

Sensory Impulses and Cognitive Mapping: Unraveling the Mythical Thread of the Eye of Horus in Nawal El Saadawi's *Women at Point Zero*

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Abstract

Physical impulses can be employed as a communication tool with the outside world due to the structure and organization of the human brain. Cognition is sparked by sensory perception. When children are consistently exposed to sensory experiences, they develop an understanding of their external reality, shaping and designing their internal view. The central nervous system converts these physical impulses into signals and stores the information in the modules of the brain as signals. According to embodiment theory, which is based on the idea that the body and the mind correlate, the materialized body impacts how thoughts are processed. The interdependency between sight and insight is the subject of this paper, along with the relationship between this duality and the mythic system. The novel *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi uses eye symbolisms excessively, signifying the Egyptian mythology of the Eye of Horus. This paper is structured into three areas. The first part deals with the Egyptian mythology of the Eye of Horus and further allusions to the third eye. The second part investigates eye symbolism in the novel, and the third part focuses on the sight-insight interplay. In brief, this paper is about how the author uses sight-insight connectedness to describe the famous mythical Eye of Horus pattern and how the outward and inward vision develops throughout the work.

Keywords: Eye of Horus, Embodiment Theory, Sight, Insight, Sensory perception

1. Introduction

Our perspective of the world is influenced or mediated by sensory experiences. Therefore, one's body plays a prominent role in transferring physical experience to the brain through neurologically encoded signals (Latash 2012, 35 - 46)¹. A child's constant interaction with the natural environment from birth suggests what that infant perceives internally about his/her immediate reality and the subsequent truth about his/her surroundings. Even if he or she must deal with an arbitrary system of knowledge about the universe, his/her sensory contacts activate signalised information in the brain. It implies that a youngster develops an awareness/knowledge of external reality and truth through sensory experience. The central nervous system transforms physiological impulses into signals and information. One's understanding of the world is comprised of such encoded information. Here, the body, specifically the sensory organs, is essential for experiencing the world.

The philosophy of embodiment looks at the related bodily functions and how they shape or affect one's mental cognition (Borghi 2015, 420-26)². According to this theory, physical pain could be brought on by traumatic events or mental anguish (Coward 2015, 88-95)³. A person's physical system may also affect their mental state. For instance, premenstrual and post-menstrual symptoms in menstruating women can include mood swings. Similarly, when we see an object, it may spark several intriguing thoughts. The primary focus of this paper is the distinction between sight and comprehension, as well as how this is linked to a more comprehensive mythical framework.

The richness of eye symbolism in Nawal El Saadawi's novel *Woman at Point Zero* parallels the Egyptian tale of the Eye of Horus (Britannica 2023). The author uses sight-insight connectedness to describe the famous mythical Eye of

Horus pattern and how the outward and inward vision develops throughout the work. This paper is structured into three areas: (1) the Eye of Horus and the significance of the third eye in Egyptian mythology; (2) the Eye symbolism in the novel; and (3) the interplay between sight and insight in the book.

2. Egyptian Myth of the Eye of Horus and the Third Eye

As pyramids maintain and archive socio-cultural narratologies, Egypt is rich in myths and legendary tales. According to the well-known legend of the Eye of Horus, Horus is a hybrid of a human body and a Vulcan head. He has two eyes, the Left Eye of Horus and the Right Eye of Ra. The Eye of Ra represents the feminine sun God. According to tradition, Seth, a competitor god, took the left eye of Horus out of jealousy. Later, in a duel, Thoth, a rival god, restored it and returned it to Horus. (Lurker 1994, 65-67)⁴.

Horus was a sky god in Egyptian myth, and due to his animosity toward Seth, he lost his left eye in a duel. Furious at having taken Horus' eye, Seth tore it to pieces. Thoth could have fixed the eye's damage, but he gave it to Horus' mother instead. In a 15-day medical process known as 'filling the eye', Hathor, the mother of Horus, restored the damaged eye components that had been gathered. Later, the lunar cycle from the new moon to the full moon was tied to this ritual. Horus decided to give his healed left eye to his diseased father, Osiris, for the sake of his soul rather than settling his physical abnormality. The Egyptians believe that even after death, a spirit might have another existence in the afterlife. For them, a soul might live again in the underworld even after passing away. Therefore the Eye of Horus symbolises an offering to the departed ancestors to lighten their shadowy underworld. Additionally, Horus's lost sacrificed eye represents protection, healing, and well-being (Mingren 2018)⁵.

In the Egyptian depiction of the Eye of Horus, the five senses of touch, thought, sight, taste, and hearing are graphically represented by a different portion of the eye. In the diagram, the pupil represents the Eye of Horus and is associated with the sense of sight in the figure. Thus, Wadjet, another name for the eye of Horus, is further defined as the ethereal light of the soul.

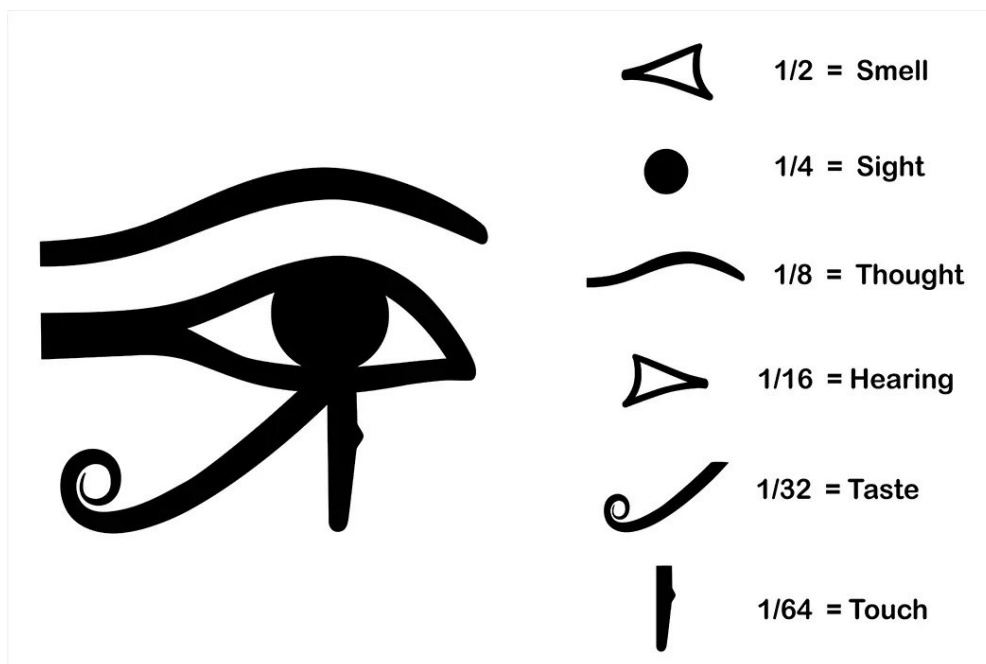


Figure 1: Eye of Horus

Interestingly, the cross-sectional segmentation of the human brain is akin to the iconic representation of the eye of Horus. Medical science opines that the Eye of Horus is located precisely where the pineal gland is, at the brain's centre.

Functionally, the pineal gland produces a psychic experience as someone approaches death because its light-sensitive cells function as a photometer in the brain. The light of sight is directed to various parts of the brain through the hypothalamus, the brain's distribution centre. Therefore, the pineal gland and the visual eye have complementary functions. Accordingly, when the pineal gland is less active, the more light the eye gathers (ReFaey 2019)⁶.

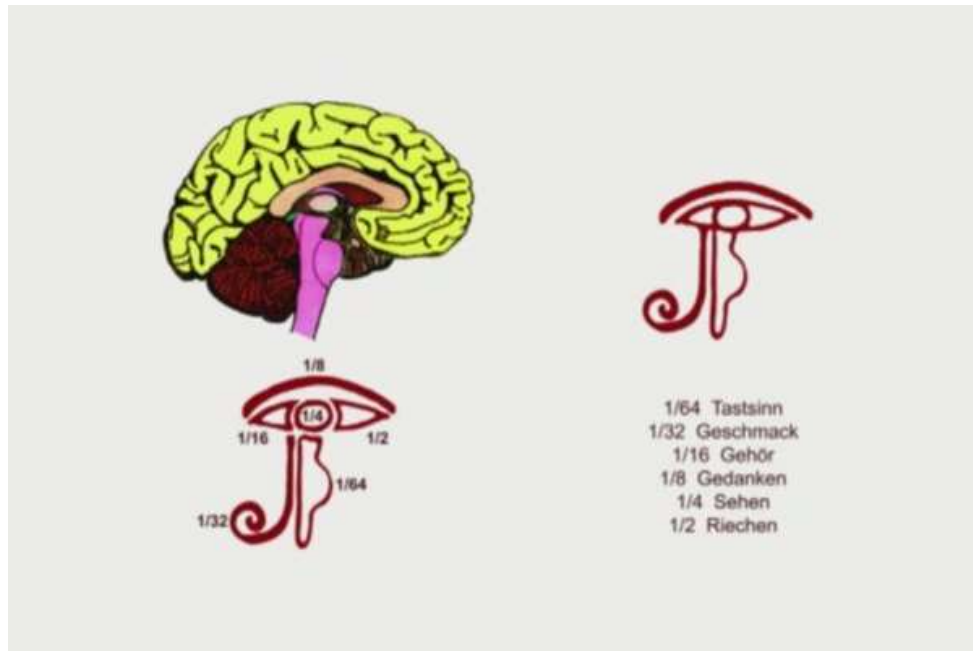


Figure 2: Hypothalamus and Eye of Horus

According to Egyptian mythology, there is a happier afterlife where the spirit can fly away into a lighter underworld like a bird. The 'host' to the afterlife, Anubis, is known for receiving the dead and serving as a guide to the underworld (Meehan 2022). Therefore, the Eye of Horus gives an additional view of life beyond death. The extensive eye symbolism and Firdaus's life in *Woman at Point Zero* adhere to the same philosophy the functional eye can see in depth.

3. Eye Symbolism in *Woman at Point Zero*

The novel is set in Egypt and features themes similar to those in the mythology of the Eye of Horus. The book's three sections focus on the riddles surrounding the lead character Firdaus, a prisoner about to be executed. Firdaus has experienced complex life events, including an abusive marriage and prostitution. The culmination of all these dramatic incidents is Firdaus' rebellion and overthrowing of the patriarchal system. Similar currents are also intertwined with health, eye loss, healing, and protection in Horus' (Wadget) existence. The author's mythical inspiration is evident in the copious use of eye symbolism throughout Firdaus' narration, which allows her to see the world through sight. The focus on the eye or sight is mentioned directly in the form of (1) people, (2)

contexts, and (3) Firdaus's eyes, and indirectly in the form of (4) the closing of eyes, (5) mirrored eyes, (6) memory of eternal love, (7) haunting eyes, and (8) longing for eyes.

Firdaus interprets individuals based on her focal point, eyes. She solely discusses the appearance of other people's eyes and eye movements. For instance, Firdaus' first memories of the world are of her mother's inquisitive eyes. She remembers her mother's eyes as "eyes that I watched" and "eyes that watched me"; that is all she can see outside the world. Firdaus recalls the hostel superintendent's watchful eyes as being so attentive that they followed the kids even in their dreams. The superintendent keeps an eye on their insidious fantasies and ideas as if her eyes were waiting to "pounce on the children like a bird of prey" (El Saadawi 2007, 21). The distinctive eye recollection is also included with Sherifa, the ideal woman of Firdaus. The Nile River and the colour green are mentioned in the author's description of Sherifa. Sherifa's

eyes are described as "powerful dark green" (54), and their green-tinted mirroring is comparable to the mesmerising reflection of green flora on the banks of the Nile River. According to Egyptian belief, the symbolism of the Nile stands for endless life (Clark 1995, 84)⁷. Sherifa saves Firdaus from her cruel captor Baomi, the hotel owner who had previously saved her from husband's torture, and regenerates Firdaus's body with purity, giving it new meaning and value.

Additionally, the initial reflection of the waiter and the subsequent recollections are tied to the eyes at the restaurant where Firdaus placed her order with her first pay. She views "looking away" as surrendering her identity and self-esteem in front of others. Later, she adopts characteristics like "head held high" (El Saadawi, 11), "eyes looking straight ahead" (68), and "looking people in the eyes" (68) with "an unwinking gaze" (68) because of her newly earned financial freedom. Depending on their eye movements, people behave and respond differently in each of these instances.

Instead of providing a careful inscription when describing a circumstance, Firdaus uses the imagery of the eye. Even a crowd of individuals can serve as eyes for Firdaus, and their eye movements have a specific function for the occasion. For instance, students are asked to bring their parents to receive the excellence award during the certificate presentation of the yearly examination. When the principal calls her name, Firdaus realises that her parents are absent, and the hall is silent. Instead of the crowd, Firdaus notices a massive set of eyes in the hall, and she compares the "uncountable eyes" to "uncountable rings of white surrounding uncountable circles of black" (El Saadawi 2007, 37).

Her difficult childhood at her uncle's house leads her to seek solace outside his house. At that point, she encounters her first instance of loneliness in the external world, accompanied by various eyes, including the "wary, doubting, stealthy eyes" (El Saadawi 2007, 21) she has observed in society. Her swollen eyes see the reality of society as "blind" and something that ignores a lady with wounds and scars as she flees the home once again due to marital rape and physical abuse from her husband. Her memory and judgment as a prostitute are also related to the 'spit' of her customers' 'insolent, brazen, courteous eyes' (71), disguised as respectful in look. Some clients utilise her as a sadistic opportunity to exact revenge on the women in their lives while enjoying her flesh. When she demands more money, they spit in disgust and criticise the attributes of her naked body. In these situations, the eyes are crucial to carrying out the ensuing actions or reactions.

Firdaus' eyes are recognised in various ways by various characters in the novel. Her childhood roommate in the orphanage guesses Firdaus' romantic relationship with Iqbal teacher from the glow in her eyes. Using three different points of view, Nawal, the novel's author and narrator, recounts three interactions with Firdaus. Nawal meets Firdaus at three different places, mirroring the three sections of the book. In the first chapter, psychiatrist Nawal initially approaches prisoner Firdaus with a request to interview her for a journalistic case study. However, Firdaus declines the invitation, expressing her reluctance to meet anyone. In the second chapter, Firdaus has a change of heart and agrees to share her life story with Nawal. Finally, in the third chapter, as Nawal waits outside the prison, Firdaus receives a death sentence. Nawal first notices Firdaus in the jail as she is seated there and casts a distant glance. She describes Firdaus' eyes as "staring eyes." Second, when Nawal first meets Firdaus in person, she has another dashing experience, as if she passes away the moment Firdaus fixes her gaze upon her eyes. Because of the constant, unrelenting gaze, Nawal compares Firdaus' eyes to eyes that murder like a knife, probing, cutting deep inside. The third time, Firdaus' eyes remind the author of society's hypocrisy. When Firdaus chooses to accept capital punishment by the end of her jail life rather than spend much time in the corrupt town, Nawal is ashamed of herself for being powerless to speak out against social injustice in her capacity as a journalist.

Firdaus's observations of her own eyes are presented in two dimensions in the book. She emphasizes the appeal of her black eyes, which she initially observes have a gleam that captivates people's attention like a magnet. Her new outlook and sense of empowerment also come from her financial independence. In contrast to society's "shifty, leering glances" (El Saadawi 2007, 72) throughout her life, her black eyes begin to look directly at people without flinching. Her way of thinking is supported by various events in her life since it emphasizes recognizing reality rather than blindly accepting what is offered.

Throughout her story, Firdaus refers to several instances of "closing of eyes." The closing of her eyes accentuates recalling her childhood abuse experience. Instead of inducing tyrannical trauma, for her, the childhood abuse was a pleasurable moment that helped her escape the pains of her real life. As a child, she was forced sex twice in the form of violence. Her friend Muhammad was responsible for her early abuse, and they innocently labelled their sexual act as a child's play called 'bride and bridegroom' (El Saadawi 2007, 21). She had a lonely, unloved upbringing at home, but when she is with Muhammad, she is happy. She refers to it as a "strong sensation of pleasure" coming from an unnamed but well-known part of her body (22). Whenever she needs to escape the oppression of the present, she envisions pleasant times spent with Muhammad. Her uncle starts abusing her after a while. She connects her uncle's improper actions and

Muhammad's abuse. She occasionally longs for her uncle's touch, just as she did with Muhammad before, and compares the sensation to her previous pleasure.

To put it another way, Firdaus' attempt to replicate the imagined pleasure point is an act of escapism. Thus, when alone, she will "shut" her eyes and use her fingers to feel for "the exact spot". She closes her eyes from the outer world and feels her body, thus trying to regain her past pleasurable memories. Her search for the lost pleasure she had from her childhood innocence is what she does with every sexual encounter. Thus during her first sexual encounter with her lover Ibrahim, she uses expressions such as "close my eyes" and "bring back the scene" (El Saadwi 2007, 36).

Firdaus' personality and physical characteristics are revealed in the narrative through two in-depth descriptions of her image in a mirror. Seeing her mirror image reinforces her understanding of her body, enabling her to get to know her better. The young Firdaus proclaims in front of the mirror that she is "born twice" (El Saadwi 2007, 26) during the initial incident. She ecstatically finds a replica of her identity as a second person in the mirror and sighs that it has never happened in her life. The curious child in her deeply investigates her features. Even though she is terrified by the reflection, she finds it repulsive when she recognises some of the characteristics she inherited from her parents. Her father's visible presence in the form of a "big, ugly, rounded nose" (27) and her mom's "thinner lips" (27) forces her to leave, looking at the reflection of the reality she owns. The disgusted similarities of her parents cause her to lose her identity somewhere. Consequently, the early mirror experience is more of a realisation than a pleasant experience.

Firdaus ran away from her husband and ended herself in the care of Baomi, the hotel's manager. She began to receive threats from Baomi demanding money, compliance, and forced prostitution. She was captured by Baomi until Sherifa freed her. Firdaus was introduced to a mirror at Sherifa's house that depicts her new phase and peaceful surroundings. When Firdaus saw a vision of herself, she realised that her life had undergone alterations akin to a rebirth. She found her new body 'smooth and tender as a rose petal' (El Saadwi 2007, 55). Firdaus embraced her change in fate and consciously removed her fearful past with the rebirth symbolism. She viewed her new caregiver Sherifa as a mother figure and confides in her hope that her sanctuary for women will shield her from any future physical violence. Sherifa's grace and wealth provided Firdaus with a setting where he could live proudly in a tidy and opulent atmosphere. It enhanced Firdaus' physical beauty and made her appreciate how priceless she was as a person.

The revelation of Firdaus about her two romantic experiences hints at her bisexual orientation. She developed a romantic attraction at the orphanage towards her lady teacher, Iqbal. Firdaus' elaborate description of Iqbal teacher focuses on eyes and tears. On her first day at the orphanage, Firdaus was weeping over her lonely childhood, and Iqbal teacher comforted her with an embrace in a dark room. Firdaus uses expressions such as "tightening her lips" (El Saadwi 2007, 34) and "swallowing hard" (34) to show the pleasure she gets from her teacher's hug. Firdaus calls the shade of light she experienced in Iqbal teacher's eyes "light in her eyes" (34), which dims and shines but blooms like "flames snuffed out in the night" (34). This description hints at how her emotional empathy eventually developed into the deepest physical and mental affection. For example, she used imagery such as "held her eyes in mind" (El Saadwi, 78,37) to express the peak of emotion.

Further contextual references elucidate that she attempted to recreate the mental image of her time with Iqbal teacher while feeling insecure. When the people in the hall stared at her during the certificate distribution, Iqbal tried to save her from their intimidating glares through Iqbal's "two eyes alone fastened themselves upon mine" (El Saadwi 2007, 78). They comforted and followed her, with a tightened hold. Eventually, when she fell in love with her colleague Ibrahim, their first meeting was similar to the earlier one with Iqbal teacher. Ibrahim's stray black eyes (34) and the tears glittering in his eyes capture the moment as a precious memory. The flame in his eyes gave her comfort and security because it illuminated her darker life. In her entire existence, Firdaus has never received consideration or attention from anyone. Nobody addressed her insecurities, desire for affection and need for safety but she could feel it from Iqbal teacher and Ibrahim. At the emotional peak when she experienced physical comfort as a hug, in both these incidents with Iqbal teacher and Ibrahim, she tried to express herself in words, but she got stuck between saying, "I held his eyes fast in mine" (El Saadwi 2007, 78). Attempting to preserve and restore beautiful memories for the future was challenging, but it eventually led to her channelling her miserable reality.

The safety concepts of Firdaus later change when she finds shelter from her tyrannical uncle's home in the outside world from her tyrannical uncle's home. She escaped from her uncle's home when she found out it was not a homely space for her to stay further. Initially, the outside realities are new and fresh to her. They open up a distinct world in front of her eyes, which makes her realise that there is a world that "had not existed before" (El Saadwi 2007, 44) or she "had never seen" (44), or she never realised "it had been there all the time" (44). During the day, it was normal and peaceful to her;

even the mob was more amazing to see how they moved around like “blind creatures that could neither see themselves nor anyone else” (45). Nevertheless, two blackish eyes chased her flesh after some time at night. Those black eyes moved down to her shoes and then gradually climbed up her legs, thighs, belly, breasts, and neck. It reached her eyes with the same cold intent. This chasing of eyes was the scariest of all her life, and she equated it with all the adversities in life. It had become less frightening than the vision of those two eyes, which sent a cold shiver running down her spine whenever she remembered them. Also, she was continuously observed by another two eyes when she had food. These two eyes observed her to judge the amount of food taken, and she called those eyes “wide open, staring, unflinching” (El Saadwi 2007, 31), which followed every morsel of food on her plate. In the above cases, she was haunted by unknown eyes of mysterious identity.

Firdaus' two romantic encounters with Iqbal teacher and Ibrahim came to an end with departure. A dramatic scene would frequently follow her yearning for safety, affection, and attention in such a parting situation. She imagined herself being restrained in her comfort zone by a sign of a call or waiting gaze from her favourite individuals. Nevertheless, fate dragged her from place to place, forcing her to leave people in pain and vain. She was forced to leave the Iqbal teacher when her uncle took her back from the orphanage, and the young Firdaus looked everywhere for the two eyes that could free her from her uncle's bonds. She continued looking everywhere with hope, like how she yearned to see Ibrahim's waiting eyes when she decided to leave him forever. She finds these two goodbyes terrible, and both parting moments are connected to her need for eyes.

In Firdaus' life, each of the sight functions, as mentioned earlier, is linked to intuitive comprehension. The mythology surrounding the Eye of Horus is also connected to the relationship between the outer and inner eyes. Some mathematicians assigned numerical values to the six eye components of the Eye of Horus. The overall value attributed to the several iconic eye elements is $63/64$. (Irigaray 2017, 3)

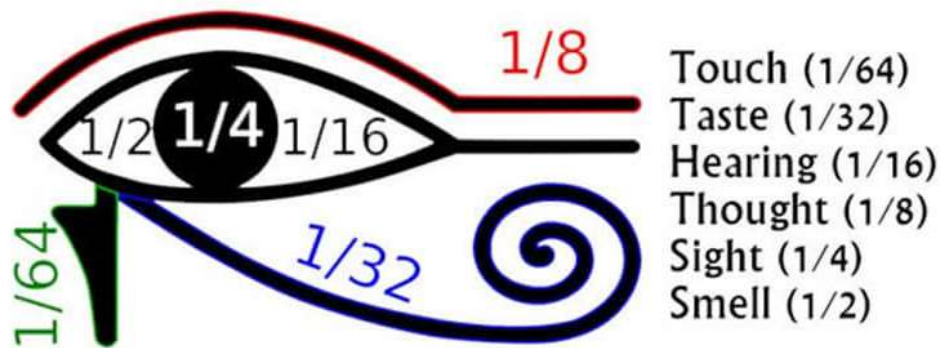


Figure 3: Mathematical Representation of the Eye of Horus

Further, it says one must be included out of 64 eyes. So, in the Egyptian view, the third eye, sixth sense, or inner eye is the lost one. (Ibrahim 2023, 21-28) In other terms, the third eye spreads wisdom, predicts the future, or creates invisible illusions. In the novel, sight or vision impacts foresight or insight and its direct visionary function. The following contexts demonstrate the insightful functions: (1) eye motions as a sign of impending bad things, (2) shedding of eye layers, (3) changing from being stared at to gazing, and (4) blindness.

Firdaus first saw men in general as a little girl while she was alone on the street. She described men's gaze as having "wary, doubting, stealthy eyes" (El Saadwi 2007, 21). Among them, she could see her father's eyes, which were

"ready to pounce" (21), and her relatives' aggressive gaze, which "seemed strangely servile" (21). This incident is a prophecy about her future interactions with men in general. She suffered mistreatment in various ways; men tormented her feminine body for fun and money. The same man who gave her sanctuary also raped her in a group. Her lover and husband used her and betrayed her. Even her father, who lived in poverty and was unaware of how to protect her from his brother's abuse, carefully schooled her to be submissive. In summary, the eye expressions described above point to the patriarchal culture around Firdaus and the impending changes in her life.

In the same way, she observes and analyses the eyes of women who are close to her. For instance, she describes the eyes of the wife of her uncle as having "pools of dark, sleepy indifference", large and black eyes with an "extinguished vitality", (El Saadwi 2007, 29) and other frightening characteristics. Firdaus' aunt deliberately chooses an elderly divorced man from her relatives for Firdaus and threatens Firdaus for the marriage. Additionally, her aunt never accepts Firdaus's return from marriage or the hostel, forcing her husband to put her in an orphanage. Her eye predictions regarding her aunt later materialised in this way.

She considered the men in her immediate group as eyes. She recognised the fatherly figure in Baomi when she first saw him because of his "resigned and calm" gaze. (El Saadwi 2007, 50) Later, she observed a shift in perception and realised they were not expected or familiar. His lustful eyes flit between her thighs and through the flesh of her body. Throughout, he seduces her and occasionally rapes her harshly with his masculine thrashes. He subjected her to gang rape as payment for her non-compliance with his commands. She could foresee Baomi's acts and secret nature through the variations in his eyes. Over time, Baomi transitioned from being a guardian to a destroyer. The same may be said of her lover Ibrahim, who initially gave her the alluring eye by seizing her heart in love. Even in her fantasies, his piercing gaze followed her, bringing colour to her drab existence. Ibrahim's eyes did, in fact, "sparkle in the sunshine with a strange new brilliance". (El Saadwi, 81) Firdaus understood that Ibrahim's love is only physical and situational and serves him best. His startling glance at various situations explains her emotional dislike of him. He initially enjoyed her company, but as a revolutionary, he became increasingly popular, and he eventually drifted away from her. He picked an affluent spouse who could guarantee him success, fortune, and position in life. Thus, astute predictions are illustrated and expanded through the description of the eyes.

Firdaus compares her own epiphanic experience to the metaphorical shedding of eye layers. For instance, after the escape from Sherifa's brothel, other travellers on the road repeatedly raped Firdaus, but one of the customers rewarded her with 10 pounds, her first paycheck ever. She compares achieving financial freedom to removing a veil from her eyes since it allows her to see the outside world clearly for the first time. She understood the importance of money, providing her power, identity, and respect. She began negotiating with people and choosing her clients in the later period. As a result of this occurrence, she developed the habit of financial stability as a means of maintaining her self-respect. She later designed and cherished the value of making choices, as she explains, "If I saw someone count his money, I fixed it with an unwinking gaze." (El Saadwi 2007, 67). Her challenging background made her reconsider financial independence rather than being emotionally linked to others.

She steadfastly held onto the belief that the body is just a vehicle for obtaining pleasure or happiness throughout her life. She never gave any thought to her physical existence. When her friend and client Di'aa had described prostitution as a disrespectful job, Firdaus enthusiastically described it as a veil falling from her eyes. She learned from Di'aa that selling flesh for cash is a menial act and that her body dictates who she is. She began to perceive her life differently after that because, in her eyes, the body was just a vehicle for carrying out the activities in her life. Recollections of the atrocities she had to undergo in the past, mainly when she worked as a prostitute for Sherifa, refuted her beliefs that her physical presence gave her true political power and influence. She consequently redefined her femininity by obtaining a career, developing a healthy body image, and forever erasing the events and people from her past.

She also had a similar experience of losing an eye layer after killing a pimp who claimed ownership of her body. She ran across another client shortly after the murder as she wandered the streets, and his stupid inquiries about the specifics of her previous sex acts with her clients infuriated her. She tore the money she obtained from him to pieces, rejecting the patriarchal society that views the female body as a commodity. She refuses to accept money since he controls her privacy. She realised that no one had the right to challenge her beliefs or conduct. At that point, she even discounted things like cash or people. Here, the value of originality is seen as a further protective layer for her.

Voyeurism was a sort of tyranny in the life of the adult Firdaus. Before that, she had made the public her victim. She had tended to stare off into the distance or the dark even before that. She expressed her existence by withdrawing from the real world and entering a make-believe realm and time. Vafaya, an acquaintance from the orphanage, made Firdaus look into the dark for the first time as she described love. She then realized that hallucinating was a natural response to

gazing into the distance. Later, when she started working for a living, she stopped staring off into the distance. On the other hand, she began peering into the darkness at the end of her time in prison due to the turmoil in her life. She confessed to the police that she had slain a man who had questioned her right to practice prostitution. She gladly accepted the death penalty, viewing her disclosure as a courageous attempt to confront the system. As a form of withdrawal from reality, she began isolating herself from other people while in jail by staring into a vacuum.

Being stared at was something she had experienced almost all the time in her life. Later, she started staring back as a repulsive revolt. Here, sight stimulates the counter-reaction to society's hypocrisies in general and the men in particular in her life. Even when her ex-lover approached her with advances and love, she preferred to reject him. Her staring at him discouraged his further visits to her as a client. The stranger she murdered was also victimised by her strange staring just before his death. On many occasions, she uses her eye as a weapon to dominate people or their encroachments. Financial independence and the freedom of choice made her hold her head high throughout, resulting in looking straight into people's eyes. The overlapping of action and reaction or from subjective dominance to objective victimisation is a freedom of choice in Firdaus' life.

Blindness, or blind point, significantly impacts Firdaus' life in addition to sight and insight. Firdaus felt light in her body because she had killed a guy and had conquered her fear. Killing is, for her, both a victorious and a vengeful act against the oppressive patriarchy that tortured her innocence. Since this encounter, she finds that even frightening things in her life are pleasant and tranquil. Later, she learns new lessons, like light is an illusion and even darkness is a wonder. She realises for the first time that the projected illusion of light conceals darkness as an actual reality. She becomes imaginatively blind as a result of the white shadow and light. She utilizes her imagined blindness as a means of escaping from her misfortune.

As Firdaus was enslaved within the patriarchy, Sherifa was the one who assisted her in developing a new perspective of the world. Sherifa raises her to a new level of embracing the spontaneity of life. Sherifa led her and forced her to examine the unexplained past happenings. She also questioned Firdaus to uncover secret treasures of her body, mind, and life. She served as a mirror for Firdaus, reflecting her hidden true nature as a person and physical being. Sheriff channelled her into perceiving, experiencing, and comprehending her physicality differently. Firdaus understood how to synthesise and analyse her life in terms of her vivid, light, and dark hallucinations.

When Firdaus was in love, she discovered beauty all around her. Even the most vulgar and terrifying aspects of humanity appeared more pleasant to her. Her inner innocence made her readily accept people's words, conform to patriarchal norms, and even adopt a harsher view of her own body. Her surroundings seemed to improve, and she gained a clearer understanding of life as her perspective changed. She held her world hostage within the tragedy of her past. Later, as she was exposed to the outside world, her outlook expanded with newfound positivity. She rejected the usual, comfortable routines and embraced the opportunity for fresh enlightenment. She saw life as vibrant rather than stagnant. She could perceive her latest transformation—the brilliant gleam in her eyes and her resilient spirit. Through the authentic lens of her newfound blindness, she saw the world with greater accuracy and authenticity.

4. Sight - Insight Interplay

Egyptians believe that an object's colour determines its actual nature; as a result, they utilise colour and character interchangeably when analysing objects. They see white as representing brilliance, joy, wisdom, and light. Also, they consider white as a symbol of God's grace and pure cosmic light. Despite having both male and female universal principles, the Egyptian Horus is typically shown in green and sometimes black. (Negar 2021) The colour black represents evil, death, and the underworld. Nawal prefers to employ black and white throughout Firdaus' narration, especially during the most intensely emotional scenes. Black and white coming together symbolises the union of heavenly understanding and the acquisition of wisdom beyond death, similar to how the soul departs from the body to enter eternity. Firdaus foreshadowed the death penalty with this colour patterning and the dyadic black-and-white blending. Instead of the reason for the response, she was apprehended and punished for the murder she committed.

Likewise, Firdaus' hallucinations are invariably associated with the colours black and white. The rings of black and white in her recollection of her mother are represented by repeating circles that converge into thicker black and white. Her mother's watchful eyes are only a series of interlocking black-and-white rings in her mind. Additionally, the encounter with Iqbal teacher and the recollection about Ibrahim share a similar colour scheme; as the pupil's black and white rings intensify, so do they. These black and white rings eventually cause her to become blind. It manipulates a fictitious vision. She loses her sight at the summit. Although it appears to be an illusion, Firdaus believes this coagulation approach transforms the haziness into a distinct vision of blackness. Her perceptive vision starts at the dividing line between black and white, waking into fresh insights.

5. Conclusion

Due to Egypt's extensive mythological heritage, artists have been able to include folktale themes in their works of fiction. The realistic tale of *Firdaus* by Nawal El Saadawi contains rich Egyptian cultural symbolism and imagery. The Eye of Horus story and the novel *Woman at Point Zero* share similarities in vision, understanding, and the combination of both vision and understanding. The act of seeing the world is attributed to a profound philosophical understanding in this novel. Even just the ability to see the world implies a sophisticated philosophical knowledge of it. In the symbolism, Horus's sacrificed eye signifies wisdom, while *Firdaus*'s observant eye represents sight. Horus undergoes a transformative journey from blindness to eternal enlightenment in the afterlife through the healing of his eye. In contrast, *Firdaus*, after reclaiming her feminine identity, finds her abused body fated to make a sacrifice for all women. *Firdaus* perceives death as the ultimate triumph and a means of liberation from a corrupted world, whereas Horus possesses the ability to breathe life back into it even after death has occurred. The comparison between these narratives underscores the complexity of cultural symbolism and philosophical themes within Egyptian mythology and contemporary fiction.

Endnotes

1. Our sensory organs, such as eyes, ears, skin, nose, and tongue, collect information from the environment in the form of light, sound, touch, smell, and taste. These sensory inputs are then transformed into electrical signals by specialized receptors and nerves. The nervous system plays a crucial role in transmitting these signals to the brain, where they are processed and interpreted. Different regions of the brain are responsible for different aspects of sensory perception. For example, the visual cortex processes visual information, the auditory cortex processes sound, and so on. Moreover, the body's proprioceptive system, which includes receptors in muscles and joints, provides information about the position and movement of body parts. This, along with other sensory inputs, contributes to our overall perception of the external world. In essence, our subjective experience and understanding of the world are shaped by the information received through sensory experiences and how our brain interprets and integrates these signals. The body, as a mediator between the external environment and the brain, plays a fundamental role in this process.
2. The philosophy of embodiment explores the idea that our bodies are not just vessels for the mind but are integral to cognition and perception. This perspective challenges traditional dualistic views that separate the mind and body. Instead, it suggests that the mind is deeply interconnected with the body and that bodily experiences significantly shape our mental processes.

Key concepts within the philosophy of embodiment include:

- a. Embodied Cognition: This is the idea that cognition is not solely a function of the brain, but is distributed throughout the entire body. The body is considered an active participant in the cognitive process, influencing how we think and perceive the world.
 - b. Embodied Perception: Our sensory experiences are not isolated functions of individual senses but are influenced by the entire body. For example, the way we move, our posture, and even our emotional states can affect how we perceive and interpret sensory information.
 - c. Enactivism: This perspective suggests that cognition is not just happening in the brain but is also dependent on the interaction between an organism and its environment. It emphasizes the active role of the body in shaping cognitive processes.
 - d. Extended Mind: This concept suggests that cognitive processes can extend beyond the boundaries of the brain and involve external objects or tools. In other words, our cognitive system can incorporate elements outside the brain, such as notebooks, smartphones, or even cultural artifacts.
3. According to the philosophy of embodiment and some perspectives within psychology and medicine, there is an acknowledgment of the strong connection between physical and mental experiences. Physical pain can indeed be influenced by psychological factors, including traumatic events, stress, and mental anguish. This is often referred to as psychosomatic or somatopsychic interaction.

Here are a few ways in which mental and emotional states can influence physical pain:

- Stress and Tension: Psychological stress can lead to increased muscle tension, which may result in physical discomfort and pain. Chronic stress has been linked to conditions such as tension headaches, back pain, and other musculoskeletal issues.

- Emotional Trauma: Traumatic events, whether physical or psychological, can have a lasting impact on the body. Emotional trauma may manifest as physical symptoms or pain. For example, individuals who have experienced trauma may suffer from chronic pain conditions.
- Central Sensitization: Prolonged exposure to stress or pain can sensitize the central nervous system, amplifying the perception of pain. This means that even mild stimuli can be interpreted as more painful than they would be in the absence of such sensitization.
- Mind-Body Connection: The mind and body are intricately connected, and mental health can influence physical well-being. Conditions like depression and anxiety have been associated with various physical symptoms, including pain.
- Placebo and Nocebo Effects: Beliefs and expectations can impact the perception of pain. The placebo effect, where a person experiences relief despite receiving a treatment with no therapeutic effect, and the nocebo effect, where negative expectations contribute to adverse outcomes, illustrate the power of the mind in influencing physical experiences.

It's important to note that this perspective doesn't diminish the reality of physical pain or suggest that it's "all in the mind." Instead, it recognizes the complex interplay between physical and mental aspects of our experience. In some cases, addressing underlying psychological factors can be an important part of managing and treating certain types of physical pain.

4. In ancient Egyptian mythology, the myth of the Eye of Horus revolves around the fierce conflict between the god Horus and his treacherous uncle Set. Set, the god of chaos, murdered Osiris, the father of Horus, sparking a divine feud for the throne of Egypt. During their epic battle, Horus lost his left eye. This eye, symbolic of protection and healing, was later restored through the intervention of Thoth or Hathor.
5. It was Horus' mother, either Hathor or sometimes identified as the goddess Thoth, who played a crucial role in healing and restoring the eye. In some versions of the myth, Hathor, the goddess of love, music, and motherhood, is described as using her nurturing and healing powers to mend the injured eye of her son. In other accounts, Thoth, the god of wisdom and magic, is credited with restoring the eye. This act of healing not only symbolized maternal care and divine intervention but also transformed the Eye of Horus, also known as the Udjat, into a potent emblem of protection, wholeness, and the cyclical nature of life.
6. The visual system operates as light entering the eyes triggers complex neural processes, with the hypothalamus serving as a central hub for regulating circadian rhythms in response to light and darkness. Simultaneously, the pineal gland, influenced by light exposure, plays a pivotal role in melatonin production, a hormone associated with the sleep-wake cycle. The interconnection lies in the modulation of both vision and biological rhythms by light. The statement suggests that when the pineal gland is less active, potentially during exposure to light, the eyes may gather more light. This notion aligns with the inhibition of melatonin production in response to light, emphasizing the intricate relationship between the visual system and the pineal gland in mediating physiological responses to environmental light conditions.
7. In ancient Egyptian mythology, the Nile River held profound symbolic significance, representing more than just a life-giving water source. According to Egyptian belief, the symbolism of the Nile extends to embody the concept of endless life. The Nile, with its annual flooding that enriched the soil along its banks, was integral to the agricultural fertility of the region. This natural cycle of flooding and receding became a powerful metaphor for the cyclical nature of life, death, and rebirth in Egyptian thought. The Nile was not merely a physical entity but a divine force sustaining life, and its perpetual renewal mirrored the eternal cycle of existence in Egyptian cosmology. This profound symbolism of the Nile as a conduit for endless life is deeply rooted in the religious and cultural fabric of ancient Egypt, shaping their worldview and spiritual beliefs.

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