

## Interconnectivity between the Female Writers' Novels and Their Autobiography: Nawal al-Sa'dawi as a Sample

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### Abstract

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This article deals with Interconnectivity between the Woman's Novel and Autobiography of the Woman Writer. The study chose the novels of Nawal Al-S'adwai autobiography as a sample to deal this theme. In Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography, the writer did not fear to talk about her personal life or to reveal the hidden experiences in her life. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi talked about the 'female' and her suffering, when talking was forbidden in Egypt. She talked about society's encroachments and treatment of the woman as a weak creature. Her novels repeatedly talked about the woman's suffering, revealed the hidden facts and uncovered the invisible and the unseen by people's eyes and minds. Actually, she put her finger on the wounds in the woman's physical and spiritual entity. This approach that Al-Sa'dawi adopts was intended to be a cry to the reader's conscience to help her to stop the injustice that has been done to the woman and therefore, her texts deal with these contents. When we read Al-Sa'dawi's texts, we realize that her autobiography is connected most to these issues.

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**Keywords:** Interconnectivity, autobiography, theme, female, society, suffering, weak creature, entity.

### 1. Introduction

George May (1992) classifies the motives from which writing autobiographies grow<sup>1</sup> and divides them into two categories: the *first* includes the serious logical and rational purposes, which can be summarized in two words: "Justification" and "evidence"; the *second* includes motives that are closer to the irrational emotions and feelings that are far from realization.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Autobiography writing in its modern concept is considered an art that is a product of the modern cultural development that has conquered the world since 19 B.C. The word 'culture' carries the components of innovation and constant growth in human life such as: instruments of materialistic technological production, scientific and medical flourish, emergence of new sciences into the fields of experimentation, which were not known before this time with new concepts and components such as psychology, which helped a lot in understanding the human soul in all its conditions. Among the advantages of this awareness is the popularity of people's interests in what is known in modern literature by the name of *the art of autobiography*. This interest is not limited to writing down and reading this type of art but it has become a point of interest to researchers and critics in international literature and it was given a lot of merit and appreciation, especially after the a second half of century (20. B.C. ) after the increase of the women writers' confidence in their works, their role in the life of their society, and after the condition of relief from their fear of revealing the hidden things or the internal secret aspects, which became ordinary issues. Thus, the writer's life or any life of any person who likes to write his autobiography are no more surrounded by precautions, prohibitions or taboos. Previously, it was forbidden to approach certain issues or even thinking about, as they were considered taboo. (Taboo: is a common name to anything that is forbidden to touch. It can be a personal thing, a place, an action, or a saying. Those who believe in that system believe that anything or anyone who approaches it or does it or says it must be punished. He might be killed, hit by a disease or a disaster. The punishment can also be a social and the compatriots of his tribe might kill him. Attachment to the system of taboos is known in all the human societies. For example: if a certain tribe whose chief or his properties have been touched by a taboo, the tribes makes anything that is related to the property a threat that should be avoided. See: Ba'albaki, Munir (1990). *Al-Mamsu'at al-Manwid al-'Arabiyya* (Vol.1; 1<sup>st</sup> printing. Beirut: Dar al-'Ilm li al-Malayn), p. 97.

<sup>2</sup> May, George(1992). *Al-Siru al-Dhatiyy*. Translated by Muhammad al-Qadhi wa Abd-Allah Sola. Carthage: Beit al-Hikma. P.14.

In some cases, we can distinguish between two types: *one type* that is connected to the writer's feeling of the passing of time, whose chief element is taking pleasure in recollections from the past or fear of the future; *the other type* is connected to the need of finding a meaning for a passing life and returning it.<sup>3</sup>

The *things* that define the woman's writing are her experience in life and the available epistemological authority and intellectual affinity. These are the elements that make the woman's writing contain special signs that are related to life experience and themes that are characterized by the attribute of 'feminism'.<sup>4</sup> Principally, the woman-writer expresses in her writing her personal female concerns, and this feature characterizes her works with a kind of female or womanly sensitivity through the issues that she introduces, which are closely connected to her female self and existence individually and collectively.

All these issues melt in the issue of social emancipation of the woman through her description of the essential obstacles that stand in her face in her pursuit to assert herself and emphasize her distinctive entity: "in her search of her identity, which is exposed to disruption, violation and obliteration."<sup>5</sup>

This feature characterizes the woman's writing by self-centeredness through the focalization of the act of fictional writing which she practices on the Self and is revealed in the strong presence of the creative "I" (Ego) in her texts, which contain: questions in the main body of the text, forms of discourse, language of narration and special style of writing, which accounts for the domination of the Romantic and lyric imprint on this type of her writings".<sup>6</sup>

Reflection of reality in literature helps the writer to coordinate his/her thoughts, ideas and approaches towards his society and his era. This is known by the term of *studying the genealogy of thoughts*. Thus, Nawal al-Sa'dawi's fiction reflects an important period in the process of the woman's movement from the village to the university. Probably it will reserve a special place in the space of the woman's literature because it represents a certain type of literature whose contents reflect and express it.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup>. George May defines 'justification' as: "Man's need of writing to justify frankly anything that he has done or opinions that he has said. The man's feeling about this need is more painful and more insistent, especially if he has the feeling that people fabricated lies against him." The emotional motives that George May mentions include two types: "One type is related to the writer's feeling about time, and it is based on his feelings of enjoyment of recalling or fear of the future; the other type is related to finding meaning to the past life or retrieving it." What is meant by that is both, the meaning of direction of life and its meaning. (See: George May, (1994) *L'Autobiographie/ Autobiography/ al-Sira al-Dhatiyya*. p.48.

<sup>4</sup>. Al-Sayyid Hamid Nassaj says about the woman's writer: "She is careful to be the 'narrator' and the 'focal character' and probably the 'only character'. She is not satisfied with neutrality, and her guiding, directing and advising voice does not calm down. This is what accounts for the density of writers' /heroines' employment of the first person singular pronoun "I" in formulating the literary discourse in general and the fictional in particular. He explains this characteristic by saying that "the maternal womb-relationship between the women writers does not stop. The element of autobiography is clearly present; Romantic emotional singing is always flowing; the spotlight is focused on the writer's character, the heroine, and this is what approximates the woman's literary writings from the genre of autobiography to an extent at which it becomes impossible to distinguish between the autobiographical elements and the imagined ones, though those women continuously intend to deny this relationship between what they write and what they experience in their private life. In addition, this subjective tendency that characterizes the woman's writing reveals the pertinent relationship that exists between the act of writing and the feminist identity. This accounts for the phenomenon of magnification of the 'Ego' (I) in the woman's literature. Through this magnification, the woman writer seeks to assert the independence of her entity and to prove that she possesses intellectual and aesthetic abilities and gifts are not lower than the gifts of man, who has always been doubtful about anything that is related to her existence and surrounds it. (See: Sayyid Hamid al-Nassaj (1977). *al-Adab al-'Arabi al-Mu'asser fi al-Maghreb al-'Aqssa* (1963-1973). 1<sup>st</sup> edition: Cairo: Dar al-Turath al-'Arabi li al-Tiba'ah. P. 349. See also: Farraj, Afif (1985). *Surat al-Batal fi Adab al-Mar'ah*. Jadaliyyat al-Jasad al-Tabi'i wa al-'Aql al-Ijtima'i. *Majallat al-Fikr al-'Arabi al-Mu'asser*. Issue, 34, p.147.

<sup>5</sup>. Ibrahim, Fathi (1995). *Al-Ibda' al-Riwa'i li al-Mar'ah al-Missriyya*. *Majallat al-Hilal*. March, N0, 81

<sup>6</sup>. Benmas'oud, Rashida (1994). *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Kitaba: Su'al al-Khusousiya/ Balaghat al-Ikhtilaf*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Al-Dar al-Baidha'. Manshurat Ifriqiya al-Sharq. p.94.

<sup>7</sup>. The woman's writings are based on the explosion of the suppressed, the hidden and the accumulated throughout time so strongly that she declares it in her direct dialogue through which she shouts out her being a woman. She intends in her writing to blow up all the cracks of her body and its fluctuations. Yet, her writings remain far from her overwhelming desire to master the necessary language to formulate her desire in writing and her attempt to act against the general existential oppression which the social, moral and psychological relations exert onto her exert on her. Therefore, the woman's novel becomes a focus of feelings that derive their aesthetics in the first place from the richness and momentum of feelings. Thus, the focus of the woman's novel becomes the Self, while the focus of the man's novel is mostly the whole world.

Thus, if certain amount of truth is available, the woman's novel will be written from a certain direct point in herself and awareness becomes the main theme in many novels. With this characteristic, the novel approaches the psychological story and the new novel in which the narrator starts seeing things through the eyes of the character but performs the operation of narration and conveys the narrative material. Thus, self-narration grows, while the narrator's voice becomes faint while the character's voice rises.

This feature is noticed in the woman's novel which emerged in the post-pioneering period of Arabic literature when the modernist instruments became varied and different from one writer to another. The woman's writings become either open to the language of the unconsciousness or submission to the authority of compulsion.

This depends on the degree of the woman's truthfulness, first to herself, and second to her art. The literature of the woman-writer should stem from her point of view, and in this case she has to be true to herself as a female. If she is true, her literature will have a great value and its value lies in its being a true mirror that reflects the woman.<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Thematic and Artistic Interconnectivity

This section deals with various thematic issues that appear in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography and her novels and shows how certain artistic techniques are employed in both her autobiography and novels. The main intersection occurs in the parallel between the characters of the novels and the character of the writer, whose experiences are reflected in several characters. Artistically, Al-Sa'dawi's narrators in her novels play similar roles of expressing the characters' voices, which are parallel to the narrator's voice in her autobiography that expresses her the female voice in general and Al-Sa'dawi's voice in particular.

However, the writer of the woman's autobiography in general is not necessarily the narrator, and therefore the writer of this study decided to deal with Nawal Al-Sa'dawi at two levels, Nawal the narrator, and Nawal the writer, though autobiographies generally start with the writer of the work.<sup>9</sup>

Nawal al-Sa'dawi's writing is derived from a certain "existence". It is a text where the narrator and the writer have more than a close tie and a sign of meeting. Certain situations and events that are related to her personal life reveal her. Ideology is not a system of abstract thoughts without soul, whose owner deals with them in a neutral and cold way; on the contrary, they are emotionally charged thoughts, each of which includes a specific emotional value. There is an inseparable relationship between emotion and ideology. In my view, it is impossible to imagine a certain type of ideology that can be established on a cold intellectual basis such as science and philosophy.

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Probably, this explains the repetition of the use of the pronoun "I" in the woman's novel, which might be a kind of self-assertion and its achievement in writing, or because the woman sees the whole world centered in her, or maybe because she is not satisfied with anything in this world except herself - the "I". Muhammad Nur al-Din Affaya intended to approach special features of the woman writing but without emphasizing or confirming them as the woman forms her writing in a completely different shape from the man's writing, whether in transcribed writing or other types that she does not stop practicing in her relationship with her body. Being a different human being that is different in her biological structure from the man and his body and because of her presence in a male society, the woman always tries to show her body in a different shape.

This is what Carmen al-Bustani admits: "We and the man don't have the same past neither the same culture, so how can we in this case have the same thinking and the same style?" See: Tarabishi, George (1978). *Al-Adab min al-Dakbil*. Beirut: Dar al-Ta'ah, p. 10-11, 69. See also: al-Bustani, Carmen (1985). *Al-Riwaya al-Niswiyyah al-Faransiyya. Majallat al-Fiker al-'Arabi al-Mu'asser*, NO. 34. p. 122.

<sup>8</sup>Naji, Sawsan (2002). *Al-Mar'ah al-Missriyya wa al-Thawrah. Dirasa Tatbiqiyya fi Adab al-Mar'ah*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Cairo. Al-Majlis al-A'la li al-Thaqafa. p. 254-255.

<sup>9</sup>In his book *Autobiography and Literary History*, Phillip Logon (1994), maintains that *the contract between the writer and the reader is based on truth in the literary work*. Criticism worked on reading many literary works according to this contract. Consequently, identity and correlation negates the world of visualization. Treatment of the literary work is done on grounds that it is the reality of the writer. However, the criterion of correlation and similarity started to change because the literary works themselves started to keep away from the written biographies in order to enter the world of innovation and visualization. In the face of this change, the critics had no choice but to consider visualization as another fact of the autobiography. Phillip Logon noticed that many lives are similar and the result is that the spoken is similar in spite of its individuality that imprints every life. See: Phillip Logon (1994). *Al-Sirah al-Dhatiyya: al-Mithaq wa al-Tarikh wa al-Tarikh al-Adabi*. Translated and introduced by Omar Hilli. 1<sup>st</sup> ed., Beirut: al-Markiz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, p. 67-69.

What we mean by 'emotion' is the liberation of a certain feeling that is prisoned because of alienation and is freed as a result of occurrence of a gap in the wall of alienation.<sup>10</sup> Autobiography is talks about the origins of one's self<sup>11</sup> and its past.<sup>12</sup> This concept of one's autobiography is considered its first component, and when it is defined and is established in one's memory, recollection of the past starts. This recollection is taken care of by "revelation that results from the moment of death"<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of her novella *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi says: "This is a real woman of flesh and blood. I met her at al-Qanater prison a few years ago. I was looking for a character of some women who were accused of or convicted for different cases."<sup>14</sup> In her preface to the novel of *Suqut al-Imam*, she says: "I tried to write this novel while I was a pupil at school but I did not know how to write it. The idea was in my head, the feelings and the characters... and since I met the Iranian Shahrabanu Siraz, who told me about her daughter's rape at prison, and when I met the Sudanese Fatima Taj al-Sirr and saw her teenage son and his companions in the hand-cut association after the Shari'a was applied, and after I lived three months in prison in Egypt with I'tidal Mahmoud, and other girls, this novel has been chasing me."<sup>15</sup>

At the beginning of her novel *Zenab*, the narrator says: "Her image does not leave my memory, her appearance is engraved in my brain, within the head bones and the tunnels of the unconscious mind..."<sup>16</sup>

The idea that Al-Sa'dawi's texts introduces is that the woman is a submissive one and she has no choice; she waits for the man to decide; in fact her fate is in his hands. The texts show the woman's dependence on the man, and even though she is rich and has economic ability and social status, she is still subordinate and submissive to him. He is the one who controls her life. Fardous-Marzuq/Fardous-Ibrahim, Jannat-Zachariyya/ Jannat's grandfather- Jannat's grandmother, Bdour-Zachariyya al-Khartiti are examples. Consequently, the man becomes a central axis in the woman's life. The family cannot disobey him.

The narrative reveals the extent of the Al-Sa'dawi's focus on the man, and making him control all the woman's affairs. In this way, the narrator emphasizes the society's habitual belief that the woman is just for plowing and reproduction. In fact, "she is owned in the same as the land is owned, and produces what the produces and she is plowed as the land is plowed. She is subject to the man's action, his choices and his different pursuits. This is exactly what indicates her inferiority."<sup>17</sup>

In my view, Al-Sa'dawi was expected to try to correct this image or criticize it rather that submit to it as we know about her thoughts about masculinity and virility thoughts. Instead of making the woman character havean aesthetic value, a mother a sister and a friend, her value lies in her being "a frame for the man's lusts and whims; she is submissive to him in his anger and pleasure, his justice and injustice."<sup>18</sup>This approach in writing is still affected by the philosophers' thoughts from the Dark Ages in Europe, which underestimated the woman's status, and confirms Thomas's emphasis of Aristotle's argument that the man was born for noble activities and intellectual knowledge, while the woman, despite her rational soul, was born for sex only, and a medium for reproduction so that the human kind would be preserved.

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<sup>10</sup>The written text is an existential extension to the writing Self and intensification of the cultural, educational, social, ideological and psychological dimensions. Therefore, we think we have to deal with the details that characterize this written text by the woman who is living a special exile. When she expresses her exiled existence through symbols and writing, she produces original fundamental writing. It is known that the writing of exile and exclusion, danger and imprisonment are the most violent and intense types of writing. See: Affaya, Muhammad Nur al-Din (1985). *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Kitaba. Majallat al-Wihda*. First year. NO. 70.

<sup>11</sup>Jaber Asfour divided the Self into three parts: Active Self for Meditation; Excited Self and Objective Self. See: Asfour, Jaber (1999). *Zaman al-Riwaya*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Damascus: Dar al-Mada li al-Thaqafa wa al-Nashr. p. 168.

<sup>12</sup> Al-Kakly, Abd al-Salam (1992). *Al-Zaman al-Riwa'i*. Cairo: Maktabat Maddbouli. P. 145.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

<sup>14</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1979). *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. Beirut: Dar al-'Adab. P. 5.

<sup>15</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1987). *Suqut al-Imam*. Cairo. Dar al-Mustaqbal al-'Arabi. P. 9-10.

<sup>16</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (2009). *Zenab*. Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> Afarfarm, Ali (1996). *Surat al-Mar'ah bayn al-Manzour al-Dini wa al-Sha'bi wa al-'Ilmani*. Beirut: Dar al-Tali'a. p. 34.

<sup>18</sup> Yunis, Muhammad Abd al-Rahman (1998). *Al-Jins wa al-Sulta fi Alf Layla wa Layla*. Beirut-London: Mu'asasat al-Intishar al-'Arabi. P. 17.

Thomas follows Aristotle's biological theory, which claims that the female is an incomplete and imperfect human being, and she was born a female because an 'event' that occurred to the spermatozoon, which in itself contains a complete perfect human being, who is the 'man'.<sup>19</sup> This approach that Al-Sa'dawi adopts is intended to move the reader's conscience against this injustice that the woman suffers from, and consequently, the texts are full of such contents.

In the modern period, the main motive that characterizes the woman's autobiography is her rebellion against customs and norms, breaking social shackles, and overcoming all the difficulties of reality and expectation of her emancipation. This motive characterizes the woman's modern discourse at all levels and it is achieved in a real way in her autobiography. In fact, it is a motive that characterizes both female and male autobiography. The woman seeks to declare herself in a stronger way than the male and we do not notice a man's sexual bias in his autobiography as we see in the woman's autobiography.

In fact, in her diving into the depth of herself through the act of writing in search of her identity that is exposed to alienation, the woman does not represent an exceptional phenomenon, because "the characteristic of focalization on the Self is not exclusive to the women, because it is considered one of the characteristics of romantic tendency in literature. However, in spite of that, it remains a dominating characteristic, mainly in women's writing."<sup>20</sup>

This focalization on the Self turns the writings of the woman novelist into a kind of *literature of confessions* that is established on recollections and associations in retrieving the components of her life and formulating them into the act of writing through forms of expressions that range between reality and symbols, statement and hinting, declaration and secrecy.

*All the themes* of the fictional texts in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's works revolve on the woman and the narration is given through her voice, which turns her and her versions into the focus of the tale, as if she were borrowing Shahrazade's role when she tells her tale to Shahrayar.

The woman's issue in its various aspects and forms and its multiple indicative levels dominates the main body of the novels and thus the woman turns into the axis of the relationship that connects between its human characters.

The woman plays the role of the heroine and the man plays secondary roles. The Sa'dawi novels refer the reader to an ideological womanly statement that constantly sends a cry towards the male society, with which Al-Sa'dawi deals with the condition of deprivation and dresses it a garment that is less powerful than the male garment, which motivated some critics to accuse her of being a female who is against femaleness.<sup>21</sup>

When we read Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's texts, we notice that her autobiography is one of most attached works to these emotional motives. It is possible to notice here several motives for her autobiography such as competition with time and man's attempt to find meaning to his existence. The idea of the motive of competition with time is based on taking pleasure in recollecting the past or worrying about the future. This motive might appear in most autobiographies. In fact, the foundation of autobiographies is recalling. However, in some autobiographies, the writer's recalling aims to give justification or evidence, while in others the autobiographer's aim is to take pleasure in bringing back past memories.

*The characters* in the work of fiction are the most important element in formulating the story. They become symbols of meanings that are outside their individual existence and this is why the image of the woman in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's novels expresses the crisis of the individual in his relations with his society, especially his outlook on the woman, which is not beyond contempt; she is nothing but a worker, a farmer, an educator and a mother. In spite of that, she is seen only as an object of pleasure and work. Therefore, the woman remains under pressure and instability due to pressures that the man exerts on her as a father, a brother or a husband through oppression in her family's house or her husband's house. This image shows the gloominess of the social condition of the man and woman and difficulty in going through it as long as awareness has not taken its way towards development and the woman's feeling of inferiority and distrust continues, especially that the work of fiction consolidates the habitual behavior of society of traditional thoughts that emphasize in certain contexts the woman's inferiority in comparison with the man.

<sup>19</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1977). *Al-Rajul wa al-Jins*. Cairo. Maktabat Madbouli. P. 49.

<sup>20</sup> Benmas'ud. *al-Mar'ah wa al-Kitabah*. P. 94.

<sup>21</sup> Tarabishi, George (1984). *Untha dhid al-Unuthab*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Beirut: Dar al-Tali'ah li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr.

In other contexts, we find that she emphasizes her intelligence, shrewdness and astuteness.<sup>22</sup> Though the woman is generally described by these attributes, she employs them in order to preserve and defend the entity of her family. The man confiscates her status so that she will continue to be ruled by the norms and traditions of society. Besides, the sexual view of the man towards the woman abolishes his acknowledgement of her abilities and her deserved status.<sup>23</sup> This is what is revealed in Al-Sa'dawi's novels.

In light of this approach, all the scientific studies focused on analyzing the 'body' and its indication because man's sense of place starts from his sense of his body, which is the closest place to him as a hiding place of desires and a center of mental powers, emotionality and animalism. In addition to that, the body is a medium of realization of the world, which starts from one's realization of the body. Therefore, Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) maintained that the body is a symbolical system of the world.<sup>24</sup> Thus, Nawal al-Sa'dawi reflects in her fiction the woman's tiredness, difficulties, pains and griefs. When we touch reality, we find out as if extra efforts have been added to the Arab woman in addition to what she already has over her endurance and forbearance. The life of the society of the novel corresponds with the real life of society outside.

It becomes clear to the reader through Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography that return to childhood is not a return to happiness; it is a return that is structured by misery, misfortune and defect and therefore, the childhood's discourse that is established in the text introduces a different discourse. While the narrator is creating her autobiography, she cannot relate what happened in reality. Therefore, she tells about very old past periods of age through the sayings and narrations of other people. As the female narrator, who is building this autobiography is engaged in establishing a different discourse, the element of 'addition' works on weaving a certain kind of metaphors and visualizations.<sup>25</sup>

Autobiographies move through a wired and undermined road. Its easiest part is that the woman turns into a female self that turns into the subject of self-narration. This is a *second* feature of the alteration of the writer's position as its *first* feature of alteration is her passage from her privacy to a collective indication at the cultural level. Her *third* alteration is her expression and representation of the whole gender of women through her participation with them in most aspects of suffering and hindrances even if that happens at varied degrees sometimes. Probably the greater alteration is the *fourth* one, which sounds to be a kind of contradiction. As the writer is registering her autobiography, she will resort to a male discourse and a language that is mastered by the man's words and sentences.

Therefore, she will have to invent another language, probably the 'absent language' as Zelicha Abu Risheh calls it. It is the language that is mastered by the woman-writer's ego (I) in a central manner that draws the attention and directs the track of reading from afar. It is a language that keeps away or comes closer in a cautious way from her life constraints and turns into linguistic and textual constraints.

<sup>22</sup> Al-Ka'bi, Dhiya' Abd Allah (1999). Surat al-Mar'ah fi al-Sard al-A'rabi al-Qadim. Dirasa fi Kitab al-Jahiz wa al-Aghani wa al-Siyar al-Sha'biyya al-'Arabiyya. M.A. Thesis: The University of Jordan. Amman. P. 74.

<sup>23</sup> Ryk, Theodore (2001). *Al-Dafi' al-Jinsi*. Translated by: Tah'ir Adib. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Latakia: Dar al-Hiwar. P. 52.

<sup>24</sup> Hamid, Ridha (1995). Al-Makan fi al-Liss wa al-Kilab. *Majallat al-Thaqafa*. N0. 17. P. 72.

<sup>25</sup> The essence of the issue appears in the 'dialectic' of the relationship of the Self with the Other in the act of writing about the Self, where the greatest encounters take place between the two sides of this dialectic relationship. As soon as the journey of awareness and writing about it starts, the Self starts searching for its identity and the journey turns into steps of contemplation and search after the meaning and question about the existence. Each step becomes an attempt to be acquainted with the position of the Ego (I) in this world. The separating borders between this subjective position and the positions of the other selves become a complicated issue and a source of conflict. Besides, the issue of revealing the characteristics of this subjective position of the Other becomes an issue that requires complete trust in the Other and fear of it at the same time. This is the actual condition of writing about the Self but when the woman becomes acquainted with her Ego (I) and writes about herself, something happens that puts writing itself in the role of the 'burner' and its writer the role of the 'burnt'. The need for the trust of the Other and trusting him becomes an insistent requirement so that the probability of burning would not become reality. The family authority has aborted lots of female literary works including the woman's writing about herself. Probably, the strongest reason that pushed the woman away from writing her autobiography or her resort to disguise in her writings in general is her fear of punishment and deprivation that society pours on the woman in general the woman writer in particular.

For example, the 'body' becomes a subject that is omitted or disregarded in many autobiographical experiences that were written by women in the varied fields of cultural work. Nawal al-Sa'dawi deals with this issue and condemns the man and considers him responsible for choosing the easy and weak works of the beautiful woman to publish and leaves the good and high quality ones. She says: "More than two months ago, I sent a copy of my last book called "Awraq Hayati" but this type of work has no space in any literary or non-literary journal. The whole space is occupied by men over sixty and young ladies below thirty... and I asked people about the reason for this phenomenon, and they answered: Most chief editors of journals, magazines, and newspapers are over sixty, and most of them are naturally drawn to young women as a result of their fear of mortality. Therefore, they ignore women writers and female thinkers if they are over forty or fifty. What would a woman who is sixty say?"<sup>26</sup>

Women's writing in general and women's writing autobiographies in particular is nearly like walking on thorns with wounded feet, which are originally barefooted, because women writing suffers from social obstacles that considers looking at the woman as a materialistic (bodily) entity as a taboo act. The situation regarding women autobiography in particular is even more difficult because it is an act of linguistic exposure of the writer's body, her history, her emotions, her ambitions and her instincts.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal: Quoted from Ashraf Tawfiq. *Min al-Adab al-Nisa'i: I'tirafat Nisa' Adibat*, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup>The woman's writing in general and the woman autobiography in particular perform basic functions including: the function of confession and questioning, where the woman writes her autobiography in an aim to discover the Self and reveal its shortcomings and drawbacks and reveal her character's weaknesses and falsity and consequently the desire of questioning the Self/ the Female on lots of suffering, to which she lets itself/herself exposed, and puts on herself some responsibility for the crisis that she suffers from. In this context, Fadwa Touqan says in her autobiography: "the gap between me and the feminine society widened as it could not give me anything. It was a bitterly sarcastic and talkative society; and talkativeness is a symbol of backwardness in societies that do not read."

The function of justification: Most of the women's autobiographical writings are ultimately attempts to get acquittal and justification for the marginal reality that the woman lives. Generally, that is done by describing or creating an environment of many guilty people and entities: the family, society, traditional norms, standards, religion and education. Fadwa Touqan says: "In this house and within its high walls that conceal the whole external world from the world of the buried-alive *harim*, my childhood and girlhood and a major part of my youth was smashed." The man is necessarily the cruelest authority that does not leave a let-out even to some air. It is authority of suppression. It can be also the mother as Fadwa Touqan relates: "I went out of the darkness of the unknown into a world that was not ready to accept me. My mother tried to get rid of me in the first months of her pregnancy."

The function of compensation, where the process of Self-narrating and its experience and endorsing its role, looks like a compensation for the fragility of the actual and real presence of the Self in the public life and shrinkage of its role as a human being before any biological classification. As a creature of complete humanity and citizenship, struggle for freedom is a right and a duty. This is what we find in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography when she says: "I was receiving threats of murder. Unknown voices came to me through the telephone wires; curses in standard and spoken Egyptian that is mixed with a Gulf, Saudi, Kuwaiti and Algerian dialect. You are atheist! You are the enemy of Islam. You are the ally of the Satan who drove Adam from Garden of Eden and caused death and ruin". This leads us to refer to the strong connection between women autobiographies between the *general* and the *specific* in an exaggerated way that results from the female writers to push back the charges against them that they are exclusively interested in women's issues that are specific to the woman. This attitude by men pushes most women writers to constantly introduce the political and historical background of their environments for some reason or no reason at all and point out their political and patriotic role through a narrative that reveals her attitudes and political views, even if there was no objective or artistic justification that requires showing this general background or the role that they play.

The function of avenge and revenge: this function does not need a lot of effort to prove its strong presence in the woman's writing in general as the majority of these works describe male characters which are characterized by falsity, backwardness and cruelty. Nearly every woman's autobiography has an image of a man or a man's attitude that turns into a symbol rather than a human being or Self. The text uncovers him in an aim to take revenge on him (as a representative of the authority, the watchman, and beneficiary) and on the culture of society and its male traditions. By doing so, the features of man/ the male mostly disappear to the advantage of the presence of the male/ the authority.

These features are introduced from the woman's perspective, which sees this deed as a vengeful action on the thought, behavior, practices and falsity of this society and its authorities in general and the social ones in particular.

The function of establishing the future: The female writer has always been occupied with a fundamental concern that is reflected in her defense of her worthiness and establishment of her special female identity in a context of the Other who not only denies her identity but seeks to marginalize it or even abolish it. Therefore, we find in her autobiography stories that express her refusal to the context of the Other that makes her biography a suppressed marginalized one. This refusal appears in the form of dreamy stories that employ her visualization as a narrative carrier.

Woman's writing is considered an achievement of a double breakthrough, being an abstract individual. The actual condition is that she is in reality an object of taboos. She is the creature that should not be talked about, or seen or known. She is an invisible creature.<sup>28</sup>

While we are reading Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography, we find ourselves in front of a repetition of double discourse. The narration does not inform and it does not intend to inform, but it adds creation and visualization. For example, the moment of birth is visualized in Nawal al-Sa'dawi's autobiography.

In view of this, it can be argued that the real events are told through Grandmother, while the metaphors are innovated through the narrator's speech, and they serve as a kind of addition that comes from the present world, present time. Through her speech, the narrator summons her refusing relationship to the whole context of the other, who founded her biography. Therefore, she deliberately invokes the biographies of others as a lighting and illumination of the defined role of the dynasty that left its imprint on the specific logic of behavior. (We find this prevailing in Nawal al-Sa'dawi's trilogy: *Anraq Hayati*, Vol.1, Vol.2, Vol.3.)

*The making of this family version* and its relationship with autobiography has its justification by the narrator, and therefore, she renews her communication with this world or formulates it in order to create a kind of guilty ones, who are our predecessors. Therefore, she is forming a kind of biographies for the people who prepared the present that the narrator is living. According to this perspective, she adopts a kind of interpretive visualization that builds up sentences that aim to establish special associations within her writing, which allows the employment of the structures of monologue recollection that builds another world, which comes out of non-compromise of the Self with reality. Consequently, the narrator varies her narratives between a narrator who *recalls* and a narrator who *constructs* detailed associations and memories that occasionally be away from reality. Recalling here is built up through the things that had echo in creating this individual self.

Creation of the narrator in the woman's autobiography is attributed to the dimensions of the writer's perspectives and her presence as an authority within the text and she creates a distance between her and the narrated thing through the presence of the structure of the imagined narrator. The narrator in the woman's autobiography is invaded by many pronouns. Inside the "I" there are other "I"s that dominate this pronoun and probably it allows having multiple identities. The female "I" formulates things more than it says as it does not reveal a lot but creates and weaves another Self that the writer intends to postpone or forget.

The narrator who formulates the text here through several pronouns ranges between the first person singular (I), the second person singular (You), and the third person singular (She) hides behind this multiplicity another discourse that is represented in the narcissistic "I" that the speaking Self shows in many times to talk about the idealistic "I" and its feelings of superiority. This is called the narcissistic dimension because the "I" (Ego) is always in conflict with the other "I" that is represented by the narrator in the oppressed person.

It appears as an action of achievement that was established or will establish a future that is different from the reality that she refuses. See George May (1992), *al-Sira al-Dhatiyya*. Translated by Muhammad al-Qadhi and Abd Allah Sowla. Qartage: Beit al-Hikma, P. 76-77; See also: Touqan, Fadwa (1988). *Rihla Jabaliyya Rihla Sa'ba: Sira Jabaliyya*. Amman: Dr al-Shuruq li al-Nashr. P. 56, 66, 69; see also: Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (2000). *Anraq Hayati*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Vol. 2. Beirut: Dar al-'Adab li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'. P. 22.

<sup>28</sup> The woman's writing is a medium to get rid of domination of all its types: domination of society and domination of the man. It is a form of resistance to all types of authority, introduction to the problems of daily life and exposition to all types of social suppression. Thus, the woman's writing is a step towards self-assertion far from half-solutions, and a revolution against injustice, oppression and tyranny. The blog of the woman's narrative texts shows us that the feminist discourse has a specialty that is formed through the woman's occupation of the center of the narrative, and its subject is nearly constant endorsement to the reality of the woman's confrontation of an environment that puts her on the margin. Therefore, the writers' reaction to this reality is focused on the disappointed woman's fulfilment of herself. This is what explains why the hero in most Arab women narratives is a woman.

The Arab autobiography generally falls in the focus of taboo issues socially, politically, and culturally, which pushed writers to practice different kinds of conventional evasions, which made this genre in Arabic writing a source of debate and inquiry. When the woman writes herself, and she is originally a marginal suppressed voice, it is no wonder that she resorts to more evasive styles and more darkening to the convention of autobiographies, which might push her autobiography into more generic interconnectivities, artistic taboos, and coercions that puts the autobiography under debates. See: al-Marini, Najat (2006). *'Alamat Nisa'iyya fi Nubugh al-Mar'ab al-Maghribiyya*. (1<sup>st</sup> ed.) al-Dar al-Bayda': Matba'at al-Najah al-Jadidah. P. 18, 27. See also: Taha, Ibrahim (2008). "Swimming Against the Current: Towards an Arab Feminist Poetic Strategy", *Orientalia Suecana* LVI, p.193-222.

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi deals with the act of activity and writing as types of struggle. Literary writing is a struggle and search for justice. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi considers corruption to be the root of the problem in all the Arab countries. Corruption of the political elites is connected to suppression and oppression of the woman. In her novel *Death of the Only Man in the World*, one of the major characters, Sheikh Hamzawi says to Sheikh Zahran: "All the people have become corrupt, Sheikh Zahran, and there is neither Islam nor Muslims."<sup>29</sup>

AL-Sa'dawi says also about her writing: "Writing in my life is like Mom's lap, like love that occurs without any reason, and despite that, I have not stopped looking for the reason...probably I have been looking for something... to draw to the world around me my true image, that image which they effaced with another one... to make the silent baby girl in my depth speak."<sup>30</sup>

Al-Sa'dawi believes that writing has been her only resort and refuge since her childhood: "I escape to it from the Mom the Dad and the Groom."<sup>31</sup> Writing remained even in her middle-age her only and last refuge and shelter at the same time. It is the only possible reconciliation between the past and the present "despite all the wounds that I have had in my homeland."<sup>32</sup>

Writing is an individual act but it is an existential condition, too. Al-Sa'dawi moves her pen in her hand and writes:

"Writing in my life was taking me into a deep well in the Earth... to a place that is empty of people...I was holding my pen and sheets of paper and leave my home. I walk and walk without stopping. I looked around me as if I were looking for something? ... I looked for a cleft to escape into it. I disappear within it and shut seven doors behind me. It was not enough to shut one door to dismiss the voices."<sup>33</sup>

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi writes about the passage of sixty three years from her life without taking them into account: "Parts from this age fell into oblivion; minutes that want to flee and disappear far away from memory and the eyes of people; minutes of pain and despair and weakness and decline; today I am not a young lady; I have become and elderly one; I have passed the age of sixty."<sup>34</sup>

We find writing in this sense a path towards realization of one's fault' the fault of 'thinking', merely 'thinking' or even 'feeling', but in all cases, it sounds necessary. Therefore, and from this angle, her autobiography has come like a series of recalling and recollections that are retrieved from a series of all the episodes of realized past life. The writing shows all the periods that she lived, everything that she thought about, and everything that she dreamt of in two circles: the family and society including all their levels, positions and sufferings. However, the element that draws attention in these recollections is what is related to the transfer of the Self from exceptional sufferings that are connected to the position of the woman in the field of the traditional conservative relations and the exploitation, suffering and humiliation that they cause to the woman. Probably, the experience of the 'female circumcision' in this context was one of the most violent private experiences that Nawal Al-Sa'dawi underwent.

Al-Sa'dawi's novels foretell a different awareness regarding their structure, visions and contents, and establishes the difference between them and the stereotypical women novels that are incapable of confirming the particularity of a certain saying, or structure or content that distinguishes the woman's writing from the man's writing regarding the issue of the woman, where the two types of writing intertwine.

The woman's existence is controlled by three features: inferiority (her relationship with the man), persecution (her existence within relations that are characterized by coercion, and suppression (her relationship with society). Therefore, her expression about this existence through autobiography seems to be a result of her tendency to find emotional and mental alternatives with which the Self emancipates itself from all the prohibiting shackles to her development.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1983). *Mawt al-Rajul al-Wahid 'ala al-Ardb*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli. P. 22.

<sup>30</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (2000). *Anraq Hayati*. Vol. 1, 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Beirut: Dar al-'Adab li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'. P. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 366.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 366.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Vol. 3. P. 366.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Vol. 1. P. 366.

In her novels *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*, *Suqut al-Imam Jannat wa Iblis*, and *Zenab*, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi reproduces her social reality putting ideological theoretical standards for the woman's nature on the one hand, and the man's nature on the other, on grounds of biological difference, and explaining certain social and behavioral rules that differ from one period to the other and one place to the other through natural biological rules.

*The biological difference* according to Nawal Al-Saidawi devotes to the woman an eternal behavioral nature that differs from the man's eternal behavioral nature, too. As a result of the woman's biological nature, she is a complete unit, and consequently, if one side of the woman is imbalanced her whole collapses and imbalances. Because the biological nature of the woman makes her a complete unit, Al-Sa'dawi's heroines should inevitably fall completely that ends with Fardous' collapse in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* and humiliation of her entity to the last drop; the death of Bint Allah in *Suqut al-Imam*, and Jannat's madness in *Jannat wa Iblis*, and her entrance into the Saray; Zenah's murder and Bdour's death in *Zenab*. All this occurs for nothing except that each of them is a woman, and the eternal nature of the woman is like that.

*The man*, however, is more complicated. As a result of his biological structure, he is divided in himself into several compound squares. If one of his sides is imbalanced, the other sides stay complete and sound, and consequently, he has the right to be bribed and stay a good citizen, a good husband, and a good father, etc.

According to Al-Sa'dawi, this is the condition of the lived reality, and it is the man's condition and image in the woman's literature. Zakariyya, Jannat's husband in *Jannat wa Iblis*, remains a husband, despite his infidelities, and this is Jannat's grandfather's condition with her grandmother. Similarly, Zakariyya al-Khartiti in *Zenab* remains the father and the husband while he was betrays his wife with other women and remains the husband and father even after he tries to rape Zenah.<sup>35</sup>

Al-Sa'dawi's novels draw us to their relationship with their specific environment, i.e. her relationship with her mother and her father and her relationship with her past as a whole (through recalling) in addition to aspects of the external world that frames her existence (home, school, playing, learning and university). The important aspect is the one that is related to the Self as an individual existence and identity at the same time. The baby Nawal Al-Sa'dawi grew within a contradictory family system, where the boy is treated differently. The text continues with this contradiction, though in ideological versions that raise some of the ideal values.

There is a system of memories, whether in its connection with the past as a passing period that is subject to recollection, or through engraving a harmonious perspective for the childhood period that makes childhood a conditioned imagined and discrepant state that avoids the truth the writer likes to convey to the reader. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi stresses that the sheets of paper that constitute her memories and worlds constitute her memories, her worlds, are her life and the dream of her childhood and youth; in fact they are the memories that she loves despite pain.

Al-Sa'dawi grew up in a liberal educated family. She spoke about her family in her autobiography (*Anwraq Hayati/Leaves of My Life*) and in some press interviews. She says: "My father is a rural person from Kafr Talha. He left the village and married an educated Egyptian. My mother is characterized by openness, and my father is liberal in his view, especially regarding the woman's education."<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> If the man looks at sex as an activity of hostility, sniping, hunting, invading, victory and humiliation, this indicates that he is a suppressed person. He is a man who was deprived by his society from everything: freedom, activity, positivity, and ability to do things and enrich the Self and achievement of goals and creative interaction. It means that society has diverted him by believing imaginary battles where he thinks he has achieved unreal victories, and thus society fixes his condition, disappointment and helplessness. Practicing sexual relationship with many women becomes a kind of invasion, hunting, domination and obsession, and consequently, provides the man with a feeling of power. The women who are dominated sexually turn into commodities and they lose their value and importance, and consequently, the aim becomes the 'quantity' rather than 'quality', namely, the accumulation that even makes money capital pale beside it. Accumulation of women makes the man feel of having a fake kind of freedom and often compensates for his inability to reach the respected power or social status of those who stand in the middle of the social ladder. See: al-Zayyat, Latifa (1989). *Min Suwar al-Mar'ah fi al-Qissas wa al-Riwayat al-A'rabiyya*. Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafa al-Jadida. P. 80, 121.

<sup>36</sup>Jareedat al-Sabah (al-Sabah Newspaper), p. 3. On 4/5/1978.

In her writing about Kafr Talha and the Egyptian countryside and the woman and the beauty of the village and al-Umdiyya and the Nile (in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* and *Jannat wa Iblis*). She stated that she comes from a rural origin and this has a great value for her and in her life. She says: "My family was not from the uneducated Egyptian families. My father had a higher education and a teaching inspector at al-Manufiyya District...and my mother learned at a French school before her father, who was a manager of the military district at that period, married her off."<sup>37</sup>

Faraj Ben Ramadan says about this: "Probably you realize the social indication of French education among the Egyptians in general. If you know that this mother attended a French school at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and if you know what kinds of girls were interested in this kind of education, and on what grounds marriage were made at that time, you will know clearly to what type of village people this educated liberal father belongs."<sup>38</sup> The important point in all this is that the education of this liberal educated family did not prevent Nawal Al-Sa'dawi from taking the road of suffering and endure the experiences of life through the intellectual world. She formed her intellectual identity and vision about human beings and life, expressed and defended them in all her works.

The family in the real world that Nawal Al-Sa'dawi reproduced does not form a safety valve for her in the new reality as it is mostly a unit of consuming commodities. At the same time, it is a producer of the same relations of possession that prevail in modern society and the violence that rules it.

In the shadow of this destitute or semi-destitute family, the possessed individual is robbed of his awareness, his will and his ability to act. He is the ideal type of the ideal citizen.

The oppressing head of the family is originally oppressed and the oppression that he exerts at the level of his family is the tool through which he lets out his anger without constituting a challenge to the regime that oppresses him. The role that this man plays within his family supports the class system by practicing exaggerated individualism, total authority. Actually, he consolidates the hierarchy of this authority within the scope of the values and social relations.

In view of this, we can understand the sadistic behavior of Fardous' father with his wife and children: "I belong to the middle class by birth from a poor illiterate father, who knew nothing in life except cultivating the land...hitting his wife each night till she bites the ground...sometimes there is no food at home and we all, except him, go to bed without dinner. My mother used to hide his food from us ...but he would sit and eat alone while we are looking at him."<sup>39</sup>

The woman's entity is summarized in this scene into an element of femaleness. She performs the function of bringing children and protects the individual ownership from father to husband. Besides, she becomes an object of pleasure to her husband. In both roles, she is something that the man owns.

There are true sayings in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's novels that are related to her childhood and they indicate that she was exposed to severe suppression, which she resisted in order to assert self and her existence. In fact, her life was nothing but a constant struggle for forbearance and resistance against various types of suppression that had been exerted on her since the era of early childhood till the era of work and writing, tiredness and exhaustion. This is what she tries to show whenever she talks about herself. Childhood has a special position in Nawal Al-Saidawi's novels. For her, it is the face of the perfect existence – the real natural and clean existence in its purity and innocence before the society's education violates the child and the shackles of society divert his manners and morals. She dealt with and spoke about childhood from this perspective in general whether in her novels or her studies.

Thus, her treatment of childhood is characterized in all cases by her specific belief that "Before he is one year old, and even before he is born, the child realizes the loftiest thoughts and imagines the most elevated mental images."<sup>40</sup> Society spoils or destroys him/ her.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1977). *Al-Wajb al-A'ri li al-Mar'ab al-A'rabiyya*. Beirut: al-Mu'assasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr. P. 12.

<sup>38</sup> Ben Ramadhan, Faraj (1997). *Al-Mar'ab bi Qalam al-Mar'ab. Dirasa Tahliyya Naqdiyya li Tajribat Nawal Al-Sa'dawi*. 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Safaqis: Dar Muhammad Ali al-Hami li al-Nashr. P. 141.

<sup>39</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 16-17.

<sup>40</sup> See: Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal; *Qissat 'Ayn al-Hayat'* from the collection of *al-Khayt wa al-Jidar*. P. 106/ 108

*Children* in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's works think like her and feel her feelings. This is not the case in her fiction but she declares it in her studies as well. This is another principle of her doctrine: The grown up person is like the child; he deals in his whole self with the people around him.<sup>41</sup> Reaching the position of maturity for Nawal Al-Sa'dawi means *return to the original childhood, which is in her point of view*, the image of the perfect existence.

By making children speak her words, she is changing their thoughts and feelings to suit her thoughts and feelings and intellectual doctrine. She does that also in her other writings.

Al-Sa'dawi's novels work by means of her imagination on transforming reality and contributing to its recreation instead of exposing or cloning it. That is done through the employment of the technique of popular heritage. She moves through the macro-narrative structure into micro-narrative structures that resemble mosaic pieces to furnish the general path within the novel. It is noticed that Al-Sa'dawi's texts are basically constructed on a number of stories or tales that reflect the visions of their composers and conceptions.

Besides, the function of these tales is confined to the crystallization and growth of the project of narration in the fictional text in general through gradual progress of the levels of the narrated thing that is connected with what is universal and is melted in the Self.

Al-Sa'dawi's novels reconstruct reality using the he style of direct antithetical discourse in an aware intentionality to turn the measurements upside down. She scolds reality and shows hostility to it and even looks at it condescendingly. Sometimes, she exaggerates in debasing it. She denudes it by revealing its male bias and judges it in a severe unprecedented shocking manner, instigating the female/woman against it and against suppressing her image. In fact, she supports herself in an attempt to return an authoritative glory that was taken from her by force.

Discourse in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's novels carries values and statements about the man's nature and the woman's nature. She is not satisfied with less than dealing with the essence of reality, which she reformulates narratively and fictionally. Al-Sa'dawi's reality is a reality of class-conflict in which each class subjugates the one below. Oppression is centered in the poor or semi-poor classes. It is a class-reality in which the man oppresses the woman despite the woman's hopeless attempts to get out of the circle of oppression. Therefore, we notice that the ladder of oppression ends with the step in which the oppressed men transfer onto their wives oppression of the man of the dominating class, who represents the domination of male Self. The tool of oppression is represented in every single item that Nawal Sa'dawi introduces. The tool can be the family or the street, which carries the entire historical and social characteristics that it represents.

We, the members of the family are with this small unit of society that reproduces the relations of possession and domination that prevails in our society. This is the case in the family of every heroine in every novel. The family gradually gets rid of anyone who does not follow the ideology of the authority and anyone who dares to disobey deviate from his pre-planned role by the authority.

No matter how far we go in our arguments regarding the indication of the artistic narrative work about itself, an no matter how far we try to distinguish between the life of the heroes of the work and the life of the writer, we cannot ignore the warm relationships between Nawal Al-Sa'dwai and the characters of her novels. In fact, we cannot give up taking that into consideration in our attempt to understand these works in the right way.

In fact, we don't need a lot of effort to find these connections as there is a lot of indicative evidence. Besides, Al-Sa'dawi has made a lot of statements about that connection in her studies that supports this argument. In addition, the artistic work includes the writer's vision and her guiding directions regarding the characters' behavior and the narrative structure.

Al-Sa'dawi's production interprets itself by itself but Al-Sa'dawi's character is the authority and resource that explains all her works. This is due to the common vision between the fictional products and the studies that result from a private suffering that she actually lived in reality.

The writer's talk about himself is problematic by nature. The problem is not only in the writer's taking of his life as a subject of discussion, which lends his speech with some or a lot of narcissism, and no autobiography is void of narcissism, but it lies in the fact that the writer looks at his past through his present eye.

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<sup>41</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Rajul wa al-Jins*. P. 140.

He looks through his viewpoint that has become complete in a certain form, and through his thought that has settled in a known direction to himself, to his thought and to his Self, which is still in the course of evolution and development and does not know at what shape or direction it will settle. That is the problem that makes the truth in autobiography dubious.

If this is a stable fact in all autobiographies, it is even more stable and correct in Al-Sa'dawi's talk about herself. This is due to her reticence and reservation in talking about herself. It is noticed that each time she talked about herself and specifically about her childhood, she intended to show herself as a brave and clever girl and she rarely accepts things as for granted facts. Nawal attributes her open-mindedness to her father. She said that her apparent cleverness and early intellectual alertness in her childhood is attributed to her father who used to allow her and her brothers to think and to debate freely and that they should not believe in anything unless they are persuaded."<sup>42</sup>

The information that Al-Sa'dawi gives about herself and life does not contradict the events and facts in her real life. There is no doubt that there are some data in her life that overlapped her life but there are events that actually took place in her life and she mentioned them frankly, and this is what concerns us.

However, the manner of talking and indications belongs to Al-Sa'dawi herself. The way of Al-Sa'dawi's thinking and her vision about man and life stem from her experience and suffering. She talked in her writings about women and introduced her measurements and evidence to stress the truth of her ideas towards the events in her life. The examples that demonstrate that are countless.

Al-Sa'dawi became the spokeswoman of women and turned her personal life and sufferings and plights into representative examples of the woman and her suppressions and disasters in general. On the other hand, she turned her refusal, resistance and relentless will into an example of what the woman should do in order to know how to deal with the patriarchal system. In fact, she turned herself into a symbol of the resisting woman. In fact, she is an ambivalent symbol. On the one hand, she is a representative of the suppressed woman but on the other, she is a representative of the woman who managed to resist oppression and survive that suppression. Therefore, she allowed herself to speak in the name of all women and bear the responsibility for their emancipation. She says in her book *al-Mar'ab wa al-Jins*:

"All the tragedies of the woman entered my clinic and all the results of deceit and backwardness lay in front of me on the diagnosis table...when the psychological and physical patient enter my clinic, they undress and uncover their secrets in front of me. On the bed in my psychological clinic, men and women opened their hearts to me, and when the doctor is a writer, he/she undresses the whole society. The doctor's lancet is like the pen that undresses and reveals society."<sup>43</sup> It is not a secret that most of the literary works include a lot of the writer's subjectivity in them.<sup>44</sup>

This subjectivity hides behind a fictional character or more. In her novels *Imra'a Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr/ Suqut Al-Imam/ Jannat wa Iblis* and *Zenab*, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi introduces a lot of personal features and reveals what she suffered in her childhood, adolescence and youth.

Regarding the issue of female circumcision, the psychological and physical pain that she was exposed to in summer of 1937, she talks about her biography and projects that on her heroines. Therefore, Bdoor in *Zenab* is a circumcised girl, who plays the role of a sexually cold woman, who cannot offer her husband a sexual pleasure; Fardous is introduced in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* to talk about her pain as a little girl who was circumcised and her constant search of that pleasure which she was deprived of in her conjugal life .

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1972). *Al-Mar'ab wa al-Jins*. Beirut: al-Muasasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr. P. 56.

<sup>44</sup> The writer, whether a man or a woman, is likely or unlikely to uncover his private life through his description of himself. This purpose remains observed and we try to guess it within his work but we may not reach it till we finish reading the work. The novel in the recent years tends to be a kind of autobiography in a consecutive way or episodes but the dividing line between autobiography that is written in a narrative form and the artistic novel that is based on the personal life of its writer is the commitment to the 'truth' besides the writer's revelation of his goal. Thus, he declares that he is writing an autobiography in this fictional structure. He also declares his real name, the names of the characters, places and dates. However, he gives to himself a pseudonym, we understand that he is writing a story, and the work is considered a 'novel' rather than an autobiography. See: Abd Al-Dayim, Yahya Ibrahim (1975). *Al-Tarjama al-Dhatiyya fi al-'Adab al-'Arabi al-Hadith*. Beirut: Dar I'hya' al-Rurath al-'Arabi, p. 427.

Al-Sa'dawi deals with the effect of the man's mistreatment to his wife through the description of Shukri Beh,(her mother's father) and his betrayal to his wife Hajja Amnih (her mother's mother) and the mistreatment of her grandfather, Habash (her father's father) to his wife Hajja Mabrouka (her father's mother). We read about the effect of that mistreatment in her novels. For example, Grandfather in *Jannat wa Iblis* plays the role of the traitor who leaves his wife to marry a fourteen years old young lady, just because she reached the age of menopause.

Zachariyya betrays Jannat in *Jannat wa Iblis*, and Zachariyya al-Khartiti betrays Bdour in *Zenab*. Fardous' father strikes her mother till she bites the ground in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* under the effect of what happened to her two grandmothers. However, Al-Sa'dawi surprises us strongly by the power of the relationship that used to join her father and mother, according to what is mentioned in her memoirs.

Al-Sa'dawi reflects the effect of the absence of her mother on her life saying: "My mother Zainab Hanim, lived and died without embracing me or kissing one single kiss."<sup>45</sup> She looked for it everywhere as her heroines did in her novels. Fardous's mother is absent and does not do her duty. The mother in *Jannat wa Iblis* does not look out of her home except through the window. The mother in *Bint Allah* does not exist. The mother in *Zenab* leaves Zenah on the street side.

On the other side, Al-Sa'dawi's father is present at a large scale in her autobiography. He is the one who converses with her, speaks with her and his other children. The mother does not utter a word or debate with them: "I feel happy when I listen to my father."<sup>46</sup> This father had a great influence on her character: "My father used to encourage me to read and think. He made me love literature from my childhood."<sup>47</sup>

Al-Sa'dawi talked about her good relationship with her father despite the distance between them. However, her novels introduce a contrasted condition. The character of the Father is negative, disaffecting and selfish. He is sadistic in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*, and abandoned his daughter in *Suqut al-Imam* and is absent in *Jannat wa Iblis*, unfaithful, opportunist and fake in *Zenab*.

The internal and external features in these novels nearly correspond in many situations and reactions, which make us understand that Al-Sa'dawi depended in her artistic novels in their events and situations on her personal private life through which she expressed her attitudes from these events and by which she pointed out her ideology. We notice some of this correspondence between her private life and the life of the central character in her novels through Al-Sa'dawi's introduction of images from various stages in her life.

Al-Sa'dawi relates these features using the first person singular narrator and mixes personal issues with collective homeland issues. Thus, the personal crisis of her heroines and their failure in their emotional relations turns into a kind of reflection to the crisis of homeland or defeat. The heroine does not find salvation or solution to those problems except with the salvation of humanity and homeland from their defeat, with which moderation of people's behavior at work and in the street can be achieved.

Al-Sa'dawi commits to tell the truth in mentioning the reality and events that happened to her. Her truthfulness is connected to her daring in criticizing various political conditions, the various theories of government and the conditions of the people. She resorts to the artistic elements to tell the truth, objectivity and frankness. She does not hide the landmarks of the characters and places.

On the contrary, she resorts to borrowing different names for the characters and places. This is one of the most important characteristics of the art of autobiography in its modern meaning. By doing so, it seems to us that the artistic novel is likely to resort in its events and conditions to the real private life of the writer but in this case, it might not be considered a completely pure and perfect autobiography.

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi chooses the voice of the first person narrator to express what is working in her soul in every part of the two novels *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* and *Suqut al-Imam*. *Suqut al-Imam* deals with the period of the Political Imprisonment (which started in 1981) but the writer manages by the employment of the first person narrator to retrieve a lot of the roots of her childhood and adolescence dreams and her life with her family.

<sup>45</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Anraq Hayati*. Vol.1. p. 120.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., Vol. 1. P. 117.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., Vol. 1. P. 103

By revealing her childhood and adolescence features, Al-Sa'dawi reveals the effect of heredity and environment in her psychological formation, which leads to a kind of communication between her and the reader of the novel. By detailing that personal and internal life, she satisfies an internal connection that meets an external connection, which is represented in the historical gradual progress of her different age periods.

As we have seen, the style of the description of Bint Allah in *Suqut al-Imam* is a picturesque style that derives its elements from the art of fiction. The writer got slight help from her imagination to connect the parts of the facts in order to express her personal life, her political life and her ideology at the same time. This is a fictional style that faithfully commits to describe the truth that expresses the subjective reality of writing.

Probably the correspondence between Fardous' features in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* and Jannat's features and Bin Allah in *Suqut al-Imam* and Zenah in *Zenab* tends to stand in the middle between the artistic novel and autobiography in its modern definition. In Fardous', Bibt Alla's, Jannat's and Zena's childhood features we find one feeling – their distress about the shackles that the mother imposes on her daughter and those that the male society imposes in addition to their loneliness and isolation from society. We read the following in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*: "And I asked my mother about my father and how she gave birth to me without a father, she hit me and brought another woman with a pocketknife or a razor's blade and cut a piece of flesh from between my hips."<sup>48</sup> She said also: "I run through darkness looking for my mother and have no one with me except my dog."<sup>49</sup> Jannat said: "She hated talking. She hid in her room so that others would leave her on her own. No one asked for anything from her, or even asked her a question. Her body shook when her mother entered the bathroom with her, searching between the folds of her body the dearest thing that girls own – something unseen at the bottom of the abdomen, like a transparent piece of paper that a breath of wind can tear."<sup>50</sup> Zena said: "She is unique!"<sup>51</sup> We read about another correspondence between Fardous' features and Jannat in the adolescence period, where each of them adds her own femininity and in her inside there was a feeling of general challenge to the family, and society as a whole.

Fardous says in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*: "I felt that I was not like women nor like girls... all girls speak about the man and I do not speak about the man... what occupied the girls' minds did not occupy mine and what concerned the girls did not concern me."<sup>52</sup> We read in Jannat Iblis:

"The bell rings and the lesson ends. She stays sitting in her place afraid to stand up. If she stands up, she will feel the warm string walk over her legs... she looks around till the atmosphere is convenient. Then she walks carefully along the wall. She hides her overall from behind with her schoolbag. At home, she withdraws over the toilet sink. She washes the overall and the underpants. The traces do not disappear. The underpants rolled up in her hand. She is afraid to hang it over the laundry rope and it will be seen. She digs in the ground and buries it and dumps it with earth and then she hides in her room under a cover as if she committed a crime."<sup>53</sup> In another place, Sheikh Basyuni tries to subjugate her but he does not succeed: "Sheikh Basyuni stares in her booklet and shook angrily... he hit her fingers by a bamboo rod... all the girls turned their hands on their chests.

They close their knees tightly and shrank within their body... he stands near her as her back was tied, her hands were above the bed, her eyes were open... her eyelashes were fixed without motion. Her eyelids did not move. He hits her on her fingers: Close your eyes girl! Bow your head.... Her eyes are open. I am not afraid from you, who fight knowledge and shut our eyes. In another place, Sheikh Basyuni tries to subjugate her but he does not succeed: "Sheikh Basyuni stared in her booklet and shook angrily... he hit her fingers by a bamboo rod... all the girls turned their hands on their chests. They close their knees tightly and shrank within their bodies... he stands near her as her back was tied, her hands were above the bed, her eyes were open... her eyelashes were fixed without motion.

<sup>48</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 17.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Suqut al-Imam*. P. 12.

<sup>50</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Jannat wa Iblis*. P. 85.

<sup>51</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Zenab*. p. 148

<sup>52</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 30.

<sup>53</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Jannat wa Iblis*. P. 84.

Her eyelids did not move. He hits her on her fingers: Close your eyes girl! Bow your head.... Her eyes are open. I am not afraid from you, who fight knowledge and shut our eyes.<sup>54</sup> It is necessary to point out the most important phases through which the heroine changed through the novels *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*, *Suqut al-Imam*, *Jannat wa Iblis*, and *Zena*. However, the great indication of the novel lies in this dialectic of transformation from one phase into another and in the completion of all these phases: first, the subjective indication, as the novel describes the events of real experience that the writer lived. Second, the intellectual indication as Nawal Al-Sa'dawi directed the events of the novel and the experience of her heroine in a manner that stresses a number of political thoughts on which her vision regarding the woman's issue is included in turn within the scope of seeing people to society and life.

The procession of the heroine in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*, *Suqut al-Imam*, *Jannat Iblis* and *Zenab* starts with her agonizing awareness of her female entity and ends with the achievement of reassurance through a feeling of faithfulness, regeneration and reconciliation between the different dimensions of the Self. Between the beginning and the end, there is a constant search and connected anxiety in the heroine's relationship with herself and the world. The heroine moved in this search through three prominent but extremely contradictory but entirely integrative phases. Anxiety and aggravated search resulted from her contradictions and reconciliation; harmony resulted from her integration. These phases are: *the phase of the body*, *the phase of the mind* and *the phase of the feeling*.

The disaster of femaleness is the most important issue in Al-Sa'dawi's life and the biography of her heroines in her novels.<sup>55</sup> Fadous says in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*: "As for me, I triumphed over life and death because I no more desire to live and I am no more afraid of anything..."<sup>56</sup> She says in *Suqut al-Imam*: "If my body dies, my heart will not die... none of you defeated my mind. No matter how much you injured my body, my mind remained far-reaching."<sup>57</sup> Jannat says in *Jannat walIblis*: "I am not a point or two in your book. I am not a deleted name of a joined pronoun. I am not afraid... I do not hide my face and am not ashamed of my body."<sup>58</sup> Bdour al-Damhiri in *Zenab* is emancipated in the end: "Bdour al-Damhiri is no more afraid of divorce or death; she can take her bag and go alone on her endless unknown road."<sup>59</sup> Resistance is born from this awareness of the disaster. Al-Sa'dawi starts her resistance and the resistance of girls in general and by doing so, she denies her femaleness: "I will deny my femaleness... I will challenge my nature... I will resist all the desires of my body."<sup>60</sup>

The breakdown of the body causes bitter suffering and engagement into a bloody conflict between reality and idealism. As Al-Sa'dawi argues, the signs of being hit by the virus of 'romanticism' lie in that breakdown and conflict. However, the heroine exaggerates in her resistance and looks forward to awaken another dimension of hers, which is the '**mind**': "I drew my way of life for myself... the way of the mind, and performed the rule of capital punishment on my body, and stopped feeling that it existed."<sup>61</sup>

In order to load personal experience with objective dimensions and in order to lend on what she says as truth the nature of comprehensiveness and absolutism, she says: "My private experience as a woman provides me with the real deep feelings of the woman."<sup>62</sup>

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi described the female body in her childhood as a 'disaster' that was created as a result from a conspiracy between society and nature. Society is represented by the family, especially the mother, and nature is represented in the traits of the female body and its anatomical and biological features. Her mother did not prepare her to accept the changes that took place on her body in a natural sound way; she prepared her in a way that loads the signs of femaleness with the thoughts of the sexual system that prevails in society.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 147-148.

<sup>55</sup> See also: the impact of Fu'ada' discovery of her femaleness on her soul (*al-Gab'ib* (p. 79-80); on Baiyya Shaheen in (*Imra'atan fi Imra'ab*, p. 7, 9, 28). See also in *Mawt al-Rajul al W'abid 'ala al-Ardh* (p. 52) and in *Imra'atan fi 'Imra'ah* (p. 19) and in *Ughniyat al-Atfal al-Da'iriyya* (p.65, 96), how the heroine is exposed to the operation of circumcision (khitan) as Nawal Al-Sa'dawi was circumcised in her childhood.

<sup>56</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 111

<sup>57</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Suqut al-Imam*. P. 158.

<sup>58</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Jannat wa Iblis*. P. 153-154.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Zenab*. p. 294.

<sup>60</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1983). *Mudbakkarat Tabiba*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli, p. 20.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>62</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 8.

The mother scared her of everything that is related to her body, especially her sexual organs by wrapping them with ambiguity and a lot of obscurity in order to cover the truth or violate and disturb the truth and keep her daughter silent and cover up everything that is related to sex. In this way, Al-Sa'dawi's feeling of fear increased about her body. She says:

"I remember that when I was a little girl, I felt terrified and my hands and fingers would tremble if my hand touched my external organs by mistake. Sometimes, I felt afraid when my dresses touched my organs and thought that that contact would cause some severe damage or affect all my whole life. That fear was increasing in me till it reached its climax on the day when I realized that there is a fine layer that exists somewhere close to the surface between my legs, and that I should not jump high over the ladder, otherwise it would be torn and a great disaster would hit me and all my family. When I grew up a little more in age, the type of fear changed... and I started fearing strangers and fear to go out from home alone; I realized that a certain danger was lurking for me in that external world."<sup>63</sup>

Then Al-Sa'dawi adds how the mother violated the girl's mind with the answers that she gave to certain questions: "One day, I asked my mother after she gave birth to my younger brother. Why do mothers give birth? She answered in such a way that made her imagine with the child's mind that some air accumulates in the mother's abdomen and that creates the uterus, which makes her abdomen get larger."<sup>64</sup>

Scaring the girl of her body and filling her heart with horror because the family's over-caution of the family to protect her virginity is easier than what happens to her when the signs of menstruation appear on her body. Al-Sa'dawi says:

"I still remember the color of my face in the mirror on that gloomy morning. It was white and my lips were covered with some blue, my arms were shaking; my legs were trembling, and I imagined that the disaster that I feared really occurred; I thought that a stranger entered my room during my sleep at night and caused me all that damage."<sup>65</sup>

However, she soon cancelled that possibility and thought that she was probably sick; she went to her mother and asked her to take her to the doctor.

"I wondered why my mother remained calm on that day and was not frightened by that serious illness. Then I came to know the truth from her when she told me that this illness hits all the girls and women and it will be repeated once a month for a few days and on the last day I will have to clean myself of this bad blood by getting a good bath. In the imagination of the little girl, I imagined that this blood means 'impurity' and uncleanness, which is a shameful matter and I have to conceal the symptoms of that illness from the eyes of others...when I go to the bathroom, I look around, and when I go out of the bath, I would wash its tiles in a very good way, as if I were wiping the traces of a shameful crime."<sup>66</sup>

In her book *al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins/ The Woman and Sex*, Al-Sa'dawi argues that the issue of the woman originated largely from people's ignorance of the reality of the woman's body and soul and the common false information about it.

Therefore, she took upon herself the mission of acquainting people with the reality of the woman's entity in an attempt to resist people's ignorance and correct her image among people and remove false information about her. She says in the introduction of the book *al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*:

"The world is in need of correct information about the woman in order to change the incorrect concepts that were spread about her in the world and which were generally written by men. Therefore, such information was not a woman's expression about her; it was a man's point of view about the woman. The difference between the truth and the point of view is great."<sup>67</sup> Nawal A-Sa'dawi noticed the phenomena of making differences between the two sexes and their indications of superiority of the male and inferiority of the woman, which led to treating her unjustly in the family, in the street and at school. Society and its various institutes work on establishing in the female consciousness the belief that she is 'defective' and her body is blemished by impurity and uncleanness and that is her fate that the nature of her female entity imposed on her.

<sup>63</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 31.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Wajh al-'Ari li al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiyya*. P. 12.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>67</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 8.

Al-Sa'dawi, however, stated that since an early age she has faced this game and refused to yield or surrender. She declared her resistance and committed not to accept any of these rulings that were imposed on her in the family<sup>68</sup> at school<sup>69</sup> and in the street.<sup>70</sup> Recreation of the world necessarily passes through resistance to the body and resistance to the man. Al-Sa'dawi says regarding this statement: "It is natural that the girl would feel hostility towards her body and her sexual organs and sex. She connects between these things and the man, and consequently, she feels hatred towards him."<sup>71</sup> In another place, she says: "In reality, I did not like young men; I hated them."<sup>72</sup>

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi repeatedly speaks about the girls' attitudes about this fate; her statements mixed with subjective meanings with general facts:

"and here, many girls struggle against this slow murder. In my childhood, I was one of these girls who were struggling and resisting... the girls differ from the boys in their struggle against the artificial invented differences between them and the boys according to their conditions and characters. One girl struggles till the period of maturity but suddenly the event of menstruation hits her with a knockout, and she gives in to her fate... Another girl, who is more ambitious and more confident in herself, insists on continuing her conflict to the extent that she denies her body and cancels her desires and seeks excellence in life defying men."<sup>73</sup>

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi and her heroines belong to the second group. However, the breakdown of the body leads to indulgence into abstraction and inclination to idealistic images that compensate for deprivation in reality. This is what happened to Nawal Al-Sa'dawi as her statement indicates:

"When I became sixteen years old, I found myself at a boarding school... I had understood by education, reading extensive books, ethics, and everything around me that contact with young men is the biggest shame and danger... but inside me I feel that a great energy attracts me towards the other sex... I felt guilty and had remorse when I had a dream in my sleep and find myself between the arms of an unknown man... I was extremely contradictory in my behavior; when I felt that I was burning inside, my appearance looked very cold. I was pretending to be cold. In reality I did not like young men; I hated them; but this young man who came to me in my dreams was different."<sup>74</sup>

Al-Sa'dawi's rally of resistance started from the point of denial of the body: "Another girl who is more ambitious and more self-confident insists on continuing the dispute to the extent in which she denies her body and nullifies her desires and seeks excellence."<sup>75</sup> It seems that Al-Sa'dawi is uttering this statement on the tongue of her heroines and expresses their conditions with men.

All of them suffer from this contradiction; she hates her body and is discontent with men, but in return, she looks for a unique man. Therefore, Fardous says in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtatal-Sifr*: "I felt that I was like women not like girls... all the girls spoke about the man but I do not speak about him. What occupies the girls; mind did not occupy me."<sup>76</sup>

In my view, the character of the heroine in all her novels is inspired by her personal experience, derived from her suffering from the issue of the woman's body and her femaleness and the results that ensued from it, in addition to the appearance of her menstruation or the monthly period and the complications that it left on her. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi at her early age experienced something that extremely affected her body and thoughts. That was the female circumcision operation (*khitan*), which is the symbolic and practical embodiment of the female's suppression, which is reflected in circumcising the woman's most sensitive sexual organ.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>68</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1974). *Al-Untha Hiya al-Asl*. Beirut: al-Muasasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr. P. 35-36.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 34-36.

<sup>70</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Rajul wa al-Jins*. P. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 35

<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 43-44.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 45-46.

<sup>75</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 44.

<sup>76</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, nawal. *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 30.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid. p. 11.

It is commonly accepted to say that though autobiography-writing reveals the private pain and the suffering of personal life, it also emancipates the Self from its guilty feeling of inferiority and enslavement. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi deals with the issue of circumcision as an injurious experience that occurs to the Self at a specific time and place according to specific customs and traditions that are extremely cruel. However, she recalls this painful event after she liberated herself from it and formulated it in a critical mold that condemns it as an insulting social practice. She speaks about *kebitan* after time has passed beyond her and she realized the difference between male circumcision and female circumcision. She studied the phenomenon and realized its dangerous indication. She speaks about her childhood as she was fifty years old and after she devoted herself to define the woman's case and support it. It became clear to her that the operation of circumcision is one of the ugliest aspects of sexual suppression that are exerted on women. She moved from the rosy dreams of childhood to the knife, slaughtering and blood.

As the knife falls between her hips, the clitoris is cut and she is deprived of two dignified values: *first*, innocence of childhood and its rosy dreams, and *second*, her feminine nature. Cutting of the clitoris is an expression of depriving the female of the components of her natural femaleness in return for the aspects of social femaleness. This is the deep indication of the event of circumcision as Al-Sa'dawi expressed it in her different works. In fact, a great deal of her intellectual and social suffering alike falls within this scope, which resulted from this event and constituted an expression of a critical search of lost values of rosy dreams and natural femaleness.

The circumcision event continued to have its established effect on her soul and thoughts all her life long. It was one of the elements that directed her thoughts into the direction in which she described in her works. The question continued to urge her till she started studying and working in medicine. Then she taught anthropology and discovered that: "The iron chastity belt, the circumcision rite and their counterparts are among the brutal operations against the woman's sexual desire, and they appeared just for economic causes."<sup>78</sup>

She says in a chapter under the title of "The unanswered puzzled question" in her book of *al-Wajh al-A'ri li al-Mar'ah al-A'arabiyya*:

"After I grew up and became a doctor in 1955, my memory did not forget that painful event that spoiled my childhood and which deprived me in my youth and conjugal life from a complete sexual and psychological life. This kind of nightmare continued to haunt me in my dreams especially when I was a grown-up doctor that works in the countryside, where people were carrying to me a little girl for treatment as she was bleeding because of her *kebitan* /circumcision... and despite the fact that I was a doctor and looked at myself as an educated lady, I could not understand at that time why people were doing those ugly things to the girls. I asked myself lots of times: "why?" but I could not have an answer. When I was a little girl, I also asked myself many time: 'why' they did do that to me and to my sisters!"<sup>79</sup> Al-Sa'dawi dealt with the issue of the circumcision rite in more than one place in her books and novels. She always tried to load the subjective events with general objective dimensions as we see in the following statement, which is not different from the previous one except in substituting the pronoun "I" by the pronoun "she". In fact, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi is seen as a representative of all women and all girls:

"The image of this little massacre remained stuck in the girl's memory, which causes lots of problems in her married life, one of which is that 'sexual frigidity' whose effect is reflected on the man in his sexual deviations and drug addiction."<sup>80</sup>

Fardous in *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* undergoes the circumcision rite, too: "I asked my mother about my father and how she gave birth to me without a father; she hit me and brought a woman who had a pan and a razor blade and they cut a piece of flesh from between my thighs."<sup>81</sup> Bdour in *Zenab* is also circumcised: "His wife Bdour was not able to give him pleasure, probably because she had a circumcised clitoris in her childhood."<sup>82</sup>

Al-Sa'dawi's journey of resistance started from this point – resistance and refusal of this predestined fate for her and continued her search of the cause of forcing it upon her and the other girls in her society.

<sup>78</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (1977). *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Sira' al-Nafsi*. Beirut: al-Mu'asasa al-'Arabiyya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr. P. 72-73.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., p. 12-13.

<sup>80</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. P. 86.

<sup>81</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. P. 17.

<sup>82</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Zenab*. p. 71.

Al-Sa'dawi went through three major experiences in her life that had prominent effect on her works and writings. These stages are: a) her experience of studying medicine and practicing it, b) her experience in literary writing, and c) the experience of her scientific studies that started in her book *al-Mar'ah wa al-Jins*. Al-Sa'dawi speaks about her experience at the faculty of medicine saying:

"When I entered the faculty of medicine... I believed that my job will be in medicine. I had an established belief that 'medicine' is a human message. By the day that I graduated from the faculty of medicine, I had realized that that my job in life would not be in any way in 'medicine' and the belief that it is just a 'human' job is merely an adolescence dream."<sup>83</sup>

She made this statement after she graduated, worked several years in her private clinic and State hospitals. Then she left medicine and took on literary writing. Al-Sa'dawi raised that issue several times in her different works including her scientific studies and fiction. This experience is reflected in some characters of her novels. We find the heroine as a lady doctor, or a student at the faculty of medicine as in *Mudhakarāt Tabība* and in *Imra'atan fī Imra'ah*. In addition, she raised this issue directly in her study about *al-Mar'ah wa al-Sira' al-Nafsi' / The Woman and Psychological Conflict*. She summarized the causes of the transformation in her views about medicine and its dignity and devotion into the opposite side.

Al-Sa'dawi dealt with the most sensitive subjects and wrote about them bravely whether in her novels or autobiography such as: sexual harassment; for example, Fardous lives that experience with her uncle, Al-Azhar Sheikh. In parallel, Nawal Al-Saidawi also had an uncle who taught at Al-Azhar and worked with the other Azhar sheikhs. Bdour, too, is exposed in *Zenab* to sexual harassment.

Al-Sa'dawi expressed her view about the issue of the relationship between science, art and other issues that are nearly identical with her life and experience. These facts appear in many of her novels, such as: *Mudhakarāt Tabība* (1965), after ten years of her graduation from the faculty of medicine. We notice here signs of clear similarity between the heroine's life on one hand with Al-Sa'dawi and her character and life on the other.

However, this does not mean in any way that the heroine's life is identical with Al-Sa'dawi's life in every detail. In fact, it is possible to say that there is no novel that expresses her life in its minutes. However, the details are not important to us as the goal of our study is to show the personal dimensions that are prominent in Al-Sa'dawi's works.

The novel of *Mudhakarāt Tabība* is a study of refusal and resistance. It is a story of a girl that notices since her early childhood the differences that exist between her and her brother and the privileges and advantages that accompany the male over the female. She declares her refusal and decides to deviate from the predestined life and rebels against it and realized that her education is a strong weapon in her rebellion.

The girl achieves outstanding results at the elementary and secondary school and receives her certificate. At the same time, she resists every attempt that aims to disrupt her studies or direct her in the same way of the other girls: towards getting interested in home affairs and prepare herself for marriage.

She continues her studies at high school and gets her certificate with distinction, and afterwards she chooses to continue her studies and succeeds with distinction. In this period, she lives a bitter intellectual and psychological experience that throws her into a major disappointment. As a result, she packs her luggage and moves to the countryside, where she practices medicine. There, she discovers unusual things about medicine, about herself and about the whole world. Then she returns to the city and works at a private clinic. She gets married but her marriage does not last long because of her husband's attitudes, who wanted to bring her back to the women's usual shed, and because of her insistence on continuing her way that she chose for herself, she is divorced and her attachment to her work strengthens. She remains stable till she meets her desired partner at the end of the novel. These are the most important stages that the doctor goes through in her memoirs! This summary is enough to provide evidence to the strong relationship between the doctor of the memoirs and Al-Sa'dawi, the doctor. The common belonging to the same profession is the field of 'medicine'. Besides, we notice that the doctor of the memoirs worked for a period at a university hospital and then she went to the countryside as she was twenty five years old.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>83</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Al-Mar'ah wa al-Sira' al-Nafsi*. P. 81.

<sup>84</sup> Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Mudhakarāt Tabība*. P. 50.

Al-Sa'dawi graduated from the faculty of medicine in 1955 s when she was twenty-two years old. She worked at the University Hospital at al-Qasr al-Ayni, first, and then she went to the countryside, where she worked till 1958, i.e. she became twenty-five years old.

We can conclude from this that al-Sa'dawi lived the same experience in one stage of her life. Among other pieces of evidence is that Al-Sa'dawi, as a doctor of memoirs, underwent a failing experience in marriage that led to divorce and remarriage. She says in this concern:

"I married an open-minded doctor but he did not accept my writings, and therefore, divorce took place. She remarried a doctor, who also had a progressive political vision, and at present, he lives in Ethiopia and we exchange visits from time to time, and I consider him a friend rather than a husband."<sup>85</sup>

This nearly applies to her work at a clinic. Then she commits to another man at the end of the novel, which is additional evidence that indicates the strong relationship between the doctor of the memoirs and Al-Sa'dawi, the doctor.

*Mudhakkarat Tabiba* is just an artistic written image of Al-Sa'dawi's experience in life. It stresses what we saw in the stages of her life and completes the missing link. Probably it is the most important indication that combines between her scientific activity and literary production.

It is worthwhile pointing out that "*Memoirs of a Lady Doctor*" is written in the *first person singular*. This is the case also in *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr* and *Suqut al-Imam*. We have no choice but to stop at this feature, especially that we find examples that clearly indicate that the speaker in the *Memoirs of a Lady Doctor* is Al-Sa'dawi herself. The heroine of the *Memoirs* says: "I did not escape into my small world till my mother dragged me to the kitchen saying: your destiny is marriage... you should learn how to cook... your destiny is marriage, marriage, marriage... That was the word that my mother repeated till I hated it!"<sup>86</sup>

The truth for Nawal Al-Sa'dawi lies in the past, and the present is merely a production of the violation and falsity of the past. All her heroines suffered from the pressure of the childhood period and the deep injuries that it left on her soul and the questions that it left on her mind. All the heroines underwent similar situations to those that Nawal Al-Sa'dawi had undergone and described in her works. Al-Sa'dawi intended to point out the childhood of her heroine's with no exception. She used different ways for that. Once, she adopts the style of following the heroine's life step by step, beginning with the early childhood period and leads her till she arrives at a certain condition on which she lives in her present. This is the style of *Mudhakkarat Tabiba*. Sometimes, she starts from a present condition and then returns into a long journey to the past, using the flashback *technique*, in order to explain that condition. This is the style of *Imra'ab Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr*. Mostly, she resorts to the technique of the *associations and recollections* of memories that are based on frequentation between the past and the present. This is the case in *Jannat wa Iblis*, *al-Ghai'b* and *Imra'atan fi Imra'ab*, *Mawt al-Rajul al-Wabid 'Ala al-Ardh*.

In the novel of *al-Ghai'b*, Nawal-Al-Sa'dawi remained a captive to the concerns of the Self and its suffering but the circle of consideration grew wider in search of the strings of communication and paths of interaction with the others. We consider this to be a natural expansion of the signs of commitment that appeared at the end of the *Memoirs*. For example, Fu'adah in *al-Ghai'b* suffers throughout one hundred and thirty pages from the agony of waiting and the burning of search about the Other, who disappeared for unclear reasons.

The Other for the heroine is no more complementary to the Self only but he became a helper to it to achieve a greater project, which is 'changing of the world' or, if we may say, a type of merging the Self and the subject that has been achieved in the consciousness of the heroine and thus, Self-fulfilment in its perfect form became conditioned by changing of the world: "Her life is too big to be gifted to one man. Her life is above that and is not her own property - she is the property of the world, which she wanted to change."<sup>87</sup>

The meeting between Fu'ada and Fareed is based on this basis. He, too, aspires to change the social and political values that he believed in into a concrete reality through changing the individual anger into collective anger. The two took two different but complementary roads in order to achieve the remote desired goal.

<sup>85</sup>Jareedat al-Sabah, on:4/5/1978. P. 3.

<sup>86</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. *Mudhakkarat Tabiba*. P. 10-11.

<sup>87</sup>Al-Sa'dawi, Nawal. (1970). *al-Ghai'b*. Cairo: al-Ha'ya'ah al-Missriyya li al-Ta'lif wa al-Nashr. P. 88.

Fu'ada dreams to devote her education in order to make a discovery that removes poverty, starvation, diseases and exploitation. Fareed, however, believes in the role of the word and its power to raise awareness of the crowds and therefore, he joins a secret movement that depends in its work on distribution of leaflets and publications among people.

*al-Gha'ib* is both a novel of projects and lofty social ideals and a novel of defeat, frustration and suppression. The powers of suppression stand up in every site and work in different styles to abort the project of the two heroes and prevent communication between them and between the world that they want to change. These powers are in the police and political system that assaulted Fareed and his companions "just because they said those natural simple words that were born with the first human being."<sup>88</sup> The authority of suppression in the novel is represented most in the watchman's character that combines the powers of 'political suppression', 'economic suppression' and 'sexual suppression.' He exploits his relations with those who have political influence in order to consolidate his political position as a big real estate owner. Fu'ada rents one of his apartments to turn it into a laboratory, where she can conduct her experiments and analyses but he exploits this relationship to achieve his sexual goals. He succeeds in that during the heroine's breakdown at the end of the novel as a result of the causes of disappointment that hit her: *al-Gha'ib* does not appear and the dream of scientific discovery turns into a terrible feeling of emptiness and impotence. The mother, who was her only supporter in the absence of *al-Gha'ib*, dies. Her work at the Ministry was a vacuum. The end of the novel is not expected at this degree that the heroine's breakdown implies. When she reaches the lowest levels and declares her despair and surrender, the awaited *al-Gha'ib* appears after a message reaches her from prison telling her about the secret of his absence and asks her to stay resistant.

After this detailed description of the intersection between Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography and her novels, it is appropriate to sum up her vision regarding her awareness of the suppressive structure of the social system and its expansion into the psychological and intellectual structure of the individuals as reflected in her scientific and literary works.

*The artistic work* is considered one of the types of creation that the woman deals with in the context of the process of her resistance that she wages against society that conspires to suppress her existence and belittling her entity. It is a way of self-assertion and achievement of her existence, which is exposed to fading and melting. The patriarchal system works in various ways to abort every intellectual aspiration that the woman expresses because it has some threat to the prevailing sexual system that is based on suppression of the woman's sexual energy.

Intellectual suppression is necessary to support sexual suppression and other types of suppressions that are focused on the woman. To impose such suppressions, society invents different ways that range from open violence to treat the woman who aspires to show her intellectual abilities to disappointment that is masked by alleged scientific arguments. Within the context of response to this explicit and implicit suppression, Al-Sa'dawi introduces her literary experience through which she achieves two main goals simultaneously: *first*, self-assertion on the existential and social meaning of the phrase and *second*, carrying out the established concepts about the woman:

"From this stems the importance of work in the woman's life, not any work, but the creative work that she loves and can create and be excellent in it. By this, the woman who practices an artistic creative work saves herself from psychoneurosis because she asserts herself through her art and creative work. She finds in her art meaning to her life and her existence and by that she can stand solid with a coherent character in the face of other problems that are connected to marriage, children, home, and is never hit by psychoneurosis."<sup>89</sup>

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi applies this statement on her experience in life. We can say that this statement is derived from her as she applies it on the experiences of her heroines whether in the nineteen sixties or after that. Art is a fundamental component of the aware and mature existence and this is what is expressed in her frank statements and her artistic works alike. In her writing about the Self, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi seems to be at a high degree of critical awareness regarding her position within the frame of the relationships and society that surround her.

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid. p. 150.

<sup>89</sup> Al-Sa'dawi. Nawal. *Al-Untha Hiya al-Asl*. P. 207.

He acquisition of the writing language is an essential possession of the tool that enables her to express her personal life in its general and individual course in a female form as an apparent lexical sign (in her relation with a supposed reader), which cannot be achieved by a male form.

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi is considered one of the writers who wrote their life as an autobiography in a fictional model that revealed her goal. She is committed to a large amount of truth, approaching in that the subjective autobiographical art or the art of memoirs in *Mudbakkarat Tabiba* (1965), *Mudbakkarati fi Sijn al-Nisaa'* (1984), *Awraqi fi Hayati* in three parts (2000) and *Rihlati fi al-'Alam* (2005).

Through this style she introduced this autobiography in a way or another into her novels. We can say that despite all the obstacles that constituted a barrier between the woman and her Self, between the woman and her psychological and artistic truthfulness, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi managed to reflect to us somewhat of her general and individual truthfulness in her novels that we can consider her autobiography as successful work in the modern artistic meaning.

### 3. Summary and Conclusions

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi employed her life experiences in her novels in a daring, coherent and tight structure. In my view, it is possible to connect between Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's literature and her fictional product and the journey of her life and biography. Her personal reality is mixed with the novel discourse in many aspects. Therefore, the central character meets in Al-Sa'dawi's novels with the personality of the writer Nawal Al-Sa'dawi in many of her real features.

All these common features worked to interconnect the creative Self at the real level with the imagined Self that is represented in the heroines of the novels, who are described as rebellious against reality. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi went through difficult situations and suffered in a male society. She observed her suffering in her life since her childhood transparently in her autobiography, which is also reflected in her novels.

Al-Sa'dawi made her fictional characters live and move in an environment and places that are similar to those environments and places that she lived in and moved in with all those who lived with her. She made them talk in their own language, dialects and style. She made them do the same deeds and dressed them similar clothes. Thus, their appearance looked similar to a large extent to that of the characters' features in real life, which stresses the interconnectivity between the real life reality and the fictional novelistic reality.

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's does not fear revealing the hidden contents of her life in her autobiography and she knows the price of her revelation but is not scared of it. Consequently, she does not adopt the male discourse in her works. When talking about the female and her suffering was forbidden, Nawal Al-Sa'dawi spoke, and when the speech about the transgressions of society and its unjust treatment of the woman as a weak creature was forbidden, she spoke and her stories came successively with stories that turn up the painful things, and reveal the concealed events, and uncover the veils from the people's eyes and minds. She dug deeply in the issues of the female in order to put her hand on the places of the wounds in the woman's spiritual and physical entity.

Al-Sa'dawi continued her process of social criticism, and with the sense of the oppressed female, she registers those attitudes that appeared freely from behind the prison bars. She expressed the social and even political suffering of the woman through the read word, the heard story and the free pen.

Nawal Al-Sa'dawi continued further than that and dealt with the feelings of the female objectively. She spoke about love and the place of the woman and her feelings from it. She embodied reality and the declared cries that are represented by freedom from captivity and revolution against male domination. When talking about the particularities of the feminist suffering in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's novels and the breakdowns that result from that suffering, we found the language of oppression and language of pleasure that are reflected by the relations of love.

Here we stand in front of a fact that we rarely find a language of pleasure in her texts. In fact, we find sad broken emotionality that is sieged in soul and body and expectations, as if the presence of pleasure is confined to the maternity relationship.

Al-Sa'dawi's production is full of expression, description and vision regarding its connection and permeation into the social political and personal reality. Nawal Al-Sa'dawi details in her novels the net of the social, political, and psychological relations through:

Relationship with males, relationship with females, relationship with literature, indications of the chosen name in the novel, place space, time space, meeting between autobiography and imagination, and language of dialogue. Besides, we meet scenic images, cinema shots, and nightmarish associations when Nawal Al-Sa'dawi draws her prison in the novel of *Suqut al-Imam* and describes the cares of the imprisoned woman and images of poverty, oppression, persecution and alienation.

There is an important feature that critics and researchers stick to female autobiography, which is putting focus on the female 'Ego' (I). We found evidence and emphasis to that in Nawal Al-Sa'dawi's autobiography, where she narrates the reality of her life and her family's life and what happens to them in Egypt. She tells about the effect of her writings on her family and her readers and the objection of lots of them because of her employment of the pronoun "I". The woman in her novels takes the position of the center of the world through a mental language that adopts the pronoun "I" (as in: *Imra'ah Inda Nuqtat al-Sifr and Suqut al-Imam*), but she does not employ the pronoun "I" (as in: *Jannat wa Iblis and Zenab*), in her narration. In addition, she adopts the technique of exaggeration in symbolism, which can be nothing but the objective correlative to reality that collapses under the loads of destruction, ruin and detachment from the human values and the tragedy of the presence of ugliness and hideousness in an unbearable way.

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