



The Role of Women's Creativity in the Development of Kuwaiti Short Story Writing

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Abstract

This article explores the role of women's creativity in the development of Kuwaiti short story writing. It examines in detail how the emergence of women's literature in the Persian Gulf countries, particularly Kuwait, is linked to the advancement of women's education. The article analyzes the themes of women's works, with a special focus on the problems of women in family and society, as well as social reforms. It highlights the shift from a romantic portrayal of heroines struggling with traditions but remaining helpless, to the emergence of a new Kuwaiti woman who is aware of herself as an individual and capable of fighting for her independence. The article also discusses the evolution of Kuwaiti short story writing from traditional plots to complex artistic techniques borrowed from world literature, which contributed to the enrichment of artistic language and the improvement of form.

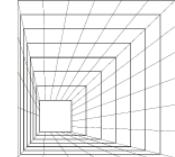
Keywords: woman writer, literature, Persian Gulf, women's themes, short story writing, short story.

The emergence of women's creativity in Kuwait, and generally in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, is primarily linked to women's access to education and the expansion of the educational system in the country. While in Arab countries such as Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Palestine, women's literature was quite developed and already in the early 20th century had many prominent representatives like May Ziade, Aisha Taimur, Bint al-Shati (Aisha Abd al-Rahman), Fadwa Toukan, and Nazik al-Malaika, this phenomenon was extremely rare in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf in the first half of the 20th century. This does not mean that there were no intellectual women engaged in creative work in this region; most of them focused on oral traditions.

It is worth noting that co-education for girls in Kuwait was introduced in 1937 [1], ten years later than in Bahrain, in Qatar in 1954, in the United Arab Emirates in 1955, in Saudi Arabia in 1960, and in Oman in 1970 [2]. Despite the differences in the timing of the introduction of the education system, the first examples of women's creative work appeared in the mid-1950s, although the first journalistic articles by Hadai Sultan al-Salim on the Palestinian tragedy, as well as the memoirs of Ibtisam Abdullatif Abdullah titled "A Girl's Memories," were published in 1948 in the journal "Al-Baath," published in Cairo by the Kuwaiti publishing house "Kuwait" [3].

According to data from the "Encyclopedia of Arab Women Writers" [3:3], the number of creative women in Kuwait was higher compared to other countries. In the early 1960s, with the flourishing of publishing and journalism, Gulf newspapers began to dedicate special pages to women's issues, where examples of women writers' works in the form of short stories, poems, and literary articles were occasionally published. In the Gulf countries, publications in the form of separate collections of women's creative works began to appear in Kuwait, Bahrain, and Saudi Arabia in the late 1950s and early 1960s, and in the 1970s and 1980s, writers from Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman joined them. In terms of literary genres, women preferred to write poetry and short stories.

By the end of the 20th century, 113 poetry collections, 115 short story collections, and 64 novels

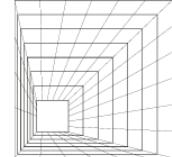


were published in the Arab Gulf countries [3]. Drama was practically undeveloped in the works of women writers, with the exception of children's plays. Laila al-Othman was not alone among women writers in her desire to express her thoughts freely. The 1980s were rich in women's creative work in Kuwait. The "Kuwait" section of the "Encyclopedia of Arab Women" notes that short story writing in the works of women writers reached its peak in the second half of the 1980s. A vivid example of this flourishing is the publication of 8 short story collections by Laila Othman, collections of works by Fatima Ali, Suraiya al-Baqsami, Laila Muhammad Salih, Mona Ash-Shafi'i, and Amina Shoaib, as well as the first collections by Bizza al-Batini. The short stories primarily focus on the place of women in the family and society, related problems, and the theme of social reforms. Some of them contain romantic longing, an example being Haifa Hashim's story "Terrible Revenge" (1952). In the path of love and happiness for the heroines of Hadai Sultan al-Salim's stories, customs impede, they complain about fate and do not even try to fight for their love and pride. These include the stories "I Saw Him," "The Flame," "Stronger than the Flame," "My Fallen Life," included in the short story collection "Autumn Without Rain" [4]. However weak all of Hadai Sultan's heroines may be and victims of the family, they managed to draw the reader's attention to the place of women in society, especially to the tragic situation of a divorced woman. The heroine of the story "My Fallen Life" is alienated from her environment. No one takes her wishes into account; her parents are ready to marry her off to the first bidder. Hadai Sultan compares the lives of such heroines to a barren and rainless autumn. (Story "Autumn Without Rain") [4, 5-8].

The most frequently used technique in Hadai Sultan's stories is the retrospective method, where characters narrate their past or return to their past lives through memories. According to the renowned Kuwaiti critic Ibrahim Abdullah Ghaloum, in the 1960s, Hadai Sultan and her contemporaries approached the women's issue from a romantic perspective. In this case, the heroine tries to fight traditions but stops, feeling her helplessness before them. Similarly, all her characters are depicted from a romantic point of view. At the same time, the writer uses evocative situations such as feelings of loneliness, a sad night, autumn, desert, fire, grief, difficulties, and others.

In the 1980s and 1990s, along with the growth of writers' artistic consciousness in stories highlighting women's problems, the image of a new Kuwaiti woman emerges, one who is aware of herself as an individual, capable of assessing her capabilities and her independence. For example, the heroine of Munira Nasif's story "The Collapse of the Palace of Hope" [5] aligns with the above statement. This is a woman who can fight for herself. Her husband is a successful entrepreneur who adapts very quickly to the fruits of progress, new technologies, and the laws of new market relations. His entire life is spent chasing money in the office. In the evenings, he spends time with friends in cafes and restaurants. He has completely neglected his family. His wife, who helped him get on his feet at the beginning of their life together, now humiliated by his indifference, takes the children and leaves her husband's home. Only then does the story's protagonist, who considered the accumulation of wealth to be the meaning of his entire life, feel how lonely and useless a person can be in a house where the family hearth has gone out.

It should be noted that there are no references to local peculiarities or national spirit in this story. What happened could happen anywhere in the world. The heroines of Laila al-Othman's stories, as well as the intellectual heroines of Suraiya al-Baqsami in the 1990s, are completely different from the weak female characters in the early stories of these writers. Currently, the baton has been passed from the successfully creative older generation of writers, Laila al-Othman, Suraiya al-Baqsami, Fatima Yusuf Ali, Laila Muhammad Salih, to the middle generation representatives Bizza Batini, Mona ash-Shafi'i, Aliya Shaib, and talented young



writers such as Habba Hamsin (born 1977), Mais Khalid al-Othman (born 1977), Maid Muhammad ash-Sharad (born 1977), Latifa Batiz, and others.

Over half a century, Kuwaiti short story writing has evolved from stories with traditional plots to works with complex technical methods, based on the experience of various creative directions. Some formal explorations that violated the laws of event-driven narrative, characteristic of the 1960s, did not prevent Kuwaiti writers from describing the rapidly changing reality from the perspective of an expanded realistic art. These formal explorations, mainly relying on a subjective attitude towards the surrounding reality and the expression of an inner worldview, allowed for the widespread use of the traditions of world literature, including modernism and postmodernism techniques. This ultimately led to the development of artistic styles in Kuwaiti prose, the improvement of its form, and the enrichment of its artistic language.

Modern Kuwaiti short story writing, without losing its national identity, is mastering the achievements of world literature in the use of internal monologue, collage, association, stream of consciousness, and many other expressive means. This contributes to the discovery of new reserves of the Arabic artistic language and its improvement, entering the mainstream of the global literary process.

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