

Book Review: Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics by Fedwa Malti-Douglas

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Abstract

A review of literature is a fundamental and essential practice in the field of research. It helps readers and researchers to understand the trends and research being carried out in similar fields of literature, literary criticism and literary theories. The researcher is aware about the research carried out in the field of feminism fiction and non-fiction. The researcher is also aware of the research work done in the area of feminism literature and feminism literary theory in different parts of the world and recognizes the multidimensional nature of the subject, who have attempted to discuss some of Nawal El Saadawi works from feminists perspective.

The researcher has studied the relevant works of research and reviewed them. The researcher has reviewed the works of writers and researchers like Fedwa Malti-Douglas' significant book "Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics." The researcher attempts to study, analyse and interpret the selected works of Malti-Douglas by taking into account the major postmodern literary features and also major feminism literary themes in the selected work.

This work represents a compelling act of advocacy. In this endeavor, Fedwa Malti-Douglas, already distinguished for her extensive scholarship on a diverse range of Arabic texts spanning various historical periods and contexts, deliberately engages in one of the most contentious debates within contemporary studies of the Arab and Muslim worlds: the status of Arab women as perceived both internally and externally, as well as the methods used to evaluate narratives addressing this subject.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Islam, Woman, Patriarchy, Politics, Social

Introduction

This paper provides the "Review of Book." It lists out the secondary sources, the survey of book and the scholarly articles relevant to the area of research. This paper examines the feminists concerns as agents of social progress. The independent pre-colonial and post-colonial woman descending to mere bodies of the female sex or in general into a lower social standing at that times and later striving for emancipation by means of education and economic liberation can be understood by reading the literature of the colonial and postcolonial.

In the pre-colonial and post-colonial period women engaged significant roles as composers and master in oral and written literature but until the emergence of pioneer women writers, there are hazy lowland for the representation of women writer in literary work. Loretta A. Hawkins says that it is "lowland of male writer's idealization, rigid conventionality, stereotyping, superficiality and nonchalance, occasionally relieved by realistic and inspiring portraits." (Hawkins, 1979) Both individually and collectively, women writers have improved the impact on that representation; the writers' shared biological, social, and psychological intricacies are authoritatively brought to light by their self-assured and genuine voice. It represents their profound literary commitment.

Women by embodiment must assert their identity voice of they have to continue silent sufferers. The women writers are very well aware of this choice and they have risen to counter that challenge. As the collective voices rise steadily from the silences, muted whispers and stifled groans they may proudly say with Langston Hughes, "We build our temples for tomorrow, strong as we know how, and we stand on the mountain, free within ourselves." (Hughes)

Much of the written scholarship on women focuses on novels as critique of the traditional society. As critical texts they recognize feminists' attempt to expose gender politics operating.

This paper focuses on how the women as portrayed in the works of Fedwa Malti-Douglas' significant book "*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" have resisted the double yoke of the conventional practices of the traditional society and how they have struggled hard to reconstruct the womanhood.

A brief overview of "*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" of the Post-colonial literature of the colonized lands, especially European, Arabian and third world literature attracts attention as they reflect an assortment of developments in the colonized lands, their culture, their enslavement and suffering at the hands of the colonizers and patriarchal societies and their subsequent struggle for freedom and self governance.

The writing of El Saadawi, like that of any another feminist and writer who have attempted to challenge prevailing social mores and dominant political structures in their communities, has caused a great considerable of controversy in the Islamic world at large. Throughout her impressive occupation as a doctor, feminist and author, El Saadawi has frequently questioned male dominance and authority in Egyptian and Arab political life. She has also provided a potent assessment of the subjugation of women in Egyptian and the Arab world. Her vision in these endeavors has sustained the opprobrium of her oppositions. During Sadat administration imprisoned her after the banning of her books for 11 years. She has been exploited as a scapegoat for more significant economic, religious, social and political issues by both Egyptian government and Islamic fundamentalism. At the same time, she has gained a sizable readership in the Western world, and as a result, she now holds a significant position on reading lists for "Third World literature" at Western universities.

The book opens by situating the controversies surrounding Nawal El Saadawi, whether initiated by her or imposed upon her. It examines El Saadawi life story, medical training, the profound effects of El Saadawi imprisonment during the presidency of Anwar al-Sadat regime, her advocacy and support for women's unity and solidarity and its repercussions, the evolving turn of religion in Egyptian context, and the positioning of El Saadawi feminist struggles within the wider framework of women's liberation and its diverse expressions.

Book Review

Fedwa Malti-Douglas' significant book "*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" is a groundbreaking study of the most prominent feminist and contentious woman author in the Arab world, Nawal El Saadawi. An author of play, fiction, nonfiction, and memoirs. In "*Men, Women, and God(s)*" Fedwa Malti-Douglas constructs the writing of this significant book and little- controversial feminist and writer truly genuinely approachable. Malti-Douglas, who argues that El Saadawi's writings cannot be understood and read apart from their Arabic and Islamic roots, uses her in-depth understanding of both classical and contemporary Arabic textual traditions as well as her in-depth discussions with Nawal El Saadawi to situate the author in her historical and cultural context. Malti-Douglas has produced an important analysis of one of the most contentious and significant authors of our time with this passionate and radical interpretation of El Saadawi's extensive body of work.

The study of Fedwa Malti-Douglas' significant "*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" provides a means to explore El Saadawi's books as a component of the expanding body of "Third World literature" and pays acclaim to the pioneering endeavors of this Arab world "feminist intellectual." Malti-Douglas' earlier work of writing on gender, and the body, in "*Women's Body, Women's Word*" is expanded upon in "*Men, Women and God(s)*." Malti-Douglas tackles these concerns in the current book through a thorough analysis of El Saadawi's body of work and identifies other known sources of her creativity and inspiration, her development, and her growth as a writer and thinker. Malti-Douglas provides several readings of El Saadawi's work that most Western readers would probably find difficult to understand, as she painstakingly dissects the religious, political, and sexual arguments that the author's characters engage in.

Malti-Douglas amplifies how Nawal El Saadawi observation on gender through quoting from and shaping classical and traditionally male genres of Islamic writing. These troublemaking motion confront with the supremacy of her male peer, whether social, literary or political life. Malti-Douglas also argue Nawal El Saadawi's common use of narrative strategy of "enframing," in her stories, which allows a female character who would normally be mute and frequently from a lower social class voice via another woman protagonist, such as the doctor-narrator in "*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*." This strategy is based on mimics the troublemaking gesture of revealing stories of novel to be alive and leans on the storytelling style of El Saadawi's "medieval literary sister Shahrazad."

Multi-Douglas illustrates how El Saadawi's position as a writer and physician doctor has shaped not only her political and literary decisions in addition to her comprehension of gender and the dynamics relationships of male-female in society. El Saadawi's status in contemporary Arabic and western literature has as much to do with her endeavors to broaden and challenge conventionally male genres and ways of discourse, and her efforts to broaden them as well as her access to the fields of writing and as physician doctor. Multi-Douglas discusses how El Saadawi has utilized her special political position to assert both genres for herself and her gender, and she contends that these two professions frequently go hand in hand due to dominate by an elite masculine discourse. Multi-Douglas writes, "first, by using it as a vehicle for women to regain their lost power, and second, by making it the focus of her own call for the integration of traditional male and female qualities." (Multi-Douglas, 1995)

By showcasing her extensive understanding of traditional Arabic storytelling, Multi-Douglas skillfully explains to her readers and audience the intricacy of El Saadawi's engagement with the topics of writing, body, gender, and patriarchy. At specific times.

Thus, that writing organizes the demonstration of "*Nawal El Saadawi and Arab feminist poetics.*" Multi-Douglas' book organized of Eight chapters, each chapter concentrating on one of El Saadawi's different works and is preceded and followed by an introduction and a conclusion., These chapters chronicle the ongoing narrative of the Egyptian feminist's scripted challenge and resistance to patriarchies, political dominance, and religious domineering—whether they are unique to Arab world or universal.

The cultural debates that El Saadawi has created herself and the critical contributions that the author has consistently produced are combined in Fedwa Multi-Douglas's captivating links. The structure of Multi-Douglas's research is supported by El Saadawi's biography, which details her life from birth in a village in the Nile Delta of Kafr Tahla, village in 1931 to her education at the University of Cairo and her medical degree, her service in government health ministries, her writing profession interspersed with her time as a political prisoner Activist detained by the late President Sadat just before his assassination, her name appearing on Islamist death lists, and her involvement in international conferences and meetings that are held to discuss the issues related to women.

Multi-Douglas then: "*Memoirs of a Woman Doctor*" utilizes autobiographical fiction to explain the "social politics of medicine," a narrative technique that stand against the ingrained binarisms of science and domesticity, as well as male and female. "*Woman at Point Zero*" explains the connection linked between the "physician and the prostitute" according to the doctor's vision of Firdaws in jail imprisoned for killing her procurer. In "*The Circling Song*," it is a second challenge of honor killing, the matter of ravishment, and the subject topos of "sinful sister and avenging brother" that still haunts literary standards in Arabic. "*The Fall of the Imam*" we find the patriarchal dominance of the political and religious institutions are intertwined in each other, while "*The Innocence of the Devil*" focuses and highlighted the pitfalls and dangers of theological orthodoxies. El Saadawi references the Pharaonic legacy of male dominance in her drama "*Isis*," although she concentrates on female alternatives to the masculinist customs. Finally, According to Multi-Douglas, "*My Travels Around the World*" and "*Memorirs from the Women's Prison*" discuss the obstacles created—and destroyed—by transnational relationships as well as the liberating benefits of incarceration..

"*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" by Fedwa Multi-Douglas explores the work of Nawal El Saadawi, an influential Egyptian feminist writer, and the broader context of Arab feminist poetics. While specific research gaps can vary based on interpretations and evolving scholarship, potential areas for further exploration might include:

However, "*Men, Women and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" misses possibilities to go beyond careful textual readings to places El Saadawi's writing works within its larger social and political context in modern-day Egypt and the Islamic world.

Although the chapters' organizational structure is not strictly chronological, it still has the obvious goal of following—indeed, emphasizing—the evolution and development of El-Saadawi's concepts. The book starts by contextualizing the controversies in which El-Saadawi's life story, her medical training, the impact of her imprisonment (during Anwar al-Sadat's presidency), her advocacy of women's solidarity and its result, the shifting role of religion within Egyptian environment, and the placement of her own feminist struggles within the large phenomena of women's liberation and the various forms of expression that it takes are all contextualized in the book's opening section.

Malti-Douglas steers clear of implying that El Saadawi's writings are either anti-Muslim or pro-Western. In her opinion, El Saadawi's work shows "that it is possible to denounce women's oppression without taking a pro-Western stance and without forgetting the reality that class differences make in the varying patterns of that oppression."

I immediately recognized and authenticated the work of Egyptian feminist Nawal El Saadawi one of numerous of the pioneers of Arabic literary studies. Her literary corpus of work now finds a significant and dynamic critical re-presentation book in "*Men, Women, and God(s)*."

"*Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal El Saadawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*" both lists and condenses these exemplary pieces from Nawal El Saadawi's body of work. In doing so, Malti-Douglas herself does this by strategically reevaluating El Saadawi's remarkable personal journey and literary profession through literary studies, socio-political historicizations, and feminist discourse. A few of these works are recognized as referencing the Bildungsroman genre, and then Malti-Douglas's research does as well. Additionally, that Bildung is one that unifies the critical tenets and paradoxes of modern feminist analysis throughout El Saadawi's corpus of work, from discussions over local authenticity and cultural identity to the "transnational circulation of cultural products," as Orientalism's steadfast supporters, both Arab and Euro-American, continue to administer.

However, it would have been interesting and more information regarding how El Saadawi's writing was received in the Arab and Western worlds, as well as a more thorough comprehension of the contentious elements of her literary works in their respective political and social settings, would have been fascinating and beneficial. It would be illuminating to enlightening how and why her work is so popular and read so widely in the West.

Nevertheless, by examining how feminism may be become more comprehensive by challenging its manifestation in non-Western contexts, Malti-Douglas has made a significant contribution. "*Men, Women and God(s)*" improves our understanding of contemporary Arabic and Egyptian letters in general and enables us to read and teach authors like El Saadawi more critically.

Conclusion

The international publication of Nawal El Saadawi's texts is undoubtedly shaped, in division, by political influence and events in her native home. However, it also demonstrates the appropriation of her writing within broader geopolitical discourses, particularly in the contentious encounters between the West and the Arab world, where narratives that are anti-Islamic and anti-Arab. Although cultural variety has increased due to El Saadawi's writings being widely taught in American university literature programs, her writing is frequently limited to being typical of all Islamic and Arab worlds and Muslim women's literature. Moreover, El Saadawi works have been simplistically employed to reinforce stereotypical portrayals of veiled, oppressed women that dominate Western media narratives.

Although Malti-Douglas's book is undoubtedly worthy of study, it is crucial to ensure that its inclusion the position El Saadawi as a spokesperson for a whole of Arabic culture in ways that perpetuate and preconceived stereotypes about the East. The book's attention to language, literary tradition, and biography offers readers the tools to engage with literature rooted in unfamiliar political, religious, and social contexts, while also recognizing the profound significance of El Saadawi's contributions to Arab world literature.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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