of Egyptian women did not possess these living conditions and were therefore only occasionally touched by the modifications.

As the cultural and economic gap widened between the rich and the poor, Islamic values became a pretext for attacking the government and the social order. Young middle and lower-middle-class men and women have supported the resurgent Islamic movements since the late seventies, presumably seeing in Islam an alternative to the foreign political systems and ideologies that have failed to provide Egypt with economic and social security.[70] By 1980 the economic and political situation had become extremely unstable as leftist and "fundamentalist" groups openly attacked Sâdât's policies, manifesting growing discontent. Sâdât responded by attempting to crush the opposition[71] and in 1981 widespread indiscriminate arrests were ordered.[72] Shortly afterwards Sâdât was assassinated and Husnî Mubârak became the new president.

Under the Sâdât regime, many writers, artists and film makers turned their attention to the failures of the revolution, indirectly and directly participating in the de-Nasirization of Egypt or what is sometimes called euphemistically the revolution of rectification. They produced works which aimed at revealing the flaws in Nâsir's rule and the evils of authoritarian government. This tendency was symptomatic of the self-critical writing which began to appear after the 1967 defeat. The *Return of Consciousness* (1974) by the aging Tawfîq al-Hakîm typifies this trend. In it Hakîm recounts in autobiographical snapshots the events that led to his reevaluation of the revolution and his aspirations for the next generation.

> There remains in front of us [his generation] only a single perspective and a single picture, namely, what the powers of the revolution have drawn for us to the accompaniment of the beat of drums. They bewitched us with the glitter of hopes that had fascinated us for a long time, and they intoxicated us with the wine of "attainment" and "glory", and we got so drunk we lost consciousness.

And he continues.

> [in the 1950s] it never passed through my mind that what Egypt would need twenty years after the revolution was not "return of spirit" but "the return of consciousness". It is a book that I myself will never write....As I see it, it has to be another writer from another generation, one who has the freedom and lack of emotional involvement which would enable him to make a clear examination and reach a firm judgement on an era in which the realities of things were confused to such an extent that certain key words

> and slogans were promoted and used in the opposite sense behind the curtain.[73]

Quite different and more imaginative critiques of the 1960s are found in Maḥfûẓ's *al-Karnak* (1974) and Jamâl al-Ghîtani's *al-Zaynî Barakât* (1974). Both works revolve around the brutality characteristic of military regimes, but they also illustrate the paradox faced by political personalities as they try to assert their hegemony over a society which is continually confronted by external forces beyond their control forces which ultimately have the capacity to maintain or alter the status quo. It is also during the mid-1970s that Nawâl al-Sa'dâwî wrote the three short novels which will be studied in more detail in Chapter Three. As will be discussed in Chapter Three, her work criticizes at various levels an entire socio-political system which she describes as the patriarchal-class social structure. She endeavours to lay bare the injustices of the existing social order and her critique reveals itself to be particularly timely

Although Sâdât's rule came to an end with his assassination, his political and economic legacy continues to play an important part in determining policy under Mubârak.[74] In the eighties Egypt finds itself in a quagmire from which it will not be easily extracted.[75] Mubârak faces growing opposition internally while internationally he has come under pressure from the nation's creditors, notably the International Monetary Fund.[76] The extensive and violent riots in Cairo in 1986 illustrate to what extent the situation has remained unstable. During the early years of his mandate, in an attempt to accommodate some of the conservative elements challenging Sâdât's social policies, Mubârak referred the issue of the Personal Status Laws to the High Constitutional Court, and in 1985, the court ruling declared the 1979 amendments unconstitutional Mubârak apparently worked to reach a compromise between the reform supporters and the conservatives, finally giving in to some of the reactionary demands of the opposition.[77] An important alteration was made to the 1979 reforms, requiring that a woman prove in the court that her husband's marriage to a second wife would expose her to either moral or material damage.[78] For feminists, especially those who considered Sâdât's changes to be a minimum, this move constituted a major regression on two levels On the one hand, it did nothing practically or legally to abolish polygamy; on the contrary it recognized it as a legitimate right of men. And on the other hand, the new requirement places the onus on women to defend their rights in a thoroughly patriarchal judicial system, instead of assuming the responsibility of upholding the law.

From Sa'd Zaghlûl to Ḥusnî Mubârak, one notices that neither male politicians nor male authors are generally able to overcome their masculine conditioning, which fixed their perception of women in such a way that they rarely go beyond symbolic gestures in support of women's emancipation. They may take a stand on occasion, demonstrating their desire to defend women's rights on a theoretical level but in practice there is little evidence that they are genuinely concerned with the application of egalitarian laws and principles of behaviour - - the same can generally be said for North American and European politicians The position assumed by these men often serves to reveal their apparent cultural open-mindedness but when examined closely it becomes evident that they have a poor understanding of the real problems facing women and tend to disregard the historic political and economic factors which lie at the base of contemporary sexism.

The misconception that there exists an *essential* feminine nature distinguishing women's emotional, intellectual, moral and spiritual constitution from that of men is a primary theme in patriarchal discourses As long as male writers, politicians, professors, etc. persist in defining women according to this cultural notion, they will not be able to represent or relate to women in a just manner. Indeed, it is often in political statements and works of literature that patriarchy is able to camouflage itself most effectively. Politics and culture thus interact having a direct effect on the status of women. As feminists in the Third World and in the industrialized world have regularly pointed out, in order to effect significant change in the social, political and legal systems which are founded on patriarchal attitudes, the leaders - - cultural and political — must assume an unambivalent position directed towards the radical transformation of women's status. For Arab-Muslim nations it would entail a major departure from the *Qur'ân* as a source of legislation on certain matters and the opening up of cultural practices which would allow men and women to be liberated from the gender-based definitions that dictate their roles in society. Egyptian leaders have moved only superficially in this direction; therefore they have not succeeded in doing away with the patriarchal structures which prevail in Egypt today. In no way does this imply that Egypt, or for that matter any Third World country, should ape North American or European cultural norms, rather Arab societies need to arrive at political solutions which do not undermine the positive material, intellectual and social traditions of their culture, while at the same time giving women the right to participate equally with men in those very same traditions.

Chapter Two: Patriarchal Notions and Institutions

Although sexism in Western and Middle East societies expresses generally the same underlying prejudices against women, it does not necessarily have the same perspective nor is it always pronounced in the same terms.[79] However, what is common to these societies is the existence of cultural discourses which create and define an "essential feminine nature," which is in turn used to rationalize the subordinate position of women in patriarchal societies. Like most feminists, al-Sa'dâwî refutes the conventional and ahistorical belief that women's status stems from their biological makeup, and is therefore natural and eternal, not subject to social, cultural or political influences. While alluding to critical studies in the social and natural sciences, al-Sa'dâwî argues that "it is no longer possible to maintain that there is such a thing as an intrinsic human nature that is stable and unchangeable."[80] She affirms:

> These new thoughts are showing their strength, their lucidity and their capacity to counter more and more effectively those outdated concepts and ideas that insist on the fundamental, unchangeable nature of women, a nature which imposes upon them service in the home, and child bearing and rearing, and only allows them to fulfill themselves as mothers and wives, and to find happiness in giving birth to children.[81]

Nevertheless the erroneous acceptance of the concept of a feminine nature remains a major obstacle to radical social change in the Middle East as well as in the West.

In the following pages I will briefly address some general questions concerning the production of the concept of a feminine nature, its maintenance and its effects. The chapter is divided into three parts. The first part deals, on a theoretical level, with social and psychological mechanisms which contribute to and sustain women's oppression in virtually all patriarchal societies. The second part explores some of the qualities, themes and sources of the tenacity of patriarchy in the Middle East. Finally, in the third part, by referring abundantly to testimonies by Egyptian women and to studies on women in the Middle East, I try to evoke more concretely difficulties faced by women in Egypt. Examples are given to illustrate how various patriarchal institutions control women's lives and the limited possibilities of escaping their control.

I. Patriarchy and Feminism

Previously I have employed the term patriarchy assuming, possibly incorrectly, that its meaning is understood. However, before continuing, it would be appropriate here to define exactly what is intended when I refer to a society as patriarchal. Simply, patriarchy is a type of social organization characterized by male domination of the major cultural, religious, legal, economic and political institutions, male supremacy in the family and the tracing of descent through the father. Not all patriarchal societies possess these characteristics to the same extent nor is their presence always manifested in the same manner. Nevertheless, it remains true that in most societies of the modern world men continue to monopolize the most prestigious, the most economically lucrative and the most powerful positions.

What are the means by which patriarchy succeeds in maintaining its hegemony? What are the limits of its power? Why do women generally seem to submit to its "laws?" Like all other forms of power, patriarchy produces and perpetuates institutions in order to consolidate its base. The most extensive patriarchal institution in a given society is the state, while the most confined is the family. Between these two extremes one finds a variety of institutions, such as the judiciary, the "clergy" and the military, all of which are instruments of authority in general and instruments of patriarchal authority in particular. The major patriarchal institutions are maintained by and indeed are simultaneously the agents of discourses, which produce, reinforce and legitimize their power. Michel Foucault analysed in depth the mutual relation between power and discourse. In one of his lectures he states.

> [I]n a society such as ours, but basically any society, there are manifold relations of power which permeate, characterize and constitute the social body, and these relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse. There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association.[82]

Discourses are composed of ideas, statements and texts which are generally thought to contain the "truth." Each institution articulates a discourse which is specific to

it; the judiciary has a legal discourse, the clergy possesses a religious discourse, etc Within these various discourses one may, however, encounter the elaboration of the identical object. For instance, in the Middle East as in the West, the discourses on femininity expressed in the laws, literature and religion correspond and they reinforce each other. Until recently, most canonical religious, legal and literary texts evoked femininity as though it were a static fact of nature.[83] According to most patriarchal discourses, irrespective of the field, femininity is characterized by a variety of psychological, moral and intellectual traits which are regarded as necessary consequences of biological traits The most familiar qualities associated with femininity in patriarchal discourses are irrationality ("women are emotional"), lack of creativity ("women are not great artists, they always copy men"), passivity and weakness ("women are vulnerable and need men to protect and lead them"), a lesser degree of morality ("women corrupt men and cause chaos in the social order"), the list goes on.[84] Usually at the root of these stereotyped notions lies the belief that women are intellectually inferior to men In striking contrast with the presumed feminine nature, the direct implication is that men are rational, creative, strong, morally upright and of course more intelligent. Through the constant reiteration of the qualities of the "feminine nature," the superior status of men is continually upheld and justified. In other words, I am arguing, as has been argued before me, that "femininity" is ideologically produced in patriarchal discourses and constitutes the essential means by which patriarchy designates the Other. Just as, to use Edward Said's words, "the Orient was Orientalized" through a history of Western domination,[85] women have been *feminized* through a history of male oppression.

One should not overlook the complexity of the construct of femininity not to mention other social and racial discursive constructs [86] Patriarchal discourses define femininity, and out of the definition emerge various social stereotypes, often varying from culture to culture. It is not uncommon to find opposing stereotypes in the same discursive construct. For example, the general feminine nature as defined in a given culture may include both an immoral persona (the prostitute, the witch, the treacherous lover, etc) and a saintly persona (the mother, the virgin, the martyr, etc) [87] The effect of this type of manichean opposition is the elimination of the nuances of individuality, while at the same time accounting for the different behaviour of women by pushing them to one pole or the other. In fact, the coexistence of two opposite stereotypes in one general notion of femininity is necessary to control the reality that there are women who escape the prescribed feminine ideal: therefore they must be stigmatized as "bad " A classic means of overcoming the fact that women act intelligently is to collapse their intelligence into a

species of immorality: "women are crafty and not to be trusted." This kind of stereotyping (opposed to the feminine ideal which includes subservience to men) also serves to mask the fact that intelligent maneuvering in a hidden manner is actually the only means left to a dominated group, deprived of real power, and seeking to improve its condition. In general, the aim of stereotyping is to erase the multiplicity of women's identities, to create the illusion that there exists one ideal and "truer" feminine nature (ideal for men's profit) and its counterpart, a depraved feminine nature.

In most patriarchal societies discourses on women are so effective in their diffusion of essentialist and sexist notions about women that it is not uncommon for individuals whose political consciousness is sufficiently elevated to object to racism and to denounce the exploitation of the working class, still to maintain patriarchal ideas about women and their roles in society.[88] These individuals are virtually blind to the fact that "femininity" is a cultural construct, man-made in the truest sense of the term. Thus, it seems that patriarchal discourses are extremely efficient and persuasive. Their content is often accepted without question, assuming a naturalness which seeps into the unconscious of men and women.

As seen above, various institutions perpetuate the discourse on femininity, but probably the most important locus of articulation, the context wherein feminine stereotypes are profoundly lodged in the unconscious and accepted as Nature, is the family.[89] It is mainly in the family that children interiorize the prevailing ideas about "masculinity" and "femininity," through the different education and responses they receive according to their gender. Many feminists[90] have illustrated how babies are treated differently depending on their gender and have discussed the sometimes subtle conditioning that renders girls *feminine* and boys *masculine*. In conforming to the norms associated with their gender, young girls and boys are inevitably and often unconsciously agents for the preservation of the dominant discourses, which may in effect operate against the interests of those who accept their statements as truths. One of the greatest achievements of patriarchy is the normalization of society according to gender, the widespread adherence of women and men to social laws and rules of behavior which continually reinforce the distinction between males and females.

The social conditioning which produces so-called normal girls may also be accompanied by more traumatic processes which aim at reinforcing different aspects of the feminine nature. For instance, sexual abuse in North America and clitoridectomy in Egypt are two obvious forms of aggression which participate in the socialization of many women

in their respective cultures. These acts may be condemned by society, but the power of patriarchal discourses on female sexuality is capable of rationalizing and minimizing the most heinous attacks against women. Moreover, the discourses may often succeed in convincing women that they are responsible for the crimes perpetrated against them.[91]

The most far-reaching consequences of the patriarchal discourse is precisely its capacity to psychologically alienate women. That is to say, the discourse's ability to infiltrate the psyche of women making them accept the patriarchal definition of femininity. Often women unconsciously conform to the way patriarchy depicts them, for it is extremely difficult to escape the socialization which begins in infancy. Moreover, women who do reject the definitions imposed on them and resist the conduct expected of them, striving to surmount the alienation and the subjugation of their gender are confronted by society in general and the dominant institutions of patriarchy in particular.

Feminist movements are a major challenge to the patriarchal social order. In order to curtail the effects of different feminisms, the agents of patriarchy resort to stereotypes, seeking to discredit feminists. For many feminists, feminism can generally be defined as the awareness that women are discriminated against, and a subsequent desire to correct that injustice. Similar to the general construct of the feminine ideal, the perceptions which circulate about feminism tend to be contradictory.

On the one hand, there is a tendency among critics of feminist movements to represent the numerous distinct currents as though they form a monolithic group, suggesting that there is "a feminist rhetoric" espousing "a feminist ideology" described as doctrinaire. This narrow view is so prevalent outside of feminist circles that for many people, to refer to an individual as a feminist immediately conjures up a negative image. Feminists are regularly pigeonholed as frustrated, aggressive women who hate men, and their criticisms (of society) are labelled as "propagandistic" and dismissed without receiving any serious attention.[92] Often adjectives are added to further evoke the image of a woman gone mad; for example, the common phrase "rabid feminist" is still put to use.[93] This reductive attitude betrays the sexism of those to whom it belongs. It is essentially the view of individuals and groups who benefit -- or who think they benefit -- from a social order which places women under men. It is an obvious defence of patriarchy which reinforces some aspects of patriarchal discourses for, at the base of this view, one senses the sexist notion that "all women are the same," and through perverse analogic reasoning, it allows for the conclusion that all feminists are the same. However, feminism is not an ideology. It does not possess a defined ideological framework, nor is there a universally

recognized manifesto of feminism. Feminism has no founder nor did it originate in a particular historic or geographic context. In fact, one might argue that women's resistance in various forms always coexists with patriarchy, that is , wherever and whenever men dominate women, women will resist through different strategies. Therefore, not only is it sexist to speak of feminism as a monolithic movement, but it is also historically and sociologically inaccurate.

On the other hand, the second commonly held perception of feminism opposes the first and can be encountered in statements referring to disagreements among feminists, which are interpreted as indications of a lack of logic and consensus. People who hold this view use these divergences as an excuse for rejecting all feminist propositions. Herein lies the contradiction, feminism is criticized erroneously as being ideologically closed and homogeneous and at the same time, sometimes by the same individuals, it is slandered for its heterogeneity [91] The diversity in feminist theories stems partially from the fact that the realities of women's lives are extremely diverse. The absence of a feminist orthodoxy allows feminists to elaborate a vast number of independent theories for dealing with sexism, which is itself polymorphous, varying from one historical epoch to the next, from one class to the next, and from one culture to the next.

II. Patriarchal Ideology in the Middle East

Women represent approximately fifty percent of the Egyptian population. Although the experiences of Egyptian women may differ depending on numerous variables, such as social class, place of residence, religion and level of education, it is possible to describe a generalized state of male domination. Regardless of their wealth, education, political position, personal relations and commitment to change, women in Egypt appear to be continually confronted with their society's sexual discrimination. The pervasiveness of patriarchal attitudes, practices and institutions prevents women - even those who seem to be free of traditional forms of male authority (father, husband, brother, etc.) - from attaining the quality of freedom enjoyed by most men. This is also true in the West but perhaps to a slightly lesser degree. The fact that men in Egypt still possess significant legal rights which are not accorded to women indicates unequivocally the

qualitative difference between the status of men and women. In spite of some of the legal and social changes which have taken place the majority of women are only superficially touched by these changes:

> People look at social change in a country like Egypt and say the whole society is changing. This is not true. It is more appearance than reality The reality is mine and that of thousand of women like me who have been educated and yet still live in the Dark Ages It is the fault of the society, which treats change at the surface and not at the level of basic values It is all right for women to vote and get educated and so forth, but it is not all right for them to have control over their own private lives [95]

This woman's comments illustrate the unfortunate truth that, despite social reform, Egyptian women continue to be constrained by a system of (patriarchal) values.

In some ways one can view Egyptian society as a good example of a "classic" patriarchy: that is, its expressions of sexism have not been dramatically transformed or significantly adapted to hide the obvious discrimination, and therefore one can still observe without great difficulty its foundations and effects in many facets of Egyptian women's lives. Egyptian patriarchy does not possess some of the subtle and elusive qualities present in Western patriarchal discourses and institutions However, one should not assume that, because Western patriarchy is nuanced, that women in the West enjoy equality with men. They encounter forms of sexual discrimination which are not necessarily present in Middle East societies and are confronted with highly refined possibly more resilient — articulations of sexism. The "refinement" of sexism in the West is the result of an ongoing process of social and psychological transformations which help to maintain its "invisible" character. In other words, sexism in the West has had to become more discreet because people became more conscious of it, notably through the scholarship of feminists who have continually tried to expose the injustices of patriarchal social orders. Sexism in any society can be seen as a virus infecting the social body, capable of mutations when the environmental conditions are no longer conducive to its existence. If the environment becomes sufficiently hostile it may become extinct In Egypt, feminists have not yet been able to rally the support necessary to provoke radical changes in social attitudes and the total abandonment of archaic patriarchal practices, such as polygamy and clitoridectomy.

Contrary to popular belief, which holds that feminism is a product of the West and was exported to the Middle East, I would suggest, as has been suggested by others who have studied the question,[96] that women's organized resistance in the Middle East and in Egypt in particular has indigenous roots dating back to the 19th century or possibly even earlier. Exposure to Western social customs and exchanges with European and North American women in the early 20th century may have encouraged Egyptian women and reinforced their aspirations, but it would appear historically imprecise to regard their struggle as merely a consequence of foreign influence, especially if one considers the hostility of the Egyptian women's movement to imperialism. By arguing that Egyptian women's desires and efforts to acquire equal rights do not have indigenous origins, one implies that they passively succumbed to Western propaganda and cultural imperialism. Historical as opposed to essentialist research shows that where there is oppression, it is generally (if not always) accompanied by various forms of resistance which emerge spontaneously. Nobody would claim that Blacks in South African are revolting against their oppression uniquely under the influence of anti-apartheid groups in Europe and North America. However, movements of rebellion are often manipulated and distorted in historical accounts in order to bolster the oppressor's legitimacy. And rebellions by women have probably been erased entirely from the historical records to create the impression that there has never been a threat to the status quo. Thus, cultural and historical facts are turned into natural phenomena.

As was illustrated in Chapter One, feminist movements in Egypt have been noticeably active since the beginning of the 20th century, during which time they influenced political events and legal reform. Nevertheless, the efficacity of the women's movements was in some respects limited by colonialism.[97] Middle East nationalisms — generally the fight against Western domination — have complex and contradictory relationships with the women's movements. Sometimes the nationalists, in particular when represented by the Western-educated bourgeoisie, pay lip service to the demands of women, encouraging them to participate in the nationalist struggle until independence is achieved, at which time the nationalists often neglect their commitments to women.[98] These nationalists often reproduce Western sexist attitudes, fusing them with Arab sexism. Other Middle East nationalisms have been based on the revalorisation and reaffirmation of Islamic principles, notably those which concern women. In this case, the feminist struggle is often stigmatized by equating it with westernization.[99] In both forms of nationalism, secular and non-secular, women are generally assigned an inferior social status. Most Arab states have maintained the aspects of Islamic law which deal with marriage, divorce,

inheritance rights, child custody and other issues touching the lives of women. Egypt falls in the mid-range between progressive and reactionary states in this respect. It should be noted that while other areas of law, such as criminal, commercial and constitutional law, are usually allowed to evolve according to national or international pressures, family law and the Law of Personal Status are uncompromisingly protected by traditionalists and others who often refuse any alteration to the Islamic decrees on these matters, selectively invoking the immutable character of the *Qur'ân*. In political debates or to gain support, secularists have sometimes used the "women's question" as a sacrificial offering in order to satisfy traditionalists' demands.[100]

Since sexism usually transcends ideological orientation and can be encountered among the right as well as among the left, its articulation tends to assume similar forms in the various political discourses. In the Middle East, two themes are particularly important in the political discourses on women. The theme of the complementarity of genders, based on the essentialist notion that men possess certain qualities not to be found in women and lack other qualities which are exclusively feminine, recurs regularly in political discussions of women's roles in society. In an article on the modesty and segregation debate in Egypt, Valerie J. Hoffman-Ladd quotes several authors who elaborate the complementarity of genders theme:

> One author contrasts the characteristics of men and women in this way: "[The] man rises to meet the burdens of life with resolution and strength, with wisdom and cleverness, with patience and forbearance, with cunning and endurance. [The] woman meets life with effusive emotions, a clear conscience, and a pure heart ". . Repeatedly stated in the literature is that women should not seek to fill roles that are contrary to their created nature (*fitra*): "Men's minds are more perfect, men are more far sighted, more resolute, and stronger. They are, no doubt, better able to face life and all its difficulties and many various problems."[101]

According to the two authors cited by Hoffman-Ladd, men are more intelligent, stronger and more prepared for life outside the home than women, whose "natural constitution" equips them for domestic life. Thus, the logic of these arguments gives way to the following conclusion: nature has determined the social roles of men and women, such that women provide men with their emotional and domestic needs while men go out into the world to face the challenges of life, which are supposedly more congruous with their masculinity. The two genders are, therefore, in perfect harmony, one complementing the

other. Clearly this vision of the social order leaves no room for women to explore possibilities outside of marriage.

The second common theme in the Middle Eastern discourses on women is encapsulated in the "equal-but-different" myth which, like many aspects of sexist discourses, tries to hide the truth of discrimination against women. One Muslim man made the following remarks concerning Islam's equity when dealing with the rights of men and women:

> .both [Muslim men and Muslim women] enjoy equal rights, but as a practical measure, man is given precedence over woman in certain matters. as when two persons travel together or work together, one of them is appointed the leader, and the other carries out his orders. As for the qualities of leader, it is stated that he should be superior physically, intellectually and morally. This does not argue that one is inferior to the other or subordinate [102]

For the sake of convenience and because men apparently have the required qualities of leadership, they are placed in control of women, and women — obedient travelling companions carry out men's orders Women should recognize men's intellectual, physical and moral superiority and surrender to their superior judgement, yet they should not see this as a sign of inequality. The contradictions are striking: one is superior to the other while the latter is not inferior.

Often the two themes are brought together, one reinforcing the other. The Egyptian Islamist movement *al-Jamâ'a al-Islâmiyya* issued a statement which is exemplary of the combining of these two themes:

> Woman must impress herself from the start with the true meaning of these words of God "Men are in charge of women," and "Men have a rank above them." She should know that the equality men and women enjoy in their humanity can never entail equality in the burdens they bear, for this is something the woman cannot endure, and it corrupts the element of weakness (*du'f*) in her, or the element of meekness (*wadâ'a*) and delicacy (*riqqa*), which is one of the secrets of her personal beauty, and perhaps it is the secret of the peace which man's being finds in her spirit when he returns, battle-worn, from the scorching of life and the competition of his

> peers. Woe to the man who returns home and finds only a counterpart in the model of his strong competitors on the outside, who vies with him, will for will and thorn for thorn [103]

Men and women are equal, but because women are essentially weak, meek and delicate elements of the feminine ideal — they are incapable of enduring the harshness of life which is, therefore, thrust on men. The perversion of men's freedom of movement into a burden to justify their appropriation of the public sphere of activity is typical of patriarchal discourses. At the base of these formulations is the sexist notion that women possess an innate feminine nature which is inferior to the masculine counterpart. The arguments presented are bereft of logic, founded exclusively on several *Qur'ânic* passages which are noteworthy precisely because of their expression of sexist principles in unequivocal terms. Indeed these two themes in the Middle Eastern discourses on women appear in the *Qur'ân* and are reproduced and expanded by some Muslim Arab men. One should not conclude that these themes are only present in Islamic discourses, they can also be found among non-Muslim Egyptians.[104] Nonetheless, the *Qur'ân* remains a major reference for many Arabs who refuse to acknowledge the inegalitarian aspects of Islamic declarations on women.

The *Qur'ân* represents one of the most effective discourses for defending patriarchy in Middle East societies. When speaking at a series of conferences in Montreal in the Fall of 1986,[105] al-Sa'dâwî addressed various problems concerning the situation of women in the Middle East. Among the issues she dealt with was the new "fundamentalist" reading of the *Qur'ân* which, she claims, interprets verses about women in an extremely rigid manner, uncharacteristic of Islam. Her point was essentially to illustrate how patriarchal institutions - governments, "clergy," judiciary, etc. - have manipulated the text through an application which aims at satisfying their own material and political ends. Her criticism was directed not against the *Qur'ân*, but against the authorities responsible for its legal, social, moral and economic application. However, by implication al-Sa'dâwî revealed that the *Qur'ân* — like all religious texts - is vulnerable to manipulation. A cursory analysis of the *Qur'ânic* pronouncements on women's property, inheritance, marriage and divorce rights demonstrates God's preference for men. Indeed, the *Qur'ân* is addressed to men, with the exception of several verses in which the feminine, along with the masculine, forms are used. Nonetheless, one should not completely overlook what the *Qur'ân* may have offered women on a theoretical level and in the historic context out of which it emerged; that is, the material, spiritual and legal assurances it outlined for women

in the 7th century. It should be underlined that the *Qur'ân* is not exceptionally sexist for a seventh-century religious text. However, its position with respect to women is unusually well defined. The concreteness of the statements on marriage and inheritance may have initially represented a positive measure, in that they constituted an explicit articulation of women's rights (but there is no consensus among scholars as to whether the *Qur'ân* improved or diminished the status of women in relation to the pre-Islamic era).[106] In any case, with the Orthodox Muslims' acceptance of the theory of the *Qur'ân*'s eternal and unchanging nature, Muslim women have been assigned, once and for all, a status inferior to that of men:

> And women shall have rights Similar to the rights
> Against them, according To what is equitable;
> But men have a degree (Of advantage) over them.
> And God is Exalted in Power

And detailing the powers accorded to men because of their superiority, the *Qur'ân* states:

> Men are the protectors And maintainers of women,
> Because God has given The one more (strength)
> Than the other, and because They support them
> From their means. Therefore the righteous women
> Are devoutly obedient, and guard In (the husband's) absence
> What God would have them guard. As for those women
> On whose part ye fear Disloyalty and ill-conduct, Admonish them (first),
> (Next) refuse to share their beds, (And last) beat them lightly; [107]

Obviously the belief in the divine nature of the *Qur'ân* is the basis of its extensive power and influence. It is considered by Muslims to be the unaltered word of God communicated to Muḥammad by the angel Gabriel, and is, thus, thought to be free of all temporal prejudice. Whether one accepts the divine origins of the *Qur'ân* or not, it is clear that the Islamic social order was founded on some pre-existing cultural conventions which it further developped to accomdate the changing social and political contexts. In particular, Islam, like Judaism and Christianity, has helped to crystallize certain patriarchal social formations, notably the patriarchal family, and consequently has contributed to the consolidation and maintenance of a cultural discourse which defines women as naturally inferior to men

III. The Web of Institutions

Although Islamic texts may theoretically justify discrimination against women and ideological factors may discourage women from pursuing a feminist agenda, there are other forces in Egyptian society which, on the concrete level, play major roles in sustaining the patriarchal order. Women's oppression in the family, their limited access to formal education and income-generating employment and the sexist bias present in the legal apparatus reflect some of the systems of marginalisation and exclusion which perpetuate male domination. These four foci of patriarchal authority — family, school, formal work force and the courts — are overlapping, often having a collective impact on the lives of Egyptian women. For instance, a woman's employment opportunities depend generally on her level of education, the constraints of family life and, in the past, the permission of the courts. The complex interrelationship of social, political, economic and psychological forces makes it extremely difficult for women to completely evade patriarchal control. By briefly presenting the four instances of power mentioned above, it will become more evident how Egyptian patriarchy strives to render women submissive to male domination.

The belief in the essential psychological, intellectual and moral differences between males and females provides the ideological foundation for discriminating between boys and girls and later between men and women. As discussed previously, sexual discrimination begins at birth in patriarchal societies. In Egypt, as in many other countries where patriarchy is firmly entrenched, the birth of a boy is preferred to that of a girl. In *The Hidden Face of Eve*, al-Sa'dâwî comments on the reception girls encounter at birth:

> From the moment she is born and even before she learns to pronounce words, the way people look at her, the expression in their eyes, and their glances somehow indicate that she was born 'incomplete' or 'with something missing'. From the day of her birth to the moment of her death, a question will haunt her: 'Why?' Why is it that preference is given to her brother....[108]

In some cases, the husbands may even hold the mother responsible and threaten divorce if girls are born. An Egyptian man discussing his "problem" stated to his companions:

> My problem is the fact that my wife has only produced four girls. Now she is pregnant for the fifth time and if she doesn't deliver a boy I will have to divorce her and try to have sons with another woman.[109]

This man's attitude and the solution he proposes to his listeners may not be those of all Egyptian men, but his position does reflect the importance of male children and the relative insignificance of females. The idea that boys are worth more can even extend to the superior price paid to the doctor for delivering a boy or for circumcision of boys in contrast with that which is paid for the delivery of girls or for clitoridectomy.[110]

Shortly after girls are born most of them enter a social programme in which their freedom of movement and expression are continually constrained, while their brothers and other boys of their age enjoy a great deal of social liberty. Al-Sa'dâwî questions the double standards that characterize the different treatment of boys and girls:

> Why did they [her parents] favour my brother as regards food, and the freedom to go out of the house? Why was he treated better than I was in all matters? Why could my brother laugh at the top of his voice, move his legs freely, run and play as much as he wished, whereas I was not supposed to look into people's eyes directly, but was meant to drop my glance whenever I was confronted with someone? If I laughed, I was expected to keep my voice so low that people could hardly hear me, or better, confine myself to smiling timidly. When I played, my legs were not supposed to move freely, but had to be kept politely together. My duties were primarily to help in cleaning the house and cooking, in addition to studying since I was at school. My brothers however, the boys, were not expected to do anything but study.[111]

Other Egyptian girls confirm the existence of these double standards, which form the basis of gender socialization:

> My father always wants to know where I am, what I am doing, and whom I am with. I only see my fiancé at planned meetings when my parents are present. Sometimes he knows my brother is out late but simply says, "Well, he must be with Leila," though they are not even engaged. Parents

> are like that; they will trust the behavior of a son but are afraid of a stranger man who might do something to the daughter that would spoil her chances to marry. Even if he didn't do something to her, people might think that he did. With a son's girl friend, they feel it is up to her parents to control what she does.[112]

In these comments and those of al-Sa'dâwî, the permissive attitude towards boys is contrasted with the repression and surveillance encountered by girls. Within the family girls are conditioned to "accept" the inequality between them and boys as a fact of nature. They may be conscious of the injustice at work and struggle against it regularly, but, lacking real alternatives, most Egyptian girls appear to submit to the social pressures. They come to believe that their inferior social status and limited freedom are normal and unavoidable. It is at this point that the process of alienation becomes effective. Consequently, many genuine aspects of a girl's personality are crushed in order to make her conform to the ideal of femininity:

> The education that a female child receives in Arab society is a series of continuous warnings about things that are supposed to be harmful, forbidden, shameful or outlawed by religion. The child therefore is trained to suppress her own desires, to empty herself of authentic, original wants and wishes linked to her own self, and to fill the vacuum that results with the desires of others. Education of female children is therefore transformed into a slow process of annihilation, a gradual throttling of her personality and mind, leaving intact only the outside shell, the body, a lifeless mould of muscle and bone and blood that moves like a wound-up doll.
>
> A girl who has lost her personality, her capacity to think independently and to use her own mind, will do what others have told her and will become a toy in their hands and a victim of their decisions.[113]

Thus, according to al-Sa'dâwî girls are prepared to receive the qualities of the feminine ideal by first removing from their being aspirations and "faculties" which may conflict with their so-called natural destiny.

One of the most literal expressions of the Egyptian patriarchy's denial of women's desires and its aggression against the physical and psychic being of women is the practice of clitoridectomy. Clitoridectomy is an extreme manifestation of misogyny, and typically efforts are made to present this mutilation as a natural event in the lives of girls.

> Circumcision is absolutely necessary. I don't know why, but it is a tradition. These parts in a woman grow bigger the older she gets. They are ugly and deface her. It's true that God created us this way, but when we woke up to ourselves we found this custom handed down to us from our grandfathers and theirs and from those of whom we are not even aware and those we no longer know. We emerged into this world and found the habit already existed. It's just so. My people do this, and so I must do like they do.[114]

In this way the practice is perpetuated by its very victims. Mothers subject their daughters to the operation in accordance with social convention. They and their mothers have undergone the operation and believe in its appropriateness, despite the pain and the possible physical and psychological complications it may entail; thus, they reveal the profoundness of their personal alienation. Apparently some mothers who are against the practice impose it on their daughters because of the belief that men prefer women who have undergone the operation.

> When it came for my first daughter to be circumcised in Upper Egypt, I was not very much for it; but my mother and friends and relatives said that it should be done to her or she might not be able to marry.[115]

But when it was the next daughter's turn, the mother encountered a different reaction from the people around her:

> Seven years later it came the turn of my second daughter, but by that time all the same people were saying that the operation shouldn't be made on girls. It changed that quickly! People were also saying that men didn't want to marry women after that operation because it makes the wives not want to sleep with their husbands. It's true! My eldest daughter never wants her husband for that reason, and he blames us for having had that operation done. In my generation in Upper Egypt we were all done.[116]

This account and others seem to indicate that the practice is becoming less frequent. However, it still occurs and constitutes an inevitable part of many girls' experiences, particularly in rural settings:

> I was told it would hurt a little, but it was hell. The midwife puts alcohol on you afterward, and you're on fire. I knew I had to go through this

> operation. I knew there was no getting around it. It's as sure a thing as having to get married or give birth. People would say to the girls, "Marriage is just like circumcision only better" or "You have to be circumcised, otherwise you can't get married." And when we are little of course the thing we want most in the world is to get married [117]

The mutilation of a female's sexual organs corresponds to the mutilation of her social being. Clitoridectomy is a preparation for marriage in the same way as the social conditioning girls undergo is aimed at making them conform to the feminine ideal, females should be discreet, unexpressive, obedient, domestically industrious, submissive and virginal. These are the qualities which are expected of a woman before and after marriage

The family assumes the responsibility for implanting in girls these so called feminine qualities, without which they would be incapable of fulfilling their natural and unique destiny in life. The entire process of socialization pushes girls towards marriage and motherhood And marriage constitutes the central event in the lives of many Egyptian girls to whom society offers very few alternatives.

> On the balance, the sociocultural context surrounding the single girl creates strong parental and community pressures for an early and parentally supervised (if not arranged) marriage. More critical is the socialization that so effectively channels the quest for satisfaction in the direction of the home and the feeling of guilt in the direction of education and work Adolescent girls are virtually stripped of any other source of self-identity outside that of marriage and motherhood [118]

These remarks by the sociologist Nadia Youssef, who has studied social factors influencing the status and fertility patterns of Muslim women, corroborate the comments of al-Sa'dâwî concerning the destruction of girls' personality through repressive education To become a wife and mother in the most traditional sense is to renounce one's own personal ambitions and the potential to use one's intellectual talents beyond the realm of the family.

The socialization of women succeeds when it achieves women's assimilation of the patriarchal notion that they are only "complete" if they produce children and thus fulfill their femininity. Women's reproductive potential (which is really the only significant difference between them and men, that is, if one rejects the patriarchal dogma of an innate

intellectual difference between the sexes) is used as a basis for defining and containing their existence. The procreative capacity of women, which is a source of power when governed by women, is politically manipulated in patriarchal societies, resulting in men's appropriation of that power, and in the propagation of a discourse in which this power of women ceases to be viewed as a force and is turned into a weakness, barring them from the pursuit of numerous intellectual and creative activities. An important part of the Egyptian patriarchal discourse is to encourage women to have as many children as possible. This state of affairs discourages contraception, which is viewed as morally and socially unacceptable in spite of Islam's historic tolerance of birth control.[119] Controlled pregnancy is particularly difficult for working-class women, and for almost all women it is dependent on the consent and participation of the husband. However, some women use contraceptives secretly.

> ..Next to us is an uncle with twenty children.
>
> I have three. The oldest is four and a half and I am tired. All of his [her husband's] relatives speak to me about having more children, even him ..but I am secretly taking the pill.[120]

To reinforce social conventions, in Egypt, like many other states, abortion is illegal. Abortion is a central question with respect to women's freedom, for the law's denial of women's right to choose or refuse motherhood means that an elite group, generally men, can force a woman to have children against her will. This legal interdiction is another example of men's control of women in patriarchal societies.[121]

In these conditions marriage and motherhood are akin to obligations placed on women, which are fulfilled under the authority of the father and the husband. The roles of wife and mother are, thus, primordial in the patriarchal definition of women's identity. As has already been observed, this combination of roles usually entails self-abnegation on a multitude of levels in order to dedicate oneself to socially determined facets of one's existence. Zahiyyat Marzûq, ex-president of the Family Planning Association of Alexandria, underlined the injustice inherent in the dominant social attitudes:

> Men still don't understand that a woman can do something valuable — especially after she gets married. They think that after she gets married, she's no good. She must sit down and cook and take care of her children and take care of her husband. They think she should do nothing, even if she is educated.[122]

In fact, the majority of single Egyptian women only possess a minimum in formal education and are usually economically dependent on their families. Consequently, marriage presents girls with the possibility of escaping the confines of the paternal home

> It was natural that I would take my time in selecting a husband so as not to repeat the tragedy of my mother. But in my eagerness to escape the conditions of my family I rushed into a bad marriage. I realized how oppressive and domineering my husband was the second week of marriage when he used to come to the school and spy on me to see that I came home right after school and that I was not talking to my male colleagues I complained to my mother and father but they were not supportive [123]

This woman's experience reveals that marriage may only offer an illusion of escape, while in effect it is the continuation of the social programme initiated at birth

The majority of women pass from a state of almost complete powerlessness in their father's home to a state, in which their power appears slightly greater in the home of their husband but remains conditioned by the authority of a man Some women view their husband and their father in the same light.

> My husband is not really that different from my father. He has the same attitudes and his relationship with me and the children is not that different from my father's relationship with us and my mother. The only difference is that I work and therefore have some freedom of movement and an income of my own.[124]

Admittedly this woman has an advantage over many women in Egypt in that she is educated and well employed. For most women their freedom of movement is limited to the realm of the home and their authority does not go beyond their role as mother and is generally subject to the veto of the husband:

> The high status held by women [in Muslim societies] derives exclusively from marriage- and maternal-related roles and is grounded in the separation between familial and suprafamilial activities and power Thus, the respect and power that she commands depend on the male's suprafamilial orientation. Similarly, women have very few possibilities of becoming involved with the activities of the larger world and they are often

> excluded from entering areas whence men derive their status and prestige.[125]

By limiting women's access to power to the restricted domestic realm, patriarchy effectively excludes them from the exercise of *real* power. This is not to say that the power that women possess within their homes is insignificant, but rather that within patriarchal societies male spheres of activity are elevated while female spheres are denigrated.

The context of the family may offer women a source of real satisfaction, and it can sometimes provide them with emotional and material support; hence there are some positive aspects to family life. Nonetheless, the socio-psychological constraints on most women, whether in their father's home or their husband's, undermine significantly the security offered by the family. Ultimately the family is the primary vehicle for transmitting and maintaining the socially constructed ideal of femininity. So long as the vast majority of Egyptian parents and husbands continue to view the conventional way of treating women as the natural and only way, most Egyptian women will remain barred from the major political, legal and cultural institutions. Yet as was illustrated in Chapter One, many women — still a minority — are challenging social norms through political activity, and by seeking economic independence and higher levels of education. As women obtain higher levels of formal education and become more and more aware of their rights, they will be better prepared to provoke the social changes appropriate for their culture.

Today more and more Egyptian women are attending high schools and universities, but the majority of females are still not receiving satisfactory formal instruction. According to the figures published by UNESCO for the year 1976 — year of the last Egyptian census — only 1.3% of the female population over 25 had received or was receiving post-secondary instruction, and only 3.1% of the same population began studies at the secondary. More disturbing is the fact that 92.9% of the female population in the age group of over 25 had received no schooling. It should not be overlooked that the majority (80.3%) of the male population of the same age group had no schooling and that only 3.4% attended or was attending post-secondary institutions.[126] These statistics reveal the educational problems faced by many developing countries, but they also illustrate that even though, on a national level, formal academic instruction is a rare commodity men tend to fare better than women. This is further confirmed by the statistics on illiteracy for 1976; 46.4% of the male population over 15 was illiterate while 77.6% of

females in the same age group could not read and write. Around 62% of the entire Egyptian population over 15 was illiterate in 1976.[127]

Family pressure on girls seems to discourage most females from pursuing academic and career goals at the expense of their culturally determined roles as mothers and wives. This is particularly true of working-class and "traditional" families who cannot afford to send girls to school or who do not see the value in educating girls. Andrea Rugh has studied in depth questions concerning women and the family in Egypt, and she points out that in some working-class families:

> Parents generally regard the early years of adolescence as a time of special preparation for a child's adulthood. In the case of boys it is a preparation for an occupation and in the case of girls it is preparation for marriage. Family investment in longer and more intensive training for boys brings returns to parents who expect their sons to help in supporting other family members before marriage and later to help with support as the parents grow old. Investment in girls is viewed as primarily benefiting the households of their husbands.[128]

If a woman's "natural destiny" is to be a wife and mother formal education is not necessary. Rugh continues in her study by underlining the attitude of many working class parents who "appear to be more concerned about marrying off their daughters than they are about preparing them for an occupation."[129] Consequently many Egyptian girls are withdrawn from school once they approach the age for marrying. Fathiyyah al Asl, an Egyptian playwright, stated:

> My father was dead set against educating girls - including his daughters. He educated his sons very well, but kept his daughters from school the moment they began to show signs of adolescence.[130]

Al-Aṣl is luckier than most other Egyptian women, for she was able to use the little formal education she obtained to her benefit and challenge the sexual barriers. Many Egyptian women are not given the opportunity to develop their academic skills because of the prospects of marriage, despite the fact that they may be promising students.

> I was in the last year of my high school at Sania school for girls. My grades were the best in the class, and I was recommended by the headmistress to be sent to England after graduation to continue my

> education at government expense. Suddenly a disaster happened in the form of a suitor....I didn't like him at all. But that was not why I pleaded and begged my parents not to force me to marry him. I just was not interested in marriage, and I was interested in nothing more than completing my education.[131]

Apparently, some middle-class families see the university context only as a place where a girl's marriageability is increased, not as a place where she can learn a profession and subsequently work in order to be economically self-sufficient. Safia Mohsen writes that when she was a college student in the 1950s:

> ..higher education had become an acceptable pattern among middle- and upper-class families in Egypt. Also, work had become more acceptable for the woman with a college degree. Yet college was viewed by the majority as the place for the girl to meet the right man, and once that goal had been achieved, the girl would not normally hesitate to leave her university studies. This pattern, of course, had many exceptions, but the predominant attitude of the female college student was to "capture" a suitable husband --- and the sooner the better.[132]

Rugh comments in her study of the Egyptian family that the changes in attitude may be a result of the difficult economic situation which often requires a young couple to have two sources of income, naturally, an educated woman has greater chances of being gainfully employed than her uneducated counterpart and has, therefore, better chances of attracting a husband in certain social milieux:

> Although all parents care most strongly about the marriage chances of their daughters, some see the best preparation as one where the girl stays at home to learn beside her mother, protected from questionable behaviour, and others see the best preparation as staying as long as possible in school to gain the prerequisites for a job of satisfactory status. Each group of parents sees their own view as enhancing the marriageability of the girl.[133]

It appears that even for those women who are fortunate enough to attend university, higher education remains an option directly linked to their future as wives and not necessarily as professionals. In her study of fertility patterns among Muslim women Youssef claims that although women with high levels of education may have fewer children than women who

have no schooling, many educated women still consider motherhood as an unavoidable part of their lives:

> The highly educated Muslim wife is often ready to explore external sources of prestige and satisfaction, but not, however, to the exclusion of her maternal role. There is evidence that higher female education (particularly university) is accompanied by considerably reduced fertility and a relatively high proportion of employment in professional jobs.[134]

Education offers women the opportunity to transcend some social conventions, but it does not generally help them to go beyond the patriarchal definition of their role in society. The question one must ask with respect to these women is whether they choose to have children as a response to social pressure or do they make the decision consciously and freely at the moment which suits them best.

It is important to recognize that formal education is not necessarily a means for women to liberate themselves from patriarchal social norms. In most patriarchal societies the education systems are profoundly sexist. Indeed, in most countries it was not until the late 19th and early 20th century that women were admitted to universities. More recently, sexism in the schools can take various technical or bureaucratic forms. For instance, Debbie Gerner-Adams observes in her article entitled "The Changing Status of Islamic Women in the Arab World" that "[i]n many places a different curriculum is still used for females, particularly at the lower levels."[135] She quotes a study of Egypt's curriculum which affirms that:

> ...the stated intention of the school curriculum is to prepare women to improve living conditions within the family, to help increase incomes, and to enlighten women *sufficiently* for them to understand the outlines of the country's developing plans. Thus, the Egyptian educational system theoretically provides equality of opportunity for Egyptian girls, but does not attempt to prepare women for the same roles as men.[136] (emphasis added)

The sexual double standards that begin at birth are reproduced in the educational system reinforcing the socialization of males and females. The Egyptian curriculum aims at informing women only "sufficiently" in some areas while in others, such as budget management and presumably family care, it is permissible for them to develop a certain

degree of expertise. Concerning the inadequacies of the school system, al-Sa'dâwî commented in an interview that the curriculum was not geared to producing "creative people who can rebel against the system. Education is a tool of oppression also."[137] These remarks are particularly appropriate with respect to the academic instruction offered to women. In these circumstances it is not surprising that many girls and young women appear to submit fatalistically to social expectations, sacrificing their career goals to become wives and mothers.

However, there are women who endeavor to pursue higher education leading to a profession as well as to perform their culturally determined roles; but the institutionalization of discrimination against women provides mechanisms for excluding them from the education system. An Egyptian woman relates the following experience:

> I did well in school and had the idea to continue until I qualified as a teacher or a secretary. Then it was arranged that I should marry my cousin, and we moved in with his parents. When it was time for the final exams the school director told me, "Married women are forbidden to sit for exams." This was a new rule - I knew others who had married and then finished school - but all my pleading could not change it.[138]

It is not clear whether this woman was disqualified from sitting for the exams because of a new rule or simply due to the caprice of the director, but it is evident that the director accepted the rule as legitimate and possessed the power to invoke and apply it arbitrarily in order to prevent the woman from pursuing her academic objectives. Since men generally are in control of the most important teaching and decision-making positions, female students may often be exposed to sexual discrimination which is either inherent in the system or expressed in the attitudes of male teachers or directors who have internalized sexist notions about women.

One should note in the woman's account that her professional goals are to become a secretary or teacher, in Egypt, like in the West, these professions are not usually jobs which men covet. In fact women who do continue to higher levels of education and subsequently practice a profession tend to be employed in jobs of relatively low prestige or those which correspond to distorted patriarchal notions of femininity. For instance, health care and education are two of the most common fields for women professionals, because they are probably thought to correspond best to women's "natural nurturing instinct," and because of the possibility of practising them in a sexually segregated context. Gemer-

Adams points out that in several Arab countries, among which Egypt was included, in the early 1970s, 40% of women professionals were in teaching, and that nursing and teaching together absorbed 96% of all female professionals. She also states that "[o]nly slowly are women entering other professional fields in larger than token numbers."[139]

There is no doubt that women's employment opportunities are closely tied to their level of formal education, and that both employment and education can play important roles in helping women overcome male domination.[140] Nevertheless, as has been seen with regard to education, women may in theory have the right to attend high schools and universities, but in practice their rights are not necessarily respected. Similarly, in the formal work force women are supposed to have the right to equal pay and equal opportunity, yet, as one might expect, they are generally discriminated against.

Although the social climate may be changing as a result of women's efforts to go beyond the conventional norms which inhibit their freedom of activity and expression, it is probably still true that most men and many women in Egypt do not believe it is correct for women to work in public. Stigma associated with women's employment in the formal work force seems to stem from traditional values which place the economic responsibility to care for the family on the men, and also from the fear that if women work in public where they may come in contact with men their reputations may be damaged. The latter point is particularly pertinent for single women from more traditional families. Gerner Adams points out these factors quite clearly:

> In terms of traditional attitudes hindering female employment, many of the same fears which were operative in a family's reluctance to allow its girls to attend school are important in this context as well. Some people still believe a working woman is exposing herself unnecessarily to men, becoming uncomfortably close to a prostitute. Families are afraid that by working a daughter or sister will destroy her chances for marriage and ruin her reputation. For many, there is shame associated with employment: it implies that the husband or other male kin is unwilling or unable to provide adequately for the family.[141]

Married women tend to be less affected by the social constraints on their working. However, a working-class Egyptian woman states that she is criticized by her husband's family for working:

> His family find fault with me. The women do not approve that I leave every day on a bus for work. They do not approve of my clothes — they all wear the black head veil. Each of them works in the fields helping her husband... [142]

Here one encounters another example of women's alienation and how it can be effective in reinforcing patriarchal attitudes. The women in the family, who have adopted conventional dress and views about women, put pressure on the working woman to leave her job and to conform to traditional social expectations.

It is important to recognize — as is illustrated in the woman's remarks quoted above — that although most Egyptian women do not work "officially," they are employed in the fields, in shops and especially in and around the home without being paid for their labour. Judith Tucker argues that although almost all women work, there is a misrepresentation of their contribution in the statistics:

> One recurrent problem in the discussion is that most statistical information omits the subsistence activities which are largely women's work. Food production and processing for home and local consumption, or the fetching of water and fuel are often time and energy consuming tasks which should, but do not, appear as productive work.[143]

This work is necessary for the economic survival of most Egyptian families and indispensable to the whole of society, yet it is unacknowledged, often viewed as the "natural" duty of women.[144]

This being the case women who are employed usually have two jobs: one in the home and the other outside. They must carry the burden of a double workload; consequently employment outside the home, which can offer women a certain degree of economic independence, may also limit their freedom by exhausting their surplus of time and energy. According to al-Sa'dâwî:

> Women have only been permitted to seek jobs outside the home as a response to economic necessities in society or within the family. A woman is permitted to leave her home every day and go to an office, a school, a hospital or a factory on condition that she returns after her day of work to shoulder the responsibilities related to her husband and children, which are considered more important than anything else she may have done.[145]

Indeed, women's domestic obligations may even prevent them from taking jobs which entail greater responsibility and higher wages. Professional women seem to seek employment in areas which do not interfere excessively with their work at home. With reference to a conference on women held at the American University of Cairo, Andrea Rugh notes that the participants observed that few women sought managerial positions because their "housework" was too exhausting to allow them to take on the extra responsibilities connected with important, well-paying posts.[146] Rugh also underlines the fact that many men do not feel obliged to contribute to the domestic chores.

> Men rarely assume household tasks in any kind of meaningful way. As one well-educated upper-middle-class husband put it, his wife could work if she wanted to but only if it did not interfere with her duties at home. He expected her to get up in the morning before him and prepare breakfast; be home early so his food was ready when he returned from work. He provided full support for her and felt that anything she earned should be spent as she chose.... Such a division makes it difficult to say categorically that women derive a greater status in the household from their financial conditions, since men have vested interest in preserving the appearance that they provide the bulk of the income. Nevertheless, women themselves often express a feeling of greater security in their economic independence.[147]

A working-class woman confirms Rugh's observations and establishes the paradox related to women's working outside the home and their acquisition of greater independence.

> Our Egyptian men are all the same; they leave the work of the house to the women. Sometimes my husband will shop or take the boy out if he sees me tired. But all this is a matter of whim. If I complain he tells me to leave my work and get along without my pay. But he knows we couldn't do that, not in today's conditions. Not with another baby coming, by the will of God. No, I won't leave work as long as I can stand on two feet.
>
> Work strengthens a woman's position. The woman who works doesn't have to beg her husband for every piaster she needs. She can command respect in her home and can raise her voice in any decision. . At the end of the day I'm exhausted. Sometimes I sit down in a chair and think I'll never get up again. But at 5.00 A.M. you'll find me up, running to prepare breakfast and lunch before leaving.[148]

There is no doubt that women who work, like educated women, have a greater potential of escaping the controls of patriarchy in the family, but so long as they continue to be obliged to perform the household chores as dictated by their husbands and society, their independence remains conditional, and they will continue to be one of the most exploited groups in society.

Most of the factors just discussed deal with the social aspects of women's employment, that is, the attitudes of women and men with respect to women working outside the home and how these attitudes create barriers which prevent women from entering the formal work force. However, there is another set of factors operative within the work force which are indicative of the sexist bias encountered by many working women. Generally, as was suggested by Gerner-Adams, working women face the same problems and double standards in employment as they do in education. For example, just as they are encouraged to study in certain fields, such as health care, they are often employed in large numbers in only limited occupations, such as housekeeping, secretarial, teaching, and more recently factory work. Thus, there is the formation of job ghettos which tend to be based on the economic exploitation of a group of individuals who do not feel they can be employed elsewhere, either because they lack experience or education, or because the social attitudes do no approve of those individuals working in other areas.

In fact, the condition of the national economy is reflected in the shift in social attitudes, and has an important impact on women's employment. As unemployment in Egypt increases, the possibilities of women finding well-paying, or any, jobs will decline; when there are few jobs to be had, women are usually the first to be fired and the last to be hired. Rugh confirms this point.

> The women's [economic activity] rates in 1937, 1970, and 1976 followed the same pattern of decline and recovery but with somewhat greater exaggeration than the figures for men reflecting what is particularly true for employment of women in Egypt, that their passage into or out of the work force depends to a large extent on how men are faring in the work force, and the availability of jobs, and the ability of men to earn sufficient income for the household.[149]

This phenomenon is probably true for almost all countries, for only in some Eastern European countries and the Soviet Union do women constitute more than 50% of the paid labour force.[150]

In any case, since most managerial positions are held by men, and they control who is hired, even in times of relative prosperity women must deal with sexual discrimination. Men prefer to hire men even if the women who apply for the job are equally or better qualified. This kind of discrimination is not difficult to identify, but it is extremely difficult to overcome. The bias against women employees is directly related to men's adherence to patriarchal notions about women, notably the belief that women are not as competent as men and that they are not as responsible and therefore, cannot perform as well as men. A manager in a government research department stated

> We hire the best people, both women and men, train them to be excellent researchers, then the men get offers for other jobs in other ministries or at the university and the women are left. We start with approximately equal numbers of males and females and end up with a predominantly female staff. Women are equally good if not better, but the image is still there that women are not serious and that to them the job is a low priority. Some departments in the government specifically request the Manpower Department not to send them women. [151]

This quotation underlines another aspect of sexual discrimination against women in the work force. Although women may be as good or even better than men at the same work, they are not "offered" the same opportunities for advancement in their field. Men are promoted while women remain in the same jobs year after year, with only the exceptional woman worker moving up to more prestigious and better paying jobs.[152]

Probably the single most important manifestation of sexual discrimination concerns the difference in wages paid to women in relation to those paid to men for comparable work. According to the International Labour Office's statistics for 1979, women were paid less than men in all sectors of non-agricultural economic activity. For instance, in manufacturing and mining women workers are paid only 65% of men's salary and in the best circumstances, in construction, women earn approximately 90% of the wages paid to men.[153] In general, women's wages vary between 60 and 69% of those earned by men despite the existence of the "equal-pay-for equal work" law passed under 'Abd al-Nasir and Egypt's signing of the International Labour Organization's convention. Thus, even when women's rights are ingrained in the law, women are still exposed to sexual discrimination on a large scale. The laxity with which the law is applied further reveals the authorities' disregard for injustice against women.

In most patriarchal societies, the legal system, which is supposed to protect the rights of all citizens, is often openly sexist, applying legislation that discriminates against women. Moreover, since most agents of the legal system are men (police, lawyers, judges, etc.), they may consciously or unconsciously act in ways which reflect their assimilation of the dominant notions about women. In Egypt, sexism is an inherent aspect of the legislation and women in several areas are not given the same rights as men. As has been illustrated above with respect to women's right to education and their right to equal pay for equal work, there is no evidence to indicate that the state endeavors to enforce the laws, consequently the laws do not exist for most women — except of course on paper. Given these circumstances, it is not an exaggeration to classify the Egyptian legal apparatus as profoundly sexist. One of the most revealing elements of sexism in the Egyptian legal system is the interdiction of women to assume the position of judge. In *The Hidden Face of Eve*, al-Sa'dâwî quotes a man who wrote to the newspaper *al-Akhbâr* in defence of this discrimination

> It is superfluous to explain, that according to Islam, ten conditions must be fulfilled for a person to judge. Without these ten conditions, the very essence of "judging" is non-existent, and the right or even possibility to be accorded this high function is lost. These ten conditions are: Islamic belief, reason, *masculinity*, freedom, maturity, justice, knowledge and to be a complete individual with a normal capacity to hear, to see and to speak.[154]

The exclusion of women from "this high function" may be justified by reference to the ten Islamic conditions, but this does not mean that it is any less sexist. Indeed, the author of these comments only illustrates the degree to which some aspects of Islam are discriminatory, and the propensity of some men to regularly defend sexual discrimination by using Islam.

It is not uncommon for judges when presented with cases involving women to be influenced by social norms, and to pass judgements which are not favourable to the women involved, despite the fact that justice — in the ethical sense — is on the women's side. Several cases can be cited in which women's rights were disregarded or the court deemed it more prudent to settle the case in an extrajudicial manner. In other cases, women are clearly the victims of men, but the court allows the men to go without punishment.

In the past, the unilateral right of men to divorce their wives left women with no means of escaping a marriage which did not satisfy their expectations. Although the law in Egypt has changed to a certain degree, it still remains difficult for women to sue for divorce, for they are obliged to prove in the courts that the husband has not fulfilled his responsibilities. Some women have tried to get out of their marriage in various ways, notably by provoking their husband to initiate the divorce. Rugh includes an account from the *Egyptian Gazette* of November, 1979, in which a woman took extreme means to obtain a divorce, only to become a victim of the legal system:

> Police yesterday arrested a housewife . who went to the security authorities...with a fictitious story about three men who she said raped her....She then asked (her husband) to divorce her to avoid any offense to his honour . Investigations revealed that the wife wanted a divorce to get rid of her husband from whom she could not beget a child [155]

Clearly if the courts recognized unconditionally women's rights to divorce, wives would not be driven to these extremes to escape unhappy marriages.

In another case, a husband left his wife and son in order to work abroad. After several years when the boy was eight years old the father returned, and although he had not communicated with his wife in the years of his absence, he took the son away from the mother, refusing to allow the wife and her family visitation rights. The mother's family went to court on her behalf to gain custody of the child but the judge ruled against them. They appealed on the grounds that the father must provide support for the child in order to gain custody. The appeal was not successful. The grandfather of the boy — the mother's father — attended court often, trying to obtain at least visitation right but to no avail. He stated:

> We are very discouraged about the case at the moment, we are hoping to have the opportunity to get visitation rights so we can at least let the boy know we care about him. But so far the courts have not given us these rights....Why is the court so partial in this case? Because the father is a judge himself and the other judges help him, but there are other cases like this where it is money that influences the decision [156]

Here not only did the court disregard the woman's right - her right to custody - but it is the source of an injustice by denying her and her family visitation rights.

The court's participation in injustice is vividly illustrated in cases concerning men who, attempting to preserve their family's honour, murder a woman in the family suspected of having had premarital sexual relations. Al-Sa'dâwî mentions such a case in which an engineer suspected his seventeen-year old sister of being pregnant. He discovered some medication in her room which he gave to a pharmacist to examine. The pharmacist told him that the medication was used to induce abortions. The engineer returned to his home and, on finding his sister, he murdered her Al-Sa'dâwî continues:

> In the post mortem examination it transpired that she was still a virgin and no evidence of pregnancy was detectable. Counsel for the defence, in his submission to the court, pleaded for the engineer's release on the grounds that his motive in committing the crime had been the defence of his family's honour He had been assailed by doubts about his sister's conduct and this led him to commit the crime. His doubts had been misplaced, but his intentions were good The court set him free without bail.[157]

This case took place in 1974 and it is difficult to say if the same thing would occur today. However, as late as 1980, a man was sentenced to only five years heavy labour for the murder of his daughter who refused to live with him after he had divorced her mother.[158]

These cases and others[159] reveal the legal system's lack of concern for women's rights and its tendency to almost always minimize the gravity of crimes against women. As was underlined previously in the chapter, if the courts of justice treat women unjustly, indeed, if the legal apparatus itself discriminates against women, there is no other official institution to prevent society at large from reproducing sexual discrimination without a sense of injustice Moreover, if women cannot seek justice in the courts, they are discouraged from defending their rights publicly Ultimately, they are stripped of the only "legitimate" means of redress and are, thus, forced to employ various strategies to defend their property, their children and their lives.

In this chapter I have tried to show that patriarchal societies are based on an ensemble of inegalitarian principles and practices which circumscribe women's freedom. Overlapping discourses on femininity, which define (in narrow terms) a *feminine* nature, circulate throughout the social body striving to render invisible the inequalities between males and females These discourses underpin the authority of patriarchal institutions, which in turn reproduce and adapt them in order to maintain their effectiveness. In Egypt women have challenged patriarchal definitions of their roles and denounced the injustices

of the social order. However, the form of patriarchy found in Egypt, and in other Arab countries, has revealed itself to be particularly tenacious, employing nationalist, socialist and Islamic dogma to counter the consolidation of potentially powerful feminist movements which might subvert male domination. Consequently, only a minority of Egyptian women participate in organised resistance. This is not to say that women at large silently and passively submit to male authority. Individual acts of resistance, which aim at changing the immediate circumstances of a woman, take place and play an important part in undermining patriarchy. Several examples of this type of resistance were cited above: the woman who was secretly using contraceptives; the woman who refused to quit her job despite her exhaustion; the woman who invented a rape-story in order to obtain a divorce, and the girl who refused to live with her father. By acting independently of men's dictates, indeed in opposition to them, these women and others like them have in their own way consciously defied patriarchal authority; and it is this same conscious defiance, pushed to its limits, that one encounters in the protagonists of al-Sa'dāwī's novels.

Chapter Three: From Submission to Subversion

In virtually all of al-Sa'dâwî's writings one encounters an extremely well articulated understanding of women's oppression and a critique of patriarchy which exposes incesssantly Egyptian political, social and economic inequalities. Her fiction presents an acute perception of patriarchy's total nature, the interweaving of the its institutions which form a web limiting women's freedom. Moreover, she endeavors to remind the reader that it is not only her protagonists' condition as women which lies at the base of their exploitation - and often impells them towards resistance - but also the class and neocolonial elements present in Egyptian society during the1970s In a prose which at first seems unambiguous and facile al-Sa'dâwî portrays the complexity of a modern patriarchal class social order *Two Women in One*, *God Dies By the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* [160] reveal a sensitivity which results from their disconcerting intimacy with the neuroses of contemporary Egypt They do not offer a treatment, rather, they move through the readers consciousness striving to trigger an awarenss of alienation, subjugation and exploitation as well as the possibilities for resistance.

Al Sa'dâwî is familiar with the unconscious workings of dominant ideologies which make submission appear easy and subversion seem frightening and impossible. Her heroines move hesitantly between submission and subversion, revealing that women's resistance to patriarchy is not a simple affair As will be seen in the analysis of the novels, women's resistance is as much an ongoing struggle against oneself, against patriarchy's grip on the psyche, as it is a revolt against repressive external authorities Al-Sa'dâwî's novels evoke the dialectic of the human psyche, exploring the interplay between the unconscious and the conscious, between fear and desire, between blind faith and critical awareness The antinomic tension between submission and subversion, which runs through the texts with an unbroken force, emerges as one of the major dichotomies conditioning women's existence in modern Egypt. (In effect, this tension can be observed in a number of contexts where domination is underpinned by a profoundly ingrained, widely accepted oppressive ideology, for instance, racism in the southern American states during the slavery era or sexism in patriarchal societies) While examining how the novels elaborate the submission/subversion antinomy and what they disclose about the processes of repression and resistance, my study of al-Sa'dâwî's fiction aims at further illustrating

patriarchy's preponderant influence on and authority over women as well as women's various and difficult efforts to liberate themselves.

I. Political Fiction and Criticism

In the introductory essay to *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Edward Said challenges literary criticism to move away from its positions of "the philosophy of pure textuality" and "noninterference" in order to determine, what he refers to as, the *wordliness* of texts. Said suggests that criticism can no longer deny or avoid the various forces that condition the writing and reading of texts:

> The realities of power and authority — as well as the resistances offered by men, women and social movements to institutions, authorities, and orthodoxies — are the realities that make texts possible, that deliver them to their readers, that solicit the attention of critics. I propose that these realities are what should be taken account of by criticism and critical consciousness.[161]

No reading of al-Sa'dâwî's fiction can possibly escape the realities of authority and resistance which inform her texts, engendering in them a power of their own. On one level, al-Sa'dâwî's writing of fiction constitutes an appropriation of imaginative language and of male authority in the field of literary production. By writing prolifically and publishing abundantly, both in Arabic and translation, she participates in the reinsertion of women writers into the modern literary tradition. On another level, al-Sa'dâwî's novels depict certain nuances in the configurations of power which characterize Egyptian society. *Two Women in One*, *God Dies by the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* were written shortly after Egypt's successful crossing of the canal in the 1973 war with Israel and just as Sâdât undertook his new economic and political policies which led to the signing of the Camp David Agreement in 1977 and the strategic alliance with the United States. Thus, al-Sa'dâwî's writing of the novels paralleled the emergence of a neopatriarchal order marked by the rapid growth of the private sector, increased foreign debt and with it foreign interference, a widening of the gap between rich and poor, and the expansion of radical

Islamic movements Al-Sa'dâwî refers obliquely to the various social, political and economic forces which have shaped contemporary Egypt and which she sees as directly impinging on her literature [162] Therefore, while her novels are largely about the experiences of Egyptian women from different social contexts, confronted by changing economic and political conditions, more generally they attempt to demystify the elite male rule which discriminates against both men and women. It is in the particular and general senses that al-Sa'dâwî's novels are oppositional

By refusing to separate her political position from her literary practice, al-Sa'dâwî has embarked on a critical project which openly seeks to subvert the non-egalitarian status quo Her fiction is an imaginative and provocative elaboration of her feminist and anti-elitist political thoughts It does not pose as non-partisan but wants to obtain an effect that is political in as much as it is "literary" in the conventional sense of the word. The Kenyan writer and critic, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, like Said and al-Sa'dâwî, defends the idea that literature is social and political by its very nature. In an essay entitled "Literature and Society," Ngugi writes

> because of its social character, literature as a creative process and as an end is conditioned by historical social forces and pressures. it cannot elect to stand above or to transcend economics, politics, class, race, [one might add gender] or what Achebe calls "the burning issues of the day" because those burning issues with which it deals take place within an economic, political, class and race context Again because of its social involvement, because of its thoroughly social character, literature is partisan.[163]

Since the writing and interpreting of texts occur in specific socio-political contexts, literature possesses the potential to either favor change or reinforce established ideas and values As a result, the so-called great literature of an era often inscribes itself in the dominant or soon to be dominant — stylistic and ideological trends, never threatening the precious apolitical appearence of the cultural community; it is evidently not the 'controversial" writings of Miriam Tlali, Waguih Ghali, Elana Garo, Mariana Bâ, B. Traven, Sembene Ousmane, Zora Neale Hurston or Jeannette Armstrong which receive wide critical recognition and are celebrated as great literary achievements

Nevertheless, when the literary establishment wants to bolster the validity of its canon or when politicized or politicizing fiction accidentally has an impact on the accepted cultural norms, some critics and historians try to discredit it, by describing it as *didactic*,

polemical, propagandistic, dogmatic, or simply as *unaesthetic* and *non-literary*. These are the catchwords of conservative members of the cultural community, who, while often benefitting from the status quo because of their gender, colour and socio economic background, strive to mask the political potency of literature. The insidious ostracization of political fiction is particularly evident with respect to works written by feminists. It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that a number of critical studies and reviews, which include references to or deal specifically with al-Sa'dâwî's novels, attack the supposed literary and moral weaknesses of the texts without making any serious efforts to analyse the substance or for that matter the form of her works. Before going on to study the three novels, I would like first to consider the nature of several critical comments on al Sa'dâwî's fiction.

In an essay surveying women's contributions to literature in the Arab East, Hilary Kilpatrick briefly discusses the work of al-Sa'dâwî. She points out al-Sa'dâwî's renown as a writer, underlining "her sincere and courageous struggle against the oppression" of women. From this one might assume that Kilpatrick understands al Sa'dawî's *engagement*. However, she reveals herself to be totally insensitive to the political and social context of the author's work.

> When the literary qualities of Nawâl as-Sa'dâwî's stories and novels are examined, however, some weaknesses may be discovered: a commonplace style and rather limited vocabulary, sometimes a slovenly construction and an occasional tendency to fall back on sugary romantic endings. In a few works she even shows all male characters in a bad light.[64]

What Kilpatrick refers to negatively as "commonplace style" is in fact al Sa'dâwî's rejection of the primacy of style and an expression of her opposition to elitist notions of originality in favor of a more content-laden approach to fiction. For al Sa'dâwî, if there were a distinction to be made between style and content, it would no doubt be one by which style is meant to serve content. The complexity and subtlety of al Sa'dâwî's perception of patriarchy requires that she employ a deliberately unambiguous style in order to be understood despite the ensemble of commonplace ideas and preconceived notions that compose the dominant ideology (and affect all readings). Consequently, what appears simple is an expression of al-Sa'dâwî's ability to render extremely intricate and not easily accepted realities. Furthermore, Kilpatrick criticizes al-Sa'dâwî's use of a "limited vocabulary" (apparently a component part of her "commonplace style"). Al Sa'dâwî's unaffected language possesses, however, the potential to reach a wider and more socially

varied readership in a country with extremely high levels of illiteracy and where most women do not have access to higher education. By using an immediate and collective mode of expression, al-Sa'dâwî succeeds in conveying her ideas and, not coincidentally, she makes her novels more accessible. The convergence of these two objectives reveal the political coherence in al-Sa'dâwî's literary project. As for the "slovenly constructions", "sugary romantic endings" and the evil male characters, these are subjective generalizations not borne out by rigorous analysis. With a series of completely unsubstantiated remarks on style, Kilpatrick tries to diminish the literary merit of al-Sa'dâwî's fiction.

In contrast with Kilpatrick's literary evaluation, the *Muslim World Review of Books* published a short critique of *God Dies By the Nile*, in which the reviewer states that although "[p]arts of the narrative are well written," al-Sa'dâwî is a problematic writer because her novel trangresses the proprieties prescribed by Islam. Here it is not the literary qualities which are questioned, but rather the supposed betrayal of Islamic morals:

> Oppression of women and class and Dr Saadawi's way of illustrating this is at times graphic and semi-pornographic. The blasphemy and obscenity goes too far to mention in this review. Suffice it to say that homosexuality, necrophilia and bestiality are all mentioned in detail Much of what the author tries to say is undoubtedly true, yet she demeans herself and her cause by her lewd passages and unsavory words This, in essence, is the malady of the women', movement today. Their genuine desire to fight against the evils of female circumcision, illiteracy and a myriad of other sufferings all out of keeping with the spirit of Islam and the example of kindness shown to women by the blessed Prophet — is slandered by a negation of all that is *good* in society and the hatred of of the family, modesty and chastity Still, we need truly Islamic lady writers to explain the Muslim case, and to fight for dignity and justice for women in a proper way.[165]

By implying that al-Sa'dâwî is not a "truly Islamic" writer and that a disrespect for Islam is symptomatic of contemporary feminist movements in the Middle East, the reviewer effectively places feminism in opposition to Islam. Al-Sa'dâwî and her work become a target for general antifeminist criticism While al-Sa'dâwî's cause — through association with her novels is qualified by the words blasphemy, obscenity, lewd, unsavory, malady, negation and hatred, Islam is associated with kindness, goodness, modesty, chastity, and the proper way The reviewer does not dispute Muslim women's right to

struggle for "dignity and justice," but this must be done within the moral paradigm of Islam. Under the shroud of morality lies the ideological objective of discrediting feminism in general and its various cultural expressions in Muslim countries. And equally important is the Muslim reviewer's desire to elevate Islam and defend the religion from perceived threats. As pointed out in Chapter Two, looking critically at Islamic principles laid out in the *Qur'ân* or *Hadîth* and challenging religious norms is a problem for some Muslims who sense the real hostility of the West towards their religion. Because many feminists in Egypt as well as in other Muslim countries do question the sexist tenets of Islam, they attract the attention of Muslim apologists who unjustifiably equate "feminism" with Westernization.

In an article suggestively entitled "La littérature féminine," published in the French monthly *Magazine littéraire*, the critic Ibrahim al-Ariss expresses widely held essentialist perceptions of women writers. Typically he presents Arab women's fiction as though some natural quality binds the various and disparate works together, metaphysically distinguishing them from men's fiction. Only in an article on women writers can a scholar unquestioningly lump together in one category poets, novelists and short story writers ranging across a century, from half a dozen different countries and expressing a variety of stylistic, formal and thematic concerns. For al-Ariss, it is not when or where the authors are writing, or what they say, or how they say it that are the significant factors in classifying their works; that the authors are women is the determinant for establishing the nature of their literature. Through this approach, al-Ariss expresses and further contributes to the patriarchal principle that the creative and intellectual processes of all women are essentially the same. Although a female writer like Ghâda al Samman may have a great deal more in common with a male writer like Halim Barakat than she has with Mayy Ziyâda or Nâzik al-Malâ'ika, sexist essentialism disregards historical, geographical and socio-political facts, giving precedence to gender as the basis to evaluate literary production. The result is to set apart *feminine literature* from *Literature*, generally dominated by men.

Consistent with the overall orientation of his article al-Ariss continues to employ essentialist terminology to describe al-Sa'dâwî's fiction and he deals with her as a particularly controversial writer.

> Mais c'est Naoual Saadaoui qui s'est montrée la plus provocante. C'est ancien médecin égyptien écrit non seulement pour les femmes, mais contre l'homme. Se bassant sur sa profonde connaissance de la femme

> égyptienne, elle compose des romans dans lesquels la guerre que mène la femme n'apparaît plus dirigée contre la société ou contre une histoire de l'oppression, mais bien contre l'homme. Position très radicale qui fait de ses romans les plus controversés de ces dernières années. De nombreux critiques les rejettent même hors du champ de la littérature proprement dite, les considérant comme des pamphlets dignes d'être étudiés, non par des critiques littéraires, mais par des psychanalystes.[166]

This brief commentary is based on two of the principal themes used to dismiss fiction by feminists. In the first half of the quotation, al-Ariss confidently asserts and repeats in successive sentences that the sum of al-Sa'dâwî's literary efforts can be reduced simplistically to a sort of battle of the sexes, a war waged by *woman* against *man*. (One should not overlook as mere linguistic convention the evident essentialism of applying the singular to refer to the collectivity of men or women.) Contrary to al-Ariss' allegations any careful reading of al-Sa'dâwî's novels reveals a desire to represent the numerous injustices of a patriarchal-class society in the Middle East and to present a history of repression in which both men and women are victims. By stressing the idea that al-Sa'dâwi uses her writing solely as a weapon to attack men, he resorts to the typical defensive stance of individuals who feel threatened by feminists and who, as discussed in Chapter Two, argue that these "provoking" women manifest an irrational aggressivity and disdain towards *all* men. Thus al-Ariss sees in al-Sa'dâwî the stereotype image of the "rabid feminist" whose literary production is simply an expression of warrior-like zeal.

The second theme emerges as al-Ariss attempts to disengage himself from the critique. By referring to the views of numerous unnamed critics, it is suggested that the radicalism of al-Sa'dâwî's works has caused them to become the subject of recent controversy in which their literary merit is questioned. Al-Ariss notes that many critics refuse to include her novels within the realm of literature "properly speaking." Here he conveniently provides an example of how certain members of *the* literary community arbitrarily define literature in a manner which allows them to exclude works expressing unfavorable political ideas. That some of al-Sa'dâwî's detractors describe her novels as "pamphlets," worthy of a psychoanalyst's attention and not that of a literary critic, is a vivid demonstration of the dismissive attitude prevalent among some critics. Indeed al-Ariss' entire commentary is aligned with those attitudes, for it is loaded with negative formulations and exclusively hostile criticism which aims more at diminishing al-Sa'dâwî's literary achievements than at providing an insightful critique of her fiction.

Finally, in *Woman Against Her Sex* [167] Georges Tarabishi applies Freudian psychoanalytic theory in order to deconstruct several of al-Sa'dâwî's novels and short stories. No doubt the most extensive and in some ways the most challenging critique of al-Sa'dâwî (more because of its pseudofeminist perspective than because of the force of its arguments), Tarabishi's book argues that her fiction betrays an antifeminist bent which can be observed through an examination of the aspirations and actions of the heroines. According to Tarabishi, al-Sa'dâwî has unconsciously assimilated "male ideology" and, again unconsciously, used her female characters to express that ideology. Throughout his study he endeavors to illustrate that the protagonists are in effect negative images of feminism, that they do not act against patriarchy, but rather reinforce it. He describes the protagonists as individualistic elitists who suffer from numerous Freudian complexes and suggests that their neurosis results from a wish to escape their female condition, from their rejection of the community of women — indeed their "hatred for members of their own sex"[168]— and their identification with masculine values. As will be shown in my analysis of al-Sa'dâwî's novels, her heroines are not born-feminists nor are they examples "to be emulated" and paradigms "to be revered."[169] Al-Sa'dâwî presents the processes by which women are conditioned to be "feminine" and through which they are dominated by males, as well as how they attempt to rid themselves of both the conditioning and the domination. The reader's empathy with the protagonists does not stem so much from their heroic attacks on patriarchal institutions at the end of each novel, but in their efforts to resolve the existential crises emerging from their contradictory desires to rebel and to conform. Tarabishi has ignored the complex psychological development of the protagonists, adopting a reductive and static view of the psyche which almost completely overlooks the significance of the dialectic of the unconscious and the conscious.

Although Tarabishi writes in a clarification at the end of the English translation, that his "analysis never claimed to deal with the personality of the writer [al-Sa'dâwi] but only the personalities of her heroines," [170] it is evident that many of his comments extend to the author of the novels. He claims that al-Sa'dâwî's defence of her protagonists (in her reply included in the English version) indicates her identification with them,[171] implying that she suffers from the complexes and elitism which he attributes to the heroines. Furthermore, he states clearly in the introduction that his criticism is directed against al-Sa'dâwî's presumed internalization of antiwomen notions:

> ... what we criticize in this particular woman's [i.e. al-Sa'dâwî's] vision of the world is not a product of her inner self, nor the outcome of her rebellion against

> her colonizer, but, on the contrary, the result of her having identified with her colonizer and internalized man's hostile ideology. In other words, our criticism will be biased in favour of the woman who is inside the woman, so that the criticism can better focus on reaching the man who is inside the woman.[172]

If one briefly considers the approach proposed by Tarabishi, one is immediately struck by his vague use of language which, while suggesting an empathy with women, is void of any real meaning. He obviously intends to undertake an analysis of some of the components of al-Sa'dîawî's unconscious. There is the "inner self" against which his criticism is not directed and which apparently corresponds with the good "woman inside the woman." On the other hand, there is al-Sa'dîawî's identification with her "colonizer" (men) and her internalization of "man's hostile ideology," that is, "the man inside the woman," which is the object of Tarabishi's critique. And it is in this very same manner that Tarabishi views the heroines' psyches, the inner self (woman inside the woman) is a renovated version of the eternal *feminine essence* which is so dear to Freudians and essential to patriarchy's hieratchichal order.

There is an obvious basis for a psychoanalytic examination al-Sa'dâwî's fiction, however, Tarabishi's approach is riddled with a transparent duplicity which undoubtedly arises from his attempt to use Freud (whose theories on femininity are notorious for their essentialism) in order to demonstrate the unconscious antifeminism of a politically conscious and committed feminist. His uncritical acceptance of Freudian theories on distinct feminine and masculine natures leads him -- like Freud — to confuse femininity and masculinity (cultural constructs) with femaleness and maleness (biological facts). Consequently, while al-Sa'dawî and her protagonists reject "femininity" and might be considered antifeminine, in that they refuse sometimes to conform to the social norms of feminine behavior and are critical of women who blindly and submissively accept their inferiority, Tarabishi interprets this as being antiwomen, primarily because he thinks that the norms of "femininity" are a natural and necessary consequence of possessing ovaries, a uterus and other characteristics of femaleness. He holds that the protagonists' difficulties in accepting the anatomic qualities of being a woman are signs of their denial of their sexual identity and their frigidity, but it is precisely those qualities which society uses as a basis for discriminating against women, and it is the discrimination, not their identication with males, which is the cause of the heroines' ambivalent feelings towards their femaleness. Typically psychiatrists — or in this case a would-be-psychoanalyst — who do not comprehend the basic notions concerning gender socialization, diagnose as

neurotic, suffering from "penis envy" and frigidity, women who challenge gender roles or refuse to accept the idea of an inherent psychological difference between men and women. Despite his statements in favour of women and feminism, Tarabishi does not seem to understand the social, cultural, political, and economic factors which impinge on women's psyche and condition their thoughts and actions. He presents himself as an ally of women against what he views as an expression of antifeminism, yet the theoretical underpinnings of his critique and his ideas about female sexuality demonstrate his retrograde perception of feminism in particualr and of women in general. Similar to Freud's writings on femininty, Tarabishi's critique of al-Sa'dâwî provides one with more information about the author than it does about the subject under study.

My examination of the foregoing quotations is not intended to suggest that al Sa'dâwî's fiction is problem-free and above criticism. Rather, I want to emphasize the gratuitous and hostile way in which often regard her work and the utter absence of subtantial arguments in their commentaries. It seems that al-Sa'dâwî's novels move so radically against the dominant ideological and aesthetic currents that critics do not feel obliged to apply the same rigor reserved for more conventional writers. One gets the impression that her literary portrait of patriarchal domination, class oppression and religious hypocrisy provokes emotional reactions instead of rational analysis from critics who are uncomfortable with her ideas and direct style.

II. *The* Novels: Protagonists and Narration

Two Women in One, *God Dies By the Nile* and *Woman at Point Zero* are constructed around the experiences of female protagonists who undergo the normal social conditioning of their class. Bahiyyah (Bahiah)[173] in *Two Women in One*, is a young middle-class medical student who lives with her parents in Cairo. In the very first pages of the novel it becomes evident that Bahiyyah is somewhat different from the other medical students; she does not seem to share the same preoccupations as most of the male and female medical students and her behavior is slightly atypical. However, her life, her studies, her family and the future planned for her by her family are all very typical of her middle-class milieu. In *God Dies by the Nile*, Zakiyyah (Zakeya), a middle aged, illiterate

peasant, lives with her brother and his two daughters in a village ruled by a tyrannical mayor. She is a widow and her only living son has been drafted. The reader is given sharp glimpses into Zakiyyah's past, providing images of her childhood and marriage which underscore the difficulties faced by many women villagers, who are largely poor, uneducated, exploited and powerless. The other female characters, with the significant exceptions of the mayor's wife and the *dâyah*,[174] are young women whose lives are dictated by the same forces which controlled Zakiyyah's life. While the peasant women are depicted as independent-thinking and physically strong individuals, there is something particular in Zakiyyah's refusal to surrender to the harshness of her life. Her upright gait and defiant eyes indicate an intense desire to surmount her oppression which distinguishes her not only from the other women but also from the male peasants. In *Woman at Point Zero*, Firdaws (Firdaus) moves from one situation to the next, experiencing a constant process of social change. As a child she was part of the peasantry, but after the deaths of her mother and father, she is adopted by her *azharî* uncle who takes her to Cairo, sends her to school, exploits her and finally marries her to an avarious, sick, middle-class old man. She flees her husband and after numerous hardships becomes a successful prostitute, enjoying the comfort of the elite. Whether it be in the village, the secondary school or the street, Firdaws has experiences which are common to other women in similar situations.

Taken separately each novel portrays male domination in a specific social environment, however, when brought together the three works provide a cross section of Egyptian patriarchy. That is not to say that, for instance, all peasant women are like Zakiyyah, but rather that almost all women from the peasantry experience in the course of their lives similar forms of oppression and exploitation. Bahiyyah, Zakiyyah and Firdaws are confronted by the standard patriarchal controls of their respective social contexts and, to go one step further, their generalized experience of male domination can be viewed as common to women of all classes. The novels deal with the particular expressions of patriarchal authority, emphasizing its variety of forms and its singularity of effect which is the maintenance of male superiority.

While it is true that the three heroines have different social references, are victimized in different ways and express their resistance differently, it is also true that they all act individually against the same system of domination, challenging the state of submission expected of females. In fact, there is a common movement by the three women as each one emerges from a relative state of submission, attaining plateaus of

awareness and finally becoming openly subversive. The similarities in the protagonists progression from submission to subversion underline the limited choices offered to women and confirms the thesis that women's condition in Egypt is marked by this antinomy. The protagonists (and women in general) must continually choose between submitting and subverting; all the existential decisions they make are governed by these two possibilities. Consequently there is a permanent stress on their psyche as they attempt to reconcile the demands of society with their desire to act freely. By submitting to the norms, they act against themselves and by challenging them, they enter into conflict with the "guardians" of the social order. Because of this tension, the women's movement is fraught with inconsistencies and regressions as they do battle with their alienation. They do not always succeed in overcoming their conditioning which has a hold on their psyche throughout the major part of the novels. The dealienation of the psyche is achieved at the moment when the heroines perceive the causes and agents of their oppression and cease to fear them. Therefore, although the progression from submission to subversion cannot be described as truly linear, it is accompanied by a definite and unhalting movement from unconsciousness to consciousness. It is the two processes together that allow the heroines to resolve the tension and act independently.

The three novels manifest inherent similarities, developing in distinct ways the progression of a woman from submission to subversion, yet this does not imply that they possess the same narrative structure. Each novel reveals an abundance of narrative idiosyncracies on the formal level which have clear semantic translations. Particularly significant is the narrative distance which al-Sa'dâwî uses effectively to evoke the heroine's state of consciousness. *Two Women in One* is related in the third person by a narrator whose perspective is extremely close to that of Bahiyyah. At home, at school, in the streets and in the company of her companion, Salîm (Saleem), Bahiyyah's perception of herself and others is exposed by the sympathetic narrator. The small distance between the narrator and the protagonist reflects the proximity of Bahiyyah's conscious to her unconscious. As Bahiyyah becomes more conscious, the affinity between her and the narrator increases and there is almost a fusion of the two, the protagonist virtually assuming the critical awareness of the narrator.

Unlike the exclusive relationship between the narrator and the protagonist in *Two Women in One*, in *God Dies by the Nile* the reader encounters a largely omniscient narrator who moves among the different narrative locations, changing perspective as it shifts from one character to the next. Throughout the novel, the narrator's frequent

displacements give one insight into the secret thoughts and private actions of a multitude of villagers. The diffusion of the narrative perspective is used to stress the collective state of submission in which the villagers find themselves. However, Zakiyyah is the most developed character and the narrator regularly returns to her because she alone manifests signs of an emerging consciousness. Nevertheless, the narrator keeps an objective distance from the protagonist, suggesting that Zakiyyah's unconscious dominates her psyche.

In *Woman at Point Zero*, al-Sa'dâwî presents a narration within a narration. The novel opens with a psychiatrist recounting in the first person, the events which lead to her interest in a particular woman prisoner. She explains that she was collecting data on women in prison when one of her colleagues working in the prison drew her attention to the case of Firdaws. After refusing on several occasions to meet with the psychiatrist, Firdaws finally invites her into the cell. The moment the psychiatrist enters the cell, Firdaws takes over the narration, looking back over the events of her life. The novel closes with the psychiatrist reassuming the role of narrator. The core of the novel is, therefore, Firdaws' memories coloured by her critical understanding of her past. While telling the story, Firdaws expresses an acute awareness and coherent perception of how patriarchy operates on females from childhood through the different stages of their lives. The first person narrative is a reflection of this awareness and the eclipsing of patriarchy's ideological control over her psyche.

Unlike the protagonists, the narrators are free of the ideological trappings of patriarchy. Their ability to perceive "reality" is not marred by patriarchal notions which affect the unconscious and plague the heroines' psyche, causing them to fear, feel guilt and submit. Whereas the protagonists inch towards and achieve degrees of awareness, gradually surmounting certain aspects of their alienation, the three principal narrators (among whom one may also count the psychiatrist-narrator of *Woman at Point Zero*) are situated on the plane of total consciousness. The convergence of the protagonist's perception with that of the narrator is a subtle representation of the evolution occurring in the heroine's psyche as she draws elements from the unconscious to the level of consciousness and moves from submission to subversion.

III. Phases and Crises

In charting the protagonists' progression from submission to subversion, one observes an ascending movement divided into a series of phases. If one confines the analysis of the narratives to the major chronological developments in each heroine's life, three phases can be distinguished, two of which are brought to a conclusion by a crisis forming the point of transition to the next phase. The phases are marked by certain problems and progresses and correspond with the different states of consciousness experienced by the protagonist as she emerges from a condition of relative submission. At the beginning of the narratives the three women appear to conform generally to the social conventions of their respective milieus, but in significant ways they — like many women — distance themselves slightly from the baseline of absolute submission. Nevertheless their efforts to maintain that distance or increase it are constrained by the coercive forces of patriarchy or the gravitational pull of their alienation. It is to these forces that they submit and against which they resist. Their unconscious and conscious desires, thoughts and actions either diminish or widen the breach between absolute submission and their state of being. While the context and events of the three novels are very different, the phases and crises experienced by the protagonists manifest important parallels which illustrate the unrelenting nature of patriarchal domination. However, there are limits to the analogies which can be made between the three novels. Consequently, I want to place emphasis on the similar pattern of repression and resistance, which al-Sa'dāwī describes in these works, and at the same time stress the distinct relationships, perspectives and experiences of the three heroines.

Phase 1: Repetition

The first phase of Bahiyyah's, Zakiyyah's and Firdaws' movement towards subversion is characterized by a repetition of similar, but not identical, experiences which underline the specific nature of their oppression. The repetition also emphasizes the central elements in the protagonist's life, the means she possesses for changing her life and the contradictions between her independent thoughts and desires and the accepted social values and conventions. Each repeated experience in the series has a direct and complex effect on

the heroine's psyche, operating on her alienation and increasing subtly her level of consciousness. In fact, the psychological impact of the experiences appears to gain in intensity with each repetition and one senses an almost regular mental displacement as the protagonists become progressively more aware of the agents of their oppression and attempt to resolve their internal conflicts. However, during this phase they hesitate to challenge in a definitive manner the ideological basis of their oppression and are continually torn between an expression of their will to subvert and an uncontrollable tendency to submit. Ultimately the repetition underscores the persistent power of patriarchal authorities, and demonstrates the degree to which the protagonists' behavior and thoughts manifest the antinomy of submission and subversion.

In *Two Women in One* the phase of repetition is centred around Bahiyyah's ambivalent relationship with the paternal home, which is simultaneously a source of security and stability and a place of repression and denial. Here al-Sa'dâwî presents an urban bourgeois secular context which seems open and tolerant, a "soft" form of patriarchal domination relying more on material rewards and ideological manipulations than on coercion in order to secure the submission of females. While the margins of acceptable behavior appear wider than, say in the case of Firdaws who lives with her religious uncle or that of the peasant women in *God Dies by the Nile*, Bahiyyah's life is nonetheless governed by the supreme authority of her father and she is forced to conceal her "real desires," which are largely antithetical to her family's expectations.

The repression of her personal desires is inscribed in a daily routine which limits her movement and activity to the paternal home and the medical college. This routine invades her consciousness, and inasmuch as she conforms to it, she becomes the agent of her own repression. However, her continual confrontation with the mediocrity and conformity of her social class — typified by the nondescript bureaucrats on the tram (p. 14, p. 31), among whom is her father, and the impressionable female medical students, from whom she does not always distinguish herself (p. 23) — activates her psyche, causing the denied desires to surge forth from her unconscious. She acts occasionally on these desires by taking flight from her anatomy class or by secretly painting or drawing, but these actions constitute only partial and momentary deviations from the routine to which she inevitably returns. Thus, Bahiyyah experiences a repetition which is expressed in her departures from and returning to the routine, in the repeated affirmation and repression of her desires to pursue art rather than anatomy, to be alone rather than among the other female students, to be autonomous rather than under the control of her father.

The central and crucial event in this section of the narrative occurs when Bahiyyah escapes temporarily from her anatomy class to attend an exhibition of her artwork in one of the campus buildings. At the exhibition she meets Salîm, a politically and socially aware student who is presented as her equal and develops into a sort of alter ego. In this meeting one witnesses the union of Bahiyyah's desires and the substitution of elements of the routine (homework, dissection room and father's authority) with personal choices (artwork, exhibition hall and Salîm's friendship). Instead of returning to the dissection room or going home, she decides to go with Salîm to al-Muqattam, which later emerges as a refuge from the paternal home. Her upward movement into the hills of al-Muqattam and the mountain itself, whose name derives from the verb "to break off," clearly suggest Bahiyyah's rupture with the norm. Yet just as desires emerge from her unconscious when she is confined to the mundane routine, when she deviates from it unconscious fears and doubts occupy her psyche, impelling her to seek its familiarity (pp. 46-47). She leaves Salîm and returns home, once again submitting to her fears and denying her desire to break away from the forces controlling her life.

The dualism characterizing Bahiyyah's existence is illustrated cogently in the sequence of events following her second meeting with Salîm at which time he gives her the key to his apartment. As she leaves the school heading in the direction of the tram stop with the key in her pocket, almost every thought or decision she makes manifests the immobilizing hesitation between expressing and denying her desires. She waits for the tram to arrive, but the moment it stops in front of her she decides to walk home. When she enters *Fam al-Khalij* Square, she experiences a tormenting instant of indecision: she must choose either to follow the well-known Nile Road home or to turn to the left towards al-Muqaṭṭam. At this point the existential angst attains its summit, and she inadvertently drops her anatomy books, hesitates, and finally picks them up, embracing, it would appear, the routine. With newly discovered conviction she directs her steps towards her home. But as she approaches the house, her conviction diminishes, and feelings of anxiety and defeat re-invade her being. She begins to question her relationship with the paternal home and the people who reside in it, concluding that her home is not the safe shelter that she believed it to be, but rather a prison wherein her father acts as a guard, surveilling her every move. She refuses to recognize the paternal line linking her to her family and turns away from the house, pursuing her desire to establish a bond with Salîm.

Bahiyyah's fluctuation does not come to end with this realization. The precise second that she enters Salîm's apartment, she is besieged by fears and feelings of guilt

She imagines her father reading in the newspaper about the murder of his daughter in a strange man's apartment and the shame he would experience seeing her body exposed to the public. She has remorse recalling the ten-piastre note that he gives her every day and his submissive posture before his superiors in the Ministry of Health. Thus al-Sa'dâwî evokes the feelings of guilt which are the effect of patriarchal conditioning. These feelings encumber Bahiyyah's thoughts, making her balk before approaching her companion. Yet she succeeds in overcoming her hesitation and her departure from the norm appears complete as she consummates her union with Salîm, tearing away an important symbol of patriarchal control (p.67). Although she wishes to stay with Salîm, mechanically she collects her things and returns home, denying the reality of the events which had taken place and possibly hoping to maintain the illusion that she is the "hard-working, well-behaved medical student, the pure virgin, untouched by human hands" (p.75) who always obeys her father.

While Bahiyyah's initial phase is characterized by a routine of repression and denial whose pivotal point is the paternal home, in *Woman at Point Zero* al-Sa'dâwî presents the routines of exploitation and abuse, which Firdaws experiences in her various relationships with men. Men play a central role in her life, both as perceived guardians or companions and as exploiters. All her relationships with men manifest the common contradictions associated with situations of domination. Her father, uncle and husband, as well as the other men she meets in the streets or at work, may provide her with food, education, shelter, money and occasionally companionship, but they all exploit, manipulate and abuse her physically and emotionally. And although she concludes from her readings of history in secondary school that men rule the world and are responsible for many of its problems (p.27), she continues to trust them. Ultimately it is her incessant quest for companionship along with her confidence in some people or fear of others which causes her to fall repeatedly into oppressive situations. She submits to her oppressor until the situation becomes unbearable at which time she seeks an exit, often only to be subjected to the authority of someone else. Different from Bahiyyah who denies her desires, Firdaws denies her victimization, assimilating in her unconscious the brutality to which her physical and emotional being is exposed.

As a child it is Firdaws' father, then her *azhari* uncle who controls her life and exploits her. After the uncle marries, he sends Firdaws to live in the residence of an all-girls secondary school. Several years later, upon the reception of her diploma (which emerges as a recurrent, but powerless, symbol of her will to freedom), she returns to her

uncle's home. One night she overhears her uncle and his wife planning her marriage to *shaykh* Maḥmûd. The next day she discreetly packs her things and leaves, fleeing into the street in search of a better fate. However, as night falls, she loses her determination in the face of the unknown, represented by two piercing eyes which emerge from the darkness, examining her body with "cold intent." Subsequently she redirects her steps towards her uncle's house and accepts the marriage to *shaykh* Mahmûd, rationalizing that "anything [she] would have to face in the world had become less frightening than the vision of those two eyes."(p.42)

Firdaws endures her disagreeable marriage, but when her husband begins to beat her, she takes refuge at her uncle's house, hoping that he will protect her. The uncle and his wife are insensitive to Firdaws' suffering and send her back to her husband stating that it is perfectly normal for a husband to strike his wife (p.44). In contrast with Bahiyyah who was not subject to any violence, Firdaws' middle-class uncle and husband use violence to control women. Al-Sa'dâwî avoids, thus, the simplistic generalization that certain forms of sexism are common to particular classes and stresses the specificity of each woman's experiences, despite the similar socio-economic level.

Upon her return *shaykh* Mahmûd humiliates her and rapes her, and several days later he beats her severely after which she leaves him definitively. Firdaws roams the streets and finally stops to rest at a coffee house where she meets Bayumi, the owner, who invites her to spend the night at his apartment, having nowhere else to go she accepts. At first Bayûmî treats her relatively well, but when she asserts her desire to work and to be independent, he becomes violent and imprisons her in a small room in order to sexually exploit her. Fortunately she succeeds in escaping from Bayûmî and again finds herself wandering aimlessly in the streets, until she is approached by the wise procuress, Sharifah Salâḥ al-Dîn. While in Sharîfah's "care" Firdaws is introduced to the universe of professional prostution and to a life of material comfort which she had never imagined existed. It is also at this time that she begins to probe her unconscious and to examine her past, sorting out her misconceptions about the roles played by men in her personal history. Despite her relative psychological liberation from her past, Firdaws remains locked in the bedroom of Sharîfah's luxurious apartment and is forced to receive an endless train of men throughout the day. Through the character of Sharîfah and also the uncle's wife, al Sa'dâwî illustrates how women can also be agents of patriarchy. In the case of Bahiyyah it is her mother who is the foil for patriarchal ideology.

The comfort, abundant food, and expensive clothing and perfume cannot, however, compensate for the physical pain and displeasure, the ennui and lack of real satisfaction which Firdaws experiences while living with Sharîfah. An unexpected opportunity presents itself and she runs away from Sharîfah's apartment, discovering her freedom once again in the streets which have become her refuge from the domestic prisons she has been forced to live in. After many hardships and by a turn of events, Firdaws becomes an independent, successful and wealthy prostitute, but the residue of patriarchal conditioning remains operative, and when one of her preferred clients and apparent companions attacks her and her trade, she cringes, covering her ears in order to escape the personal attack on her reputation.

As a result of the criticism and wanting to recapture her "honor," Firdaws gives up prostitution and takes a job in an office, exchanging her material comfort for a miserable salary and the appearance of respectability. During her three years working in the office, she becomes aware of the vulnerability of working women and the sexist attitudes of male officials who use their position to exploit the women under their authority. Nonetheless Firdaws enjoys her work, and eventually she meets and falls in love with a male employee. Her relationship with Ibrâhîm and the experience of "love" transform her negative perception of the world. Her illusions are shattered, however, when she hears of Ibrâhîm's engagement to the chairman's daughter. In a desperate attempt to block out the reality of her lover's betrayal, she again covers her ears, but the words penetrate her consciousness and she retreats from the group of employees who have surrounded Ibrahîm to congratulate him.

In the cases of Firdaws and Bahiyyah al-Sa'dâwî describes a repetition of events which tends to be marked by the protagonists' attempts to escape exploitive or repressive situations. Their continual efforts to free themselves from other people's control often take the form of a flight from the place of domination. In *God Dies by the Nile*, Zakiyyah is repeatedly faced with the death, disappearance or departure of the members of her family. Here al-Sa'dâwî presents the collective victimization of an entire family which in some respects corresponds with the victimization of the whole village. It is not only what Zakiyyah experiences directly (multiple pregnancies, the deaths of all her children except Jalal (Galal), a poor diet and hours of labour in the fields and at home) which has an impact on her psychological state, but also what she observes or deduces from the tragic events occurring around her. She, like many of the villagers, attributes the cause of these events to the will and power of God, illustrating the religious fatalism which forms the

spiritual framework for explaining misfortune in the village. This principle of faith is manipulated by the various instances of power, represented by their local agents in the persons of the Mayor (the state), the Chief of the Village Guard (the military and the courts), the Imam (orthodox Islam), and the barber/*shaykh* (popular religion). These are the primary forces governing life in the village, and Zakiyyah's family is often the victim of their oppression. The village can be viewed as a microcosm of Egyptian society, however, it would seem that al-Sa'dâwî's primary intention in this novel is to underline the contradictions which characterize certain aspects of rural life, particularly those which concern women and religion.

Whereas guilt and honor are the forces which operate on Bahiyyah and Firdaws, making them accept patriarchal norms, religious faith is the power which renders Zakiyyah passive. In the opening chapter, Zakiyyah's only brother Kafrâwî (Kafrawi) approaches her to inform her of the disappearance of his eldest daughter Nafîsah (Nefissa). Visibly disturbed by the news of Nafîsah, Zakiyyah reveals her fatalism by relating this disappearance to the departure of her son Jalâl, who was drafted and disappeared in action. Her brother pleads with her to pray for the return of their children and she explains to him that she has prayed many times for Galal's return, but to no avail. She begins to question the power of prayer and seems to doubt God's capacity to intervene on her behalf, giving up hope that Jalâl and Nafîsah will return. However, Kafrâwî remains by Zakiyyah's side and encourages her to continue praying, acting as a spiritual support for his sister who is beginning to show small signs of loss of faith.

The passages which follow this opening scene revolve largely around the causes and effects of Nafîsah's departure. It soon becomes evident to the reader — but remains hidden from most of the villagers — that Nafîsah was raped by the Mayor who has a penchant for young peasant girls. Her victimization is compounded by the undesirable and imminently scandalous pregnancy resulting from the rape. It is only after secretly giving birth to the illegitimate child that she runs away, leaving the baby on the threshold of the Imam's house. Ironically the Imam is impotent and his wife, Fathiyyah (Fatheya), longing for a child, insists that the foundling is a gift from God. However the Mayor and his associates incite the villagers to conclude that the baby is the product of Nafîsah's presumed adultery with a peasant named 'Alwâ (Elwan). Mysteriously 'Alwâ is discovered dead in the field, and Kafrâwî is conveniently accused of murder by the Chief of the Village of Guard. The following day, the innocent and intimidated Kafrâwî is apprehended, tried and convicted of killing 'Alwâ on the grounds that he was compelled to

avenge his family's lost honor. Zakiyyah and Zaynab (Zeinab), her niece and only remaining relative, silently and helplessly witness the tragic events which transpire, submitting to the power of the ruling authorities.

Crisis 1

In the three narrations, the final event in the series of repetitive experiences acts as a catalysis, a sort of exclamation mark which imposes itself rudely on the heroine's psyche. While the unsettling effect of the event causes a certain desperation, notably in the cases of Firdaws and Zakiyyah, it also propels the three women into a state of greater consciousness, leaving little room for the well-nourished and culturally sustained illusions. They adopt a critical, almost cynical, vision of their past, present and future, which is characterized by a noteworthy lucidity. Thus the protagonists' hesitant, but regular, psychological movement towards subversion becomes more deliberate and conscious as they reject variously social, legal and religious conventions.

After making love with Salim and returning home, Bahiyyah lies in bed contemplating the significance of her act in relation to her previous experiences and the plans for her future. She wonders if "what had happened was only a dream," and "[i]f not a dream, then an accident that had befallen her without her willing it, like all acts of fate or destiny." (p 72) But in the folds of her mind she does not doubt that her experience with Salim was real and voluntary

> . she realized that this accident was the only real thing in her life. It was not an accident, a dream, an act of fate and destiny or mere chance, but the only act she had ever performed intentionally, the only thing she had actually wanted to do.(p 72)

She concludes that everything else in her life, from her birth to the preliminary steps in planning her marriage to her cousin, had occurred without her consent. "Everyone told her what they wanted. No one asked her what she wanted. In fact, she had never wanted any of the things they wanted for her." (p 73) These thoughts led to disturbing recollections, memories of the cousin's cliché perception of women (p 73) and of how her mother infused her with fear and contempt for her genitals.(p.74) She falls asleep on these

thoughts and awakens to the call of her father who expects to find under the covers his well-behaved, virginal daughter; but the young woman in the bed "was not Bahiah Shaheen after all: she was not his daughter, nor was she polite, obedient or a virgin."(p.75)

Unlike Bahiyyah for whom the cataclytic event is experienced positively, reinforcing her independence, Firdaws is faced with the harsh reality of her victimization. When she discovers the news of Ibrâhîm's engagement to another woman, she leaves the company premises and walks tearfully through the streets with no fixed destination. Later that night she returns to the office to collect her things, all the time harboring a slight hope that Ibrâḥîm might appear, however, her hopes are in vain (pp.84-85). Firdaws explains to the psychiatrist:

> I had never experienced suffering such as this, never felt deeper pain. When I was selling my body to men the pain had been much less. It was imaginary, rather than real. As a prostitute I was not myself, my feelings did not arise from within me. They were not really mine. Nothing could really hurt me or make me suffer then the way I was suffering now. Never had I felt so humiliated as I felt at this time. Perhaps as a prostitute I had known so deep a humiliation that nothing really counted. When the street becomes your life, you no longer expect anything. But I expected something from love. With love I began to imagine that I had become a human being. When I was a prostitute I never gave anything for nothing. But in love I gave all: my capabilities, my feelings, my deepest emotions. I gave everything I had without ever counting the cost. I wanted nothing, nothing at all, except perhaps one thing. To be saved through love from it all. To find myself again, to recover the self I had lost (pp.85-86)

By covering her ears or fleeing into the street Firdaws does not escape the extreme emotional suffering that Ibrâḥîm inflicts on her. His manipulation and exploitation of her body and her heart pushes her to the edge of existence and she falls without offering the least resistance into the abyss of total disillusionment.

Zakiyyah endured the deaths of her children, learned to accept the disappearance of Jalâl and tolerated with difficulty the pain and humiliation associated with Nafîsah's departure, but she is incapable of bearing the accumulation of suffering which terminates with the unjust arrest of Kafrâwî. Torn between the acceptance and the rejection of God's

omnipotence, between faith and apostasy, Zakiyyah's religious fatalism collapses into despair:

> I wonder where you are Galal my son. I wonder whether you are alive or dead. O God, if I knew he was dead my mind would be put to rest. And now Kafrawi has been taken away Who knows if he'll ever come back. O God, were not Galal and Nefissa enough? Did you have to take Kafrawi also? We no longer have anyone, and the house is empty. Zeinab is still young and I am old (p 66)

Although she invokes the name of God, Zakiyyah's lamentation is as much an indication of her progressive loss of faith as it is a supplication for divine intervention. Indeed she seems to suggest both that God is somehow responsible for all the misfortune which has befallen her family and that he is unable to help her; she recognizes God's power, yet rebukes Zaynab's attempt to assure her that Allah will assist them, stating that "Allah alone is not enough "(p 67)

While Bahiyyah's illicit sexual relationship with Salîm, Ibrâḥîm's betrayal of Firdaws and Kafrâwî's arrest are extremely different events, they all constitute a rupture with the past which is experienced as a voluntary abandonment or an imposed loss: Bahiyyah forsakes her virginity, rejecting completely the patriarchal norms; Firdaws loses her love, her illusions about respectability and the little confidence she still had in men, and Zakiyyah's spiritual support is taken away from her, resulting in her loss of faith. Their past efforts to overcome their problems through denial, flight or prayer are no longer appropriate in the face of the new reality of their respective situations which force them to react It is out of this imperative that the second phase emerges.

Phase 2: Marginalization and Reintegration

In the second phase al-Sa'dâwî develops the protagonists' attempts to remove themselves from the grasp of the social forces governing their existence and emphasizes the reassertion of patriarchal authority, a final effort to rehabilitate — or more precisely, to subjugate these potentially subversive women Psychologically and physically they move to the margins of society, surmounting most of the prevalent ideological controls

which had previously conditioned their thoughts and actions. Their marginalization is voluntary, but not entirely conscious. Al-Sa'dâwî attributes to each heroine a different mode of consciousness which, despite its evident subversive quality, is expressed, paradoxically, through actions and behavior that are not bereft of familiar social references. In other words, Firdaws', Zakiyyah's and to a lesser degree Bahiyyah's transgressions are not complete, for the three women remain decidedly — and one might argue unavoidably — within the realm of patriarchal control. While they move progressively closer to an open subversion of patriarchay, an aspect of their conditioning, namely their fear of male authority, remains operative, preventing a radical confrontation with their oppressors.

After having reconciled her departure from the norm Bahiyyah gets up and goes to the college "as usual," aware of the transformation which had occurred, affecting her consciousness without altering in any noticeable manner her physical being. She leaves the school and in a preconscious state heads in the direction of Salim's apartment. She uses the key to enter the apartment, but Salîm is not there. Al Sa'dâwi wants to suggest that although the relationship with Salîm encourages Bahiyyah to affirm her personal desires, in the end it is Bahiyyah who decides to go to the apartment and spend the night there alone. "It was the first night she had ever spent away from home: her first night in someone else's bed. She imagined her father bellowing like a bull." (p 79) The next morning, not knowing what to do or where to go, she leaves Salîm's apartment and walks to the college, revealing the unconscious attachment to the routine. Upon her arrival she discovers that a strike has been called and the classes have been cancelled. Thus al Sa'dâwî alludes to a paradox characteristic of educational institutions which are repressive but often the locus of revolutionary political activity. While most of the other medical students decide to go home, Bahiyyah takes part in the student/worker demonstration during which she meets Salîm (p 85). By spending the night alone at Salîm's and participating in the protest march, Bahiyyah effectively distances herself from the norms, challenging not only her father's authority but also the state's.

Not surprisingly it is first the state, through the military, which reasserts its power, arresting the demonstrators. Then Bahiyyah's father takes charge of his daughter, paying for her release from jail and taking her home where her future is to be determined. Bahiyyah realizes that there is something disturbingly similar between her arrest and her father forcing her to go home. "She got into the taxi. Her father sat on her right, her uncle on her left. The door shut and the taxi moved off. It was as if she had been arrested again, but this time by another kind of police." (p 94) Her paternal uncles and her father decide

that the best solution is to remove Bahiyyah from school and to have her married off as quickly as possible.

Firdaws moves to the margins of society by quitting her "respectable" job and returning voluntarily to prostitution. She concludes that "[t]he time had come for [her] to shed the last grain of virtue, the last drop of sanctity in [her] blood "(p.86). She is now convinced that the "least deluded" woman is the successful prostitute who is not subject to the authority of anyone. The decision to go back to prostitution appears to relieve somewhat the pain caused by Ibrâhîm, and she affirms that she felt

> . like a woman walking through an enchanted world to which she did not belong. She is free to do what she wants, and free not to do it. She experiences the rare pleasure of having no ties with anyone, of having broken with everything, of having cut all relations with the world around her, of being completely independent and living her independence completely, of enjoying freedom from any subjection to a man, to marriage, or to love, of being divorced from all limitations whether rooted in rules and laws, in time or in the universe (p.87)

Firdaws' leitmotif becomes "I hope for nothing, I want for nothing, I fear nothing, I am free." After years of subjugation she finally possesses what would seem to be absolute control of her body and mind, and she expresses this autonomy by choosing a profession in which she is her own "master" and which pays well, thus ensuring her economic independence and the possiblity to enjoy some leisure. She realizes the attitudes towards her profession — which is illegal but tolerated, considered shameful but whose services are often used by 'respectable' men — reflect the hypocrisy of society. Conscious that prostitutes are marginal people, and that nonetheless their trade is an important part of patriarchal society, Firdaws even tries to situate herself on the margin of the marginal by refusing to adhere to rules of her trade (p.89).

Despite her conviction that it is preferable "to be a free prostitute, rather than an enslaved wife" and her awareness that her "profession had been invented by men" (p.91), both of which reveal her level of consciousness and her profound understanding of her situation, she is subject, totally against her will, to the coercive control of another man. She uses all the means available to her in order to maintain her independence as a prostitute, but she is persistently pursued by a pimp who claims that he wants to protect her from other men. She attempts to evade his control by using her various contacts, yet

quickly realizes that he is more powerful than she and that she is incapable of fighting off his attacks. Finally Firdaws surrenders to Marzûq's (Marzouk) physical intimidation and he starts to take a share of her profits and to circumscribe her freedom.

Bahiyyah and Firdaws rebel clearly against the social norms, challenging the male authority over them and are subjugated by the application of coercive patriarchal forces. Conversely Zakiyyah's marginalization, and later her reintegration into patriarchal society, occur within the socially sanctioned limits of popular religious beliefs. Her transgression, unlike that of Bahiyyah or Firdaws, is justified, the villagers believe that the lifetime of hardships and the more recent difficulties related to the disappearances of her niece and brother have made her vulnerable to evil spirits which invade her being and force her to say and do things against her will. She suffers from a folk illness, commonly referred to as *'udhra* (*'uzra* Egyptian), and with the title of *ma'dhûrah* (*ma'ûrah* Egyptian), which can be translated as the "excused one," she is not held responsible for her deviation from the religious norms and her refusal to participate in village life.[15] However the physical and psychological breakdown, which accompanies her religious crisis, can be understood as a psychosomatic translation of her unconscious desire to evade the limits imposed on her thoughts.

As Zakiyyah suffers from constant physical malaise and experiences multiple deliriums, her memories mixing with hallucinations, the villagers organize a *zâr*, the traditional healing process used to free the *ma'dhûrah* from the malefic effects of the spirit. The *zâr* is the first attempt to bring Zakiyyah back under the influence of the dominant ideology, but it is not effective and she remains in a state of paranoia and pain only maintaining faith in Zaynab. Desperate to help her aunt, Zaynab takes the advice of the barber/*shaykh*, *Ḥâjj* Ismâ'îl, who has contacts with "knowledgeable" men in Cairo. The *shaykh* uses the opportunity to gain the favors of the Mayor whose attention has recently been captured by the young Zaynab. Consequently, *Ḥâjj* Ismâ'îl sends Zakiyyah and Zaynab to Sayyidah Zaynab Mosque in Cairo where they are to meet a *shaykh* who will instruct them how to relieve Zakiyyah of her illness for a fee of ten piastres. Despite her weak state and the confusion plaguing her mind, Zakiyyah remarks about the ten piastre fee that "[e]ven God wants us to pay him something. Yet He knows we own nothing."(p.80)

Zakiyyah's cynical and penetrating view of religion is contrasted with Zaynab's unshakeable faith, which could easily be misconstrued as the cause of Zakiyyah's cure. The two travel to Cairo and upon their entry into the mosque, they experience, each in her

own way, a unification with other beings On the one hand, Zakiyyah loses herself mentally among the innumerable bodies crowded into the mosque which she perceives as bonded together, becoming one uniform mass:

> They were sick or blind They were young or old. They were children or babes in arms They were sheikhs of sects, or beggars or thieves. They were sorcerers, and fortune-tellers, people who made amulets or recited religious chants They were saints of God, intermediaries to His Grace, guardians of the doors to Heaven All of them like Zakeya and Zeinab raised the palms of their rough hands in one uniform movement to Allah on the high and chanted in one voice, in one breath 'O God '(p 89)

Being surrounded by this mixed gathering of social misfits reassures Zakiyyah and comforts her, she regains some of her strength through the collective experience of suffering and the therapeutic effect of the *ziyâra* seems to have worked even before she meets the *shaykh* mentioned by *Hâjj* Ismâ'îl On the other hand, Zaynab has an intense spiritual experience which confirms her personal faith as she feels herself drawn into the presence of God and united with Him (p 89)

While under the spell of the climactic union with God, Zaynab moves towards a voice calling out her name. She comes face to face with a peculiar *shaykh* who questions her about Zakiyyah, at which time she realizes that her aunt has been by her side the whole time The man tells Zaynab that her aunt is ill because they have disobeyed the will of God He informs her that in order for Zakiyyah to be cured, Zaynab must go to the Mayor's house and obey his orders and Zakiyyah must faithfully perform her prayers And although Zakiyyah seems to be cured, they pay the *shaykh* for his advice. The next day the two women return to their village and faithfully follow the instructions, Zaynab's submission to the Mayor paralleling Zakiyyah's submission to God (pp 95-97) Shortly after these events, Jalâl returns from the war, reinforcing Zakiyyah's faith which is restored when Zaynab stops working for the Mayor and gets married to Jalâl, partially reestablishing the normalcy of family life. However, the period of relative harmony comes to an abrupt end as a result of the manipulations of the Mayor and his cohorts

Crisis 2

The second and final crisis in the heroines' journey out of submission and towards a "principled" form of subversion results not only from the heroines reintegration into society and their general condition of subjugation, but also from the perpetuation of their victimization which takes the form of a precise aggression on their physical and psychological being. As has just been illustrated they are forcefully or calculatingly pulled back towards the centre of patriarchal institutions. Bahiyyah is forced to go home where her father is the master, Firdaws returns to prostitution and is later subjected to the authority of a pimp, and Zakiyyah falls under the influence of popular religion which is manipulated for obvious material ends by the *shaykh*s. While Bahiyyah and Firdaws remain psychologically at the limits of the ideological control exercised by patriarchy, they are physically forced to submit to their oppressor's. On the other hand, Zakiyyah is not subject to the same physical control, she is, in a manner of speaking, free to pray or not to pray, free to work in the fields or to sit on the step of her house but she is psychologically bound by her rediscovered faith which effectively inhibits her freedom of action. In all three cases, a shadow of fear continues to exist in the minds of the women rendering them passive. However, when their submission is accompanied by more injustice, by an event which infuses the protagonists with a controlled fury, they experience a crisis that makes them face their fear, signaling the end of their reintegration and the beginning of their total subversion.

Bahiyyah's father decides to put an end to his daughter's studies and she soon suspects her parent's intention to marry her off. She contemplates running away to avoid "the impending danger," but is incapable of putting her thoughts into action. At midnight, when she heard her father's snores, she sneaked out of her bed, dressed and sat on the edge of her bed wondering where to go. Where could a girl of eighteen like her go at this time of night." (p 96) Because of her fear, she gives in to the idea that her marriage is inescapable. A groom is found, the wedding takes place and Bahiyyah's destiny appears sealed when they arrive at her husband's appartment at which time she passes "from the hands of Muhammad Shaheen into the hands of Muhammad Yaseen."(p 100) It is precisely at this moment that Bahiyyah surmounts her fear, which is displaced by her anger with the man who had just become her husband. She refuses to recognize his authority over her, rejecting his physical advances. The man attempts to

impose his will on Bahiyyah, declaring that she is his wife and striking her, but she simply laughs at him with contempt and looks at his naked body with repulsion. Although the arranged marriage has no validity in her eyes, socially and legally it binds her to the man her father had chosen. Her only means of escape is, therefore, to create a scandal, "for scandal alone could save her now, could make everyone cast her out. She wanted to be cast out to have no mother or father, and no family to protect her. For protection itself was the real danger. It was an assault on her reality, the usurpation of her will and of her very existence." (p. 103)

Just as Bahiyyah wants to be free of the "protection" of her family, Firdaws realizes from the beginning that the protection offered by the pimp is more dangerous than anything else she may have to confront alone. In fact, she tells Marzûq the pimp that it is only from him that she is in need of protection (p. 92). After working for Marzûq for an undetermined period of time, Firdaws recognizes that he is a dangerous pimp with an influential network of contacts in the courts and the police station through which he succeeds in controlling numerous prostitutes among whom she is counted. Notwithstanding, frustration and determination blend together in Firdaws' mind making her impervious to Marzuq's threats and preparing her psychologically for the ultimate confrontation with her oppressor.

> I was not nearly as free as I had hitherto imagined myself to be. I was nothing but a body, a machine working day and night so that a number of men belonging to different professions could become immensely rich at my expense. I was no longer even mistress of my own house for which I had paid with my efforts and sweat. One day I said to myself, 'I can't go on like this.' (p. 94)

It is this realization which constitutes the crisis, and leads Firdaws to surmount her fear.

Zakiyyah's and Zaynab's subjugation was brought about through the manipulation of religion, but after her marriage, Zaynab uses religious arguments to counter the Chief of the Village Guard's attempts to convince her to return to work for the Mayor (pp. 134-35). Zakiyyah witnesses the conversation between Zaynab and the Chief of the Village Guard in which the local official argues that it was God who ordered Zaynab to go to the Mayor's house, while her niece invokes a communication received from God who has forbidden her to go to the Mayor's. The Chief of the Village Guard dismisses her claim that it is God who has incited her to resist the Mayor's request and naturally suspects

that Jalâl is behind Zaynab's refusal. He devises a plan to remove the young man by accusing him of robbery and arresting him.

Once again thrust into a state of despair and depression, Zakiyyah sits, immobile in front of her house with Zaynab at her side, reflecting on the causes of their victimization

> But the darkness of her mind was no longer the same. It had changed. Nor was her mind the same mind it had been before. Something had started to move in it, a tiny flitting thing. And a question kept whispering under the bones in her skull, a question she had never asked before, and which grew louder all the time until it became like a ringing bell. (p.13)

Jalâl's arrest triggers in Zakiyyah a process of critical thought which causes the veil covering her conscious to disintegrate slowly. Questions, which she had locked in her unconscious, emerge gradually from the recesses of her mind and she is no longer capable of abandoning herself to the will of God, nor can she find succor in the faith of Zaynab. On the third day after Jalâl's arrest, Zaynab leaves Zakiyyah's side, departing for Cairo to visit her husband in jail, never to return. Zakiyyah is alone with her thoughts, the questions concerning the real agents behind Jalâl's arrest and the recollection of Zaynab's conversation with the Chief of the Village Guard pass through her mind in a lyrical manner. Her thoughts are characterized at the same time by a clairvoyance and a certain madness, providing her with the uncanny capacity to transpierce reality, a faculty which occasionally accompanies madness. She renounces her faith and blames *God* for her suffering, declaring to Zaynab just before her departure that now she perceives the truth.(p.135)

Phase 3: Subversion

In the first phase, Bahiyyah, Firdaws and Zakiyyah repress their desires and thoughts, accept the cultural norm as natural law and often submit to the will of others, reflecting the psychological alienation caused by patriarchal social conditioning. By the second phase, they have resisted the effects of and moved to large degree beyond the alienating notions of patriarchal ideology, but continue to carry within them a fear of male

authority which is in effect very powerful and threatening. In the third phase, as a result of their extreme victimization, al-Sa'dâwî's protagonists cease to fear the patriarchal forces governing their lives, escaping finally and totally one of the most profound aspects of their alienation. The moment they surmount their fear, when they resist their oppressors by confronting them rather than retreating from them, they are invested with a power to take control of their personal situation, the reader witnesses, thus, the empowerment of the women as they redefine through their resistance the laws and social codes, momentarily experiencing complete physical and psychological independence. No longer do the threats of ostracization, physical abuse or God's wrath have a dissuasive impact on the three women, who now feel they have nothing to lose, their respective situations having become insupportable. Their acute sensibility to their oppression and a determined desire to move against it impel them towards particularly subversive actions. They now inspire fear in those very same forces which had hitherto been the source of their fear.

As her wedding night draws to a close, Bahiyyah quietly leaves her husband's apartment. In the morning she goes to the medical college where she learns from the sympathetic doctor, who had tried to help her and Salîm attempt to flee the police, that it may be many years before Salîm is released from prison. Devastated by the news, she walks aimlessly through the streets when suddenly she hears someone call her name. She turns to meet her anatomy professor, Dr. 'Alawî (Alawi), sitting in his big car. Entirely preoccupied with the idea of Salîm's imprisonment, she accepts Dr. 'Alawî's offer to go for a ride and to have lunch with him. She suspects that Dr. 'Alawî is against her and her suspisions are confirmed when he tries to seduce her. She pushes him away, at which point he declares that she is not a "normal girl" (p. 111). Proud of the fact that she is not 'normal,' Bahiyyah heads in the direction of al-Muqattam, but she hesitates and notices her father and uncle pass by in a taxi. At that moment, she decides to do everything possible to remain free.

> She would kick anyone who approached her and gouge out the eyes of anyone who dared to touch her or even to stir the air around her. With her lancet she would rip open the belly of anyone who stood in her way. Yes, she would kill him. She was capable of committing murder. (pp. 113-14)

Bahiyyah turns to political activism, working clandestinely with a group of other militants who print and diffuse socialist literature in the working-class neighbourhoods of Cairo. Her political ideas also find expression in her paintings which she continues to produce and sells to assure her economic autonomy. Despite her separation from Salîm

and the dangers accompanying her subversive activities, Bahiyyah experiences a certain optimism which emanates from the reconciliation of her real desires and her actions. No longer is she tormented by the anxiety of the existential duality, having moved beyond the periphery of patriarchal domination. She is at the zenith of her independence. However she is followed by a pair of eyes as she moves through the streets, and although she tries to escape their menacing surveillance, she finds herself surrounded by several policemen who descend upon her. Knowing that she cannot escape them, she proudly walks towards her captors, holding her hands out in front of her to be locked in handcuffs.

Firdaws hopes to break free of Marzûq's domination by walking away when he is not present, just as Bahiyyah walked out of her husband's apartment while he slept. However, after Firdaws packs her belongings (among which is her secondary school diploma), Marzûq appears in the door blocking her departure. She tells him that she is determined to leave. They exchange blows and Marzûq tries to pull out a knife from his belt, but Firdaws swiftly snatches the weapon and plunges it repeatedly into his body. She relates to the psychiatrist the thoughts which ran through her mind as she defended herself against Marzûq.

> I was astonished to find how easily my hand moved as I thrust the knife into his flesh, and pulled it out almost without effort. My surprise was all the greater since I had never done what I was doing before. A question flashed through my mind. Why was it that I had never stabbed a man before? I realized that I had been afraid, and that fear had been within me all the time, until the fleeting moment when I read fear in his eyes. (pp.95-96)

Whereas Bahiyyah is willing to commit murder to maintain her freedom, Firdaws had to murder in order to become free, indeed it is in the very act that she discovers her freedom. She uses her captured liberty to attack the system by insulting a prince who solicited her services as a prostitute. For Firdaws the prince is the preeminent symbol of male authority and of male baseness. Her anger and hatred of the prince drive her to attack him physically, at which point he screams for the police who come to arrest Firdaws. Firdaws argues with the police affirming that "you are criminals, all of you: the fathers, the uncles, the husbands, the pimps, the lawyers, the doctors, the journalists, and all men of all professions." To which the police respond "[y]ou are a savage and dangerous woman." (p.100) They handcuff Firdaws and take her to prison. And despite

the president's offer to reduce her death sentence to life imprisonment if she agrees to apologize, she refuses the gesture, preferring to exercise her freedom to the full extent.

Drawn back to her initial questioning of her faith, Zakiyyah identifies the power of God with the powers of the material world. She does not doubt God's omnipotence, on the contrary she accepts that it is God who is responsible for all that happens on earth. At the same time she recognizes somehow that everything that takes place in the village is the will of the Mayor. The Mayor rules the village as God rules the earth, and in Zakiyyah's troubled, but perceptive, mind the Mayor is God. After Zaynab's departure, she continues to sit at the entrance of her house, staring at the iron gate in front of the Mayor's house. When she sees the blue eyes of the Mayor appear, she mechanically gets up, goes to the stable and takes the hoe between her hands. She moves steadily towards the Mayor, who simply sees Zakiyyah as one of the peasant women working on his farm. Before he realizes what is happening Zakiyyah brings down the hoe powerfully on the Mayor's head, killing him.

Zakiyyah's psychological state of consciousness, inflected with madness which derives not only from her suffering, but also from her perception of its "true" causes, is accentuated by her act of subversion. She does nothing to escape arrest. She has nowhere to go and does not seem discouraged by the prospects of being imprisoned. Since she has accomplished her task, she waits, sitting on the threshold of her house perhaps imagining that she will soon be reunited with the other members of her family. She is arrested and taken from the village to the prison into which she is led surrounded by men, with handcuffs on her wrists, "but her large black eyes were wide open." (p.138)

For al Sa'dawi, women must challenge with their minds and their bodies the patriarchal elite order. She recognizes that it is by denying women knowledge and by controlling their means of production that patriachy succeeds in maintaining its hegemony. In the three novels, women's access to education and through it their capacity to defend their rights, obtain gainful employment and live independently of male domination are central questions. However, it is not only in obtaining an education and economic security that women acquire their freedom. In *Two Women in One* many of Bahiyyah's middle-class female classmates conform submissively to the norms while in *God Dies by the Nile* the peasant women try to resist male authority. And despite Firdaws' secondary-school education and her acquired material wellbeing, she is forced to submit to the control of

Marzûq. There are obviously no hard-fast rules, but one might conclude that subversive women with an education and the possibility of achieving economic autonomy can generally resist patriarchy more effectively. To a certain degree, Bahiyyah's final expression of resistance, although less dramatic, is the most promising because it takes the form of a collective movement which aims at increasing the awareness of others. Zakiyyah's resistance has a clear collective effect on the village, but it does not in and of itself constitute an act with the capacity to change the system of patriarchal and class oppression faced by many peasant women. Similarly Firdaws' act of liberation does not change the situation of the numerous prostitutes exploited by pimps. Firdaws and Zakiyyah strike out against their immediate oppressors, and in doing so they succeed in liberating themselves and other women temporarily. The collective aspect of their resistance lies primarily, but not exclusively, in its potential symbolic value for women around them who will see their actions as signs of women's ability to challenge their oppression. For al-Sa'dâwî it is not so much the form of resistance adopted by women which is significant, but rather women's and men's recognition that the injustices of the patriarchal-class social order are not natural and unchanging and that it is necessary to question, criticize and reject the legitimacy of ideas and institutions which maintain inequalities.

Conclusion: The Freedom Paradox

Through the stories of Bahiyyah, Firdaws and Zakiyyah, al-Sa'dâwî illustrates that women's resistance must begin with the psychological processs of "dealienation" and a *prise de conscience* of the injustices they and others face in socially stratified, patriarchal societies. This awareness creates the possibility of rejecting patriarchal norms and of resisting the elite rule. However, given the hegemony of patriarchal institutions, women who attempt to subvert the social order or simply who do not conform to its rules are threatened with marginalization, violence or imprisonment. Thus the psychological freedom acquired by al-Sa'dâwî's protagonists, all of whom are somewhat exceptional in the extent to which they carry out their resistance, does not lead to their physical liberation. On the contrary, as we have just seen, when the three women attain the summit of their psychological autonomy, which is expressed in their radical attack on patriarchal agents or institutions, they are physically apprehended. While their hands are symbolically restrained with handcuffs and they are led to prison, their minds remain beyond patriarchy's control. their physical and psychological states are at opposite poles, and this opposition results ironically from the heroines' resolution of the antinomy of submission and subversion. By choosing to subvert they are subject to the coercive forces of exclusion which are employed by the patriarchal state to eliminate any threats.

This brings us back to idea that patriarchy is a total system, composed of interlocking institutions of conditioning, surveillance and chastisement. Does al-Sa'dâwî wish, therefore, to suggest in these novels that all resistance is futile in the face of patriarchy's apparent omnipotence? Is there no escape for women from patriarchy's carefully woven and well preserved web? In spite of the tragic conclusion of the three novels, al Sa'dâwî's message is not defeatist. She strives to express the importance of women's awareness that they can and should resist injustice in its various sexist and classist forms. She also stresses the weaknesses in the patriarchal construct, for which the psychological control of women remains the primary means of maintaining itself, she points out that it is precisely this control from which women escape, for they can overcome their alienation and reject the legitimacy of male authority even though they may be physically subjugated or imprisoned. Once women free themselves of the repressive effects of patriarchal social conditioning, they will be able to pass to the next step of dismantling the non-egalitarian social order.

Notes

Preface

1- Jorge Luis Borges, *Seven Nights*, trans. by Eliot Weinberger (New York: New Directions Books, 1980), p.50.

Chapter One

2- Neither Roger Allen, "Contemporary Egyptian Literature", *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 35, no. 1 (1981), 25-39 nor Menahem Milson, "Some Aspects of the Modern Egyptian Novel," *Muslim World*, vol. 11, no. 2 (July, 1970), 273-246 mentions a woman novelist in his study of Egyptian fiction.

3- A number of books may be consulted in order to better observe the work that is being undertaken by revisionists: Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, *Old Mistresses: Women, Art and Ideology* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981); Sheila Delany, *Writing Women: Women Writers and Women in Literature, Medieval to Modern*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1984). Elisabeth W. Fernea and Q. Bezirgan, eds., *Middle East Muslim Women Speak*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).

4- Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: an Historical and Critical Introduction* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1982), p. 31. John A. Haywood, *Modern Arabic Literature 1800-1970: An Introduction, with extracts in translation* (London: Lund Humphries Publishers Ltd., 1970), p. 136, Hilary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel: A Study in Social Criticism* (London: Ithaca Press, 1974), p. 21. These three studies support the thesis that Haykal's *Zaynab* should be considered the first Egyptian Arabic novel, however, M. M. Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," in *Critical Perspectives on Modern Arabic Literature*, ed. by Issa J. Boullata (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1980), pp. 26-27, suggests that *Hadith 'Isa ibn Hishâm* (1907) by Muhammad al-Muwaylihî might be viewed as the first Arabic work of fiction having novelistic qualities. See also S. Gabalawy, *Three Pioneering Egyptian Novels* (Fredericton: York Press, 1986), p. 5, where he says that *The Maiden of Dinshway* (1906) was the first modern Egyptian novel.

5- Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," in: *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. by Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), p. 286.

6- Leila Ahmed, "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, a Preliminary Exploration: Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, People's Democratic Republic of Yemen," in *Women and Islam*, ed. by Azizah al-Hibri (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1982), p. 161, Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," p. 286.

7- Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*, trans. by Margot Badran (London: Virago Press, 1986), pp. 117-120.

8- Ibid., p. 122.

9- Leila Ahmed, "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East, A Preliminary Exploration," pp. 160-61, Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," p. 291.

10- Juliette Minces, *The House of Obedience: Women in Arab Society*, trans. by Michael Pallis (London: Zed Press, 1984), p. 95; Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," p. 285; Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1984), p. 222; Nawal el-Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, trans. by Dr. Sherif Hetata (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982), p. 176

11- Leila Ahmed, "Feminism and Feminist Movements in the Middle East," p. 160, makes an interesting point about the metaphorical power of the veil

12- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve: Women in the Arab World*, p. 175

13- Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist*, p. 134

14- Mona Mikhail, *Images of Arab Women: Fact and Fiction* (Washington: Three Continents Press, 1979), p. 50.

15- Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 100.

16 Huda Shaarawi, *Harem Years*, p. 135; Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life* (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1986), p. 22

17- M. M. Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," p. 28, Roger Allen, *The Arabic Novel: an Historical and Critical Introduction*, p. 40

18- Hilary Kilpatrick, *The Modern Egyptian Novel*, pp. 41-42.

19- Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1981* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 16.

20- Salma Botman, "Women's Parucipation in Radical Egyptians Politics," in *Women in the Middle East*, Khamsin Collective (London: Zed Books, 1987), p. 15

21- Doria Shafik, "Egyptian Feminism," *Middle East Affairs*, vol. 3, no. 8-9 (Aug.-Sept., 1952), 237-39.

22- Salma Botman, "Women's Participation in Radical Egyptians Politics," pp. 23-24

23- Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1981*, p. 31, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Egypt*, p. 104.

24- Derek Hopwood, *Egypt: Politics and Society 1945-1981*, p. 39

25- M. M. Badawi, "Commitment in Contemporary Arabic Literature," p. 32

26- Ibid., pp. 34-36.

27- For a brief discussion of Nâṣir's populist rule see Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat: The Post-Populist Development of an authoritarian-Modernizing State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 11-29

28- Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p. 40.

29- Ibid., p. 87.

30- Laila Shukry el-Hamamsy, "The Changing Role of the Egyptian Woman," *Middle East Forum*, vol. 33, no. 6 (1958), 26-28

31- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve · Women in the Arab Word* , p. 180.

32- Salma Botman, "Women's Participation in Radical Egyptians Politics," p. 25.

33- Sabry Hafez, "The Egyptian Novel in the Sixties," *Journal of Arabic Literature*, no. 7 (1976), 70.

34- Raymond A Hinnebusch Jr , *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p. 24.

35- Ibid , p 24.

36- Ibid , p. 31.

37- Peter C Dodd, "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic, *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 22, no. 2 (Spring, 1968), 110.

38- Nada Tomiche, "The Position of Women in the UAR," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3, no 3 (July, 1968), 31

39- Judith Gran, "Impact of the World Market on Egyptian Women," *MERIP-Reports*, no. 58 (June, 1977), 5.

40- Nada Tomiche, "The Position of Women in the UAR," 37.

41- Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 222.

42- Nada Tomiche, "The Position of Women in UAR," 141-42; Nancy Adams Shilling, "The Social and Political Roles of Arab Women· A Study of Conflict," in *Women in Contemporary Muslim Societies*, ed by Jane I. Smith (New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1980), p. 129

43- Peter C Dodd, "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic," 163-64.

44- Peter Johnson, "Egypt Under Nasser," *MERIP-Reports*, no. 10 (July, 1972), 7.

45- Raymond A Hinnebusch, Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, pp. 29-30.

46- Peter Johnson, "Egypt Under Nasser," 8

47- Raymond A Hinnebusch, Jr , *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p. 21.

48- Valerie J Hoffman, "An Islamic Activist: Zaynab al-Ghazali," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, ed by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985), pp. 233-234

49- Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, pp. 125-26.

50 Raymond A Hinnebusch Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p. 37.

51- Raymond A Hinnebusch Jr , *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p. 39; Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot, *A Short History of Modern Egypt*, p. 127; Nadine Lachine, "Class Roots of the Sadat Regime: Reflections of an Egyptian Leftist," *MERIP-Reports*, no. 56 (April, 1977), 4.

52- Naguib Mahfouz, *The Thief and the Dogs*, translated by Trevor Le Gassick and M. M. Badawi, (Cairo The American University in Cairo Press, 1984); Naguib Mahfouz, *Miramar*, translated by

Fatma Moussa Mahmoud, (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 1978), Sonallah Ibrahim, *The Smell of It and Other Stories*, trans by Denys Johnson-Davies (London Heinemann, 1978).

53- Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, (Syracuse, New York Syracuse University Press, 1986), has already been cited, it is an interesting study of women who have generally succeeded economically or politically because of their ability to take advantage of the changing conditions around them. Some attention is given to opposition women but the information is not examined in depth. This tends to be a major problem with the whole work which attempts to formulate universal principles based on a limited — but nevertheless valuable survey of the female population in Egyptian public life.

54- Judith Gran, "Impact of the World Market on Egyptian Women," 8.

55- Peter C. Dodd, "Youth and Women's Emancipation in the United Arab Republic," 160

56- Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p 207.

57- Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p 239

58- Indicative of the conservatism of the Sâdât regime in the early seventies is the dismissal of Nawâl al-Sa'dâwî from her post in the Ministry of Health in 1972 after she had published a treatise which discussed women and sexuality

59- Earl L Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, pp 133-40, Safia K Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections: Working Middle-Class Women in Egypt," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, ed. by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin University of Texas Press, 1985), pp 56-57

60- Safia K. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections Working Middle-Class Women in Egypt," p 60

61- Barbara Lethem Ibrahim, "Cairo's Factory Women," in *Women in the Family in the Middle East*, ed. by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin University of Texas Press, 1985), p 296

62- Soheir A. Morsy, "U S. Aid to Egypt An Illustration and Account of U S Foreign Assistance Policy," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 8, no. 4 (Fall, 1986), 358

63- n.a. "The Reaction of Bricks, 'Jihan, Jihan! We are Hungry'," *MERIP-Reports*, no 56 (April, 1977), 6-7; Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr , *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p 71

64- Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, pp 158-59

65- Ibid., p. 158.

66- Aziza Hussein, "Recent Amendments to Egypt's Personal Status Law," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, ed. by Elizabeth Warnock Fernea (Austin University of Texas Press, 1985), p 232.

67- Andrea B. Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, pp. 171-73

68- Ibid., p. 272; Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p 184.

69- Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p 36

70- Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr., *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, p 76; Andrea B Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 228.

71- Raymond A. Hinnebusch Jr , *Egyptian Politics Under Sadat*, pp. 255-56.

72- Nawal El Saadawi, *Memoirs From the Women's Prison*, trans. by Marilyn Booth, (London: The Women's Press, 1986), is a personal account of the experiences of some of the women who were arrested.

73- Tawfiq al-Hakim, *The Return of Consciousness*, trans. by Bayly Winder (New York: New York University Press, 1985), pp 54-55.

74- Judith Tucker and Joe Stork, "In the Footsteps of Sadat", *MERIP-Reports*, no. 107 (July-August, 1982), 6

75- Ibid., 5.

76- Joe Stork, "Rescheduling the Camp David Debt," *MERIP-Reports*, No. 147 (July-August, 1987), 31.

77- Earl L. Sullivan, *Women in Egyptian Public Life*, p. 39.

78 Ibid , p 38.

Chapter Two

79- For comparisons of the difference between Western and Middle Eastern views of femininity see: Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil. Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (Cambridge, Mass.. Schenkman Publishing company, Inc., 1975), pp. 1-11; and Fatna A. Sabbah, *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*, trans by Mary Jo Lakeland (New York: Pergamon Press Inc., 1984), pp 23-33

80- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve Women in the Arab World*, ed. and trans. by Dr. Sherif Hetata (Boston Beacon Press, 1982), p. 80.

81- Ibid., p 79

82- Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon and Trans by Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), p. 93

83- Fatna A Sabbah, *Woman in the Muslim Unconscious*, analyses the elaboration of the Islamic feminine ideal in various religious, legal and literary texts Also see Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp 133-169

84 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp. 74-90.

85- Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), p.5.

86 Rozsika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch Embroidery and the making of the feminine* (London: The Women's Press, 1984), p. 4, makes the following distinction:

It is, however, important to distinguish between the construction of femininity, lived femininity, the feminine ideal and the feminine stereotype The construction of femininity refers to the psychoanalytic and social account of sexual differentiation. Femininity is a lived identity for women either embraced or resisted. The feminine ideal is a historically changing concept of what women should be, while the feminine stereotype is a collection of attributes which is imputed to women and against which their every concern is measured.

87- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp. 157-160

88- Barbara Smith, "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism," in *The New Feminist Criticism Essays on Women, Literature, and Theory*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (New York Pantheon Books, 1985), pp 172-173, points out that black male critics have tended to manifest the same sexist bias found in the criticism of women writers written by white male critics. Also Nancy Houston, "Le feminisme face aux valeurs éternelles," *La Vie en Rose*, No 34 (March, 1986), p 29, observes the resurgence of anti-feminist sentiments in the ostensibly progressive French newspaper *Liberation*

89- Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics* (New York. Ballantine Books, 1987), p 45

90- See Elana Gionini Belotti, *What are little girls made of? The roots of feminine stereotypes* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976) and Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve* pp 7-49

91- Often women who are victims of rape and who do not resist because they are intimidated by their aggressor are thought to have been complicit to the crime. See Joni Seager and Ann Olson, *Women in the World An International Atlas*, ed. by Michael Kidron (London Pan Books, 1986), p 119 Clitoridectomy is sometimes rationalized as a means of controlling women's "unrestrained sexuality." See Andrea B Rugh, *Family in Contemporary Egypt* (Syracuse, New York Syracuse University Press, 1984), p. 160.

92- Elaine Showalter, "Toward a Feminist Poetics," in *The New Feminist Criticism Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (New York Pantheon Books, 1985), p 126.

93- Rosalind Coward, "Are Women's Novels Feminist Novels?" in *The New Feminist Criticism Essays on Women, Literature and Theory*, ed. by Elaine Showalter (New York Pantheon Books, 1985), p 226

94- Elaine Showalter "Toward a Feminist Poetics," pp 126-127, cites a male critic who wrote an article entitled "A Case Against Feminist Criticism" which argues that feminist criticism lacks "rigor."

95- Safia K. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections: Working Middle-Class Women in Egypt," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, ed by Elizabeth W Fernea (Austin, Texas University of Texas Press, 1985), pp 66-67.

96- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp 172-176, Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed by Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge, Mass : Harvard University Press, 1982), pp 277-278, and Judith E Tucker, *Women in nineteenth-century Egypt* (Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1985), p 163, discuss the role played by women in the political life of Egypt during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

97- Judith Tucker, *Women in nineteenth-century Egypt*, pp. 195-196

98- Remember the Wafd's disregard for women's political rights despite their participation in the fight for independence *Supra*, Chapter One, p 5

99- Nadia Hijab, *Womanpower The Arab debate on women at work* (Cambridge University of Cambridge Press, 1988), pp 45-46, Judith Gran, "Impact of the World Market on Egyptian Women," *MERIP-Reports*, no. 58 (June, 1977), p 7, and Thomas Philipp, "Feminism and Nationalist Politics in Egypt," p 279

100- Recall the constitution promulgated by Sâdât which sought to gain the support of traditionalists in order to oust the radical left elements *Supra*, Chapter One, p. 15

101- Valerie Hoffman-Ladd, "Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Women in Contemporary Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, no. 19 (Feb., 1987), 33-34.

102- Malik Ram Baveja, *Woman in Islam* (New York: Advent Books, 1981), p. 67

103- Valerie Hoffman-Ladd, "Polemics on the Modesty and Segregation of Woman," pp. 34-35.

104- Nayra Atiya, *Khul-Khaal Five Egyptian Women Tell Their Stories* (London: Virago Press Limited, 1988), pp 29-52, includes the story of a Coptic woman whose experiences, despite a difference in class and religion, reveal that non-Muslim and Muslim women are expected to behave in a similar way and are faced with many of the same stereotypes.

105- Invited to Montreal by the Centre d'études arabes pour le développement (CEAD), al-Sa'dâwî gave four talks between October 9 and 14, 1986, each one co-sponsored by a different local organization or institution

106- Fatima Mernissi and Nawâl al-Sa'dâwî argue that matriarchal institutions were displaced by Islam Their view is substantiated by the research of W Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* (Cambridge Cambridge University press, 1885), however, various scholars, Muslim and non-Muslim, refute these arguments, pointing to Islam's condemnation of female infanticide and the limits it placed on polygamy

107 Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur-an Text, Translation and Commentary* (United States: Khalil al-Rawaf, 1946), p 90, II 228 and p 190, IV 34

108 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p. 12.

109 Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 59.

110 Nayra Atiya, *Khul-Khaal*, p 139

111 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp 9-10.

112 Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 162

113 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p. 13.

114 Nayra Atiya, *Khul-Khaal*, p 11

115 Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 161.

116 Ibid., p 161

117- Nayra Atiya, *Khul-Khaal*, p. 79

118 Nadia H Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns of Muslim Women," in *Women in the Muslim World*, ed. by Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), p 80.

119 B. F. Musallam, *Sex and Society in Islam Birth Control Before the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge Cambridge University Press, 1983), illustrates the prevalence and the tolerance of birth control and abortion in Medieval Islamic societies.

120- Andrea B Rugh, "Women and Work: Strategies and Choices in a Lower-Class Quarter of Cairo," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East*, ed. by Elizabeth W. Fernea (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 279.

121- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p. 72, addresses the question of legalizing abortions, stating that if the practice was legal, women who wished to terminate a pregnancy could seek treatment in officially recognized clinics where the services offered would have to meet health standards; thus, the risks of complications would be reduced, for at present the operation is performed extensively on an illegal basis and women may often be victims of poorly executed, expensive abortions.

122- Perdita Houston, *Third World Women Speak Out* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1979), p. 92

123- Safia K. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections," p. 63

124- Ibid., p. 64.

125- Nadia H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns of Muslim Women," pp. 85-86

126- *United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization* (UNESCO) *Statistical Yearbook 1986* (Belgium: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1986)

127- Ibid.

128- Andrea B. Rugh, "Women and Work," p. 285

129- Ibid., p. 287

130- Perdita Houston, *Third World Women*, p. 35

131- Safia K. Mohsen, "The Egyptian Woman: Between Modernity and Tradition," in *Many Sisters*, ed. by Carolyn J. Matthiasson (New York: The Free Press, 1974), p. 50

132- Safia K. Mohsen, "New Images, Old Reflections," p. 68

133- Andrea B. Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 260. Nadia H. Youssef, "Status and Fertility Patterns," p. 93, points out that some Egyptian men are seeking wives who work to help carry the economic burden

134- Nadia H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns," p. 87

135- Debbie J. Gerner-Adams, "The Changing Status of Islamic Women in the Arab World," *Arab Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 4 (Fall, 1979), 332.

136- Ibid., 332

137- Sarah Graham-Brown, "Feminism in Egypt: A Conversation with Nawal Sadawi," *MERIP Reports*, no. 95 (March/April, 1981), 26.

138- Barbara Lethem Ibrahim, "Cairo's Factory Women," in *Women and the Family in the Middle East* ed. by Elizabeth W. Fernea (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1985), p. 291

139- Debbie J. Gerner-Adams, "The Changing Status of Islamic Women," p. 339. Judith Gran, "Impact of the World Market," p. 5, Andrea B. Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 264, and Nadia H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns," p. 92, mention the tendency for women's employment on a significant scale to still be limited to certain, often non-prestigious, fields.

140- Nadia H. Youssef, "The Status and Fertility Patterns," p. 90

141- Debbie J. Gerner-Adams, "The Changing Status of Islamic Women," p. 338. Andrea B. Rugh, "Women and Work," p 279, corroborates this point.

142- Barbara Lethem Ibrahim, "Cairo's Factory Women," p. 297.

143- Judith Tucker, "Egyptian Women in the Work Force," *MERIP-Reports*, no 50 (August, 1976), 5

144- Judith Gran, "Impact of the World Market," p 7, points out in a footnote (no 7) the illusions that men and women have about the economic insignificance of housework. She cites several works in which the economic importance of housework is analysed.

145- Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p 188.

146- Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 270.

147- Ibid , p 270

148 Barbara Lethem Ibrahim, "Cairo's Factory Women," p. 298.

149- Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 264. See also Nadia Hijab, *Womanpower*, p 74 and p 82.

150 Joni Seager and Ann Olson, *Women in the World*, map 15.

151 Saha K Mohsen "New Images, Old Reflections," p. 161.

152 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p 187

153 *Yearbook of Labour Statistics 1986* (46th ed , Geneva International Labour Office Organization, 1986)

154 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, pp. 186-187.

155 Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 177.

156 Ibid , pp 180 81

157 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p 30.

158 Andrea B Rugh, *The Family in Contemporary Egypt*, p. 85.

159 Nawal El Saadawi, *The Hidden Face of Eve*, p. 30.

Chapter Three

160 All references and quotations come from the official English translations of al-Sa'dâwi's novels: Nawal El Saadawi, *Two Women in One*, trans by Osman Nusairi and Jana Gough (London: al-Saqi Books,1985), Nawal El Saadawi, *God Dies by the Nile*, trans. by Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 1985); Nawal El Saadawi, *Woman at Point Zero*, trans by Sherif Hetata (London: Zed Books, 1983) In order to simplify notation, all subsequent page references for the three novels are indicated between parentheses within the body of the text.

161- Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text and the Critic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 5.

162- Nawal El Saadawi, *Memoirs From the Women's Prison*, trans. by Marilyn Booth (London: The Women's Press, 1986), p. 2.

163- Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Writers in Politics* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 6.

164- Hilary Kilpatrick, "Women and Literature in the Arab World: the Arab East," in *Unheard Words: Women and Literature in Africa, the Arab World, Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America*, ed. by Mineke Schipper and trans. by Barbara Potter Fasting (London: Allison and Busby, 1984), p. 81.

165- Maimuna Quddus, "God Dies by the Nile," *Muslim World Review of Books*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Winter, 1987), 72.

166- Ibrahim al-Ariss, "La littérature féminine," *Magazine littéraire*, no. 251 (March, 1988), 44.

167- Georges Tarabishi, Woman Against Her Sex: A Critique of Nawal el Sadawi, trans. by Basil Hatim and Elisabeth Orsini (London: Saqi Books, 1988).

168- Ibid., p. 71.

169- Ibid., p. 16.

170- Ibid., p. 213.

171- Ibid., p. 213.

172- Ibid., p. 10.

173- Throughout the analysis of the novels, I have transcribed the names of characters according to the Institute of Islamic Studies' norms of transcription for classical Arabic and where they occur for the first time I have placed between parentheses the spelling used in the official English translations. Naturally in quotations from the translations I have not altered the spelling of characters' names.

174- The *dâyah* is a local personality who performs various socio-medical functions generally concerning women, such as the carrying out of clitoredectomies. She may also play a role in popular religious ceremonies and faith healing practices.

175- Soheir Morsy, "Sex Differences and Folk Illness in an Egyptian Village," in *Women in the Muslim World*, edited by Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie (Cambridge: University of Harvard Press, 1982), pp. 601-611.

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