

into binary structures/axes (e.g., A. Sheridan's translation of *Ecrits*, 1977) of the kind professor McGlathery uses as a basis for his analytical procedure.

Nawal el-Saadawi

Searching

Translated from the Arabic by Shirley Eber

London: Zed Books, 1991. Pp. 114. £3.95 (\$7.95).

Reviewed by Ramzi M. Salti

Not unlike many of Nawal el-Saadawi's other feminist works which generally deal with the situation of women in Egypt, *Searching* (originally published in Arabic as *Al-Ghâ'ib*, not dated) is a novel that operates on a dual level. On one level, the reader is led on an eventful journey through Cairo in the company of the main character, Fouada, who is looking for her lover, Farid. On a less apparent level, however, the reader is also being taken on a psychological journey through Fouada's mind as she discovers that her quest, which originally centered on her absent lover, gradually takes on the form of a search for some significance for her own life. As the story unfolds, the reader is constantly reminded that Farida's seemingly new awareness "was not exactly a discovery, neither was it sudden, but rather a slow, insidious, obscure feeling, which had started some time ago" (12).

At first glance, the plot seems simple. Fouada, a trained research chemist in Cairo, is worried when her lover Farid does not show up for their weekly meeting at their favorite restaurant. She thus begins her search for him by calling his home and going over, only to find that Farid has disappeared. As the days pass, however, Farid's continual absence leads Fouada to focus on the things that she had been looking for in her own life but never seemed to find, such as her ambitions, values, and place in society. She finds herself constantly in contact with mostly male characters who, in one way or another, attempt to manipulate her and take advantage of her. While looking for a place to set up her chemistry lab, for example, she finds that she has to deal with Saati, a landlord who agrees to rent her an apartment for little money, yet expects payment in other ways. In this novel, he is just one of the many characters who refuse to take her qualifications as a chemist seriously because she is a woman. As in the case of other main characters in el-Saadawi's other novels, such as Bahiah in *Two Women in One* (1985; see *WLT* 60:2, p.356) and Ferdaus in *Woman at Point Zero* (1975; see *WLT* 59:3, p.483), Fouada is also a woman who feels that she must compromise and prostitute herself in some way if she is to survive.

Farid's disappearance also leads Fouada to reevaluate her own priorities in life, something which seemed impossible to her when Farid was still in her life. She wonders, for instance, "how he had become her every moment" and "how had a man become her whole life?" (74). These questions become even more poignant when contrasted with her mother's recurrent words warning that her "future lies in studying" and that "there's no use in men" (13). The real-

ization that her own self had been denied throughout her relationship with Farid consequently enables Fouada to think about what mark she would like to leave on the world. The answer for her is a chemical discovery that would be a scientific breakthrough. Unfortunately, though, she also has to face her realization that "masculinity in itself was one of the preconditions for discovery" (22), a fact that makes her even more discouraged and disillusioned with her life.

Throughout this novel, el-Saadawi therefore uses Fouda's search to provide a powerful feminist statement concerning many Egyptian women who, though well educated and independent, still find themselves struggling against their social surroundings for respect and basic rights.

Saad Elkhadem

Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada

Translated with a Critical Introduction by Saad El-Gabalawy

Fredericton, N.B.: York Press, 1991

Reviewed by A.F. Cassis

Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada, the second part of Elkhadem's Trilogy of the Flying Egyptian—the first part, *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian* was released in 1990, and the third, *Crash Landing of the Flying Egyptian*, has just been released—does not expound on the life and adventures of the Flying Egyptian as much as it deepens the mystery surrounding his life and death by presenting four "recorded interviews" with Egyptian immigrants who had known the Flying Egyptian in Canada. Each of the four interviews carefully blurs the distinction between fact and fiction insofar as the Flying Egyptian is concerned.

The "Foreword" by the editor/interviewer attempts to establish the "scholarly integrity" of the investigation upon which he is embarking as well as its "historic impartiality" by carefully explaining the circumstances that necessitated the trip to Canada. Besides the interesting development of the editor/interviewer's decision to stay in Canada—the story within the story—the Foreword very nearly overwhelms the reader by its 27 extensive copious footnotes which are far more extensive than the text they try to explain and elucidate. This painstaking attempt to document—a parody perhaps of the pedantry of the scholar and critic?—authenticates the problem and the mystery of the Flying Egyptian and establishes the credibility and impartiality of the rather prosaic and pedantic editor/interviewer. In this way the transition from the factual and documented account in the Foreword to the hazy and ill-defined observations and reminiscences which characterize the interviews is hardly questioned.

Each interview is "authentic"; that is to say, it is credible and in character, and reveals an understanding and appreciation of the plight of immigrants: