

L'Excisee

By Evelyne Accad

1982. In 1979 Ms. Accad was awarded the Delta Kappa Gamma International Educator's Award.

David K. Burner is Professor Emeritus at Iowa State University. For the past fifteen years he has centered his attention and work (in the classroom and on the radio), upon contemporary writers from Africa, Asia and the Caribbean.

About the book

«Female circumcision (excision, rather, for one is speaking of the removal of the clitoris, the labia major and minor) is ugly to contemplate»⁽¹⁾. Some people do not know that the ritual exists. Most people, who do know, prefer to deny it and avoid the thought, lest they be overwhelmed with horror.

Evelyne Accad explicitly affirms it in her book, *L'Excisee*, which has been translated into English by David K. Burner. Including poetry in the text, she tells the story of E., an idealistic young woman, who escapes the domination of a Protestant father and goes on a journey through a world where women are also socially and physically excised by the tyranny of men. E., herself, is not excised but witnesses the operation on ten and twelve year old girls in the women's quarters of a desert village.

Accad describes the ritual in detail. She emphasizes the lack of anesthetic and proper sterilization, the pain, the profuse bleeding, and the sexual inertion of the little girls. She does not exclude the happy chants of the women who participate in the ceremony, nor the pride of the mothers whose girls are being prepared for motherhood.

Accad places this tradition in its social context by speaking of the seclusion of women in private quarters. She also points out the elite status of women who bear male offsprings, not to mention the blessing of not having a female child, who would eventually have to be excised.

L'Excisee is an outraging book about an outraging reality •

(1) Burner, David K. «Translator's Preface» *L'Excisee*, the first English Edition, Washington D.C.: Three Continents Press, 1989. (ISBN: 0-89410-596-5).

About the author

Evelyne Accad was born and raised in Beirut, Lebanon. She has a B.A. in English literature from Anderson College, an M.A. in French from Ball State University, and a Ph.D in Comparative literature from Indiana University. She is currently a Professor at the University of Illinois, where she teaches French, Comparative literature, African Studies, Women's Studies, and South-West Asian Studies. Evelyne Accad is a close friend and supporter of Al-Raida and has contributed several articles to our newsletter. Her publications include: *Coquelicat du Massacre*, *Contemporary Arab Women Writers and Poets*, (published by and sold at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World), *The Role of Women in the Modern Fiction of North Africa and the Arab World*; *L'Excisee* was first published in French in