



The Image of Women in the Modern Palestinian Novel

Sana Izz Aldin Atari*

Department of Women's Health, Israel

***Corresponding Author:** Sana Izz Aldin Atari, Department of Women's Health, Israel.

Received: April 04, 2024

Published: September 16, 2024

© All rights are reserved by **Sana Izz Aldin Atari**.

Abstract

This study deals with the image of women in the Palestinian novel, as Palestinian women received the attention of many writers and writers of different orientations and interests, and occupied a prominent space in their literary production.

The importance of this study is evident in the fact that it sheds light on an important issue, which is the image of women in the Palestinian narrative that appeared after the Nakba, women who played and still play an important role in the Palestinian national movement and in social life. The study aims to identify the models of women that writers have dealt with in the Palestinian novel, from the Nakba until the pre-Oslo period, analyze these models, and examine whether the writers of the Palestinian novel have dealt with female characters that truly reflect the extent of Palestinian women's contribution to the struggle for the homeland and the cause. Palestinian? Do these models enhance the positive role played by Palestinian women?

The study followed the descriptive analytical approach that is consistent with its objectives.

It has become clear through this research that Palestinian novel writers have highlighted the image of women in multiple models, such as the intellectual, the liberal, and the fighter, within a realistic framework, in addition to considering women as a symbol of the land and wisdom. These models were numerous and varied according to the stages through which the Palestinian people's struggle went through and according to the writer's own experiences. They may also have been influenced by the gender of the writer, and his presence in diaspora countries or within the homeland.

The door is still open for more studies that address this topic from its many aspects and to address the stages that followed the Oslo stage.

Keywords: Novel; Divergent; Dissonant

Introduction

The novel is the literary genre most capable of capturing the divergent, dissonant, complex, and heterogeneous melodies of the rhythm of our time, and monitoring the accelerating transformations in the current reality.

This is considered the true beginning of the Palestinian Arab novel, after the Nakba, after some writers benefited from previous Western and Arab experiences, represented them, and were able to formulate reality artistically, as "the national concern began to occupy all the spaces of the pages that aspire to express the experience of uprooting and exile. However, the overall production. The literature that emerged from that stage remained characterized by emotional intensity that was overshadowed by a state of

sadness, and over which floated the rhythm of romantic nostalgia for the lost place, and the direct, poetic insistence on returning to the earth" [1].

Since the beginning of the sixties, the Palestinian novel has begun to take a clear realistic direction, as many combined factors led to the crystallization of this trend in many writers. Among those factors, we mention the dominance of some new ideas and concepts, the growth of liberation movements in the Third World, and the launch of the Palestinian liberation movement. The year 1965. Which led to the dominance of the realistic trend over the overall fictional production [2].

Arab women, especially Palestinian women, have received the attention of many writers and writers of different orientations and

interests. It occupied a prominent place in their literary production, whether poetry or prose. It was the sensitive chord that affected and affected the movement of reality.

Palestinian women registered a presence on the social and political levels following the Israeli occupation of the remainder of the land of Palestine - the West Bank and Gaza Strip - in June 1967.

Palestinian women and the specificity of their situation

The circumstances of Palestinian women, whether inside or outside the country, have been characterized by a certain specificity, depending on the movement of the Palestinian and Arab reality in general, and the changes occurring in the course of the central issue. The Palestinians in the diaspora lived "exceptional circumstances in the fields of politics and education. In politics, they were subject to the positions of the Arab regimes on the issue, but in education, the Palestinians did not receive an education with unified curricula and methods. They were subject to the education systems prevailing in the Arab countries in which they settled" [1]. All of this had a clear impact on the Palestinian personality, especially the personality of women, in addition to the influence of social and economic conditions, the multiplicity of intellectual trends, and the differences in daily life patterns between this country or that, which had the greatest impact on Palestinian communities, on women's awareness, and the degree of their response to... Updates [2].

The Palestinian novelist was aware of the extent to which the Palestinian Arab women's movement was linked to society and the national cause, as an active and influential force in the course of the construction and liberation movement, in addition to being an artistic source rich with suggestive and expressive connotations.

The contemporary Palestinian novel has paid attention to the role that women represent in their society, although in most cases the treatment of that role does not go beyond traditional stereotypes of women.

Arab women, especially Palestinian women, "grew up in a society that built an essential part of its modern history on the struggle against colonialism and Zionism, so the issue of liberating the homeland and issues of democracy had to occupy the largest space in the struggle to build a Palestinian society based on the foundations of justice and equality for all its people." Men and women" [3]. It was natural, in light of the difficult conditions that Palestinian women experienced after the Nakba, that the issue of their liberation should not be separated from the national issue.

As a result of the increase in the rate of education, the opening of many local universities (Birzeit, An-Najah National Univer-

sity, Bethlehem University, Hebron University, Al-Quds University, and the Islamic University), and the emergence of new women's frameworks in the period between 1978 and 1982, which aimed to enhance the role of women politically, culturally, and professionally. The social status of Palestinian Arab women has improved, as most of them have become educated, productive, and possess the ability to manage their affairs and improve their income and that of their family, especially in light of the deteriorating economic reality resulting from the policies of oppression and economic annexation followed by the occupation, and the resulting land confiscations and control. On water sources, besieging national production, making local markets closed for Israeli goods, demolishing homes, and arresting many heads of families and their breadwinners [4].

Choosing female characters in the Palestinian novel

National concern has influenced the choice of female characters by Palestinian novelists, as they intend to present models that are strong and reject weakness.

Novelists differ in choosing their characters depending on the experiences and circumstances they went through, whether at home or abroad. The creative Palestinian writer Liana Badr presented in her novels "A Compass for Sunflowers", "Stars of Jericho", and "The Woman's Eye" as examples of educated women who participate in the Palestinian struggle. And in the institutions of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the revolution, and the university girl who does not seek something of her own, but rather integrates into the daily struggle work and in the camps and is chased from one place to another.

The most important image presented of the Palestinian woman is that of the "fighter" and the "prisoner" who carried out action against the Zionist enemy. This image showed the atmosphere of Israeli prisons from the inside, specifically what Palestinian women are subjected to in terms of torture and persecution. It also depicted images of torture and injustice. Reserving personal freedom for the simplest and least reasons.

The book did not highlight a single image of the Palestinian woman, but rather there were many positive and negative models. There is "the mother woman who perseveres, is patient, and bids farewell to her martyred children," the university student who aspires to achieve her freedom and personality and seeks to be an effective member of society, and the neglected, marginalized woman who finds herself working. In places that some conservatives in society are not satisfied with [5].

All of this represents "the toughness of women present in real and fictional society".

Some of them believe that the most prominent examples dealt with the “militant” woman who resists her torturers in captivity and keeps the secrets of the resistance and her comrades.

In the novel “Crying on the Heart of the Beloved” by Rashad Abu Shawar, we find the freedom fighter “Fajr” exercising her honorable national role, through her media, political and revolutionary activity, with young men and women like her. She says to Ziad, showing her regret for the old days, when young people were enthusiastic about revolutionary work diligently and sincerely: “We were together in the office... a large group of young people, some translating, some writing, some printing internal bulletins and some drawing and planning... like a beehive”) [6].

Novelist Faisal Hourani presented different images of women in his novels. In “The Trapped”, Maysara appeared as a university graduate and brilliant. In “Bir al-Shom,” the heroine was a homeless woman from a poor peasant family, and in “Samak al-Lajja,” he presented “Umm Raja,” an illiterate widow in a half-Bedouin, half-peasant family.

The Palestinian woman is strong and patient with the arrest of her children, and she represents an example of the sacrificial Palestinian woman who incites her children to act in resistance.

The Palestinian novel also highlighted examples of women who carried weapons and participated in the resistance, such as the characters “Hanaa and Fajr” in the novel “Crying on the Beloved’s Chest,” “Jinan and Shahd” in the novel “A Compass for the Sunflowers,” and the character “Hind Al-Najjar” in the novel “And It Shines.” “Gharba” by Laila Al-Atrash.

In the novel “Sunflowers” by Sahar Khalifa, which was written 36 years ago, the author dealt with three human characters, each one belonging to a different class and social group: “Rafif,” the educated bourgeois girl, “Saadia,” the struggling worker, wife of the martyr, and “Khadra,” the prostitute. The downtrodden, which represents women at their lowest social and economic levels [7].

Such works highlighted multiple forms of women’s struggle, such as clinging to the land, as did the character “Umm Rubabika” in Emil Habibi’s “Six Days,” and mobilization and incitement, as did the character “Umm Saad” in Ghassan Kanafani’s novel.

The role of women was not limited to providing their children for revolutionary work, as the Palestinian novel presented other images of (the revolutionary woman herself who practices political, media, and military work. She carries weapons in the founda-

tions of the revolution... and is wounded, her blood flows, and she falls as a martyr alongside the guerrilla fighter) [1].

The effect of the writer’s gender on the choice of the woman model in the Palestinian novel

Some critics and novelists believe that dealing with the image of Palestinian women depends on the gender of the writer, such as novelist Sahar Khalifa, who believes that male writers “focused on the mother and wife who supports her husband in the struggle, and who makes life under occupation easier for him” (Hamoud, 1994). Likewise, the writer Gharib Askalani believes that female models in the Palestinian novel, especially the exile novel, are often subservient to the world of men, and do not appear as an independent personality that crystallizes independently of his will (Asqalani, 2007).

The impact of the Intifada on the image of women in the Palestinian novel

The number of female martyrs, prisoners, and wounded among girls and women increased during the years of the uprising, which led to the spread of new social values related to the principle of family and social solidarity, setting dowries, rationalizing marriage expenses, and women becoming more and more integrated into the fabric of daily life, so that their pioneering role was proven in a short period of life. The uprising was no longer only concerned with the service or relief aspect, but rather it became involved in daily political life, which contributed to raising its awareness of itself and its social issues.

The Palestinian novel focused on the realistic image of the woman, as she cannot be separated from her surroundings and place, nor isolated from their influence on her. Thus, the development of her personality and her ownership of her decisions occurs through a social, intellectual, and psychological movement that affects her as much as the man.

The novel “And It Rising West” by writer Laila Al-Atrash anticipated the first intifada, indicating the formation of awareness in resistance in the heroine Hind Al-Najjar, and the subsequent abandonment of many social concepts and legacies, in the context of the inevitable development of that awareness.

Although the concerns of Palestinian women increased during the time of the Intifada, due to their participation in its various events, this was not accompanied by a clear change in the level of social reality regarding women’s specific issues (Al-Aila, 2003).

The new reading of the daily reality of the Intifada pushed the Palestinian novelist to greater clarity and boldness, as his vision of

women went beyond the inherited symbols (land, wisdom, ideals) to deal with her as a reality and a feeling.

We notice the decline of the model of the woman who makes her body permissible, under the pretext of compelling social and economic conditions, as we saw in the novels issued in the period preceding the uprising. Rather, the novels published after the uprising are filled with models of women who suffer from the extremely harsh reality of life, proud of their dignity, preferring toil and misery rather than falling into the swamp of sin [8].

Also, the novels published after 1987 celebrated the female models who became involved in the political and struggle arena after the outbreak of the uprising, without paying attention to the criticism of others who did not accept her departure from their controls, which gave some women the opportunity to highlight their leadership abilities and realize themselves, side by side with men, which It enabled some of them to attain advanced levels in political and struggle frameworks, compared to the previous stage [9-14].

Conclusion

The Palestinian novel focused on highlighting the image of women in multiple models, such as the intellectual, the liberal, and the fighter, within a realistic framework, in addition to considering women as a symbol of the land and wisdom. These models were numerous and varied according to the stages through which the Palestinian people's struggle went through and according to the writer's own experiences, and they may also have been influenced by the gender of the writer.

The topic "The Image of Women in the Palestinian Novel" still needs more in-depth and objective studies, especially since there is noticeable activity in the Palestinian literary scene in terms of publishing novels, and this activity must be accompanied by parallel critical studies.

Bibliography

1. Abu Matar Ahmed. "The novel in Palestinian literature". Arab Foundation for Studies and Publishing (1990).
2. Al-Shami Hassan Rashad. "Women in the Palestinian Novel 1965-1985". Publications of the Arab Writers Union (1998).
3. Al-Sayegh May. "Arab Women - Reality and Aspirations". Al-Nahj Magazine, Damascus 41 (1995): 100.
4. Abdel Hadi Fayhaa. Roles of Palestinian Women from the Mid-1960s to Mid-1982: The Political Contribution of Palestinian Women: Women's Narratives: Transcripts of Oral Interviews, 1st edition, Palestinian Women's Center for Research and Documentation, Al-Bireh, Palestine (2015).
5. Abdel Hadi Fayhaa. "Models of the woman/hero in the Palestinian novel". Egyptian General Book Authority, Egypt (1997).
6. Abu Shawar Rashad. "Crying on the Heart of the Beloved, Arab Foundation for Studies". Publishing and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon (2000).
7. Totah, Ghadeer. "Women in Sahar Khalifa's novels". Unpublished master's thesis: Birzeit University, Palestine (2006).
8. Rafidi Wissam. "Palestinian women and the novel between two times: resistance and Oslo". Dar Al-Farabi, Beirut (2017).
9. Borini verses. The Image of Women in the Palestinian Novel: The novels "The Family Horse" and "Praise for the Women of the Family" by Mahmoud Shuqair as an example, unpublished master's thesis, Birzeit University, Palestine (2017).
10. Hammoud Magda. "Women in Sahar Khalifa's Novels". Syrian Knowledge Magazine 373 (1994): 189-208.
11. The family Zaki. "Women in the Palestinian novel". Dar Ugarit: Ramallah (2003).
12. Askalani Ghareeb. "The image of women in men's novels". Al-Hiwar Al-Mutamaddin (2007): 2077.
13. Al-Sammadi Wael. "The image of women in Sahar Khalifa's novels, Durub, Amman, Jordan". (2010).
14. Wadi Farouk. "Three signs in the Palestinian novel". Al-Aswar Press: Acre (1985).