

Similarities and Differences between Tucker

Green and Nawal

El Saadawi's Selected Plays.

أوجه التشابه والاختلاف في مسرحيات مختارة لديبي تكرر جرين ونوال السعداوى

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المخلص

يناقش كل من جرين والسعداوي قضايا العدالة وحقوق الإنسان ويأتى ذلك فى إطار مفهوم الإنسانية. ولقد تذبذب معنى النزعة الانسانية وفقا للحركات الفكرية المتلاحقة التي ارتبطت بها. وتحاول كل منهما استكشاف القضايا المتعلقة بالعدالة وحقوق الإنسان وانتهاكها في مسرحياتهم. وكلاهما لديه أجندة حقوق انسانية محددة. وتتناول جرين قضية العدالة وحقوق الإنسان للمهمشين، خاصة النساء. وتتناول "حقوق المرأة" و "حقوق السود" على أهما حقوق "إنسانية". وتناقش في مسرحياتها الثلاث : رجم مارى (2005) و اجيال (2005) والحقيقة والمصالحة (2011) قضايا القتل وفيروس نقص المناعة البشرية وأزمة الإيدز، والتمييز العنصري، والتمييز ضد المرأة، والتعذيب، والفقر، والإبادة الجماعية، والاعتداء الجنسى ، وحقوق الطفل، خاصة الأطفال الجنود والرجم في إفريقيا. وتتناول السعداوي فكرة "العدالة" وتدافع عن "حقوق الإنسان" في مسرحياتها اثنتى عشر امراة فى الزنزانة (1984) و ايزيس (1985) والزرقاء (2006)، مع التأكيد على "حقوق الإنسان" للمهمشين مثل النساء والفقراء فى العالم العربي، وبشكل أكثر تحديداً فى المجتمع المصري.. وتركز فى العديد من كتاباتها على القضايا الخلافية مثل الدعارة والعنف الجسدى والأصولية الدينية والبطالة. الحق فى التعليم؛ الحق فى العمل والحق فى الضمان الاجتماعى وحماية الصحة وحرية الكلام والفكر والتعبير. وتكشف جرين والسعداوي عن رسالتهم بأنهما إنسانيان ويتشاركان الحماس للدفاع عن حقوق الإنسان ودعم مطالبتهما المشروعة بالحقوق المدنية والسياسية، والحقوق الاقتصادية والاجتماعية والثقافية.

الكلمات الدالة: تاكجرين- السعداوي- إنسانية- العدل- حقوق الانسان- الحقوق المدنية والسياسية - الحقوق الاجتماعية - الحقوق الاقتصادية - الحقوق الثقافية

Abstract:

Tucker Green and El Saadawi discuss justice and human rights under the umbrella of humanism. They attempt to explore the issues relating to justice and human rights and its violation in their plays. Both of them have a specific rights agenda . Green serves the question of justice and human rights for the marginalized people, especially women. She presents "women's rights" and "black's rights" as "human" rights. In her plays , she discusses the contextual issues such as murder, HIV and AIDS crisis, incest, racial discrimination, discrimination against the women, torture, poverty, genocide, domestic and sexual abuse and the rights of the child,

El Saadawi supports the idea of 'justice' and defends the cause of 'human rights', with an emphasis on the "human rights" of the marginalized people such the women and the poor in the Arab world, and more specifically in the Egyptian society. Many of her writings focus on the controversial issues such as prostitution, domestic violence and religious fundamentalism, unemployment; the right to education; the right to work, the right to social security and

health protection, and freedom of speech, thought, expression. Green and El Saadawi reveal their messages to be humanists and they share the enthusiasm to defend human rights and support their legitimate claim to civil and political rights, socio- economic rights and cultural rights

Key Words: Tucker Green- El Saadawi- Humanism. Justice- Human rights. civil and political rights- socio-economic rights- cultural rights.

Both Tucker Green and Nawal El Saadawi highlight the role of the dramatists in directing the gaze of their audience and readers towards the values of justice and human rights under the umbrella of humanism . Both of them make valuable contributions to the struggles for human rights. Their concern with human rights which are universal by their nature permeates their work whether their focus is on global or local human rights. These plays are set in the "Third World" and reflect the political, socio economic and cultural disadvantages in "developing countries. The West and the East are dominated by universal humanistic principles.

This research compares with critical focus on Green and El Saadawi's attempts to explore the issues relating to justice and human rights and its violation in their plays. Both of them reveal their messages to be humanists and they share the enthusiasm to defend and support justice and human rights.

Their views diverge when it comes to their assessment of human rights.

Both Green and El Saadawi depict the contemporary realities of different kind of suffering and pain to raise awareness about the urgent human rights concerns. Their plays become recognition of the specifics of their experience within concerns about the real and "universal" rights for humanity. Green presents "women's rights" and "black's rights" as "human" rights. For Lynette Goddard, the distinctive contribution that Green makes to contemporary theatre is her staging of black experience as "universal (2015, 17). Green discusses the important issues concerning the plight of women and black, especially in the third world. She devotes her plays to prove that women and black are equal in fighting against difficulties. It is essential to mention that Green's plays are both specific tackling the life of the black family, and universal in dealing with the concept of family in general as well. The nuclear family –Mum, Dad, Sister, Brother– is her basis. This centrality of the family anchors Green's exploration of global themes in her three plays: *Stoning Mary* (2005), *Generations* (2005), *Truth and Reconciliation* (2011).

The contextual issues which might describe her plays are murder, HIV and AIDS crisis, incest, racial discrimination,

discrimination against the women, torture, poverty, genocide, domestic and sexual abuse and the rights of the child, especially child soldiers and public stoning in Africa. Green's treatment of such issues which tend to be bold, controversial and epic in their scope could be described as thematically diversified and conservative. Green resists any imperative to make the topics of her work explicit. For example, we might infer that *Stoning Mary* explores AIDS and addresses its effects on the family though this is never stated explicitly. The audience's understanding is mediated through the family's pain at their personal suffering.

Stoning Mary does not explicitly portray young people in war. The sudden appearance of the child soldier suggests a connection to the mass loss of lives through AIDS couple and genocide. *Generations* also explores AIDS and the subject matter is never stated, with only an implicit sense of the crisis inferred from the loss of young lives and Grandma's reference to 'This thing./ [...] This big dying thing' (87), which is reiterated and expanded by Grandad in the final scene: 'This dying thing... This unease. This dis-ease/ (89).

On the other hand, El Saadawi introduces "Arab women's rights", especially "Egyptian Women's rights", "The poor classes' rights" as "human rights" in a different way. She raises the question: How we can talk about human rights

without extending them to include the political, socio-economic and cultural rights. She explains that her reference of the themes of her plays is taken from her life and the Arabic-Egyptian culture and history.

Contrary to Green, El Saadawi confines her works to the local human rights issues in the Arab World, especially in Egypt. In her conversation with Adele Newson- Horst, she says: " I do not write for the West . I write for people everywhere who believe in justice, freedom, love, equality, peace, and creativity. But I do write in Arabic; therefore I write mainly for people in our countries" (2008, 58).

The contextual issues which might describe her plays *Twelve Women in a Cell*, *Isis* and *Al Zarqaa* include the protection against unemployment; the right to education; the right to work, the right to social security and health protection, the right to a respectable standard of living (housing, water, food, clothing and many others), freedom of speech, thought, opinion, expression, the right to participate in political movements, the right of fair trial and freedom of press. These issues seem mostly explicit in El Saadawi's plays.

For instance, the cell that hosts twelve Egyptian women in *Twelve Women in a Cell* becomes the Arab patriarchal society, within which these women struggle as their ultimate

goal becomes survival at the light of human rights. The nature of society presented in *Isis* is patriarchal. Isis's experience stands for every other woman's similar experience under the umbrella of an oppressive patriarchal society. Isis experience should extend to include every oppressed woman.

In *Al Zarqaa*, the industrial society represented in a group of workers in a factory who suffer from the capitalist patriarchal system, reframed as the New World Order, which has developed oppressive policies of controlling the workers to facilitate more exploitation of the poor, especially the poor workers in the Third World.. In her defense of the poor workers' rights, El Saadawi shows that imbalanced societies always suffer from class distinction, and the capitalists/ bourgeois often oppress the working class/ proletariat . She shows El Wali as the exploiter who stands for the capitalist patriarchal system.

Each playwright has her own perspective. What distinguishes Green's work from El Saadawi's plays is her dramaturgy, which draws on an African cosmological system. Green's work, both thematically and stylistically, draws on the influences and legacy of the African Diaspora. Diaspora and its concerns remain highly relevant to Green's work. Her social and political perspectives remain rooted in the African

Diaspora. Her identity remains shaped by her race and gender.

Unlike El Saadawi , Green does not access African symbolism, history and mythology in order to explore her own identity. The question of identity as something that needed to be defined and defended does not occupy Green. She does not look inward but outward at the world. She draws attention to specifically African issues that arise from the histories of exploitation of human beings. According to El Saadawi, the word "identity" is a postmodern term and a dangerous word because it divides people according to culture, ethnicity, , religion, class, race, gender, language, and other false distinctions imposed on us . In *The Reader*, she mentions that "there is no pure identity but the human identity" (1997, 332).

El Saadawi believes women should look for their identity within their own culture. She mentions that women's oppression is inseparable from class and race . El Saadawi, unlike Green, accesses mythology to explore her own identity. Gerard Genette's concept of literary adaptation deals with the influence of a given contemporary context on the renewal and reintroduction of a former text in a manner consistent with the author's ideological background. Her play *Isis* is a modern adaptation of the ancient Egyptian myth of

Isis and Osiris. El Saadawi casts her play in mythic mold but the events of the plot lack the incredible supernatural incidents existed in the original story myth.

In *Isis*, the tragicomedy is revealed through many serious incidents such as the military coup, murders, castrations, decapitation, suffering and injustice, then the final triumph of the forces of good over the forces of evil. She denies that Isis is a deity who is endowed with omnipotence. Isis is an ordinary woman who has sharp intelligence and rationality and knows how to use them well.

According to Fragkou and Goddard, Green's plays pay due attention to foreground "universal" emotions of loss, grief and anger' (2013, 246). These emotions play an important role politicizing subjects, particularly the problems and issues of women and black race. Identities such as gender and race are the reasons that lie behind her anger. Her plays are "angry" ones. Anger has served as a force for feminism to speak against injustices toward women.

Marianne Elliott describes *Stoning Marry* as an 'angry' play. In the play, women's failure to come out in support of each other also comes angrily to the fore in this play. After her failed petition against punishment for the wrong, she has righted by the revenge killing of the boy soldier who murdered her parents, the older sister abandons younger sister

who holds tight to her anger at the failure of feminist sympathy. The younger sister is left with 'no stay of exe-fuckin-nuthin' (67) to face the ordeal of her execution without a sympathetic witness. 'Not even the women' (67) have come out to support her. She launches her angry tirade in the 'bitches speech:

Betcha bitches'll come to my stonin, /Betchu they do./Betcha bitches'll come out for that tho./Bring a bitch fuckin picnic and make the/ effort./ Dressed like a bitch on occasion as they/watch./Bet iss a bitch be first in the queue.../Be first to fuckin throw.../Fuck it./Fuck em./Fuck them. (70-71).

Green has confronted audiences with an innovative and challenging mode of theatrical engagement with human rights abuses and global injustices. In plays such as *Stoning Mary* and *Generations* she calls attention to issues such as the use of child soldiers and the African AIDS. She makes an assertion of shared humanity and consequent responsibility through dramatizing specific situations. The device of 'witnessing' which is absolutely absent in El Saadawi's plays works to promote the astonishment that Walter Benjamin infers. Benjamin argues that '[Epic theatre] consists in arousing astonishment rather than empathy" (2003,18). The audience as witnesses are asked takes responsibility for what

they see and hear and are offered the possibility for a more critical reflection on issues of social injustice and human rights abuse.

By reading El Saadawi's work alongside Tucker Green's, El Saadawi's plays also seem "angry". According to Ebtehal Al Khatib " El Saadawi seems to direct her anger at her readers as contributors to, passive viewers of, or even shy protesters against the oppression of the minority in her society" (2013, 5). This brings us back to the idea of feminist anger as a legitimate response to pain.

For El Saadawi, anger continues to have political potential. She considers dramatic text as a means of revealing the world of women and poor to readers. Like El Saadawi, her characters in *Twelve Women in a Cell* express their anger towards the bad conditions they suffer.. Anger can be a way to interpret and transform suffering that give rise to the pain. It is impossible to separate anger of the characters from their pain. Anger represents a reaction to pain which extended to human beings in general. Green's plays are full of women testifying about pain as a result of violence. For Green, most countries recognize gender violence including domestic violence, and have developed a strategy to raise awareness and to support victims of gender violence.

Green does not explicitly show instances of violence in her plays. Her plays do not stage any explicit image of violence. For instance, In *Stoning Mary*, the acts of violence – the child soldier's attack on Husband and Wife, and the public torture of his killer – are confined to the blackouts between scenes. In the last scene, Mary's hair is shaved by the Correction Officers, and the play ends with "Mum pick[ing] up her first stone (73), without showing the rest or the brutality of Mary's stoning.

Physical violence is conveyed through dialogues, descriptions, and certain images, which is similar to the use of verbal violence in the play. One of the characters who uses verbal violence is Older Sister. She first appears in the play, following her parents' death, when she visits her sister in prison. She is depicted as an aggressive woman. Though it is difficult to relate her aggressive behavior directly to the tragic loss of her parents, it can be argued that she verbally abuses her sister Mary.

The theatrical representation of a patriarchal class system may be traced in El Saadawi's plays. They deal mostly with the form of gender inequality and the suffering of women in traditional patriarchal societies as reflected in her plays. El Saadawi strives hard to deconstruct the patriarchal class system by revealing its dark side where women are raped and

destroyed for being women. In *Isis*, for instance, she devotes an entire scene to the issue of rape, as its events take place in the old market:

"A squad of soldiers, headed by the army chief, roam the market to maintain security and order, and some of them are looted and kidnapped under the guise of maintaining security. People's eyes, while they look at them, show fear and panic.

The army chief looks at a young beautiful girl sitting next to her mother selling chickens. He looks at the girl with lust, and sees that she attaches the image of the goddess Isis in her chest. He pulls the image strongly from her neck and cries angrily. The girl and her mother shivered in panic (I, iii, 36)

It is evident from this scene that the culture of patriarchal rape dominates the whole scene, ranging between the soldiers 'rape of the peasants' properties and the army chief's greed to rape the beautiful girl. It is worthy to note that the victim is sacrificed at the altar of the patriarchal class system.

In *El Zarqaa*, also, the suffering of pain as a result of violence is extended to working poor. Their suffering is clear when El Saadawi dramatizes the extreme violence enacted

against Shuhdi by the jailer. Shuhdi becomes the main narrator of the day's events in the factory and the one who bears witness of the workers' suffering and their grief:

Shuhdy (*in a very tired voice*) : I am not a mule. I am Shuhdy. I am a human being; I lived among the people in the factory. I carried them and their children on my hand. I was seeing a child digging into the trash can like a dog to find a bone. ... a rotten piece of bread ... some rice that neighbors left and threw in the rubbish (II, vi, 58)

These plays prove that women and the poor are equal in fighting against inhuman and unjust forms. She replaced the family by the human society which takes its form from the term "patriarchy" which may be called "patriarchal society" constrained and dominated by patriarchal mentality.

The autobiographical quality is absent in Green's plays. Her voice is made evident in the use of the lower-case when she writes her own name or the title of her plays to highlight the primacy of her work over herself as a writer. "She refuses to speak of her own ancestry, although her family appears to have come from Jamaica, and [she] is unwilling to reveal her date and place of birth, considering that her origins are irrelevant to an understanding of her work (Peacock 2008,

59-60). Her productions identify a precise geopolitical location. She is often anxious to attend to topics beyond black Britain.

Green combines black and white actors and actresses and explores different sittings to prove that her theatre addresses not only black audience, but human beings in large, because her stories deal with marginalization, discrimination and violence. For instance, in *Stoning Mary*, Green stipulates that the play is "set in the country it is performed in" All characters are white" (2). Also, *Generations* makes implicit reference to South Africa. It explores African themes such as the devastations of AIDS, reflecting Green's global ethical viewpoint .The play dramatically portrays the effects of disease and poverty on a personal and national level. *Truth and Reconciliation* is set in five countries: Bosnia, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Rwanda and Zimbabwe. By transporting African issues across continents into a British setting, Green makes the trauma of such atrocities more tangible for her imagined white liberal audience (Interview, 2003).

While the autobiographical quality is absent in Green's plays, it is evident in most of El Saadawi's works. In the latter's autobiography, she describes and speaks extensively about critical moments of her life by moving among different

stages. On the personal note, she speaks about her imprisonment and transferred this experience into her works. For example, El Saadawi's *Twelve Women in a Cell* is based on her experiences in prison that functions as a metaphor for the predicament of all Arab women.

In the play, the women in the prison are deprived of their basic rights as prisoners. In their quest for liberation from the injustices and oppression exercised against them, they do not know the reasons stand behind their imprisonment. Salma says: I want to know why I'm here (29) They suffer from a lack of health care. They are allowed to smoke cigarettes. Cockroaches and bugs spread in the prison. The bucket is used as a bathroom. The female political prisoners are prevented from listen to the radio or watching television. They feel hungry and do not get enough bread. Salma says: I'm always hungry here, two pieces of bread a day isn't enough (32) and the Governor comments: why only two pieces? They should be getting three! (32)

On the contrary, in Green's *Stoning Mary*, the prisoners get their rights of health in prison. Older sisters contests the fact that Mary has rights; the fact that Mary's eyesight has improved because she was given a pair of glasses in prison, and that she has quit smoking, signals a healthier body that Older Sister resents: " [y]ou don't got the right- you lost that

right- you lost that right when you started me startin- you lost that right before you lost your rights, right? (84). Older Sister's claim that ' I could be goin blind and no one wouldn't know/- no one wouldn't want to know' (45) is one of the many allusions in the play to the idea of someone's needs being overlooked and ignored by those who have the ability to make things change.

Both Green and El Saadawi's plays are influenced by feminism but they serve the women rights in different ways. They devote their plays to prove that women, black and poor are equal in fighting against difficulties. Women have the right to freedom in economic, political, social, educational and all other affairs.

For example, Feminist analyses of *Stoning Mary* are evidenced in the inability of the female characters to care for each other. It indicates a breakdown of feminist unity and activism in a post-feminist context .The issues are alluded to between the lines of the play focus on the domestic quarrels between the pairs of characters. The AIDS afflicted characters, Husband and Wife can only afford one prescription; each pointing out how their own survival should be valued over the other's .They are forced to fight each other for their own survival because their economic position only allows them to be able to afford one bottle of

medicine. Fragkou and Goddard have suggested that the very absence of care within many of Green's plays is the key provocation of her work, a provocation that reproduces an ethical obligation through a complex spectatorial encounter (2013,148)

On the other hand, in a 2010 interview with *The Guardian*, El Saadawi states, “For me feminism includes everything”. “It is social justice, political justice, sexual justice . . . It is the link between medicine, literature, politics, economics, psychology and history. Feminism is all that. You cannot understand the oppression of women without this”.

In her conversation with Newson –Horst , El Saadawi says " I am a humanist and socialist and I am against classism, racism, against all kinds of discrimination " (2008, 55) . She adds "I am a feminist writer" (2008, 58). It is important to note, however, that El-Saadawi is one of the most radical feminist writers in the Arab world. She calls for women's basic rights in an unjust society. When El Saadawi is asked to describe herself, She answered:

I am African from Egypt, not from the Middle East. The Middle East is a term used relative to London so that India becomes the Far East. I am not from the Third World. There is one world that is racist and a capitalist- economy world. I

became a feminist when I was a child and started to ask questions... to become aware that women are oppressed and feel discrimination. Feminism is very broad in the Arab World and includes issues of political, historical, cultural, personal, social and religious significance (2008, 55).

In El Saadawi's *Isis*, for example, the "feminist philosophy ... is based on weakness and helplessness with swords and weapons" (I,i,32). El Saadawi argues that "Real power is the police, the military, capital, and religion. Women are outside this real power in the north as well as in the south" (1997:24). This regime considers women as inferior citizens, Set tells Ra about Isis that "no matter how much she rebels against you, [she] is only one woman and not dangerous" (I, i, 38).

Ra has a negative image about women as he believes that "the problem is that we [men] cannot have sons who inherit the throne after us without women. If it were possible for a man to get pregnant and to give birth, we would have disposed of women completely" (II, ii, 92). Within the patriarchal system, Set articulates the traditional view of women:

A woman was not created to rule. She was created to become an affectionate mother and a gentle, quiet wife who

waits for her husband with a tender smile, cheerful face, and a soft perfumed body... Yes, this is the ideal wife... Nothing disturbs her mind or heart except her husband... [This is the] calm obedient female. (I, v, 79).

Both Green and El Saadawi highlight women's suffering and can be read as indictments of so-called female solidarity. Solidarity among women can be a powerful force of change, and can influence future development in ways favorable not only to women but also to men . They are the poorest and the most oppressed and exploited, especially when class, color, race and religion intersect.

In *Stoning Mary*, for instance, the play refers to a lack of solidarity amongst women who failed to unite and combat for their cause. Older Sister breaks her promise to attend her younger sibling's stoning, Despite Younger Sister's graphic outline of what will happen to her – ' they 'll shave my head./ [...]then strip me down/ [...] then lead me out' (60), Mary's body is dehumanized by her own community who has failed to act to stop the stoning from going ahead.

In *Truth and Reconciliation*, in the court in South African Mum obstinately refuses to sit down until the white policeman who killed her daughter twenty- two years earlier arrives at the hearing. Grandmother Nana implores Mama

(her daughter) ' to sit/side by side with/ me' (41) in a show of female strength and solidarity.

Despite all the difficulties that women face, the world witnesses a great solidarity of people seeks common goals. El Saadawi discusses the human solidarity among peoples of the world to resist the global injustice at the local and international levels to discover what is common to us all – our basic humanity and our longing for justice. It is a human solidarity rooted in the rejection of all forms of discrimination based on class, gender, race and color . For example, in *Twelve Women in a Cell*, the women come from different classes and religious backgrounds but they have one aim represented in the female solidarity. This solidarity of women is what El Saadawi introduces and asserts its effectiveness in this play and in her work in general. In *Isis*, El Saadawi calls for solidarity, not only among women but also among the different oppressed sectors of society to confront oppression:

Isis. People are strong when they come together.....The power of the people is stronger than the sword. The blade may triumph once, twice, or three times... However the power of he people is the only weapon that is going to prevail in the long run. (II, iv, 102)

The backlash against the rights of women and the poor is universal, and not specific to our Arab religion or to Islamic countries. The oppression of women and poor classes constitutes an integral part of the capitalist patriarchal system prevalent in most of the world. Both Green and El Saadawi foreground the experiences of women and the lives of those who are marginalized and traumatized. They focus on the female characters in their plays. For instance, in Green's *Truth and Reconciliation* there are many female characters such as the South African mother and the Bosnian woman, who may be classed as victims of one kind or another. These characters, like many of Green's are explicitly situated in terms of race and gender, so that in this play ' [t]he South African family and Zimbabwean characters are Black. Bosnian, Serb, South African Officer and Irish characters are white (2011, 3).

The female characters of Green's plays are depicted as violent and self- serving. She does not romanticize her characters. In *Stoning Mary*, when Older Sister visits Mary in prison, she avoids discussing the death sentence. Instead she complains about being called to visit and challenge Mary's human rights. She criticizes her sister's appearance in a manner which indicates her resentment for the attention Mary has received for killing the child soldier.

In this play, Green uses the technique of doubling Husband and Wife with Egos. Some characters are shadowed by EGO characters that offer important commentary and verbalize the couple's inner and unconscious thought. The Egos also function to interpret the implied silences between the main characters. This role is particularly valuable to the reader of the published script, who lacks access to the characters' non-verbal communication.

Ambiguity is a key to Green's treatment of characters. Most of Green's characters are given names such as Mum, Dad, Wife, Husband, Older Sister and Younger Sister. Goddard has suggested that the lack of names avoids limiting the plays to a particular ethnic context (2010), and instead issues an appeal to any spectator to imagine their own "mum" or "Junior Sister" involved in the horrors onstage. These names are identified by their multiple relationships with one another than being named as independent individuals. Her concern for human relationship is stressed in her tendency not to use proper nouns.

Green uses the technique of collective storytelling in the history of human rights. The intention was to foreground ' the stories of people who would be in the headlines every day if what was happening to them was happening to white people' (qtd in Gardner 2005). She presents characters

struggling in situations typically seen afflicting non- white people in the news (child soldiers; lack of antiretroviral drugs for Aids suffers; women sentenced to death by stoning). The play takes issues with the global injustices of First and Third Worlds.

In Green's *Truth and Reconciliation*, for instance, the female characters are clever storytellers with a creative imaginary. Their stories are told by a narrator tries to uncover the paradoxes of human behavior and the resultant injustices. The stories involve characters who have been the victims of human rights violations. The victims' stories are interwoven so that each unfolds episodically over the duration of the play.

There are many female characters also in El Saadawi's plays. For example, In *Twelve Women in a Cell*, as it is clear from its title, the majority of the characters are female. There are more than twelve women include different types of women like a university professor, a prostitute, an atheist, and a fundamentalist Muslim. They address each other and comment on each other's reactions and thoughts because there is no physical wall existing among them. By placing the social, ideological and class assortment of women within a single prison cell , El Saadawi inflates the ambiguity of her characters in the play.

El Saadawi introduces flesh and blood characters carry proper names. The characters who are not provided with individual names and are labeled by their functions such as the Egyptian sailor, the High Priest and the Army Chief in *Isis*, and El Wali in *Al Zarqaa* , for example, are types stand for the institutions they represent. Clearness and simplicity are characteristics of her characters. They participate, dream with everybody else, and share the worries and the hopes of their community, the good and bad sides of it.

According to El Saadawi, the female characters are powerful ones who resist oppression with all their might. Alia is the hero who offers to be taken instead of Neffissa, who has suspiciously been called by the Inspector. Alia, the freethinker as El Saadawi calls her, is the most similar character who represents El Saadawi herself either explicitly in her interviews or implicitly in her autobiographical works. In the dramatic scene that concludes the play, she replies to the new Inspector question, "[W]hat are you?" by answering, "[H]uman" (1994, 183).

El Saadawi's characters also can be accused of being violent, aggressive or non-feminine. They can steal, kill or die fighting. For example, the female characters in *Twelve Women in a Cell* such as Zeinab, the criminal and Sabah, the beggar:

Zeinab (*Looks at her hands.*) I killed him. When I saw him do it with my own eyes. (*She shuts her eyes.*) I hit him with the pickaxe, chopped him up, put him in a bag and threw him into the sea. (*She laughs.*) The fish finished him long ago. (*Zeinab gets up suddenly.*)(117)

El Saadawi uses the foil character technique. It is a character who contrasts with another character. It is used to highlight some qualities of a character with another character. In *Isis*, she contrasts Osiris who embodies good and justice with Set who embodies evil and injustice. She also uses the technique of collective storytelling. In *Twelve women in a Cell*, the female prisoners tell the stories of their arresting. When Azza asked Bassima to tell them something, Bassima told the story of her arresting: "Before they arrested me, I was in hiding for some time. You can't imagine how tired I was. All I wanted to do was find a bed and sleep". (81). The dialogue between Salma and Alia also tells us how they are arrested:

SALMA They took me from the street; I was going to see my mother.

ALIA They broke down the door. They knocked for a long time but I wouldn't let them in.

SALMA They had no orders, no warrant, nothing.

They don't tell you anything. 'Where are you going, love?'

They said: 'Come with us, we'll take you home' they said. I would have yelled out if I'd known. (86)

Green's plays are not based on actual testimony or facts. She breaks away from the familiar traditions of documentary theatre and social responsibility by focusing on the emotional aftermath of the instances of violence and murder. Green mentions that "the play [*Stoning Mary*] is not a documentary about Africa" (cited in McLaughlin, 2005, 4), but in fact it expresses an urgent response to the human issues affecting Africa by raising awareness about the practice of stoning, child soldiers and the AIDS crisis in sub-Saharan Africa. Green seeks to bring the plight of Africa's racially and economically marginalized to our attention.

On the contrary, El Saadawi's plays are documentary. Actually they do not only document discrimination against women, but also against the poor and the marginalized. In *Twelve Women in a Cell* she exposes the details of the Egyptian life. She uncovers and discusses many negative aspects of the modern Egyptian society, especially in the second half of the twentieth century such as gender distinction against women, racial discrimination, delusion of

mass media, unjust laws, as well as spread of ignorance, poverty, corruption and injustice in our society.

, *AL Zarqaa*, documents the bad conditions of the working poor in the Egyptian society. The workers are prototypes of the marginalized people in their society. These working poor suffer during their life and after their death. They lack the social protection umbrella against injustice forms they are suffering from. El Saadawi calls to enact the legislations that can keep the rights of the workers, especially the poor.

On one hand, Green's words reveal her belief that the media fail to represent important issues concerning the plight of black people, especially in the third world. For Green, this inability is determined by how news circulates through media and its strategies of ignoring particular issues while paying attention to the problems of the West. Green suggests that events taking place in Africa would be regarded very differently by Westerners when they happening in Europe, implying a similar concern about the partiality of Western human rights agenda.

The shift of the perspective of Western audience from Africa to their own homes is an effective strategy employed in *Stoning Mary*. This strategy draws attention to transnational

concerns regarding the uneven distribution of wealth and unequal material conditions between Africa and the Western world. Before each scene in *Stoning Marry* begins, its title is projected onto the set in a bright white light. These titles, reminiscent of newspaper headlines, frame each scene. The tension created by the titles and the scenes of human suffering which follow highlight the media's portrayal of the human stories behind them.

On the other hand, El Saadawi points out that "knowledge generates power" (1997, 4), the country tries to hinder the spread of knowledge among the citizens through media which "delude the people by placing a veil on their minds through which they cannot see what is happening to them or around them" (1997, 4). This is exemplified in *Isis* when Ra orders Seth to circulate the false news that Ra does not "appear on earth and [his] dwelling is in the disc of the sun" and urges him that people must be convinced that Ra is "the almighty god" (I, i, 39).

El Saadawi's words mention that "many people are deceived by the mediasponsored by the state" (1997,12). She adds, the media have become more efficient at obscuring the real aims of those international institutions or groups that speak about justice, equality and human rights, but whose decisions lead to the opposite (1997, 78). Trumpets and

Psalms, for instance, in *Isis* represent the media. They are the sources of information for people:

The chief of army: We announced in trumpets and psalms that the era of poverty and humiliation has ended forever and the era of prosperity, safety and freedom has come, and there will not be one hungry nor one naked , and every farmer will have a house lit by solar energy and the power of the greatest God Ra. (I,v,51)

Presenting complex emotional issues and character interactions through the form of a ritual is a hallmark of Green's dramaturgy. She is more interested in integrating ritual elements into her plays as a means of facilitating her social critique. This ritualization is found across many of Green's plays (cooking a family meal in *Generations*, to social interactions and meetings (visiting someone or offering someone a seat in *Truth and Reconciliation*, to crime and punishment in *Stoning Mary* (woman sentenced to death for killing the child).

El Saadawi shares Green in using ritualization but within a patriarchal system. The most obvious aspects of ritual Green and El Saadawi employ in their plays are the use of repetition and musicality. These activities are found in

the plays of both dramatists. Through the use of repetition, Green gets audience engaged and gives them the ability to imagine when they are going to see a play and ask questions.

In *Generations* , for example , the preparation of food is the main action at the beginning of the play. In each cycle a family member disappears. The food is uneaten and preparation begins again. As the play progresses, a family member leaves: first the younger sister, then the elder sister and her boyfriend, the father and then the mother until just the grandparents remain. With each character's 'death' the dialogue between the family members is repeated again with each family member's passing.

The play is composed of relatively few lines that are repeated again and again: Mum: “This is how your father started with me.” Dad: “I needed a meal...She looked well fed.”(73). As interpreted by the centered actors, the words seem nostalgic one minute and menacing the next. The repetitive sections of dialogue in *Generations* resemble the prescribed order of events which characterizes ritual practices. Green uses the ritual of every day in order to create a contemporary ritual theatre.

For El Saadawi, the plot of *Isis* has repetition with some variation. This repetition is presented through introducing two husbands in the name of Osiris. Isis is

married twice. First to her brother god Osiris, then to the common Egyptian sailor. The variation is that the first is killed in the military coup to pass the throne to Seth. The second is killed for his claim that he is Osiris, Isis's husband. Seth finds it humiliating that the royal blood is mixed with that of the commons.

The use of music as a dramatic device underscores the emotional impact and broadens the scope of the theatrical experience. *Generations*, ends with the choir singing the South African national anthem. The choir sings a prologue and epilogue reciting a long list of African names: “Another leaves us, another has gone” (67). The choice of choir to surround the audience breaks down the divide between the performance and the audience which implicate spectators as witnesses. According to Aleks Sierz ' some audience members joined in [with the singing], but some were nervous about the breakdown of the usual distance between performers and spectators' (2011,89).

El Saadawi uses songs in her plays. In *Twelve Women in a Cell*, Sabah, the beggar and Zouba , the prostitute sing and repeat their chants . El Saadawi wants to attract our attention to the social atmosphere under which two women live. Both of women suffer poverty. They choose the wrong

way. The first chooses the way of stealing and the second chooses the way of prostitution. Sabah repeats her chant:

Honest people thrown in the mud

The son- of- a- bitch ruling as he pleases (10)

Zouba also repeats a folk song:

Whoever wants to marry me,

Show me what you can do,

Don't bore me to death,

With your life history (47)

Symbolism plays an important role in Green's plays. In *Generations*, for example, the cooking symbolizes both a sense of the foundations upon which the family generations have been built. It signifies home, nourishment, the passing on a traditions and skills also acquires meaning through repetition. In the process, the notion of waste, futility, and the impact of the regression the disease is causing in society is underlined. Thus the natural order of death is reversed.

The choir in the play is a symbol of the world of the dead. Sacha Wares explains its significance in an interview with Jane Edwardes : 'You get the small domestic situation and then you get the wider significance of the drama through

the choir. [...] [T]he choir is not there to pad the show out. The choir is there to give it greater resonance. The characters are all suppressing their emotions because they are trying to keep going. The function of the choir is the release of that emotion' (cited in Edwardes, *Time Out*, 26 February 2007)

In a similar way, El Saadawi's plays have become an allegorical microcosm of the world she knew and participated in. As a symbolic text, the female characters in *Twelve Women in the Cell* appear to be allegorical representations rather than realistic characters. In the play, we meet twelve women come from different social, ideological and educational spheres, ranging from the prostitute to the professor. Also, the framed "portrait of a man" (1994,7) is significant. It's a symbol of the head of authority. As a religious symbol, the veil is introduced as an icon of resistance and a tool for the imposition of power.

In *Isis*, god Ra declares: "I hereby order the castration of all the servants and slaves in our sacred palace and the circumcision of all the women and girls in our precious harem" (II,ii,94). In fact, castration and circumcision in the play are symbols of the oppression and the patriarchal political domination of the people to ensure that they do not aspire to oppose the authority:

God Ra: We must suppress the revolution in its cradle

Priest: Let us begin, O greatest God, with castration of slaves and circumcision of women. He who does not know the lust of sex does not know the lust for ruling, and it is easy to subdue him. (II, ii, 106)

Language is a primary focus for Green who plays with language in powerful ways. She uses the devices of silences – the unspoken. Silence carries various meanings in her plays. Nicola Abram suggests that Green uses silence to negotiate political subject matter in *Stoning Mary*, *Generations* and *Truth and Reconciliation*. Her use of silence allows for the emergence of a 'surrogate language of the body' (2014, 121) by which actors need to physically communicate what is silenced from speech.

In the opening stage directions, Green specifies that the slashes denote overlapping dialogue and "names appearing without dialogue indicate active silences between characters listed" (2005,2). It is not uncommon to encounter a page in the play script as bare as the following:

MUM They *took* him.

They did.

DAD

MUM

MUM

MUM

DAD Wash it now . . .

MUM

DAD Run your hands over his number one now. (35)

Dad fails to respond to Mum's opening comment, which provokes a protracted silence from Mum in turn. Green combines and contrasts two representational modes: visual and aural. Indeed, the failure to speak is often accompanied by a failure to look.

Deidre Osborne argues that the form of Green's writing constitutes a 'dramatic poetics' built on strategies of linguistic experimentation that are best observed on the page rather than in performance (2011). For example, in sequences such as Younger Sister's speech in *Stoning Mary*. Green moves entirely into a poetic form as Younger Sister delivers six stanzas of a rhythmically charged diatribe against different

groups of women who purport s feminist solidarity but haven't supported her cause

British playwriting guides see conflict as central to the construction of a drama. The conflicting perspectives are obvious either in Green's plays or El Saadawi's. In Green's *Truth and Reconciliation*, for example, these perspectives are clear in Green's treatment of the archetypal human rights figures of the victim and the perpetrator. Also, in El Saadawi's *Isis*, another conflicting perspective shows the good represented in Osiris who embodies good and justice against Seth who embodies evil and injustice.

Both Green and El Saadawi use the element of conflict that Tim Fountain sees as central to the construction of drama (2007,10-11). In Green's *Stoning Marry* , for example, we observe two families who are confined within a continuous conflict over a bottle of antiretroviral as they deal with the effects of genocide, a thematic focus that produces both inter-personal and extra- personal conflict.

On the other hand, in *Twelve Women in a Cell*, Azza, the Westernized character, tries to join Etedal, the devout Muslim, her circle, she says, "[C]ome and sit with us". Etedal's reply reveals an inner conflict often connected with the extremist mindset: "I like you, you know, but...you'll suffer forever" (1994, 52). in *Al Zarqaa*, Dr. Fahim suffers

from an inner conflict between a person's duty to adhere to the truth and his responsibility towards his children to provide them with the basic necessities of life. Dr. Fahim abandons his faith in the principles in order to secure the needs of his family.

Green's plays are full of ambiguous plots that resist closure. Green's plot in *Generations*, for example, is not progressive / linear. Through the repetitive dialogue and circular action, meaning is made not by linear progression but rather by what Okagbue defines as "a process of cumulative associations". The action is played out chronologically. Green writes the dialogue for *Generations* in Standard English with few references to her characteristic black vernacular. The use of Standard English, however, is underlined by the reintroduction of the South African choir at crucial moments that work to remind us of the specific racial and geographical context.

These plays often compromise fragmented scenes which provide key information slowly and without a full explanation and tie together in the end. When the scene comes to close, the theme comes into focus and provides a glimpse into the writer's aims. For example, *Stoning Mary* juxtaposes three stories without framing or explanation: an AIDS- suffering husband and wife clash over a single

prescription; a mother and father fight over the memory of their absent son; a young woman visits her sister in prison. Also, *Truth and Reconciliation* is made up of disconnected and interwoven vignettes set in five different countries which share a common experience of prolonged war, genocide, conflict and trauma. The scenes are not delivered in chronological order.

In contrast with Green, chronological linearity and the dramatic unity shapes El Saadawi's plays. In *Isis*, the play follow linear structure as there is neither analepsis nor prolepsis. El Saadawi uses everyday language and writes her plays in a combination of standard and colloquial modern Egyptian Arabic.

Green discusses the problems and diagnoses the cases of the black continent without introducing solutions such as the case in *Stoning Mary* and *Generations*. Green's work is always about asking complex question about what's happening in the world we live in now. Green's plays invite questions and debates about the important and global issues. The progress is not made through solutions but through asking more questions.

El Saadawi introduces the problems and its solutions. She also suggests a vision. The issue of marginalization of Arab women and the poor takes a number of forms mostly

stemming from patriarchal knowledge upon which the Arab societies were built. In An interview done by Rajaa Gharbi, El Saadawi speaks of the roots and forms of marginalization. She believes that the resolving of such marginalization only comes through addressing patriarchal culture. *Twelve Women in a cell*, for instance, is a unique text draws together a number of characters based on individuals who are marginalized in Egyptian society.

She provides a vision of how to confront oppression such as that of women in rural Egypt and change it. She sees the promised utopian society will be reached through a collective effort and constant resistance of all women of the world of all ages, regardless of their class, race and religion. In *Isis Addressing Maat*, Isis says, "My mother died while resisting. We must resist as well until the last breath "(I, iii, 44).

Finally, by focusing on the precision and detail of Green and El Saadawi's plays discussed, their drama simultaneously seeks to reframe broader debates around justice and human rights in the light of contemporary drama and its politics. The drama of both of them has values for human rights as a means for raising awareness of the fact of injustice to present complex ethical questions that stem from the specific and

subjective experience of those marginalized women and poor in an often unjust world.

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