

The Arab Woman in Confrontation with The Forbidden Trinity

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ABSTRACT: *The oppressive reality of the Arab woman has undoubtedly made Arab feminist literature its own features. The woman's search for freedom is undoubtedly more able to express her injustice and oppression than the man because she suffers most from tyranny and oppression. Thus, feminist literature is the best experience for the woman to extract her rights, restore her deprived freedom through writing, raise her voice and exercise the freedom of expression that she has been deprived of for so long. She took out her pen and started "talking like Shahrazad", revealing with her tongue her experiences and desires, and expressing her concerns and pains. In recent years, she is no longer writing to defend what has been stolen from her demanding change and freedom. Writing for her is no longer a defensive device, but an offensive system in which she condemns and retaliates against the man. In her revolutionary feminist narrative, she demonstrated her offensive tendency against all the taboos of the forbidden trinity: politics, religion, and sex, and demonstrated a clear challenge to social norms as well as the literary norms that were established by the masculine establishment. This study, therefore, shows how Arab women writers are able to break the forbidden pillars of the Forbidden Trinity by presenting each other's experiences and testimonies in their quest to challenge this oppressing trinity and to face its censorship powers.*

KEYWORDS: Arab, woman, confrontation, forbidden trinity

INTRODUCTION

The issue of Arab woman's liberation from oppressive taboos and their prohibitions continues to concern many in our current reality, especially in a society that suffers from oppression, underdevelopment, and poverty. The woman suffers from prevailing social, political, economic, and religious relations more than men. This may be due to the masculine discourse that determines this tension in women's and men's relationships. The conflict between them, as Naṣr Ḥāmid Abū Zayd puts it, is due to a racist discourse towards women: "The produced discourse about women in today's Arab world is a discourse that is in its entirety a racial sectarian discourse, in the sense that it is a discourse that speaks of the absolute woman/female and puts her in a comparative

relationship with the absolute man/male. When a relationship is determined to be between opposite or opposing parties, and one of the parties has to submit to one the other, surrender to him, and obediently enter his area of influence, the party that perceives himself as dominant would produce a racist sectarian discourse in all three meanings of the three terms and their indications. This discourse is not only the religious one but also the prevailing and popular discourse that is dominating among the public and in the media. It is also not difficult to find in the tone of the discourse of "equality" and "participation" a sense of superiority, stemming from an implicit assumption that the discourse carries with it the centrality of the man/male. When the woman is equal, she is equal to the man, and when she is allowed to participate, she participates with men. In any case, the man becomes the center of the movement and the focus of activity as if the whole activity of the woman is marginal and gets its indication through the man's activity.¹

Abd al-Rahman Munif asserts that the woman's opponent is not the man for being a man, but a society with its values, traditions, and shackles. Every father and every brother wants freedom and well-being for his daughter or sister, but the thing that impedes the achievement of that is a large number of dominant restrictions and customs, and the censorship imposed by society, and thus prevents the father or brother from achieving the minimum conviction he believes in. Therefore, the effort should be focused on what is considered to be the prohibition or impediment of access to equality and liberty, which is not necessarily the man as sex, but the nature of the relationships that control the two together, which makes them slaves, albeit in varying proportions, as a result of the historical evolution that began to recognize muscular power essentially, and which ended up being considered the economic and ideology that accompanies it as the basis of discrimination and domination".² It is this oppressive reality that leads to strained relations between women and men, according to Munif, which leads to the woman's suffering. Women in Arab society, especially at the current stage, suffer a lot because they are women. "In a society that is underdeveloped and subjected to progressive repression, it is natural that a woman's enslavement, or inferior status, is normal, especially since this society possesses a legacy in terms of religion and traditions that reinforce such a view and gives her a lot of justification".³

On the other hand, Shadia 'Ali Qannawi believes that men's attitude toward women has always been contradictory. While women held the highest place in society in the old times, men were much afraid of them, swinging between being attracted to them and being enthralled and hostile to them. The source of this fear was originally man's inability to explain her reproductive capabilities and he could not explain Earth's seed

¹ Abū Zayd, Naṣr Hāmid (2004). *Dawa 'er al-Khawf – Qira 'ah fi Khitab al-Mar 'ah*. al-Dar al-Bayda': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, p. 29.

² Munif, 'Abd al-Rahman (1998). *Bayn al-Thaqafa wa al-Siyasa*. al-Dar al-Bayda': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, p. 155.

³ Ibid., p. 152.

capability. This double treatment of women and this fear is deep-rooted. This established the possibility of scaling down their economic, political, and religious roles in medieval societies.⁴

Since the woman still lives under constraints and taboos that deprive her of her rights and freedom, this makes her abler to portray her historical suffering and makes her literature different. It is a particularity that reveals her private experiences and private suffering that stems from her social condition and circumstances that are represented in a condition of slavery, and the constraints that the Arab male society still imposes on her by the authority of its customs and norms, giving power to the man, reinforcing his authority at her expense. Hence, her creative writing, especially feminist literature, is the best experience for a woman to extract her rights, restore her deprived freedom through writing, raise her voice and exercise the freedom of expression she has been deprived of for so long. She started writing herself by herself and raising her voice boldly, without hesitation, telling as Shahrazad, and reve⁵Aling in her tongue her experiences, concerns, and desires. In recent years, she has written not to defend what was stolen from her as writing for her is no longer a defensive device, but an offensive system.⁵ By writing on paper, she turned her words into bullets with which she attacked the man, avenging and condemning him.

Questions of the Study

Thus, this study attempts to respond to the following questions: How does the woman's literary creativity interact with the taboos of the forbidden Trinity in the Arab world? How does she confront its censorship taboos and prohibitions? Were her writings prohibited when she broke the taboos? Does her revolting feminist literature contribute to the affirmation of her rights and freedom, and does it provide her with a platform for addressing her concerns and issues? Have all the women writers accepted the term "feminist literature" to name their writings? How do her male society, especially men deal with her pen and writings? Has she succeeded in extracting the legitimacy of her creativity and the attitudes toward it have changed? To what extent has she been able to write herself and show her anxieties, desires, and dreams without fear? How bold and brave has she been in tackling taboos and prohibitions? Are there any means that she adopted for preventing and circumventing social censorship in particular? Are there women writers who were afraid of punishment, and withdrew? Is the woman's punishment lighter than the man's punishment due to her being a woman?

⁴ Qannawi, Shadia Ali (2000). *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya wa Furas al-Ibda'*. Cairo: Dar Qiba' li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', p. 18-19.

⁵ Taha, Ibrahim (2019). *Fitnat al-Adab wa al-Naqd – Maqalat fi al-Adab al-Falastini wa Mulahazat fi al-Zahera al-Adabiyya*. Baqa al-Gharbiyah: Majma' al-Qasemi-al-Qasemi Academy, Haifa: Maktabat Kol Shay', p. 12.

These questions constitute the main pillars of this research, which will aim to discuss and answer, relying on the testimonies and confessions of a number of women writers in their confrontation with the forbidden trinity, which would be samples that reveal the reality that the woman lives. This will enhance the research so that it will provide the reader with a clear picture that can be relied upon in future studies. Besides, this will also give it sincerity, realism, and inclusiveness, because the woman's issues in the Arab world and its conservative communities are one and are not different in their nature, motivation, and ramifications. It should be noted, however, that before we consider these issues, we should provide a background that explains how the Arab woman's literature and her literary creations have evolved, down to what has been called "feminist literature" and how the term has been received by men writers and women writers, and then its features and contents.

Features of the Development of the Arab Women Literature

A number of critics try to emphasize that the seeds of the thought of feminist libertarian appeared in Arab women's literature in ancient times, relying on the fact that the model of the explicit female self-expression is abundantly present in early Islamic culture, where the woman has been distinguished since Jahiliya/ Pre-Islam by her expressing her opinion and insistence on it in relation to her private life and future. In addition to the woman's audacity to make her position on public issues since the dawn of Islam, they surrendered only to their desire and decision. The Arab woman has long been aware that her social emancipation depends on her economic emancipation. Many women sought work and economic independence from their husbands and families, and some women gained money with their poetry. There are numerous accounts of poetic Arab women in history who have claimed their sexual rights⁶. That led some to say: "The ideas and principles of modern liberation feminist movements may be rooted - in some of their manifestations, at least - in the Arab culture, the light of which faded in the dark ages that fell on the Arab societies for a long period till the Arab Renaissance in the 18th century".⁷

The status of the woman in Arab societies has worsened exponentially since the late Umayyad Era, reaching its lowest inferiority in the Ottoman Era, where the man saw her only for sexual pleasure, keeping her away from the light of science and freedom to surround her with a thick fence of ignorance and stagnation. However, by the end of the eighteenth century until the early twentieth century, there were significant events in the Arab region that took communities out of the marshes of ignorance, including the French campaign against Egypt, the exclusive rule of Muhammad 'Ali Pasha of Egypt, the achievement of a comprehensive renaissance, the European intervention and the establishment of universities and schools in Bilad al-Sham (Syria). These matters led to the emergence of the Arab renaissance, which also affected Arab women, and

⁶ Saffouri, Mohammad (2011). *Dirasa fi al-Sard al-Nasawiyy al-'Arabi al-Hadith* (1980-2007). Haifa: Maktabat Kol Shay', p. 83-86.

⁷ For more information about the Arab woman creativity since Pre-Islam (Jahiliya) period till the Renaissance period, see: Saffouri, Ibid., p.49-89.

changed the view of male society about her. The Renaissance's pioneers called for the removal of injustice to the woman demanding that she be reformed, educated, and prepared for the upbringing function, and to be able to keep up with her husband.⁸ Some intellectuals started calling for women's freedom because they believed that she is an important factor in society's advancement. Others linked her freedom to the man's political freedom. All these voices and calls have contributed to raising woman's social profiles. They also paved the way for the establishment of women's associations and movements that worked to achieve justice, women's rights, and freedom, including the freedom to participate in literary life.⁹ The issue of the woman emancipation took over the facade of ideological conflict until it became the heart of the Arab Rising Demand Program. Rachida Benmasoud emphasizes that the issue of women is a cultural issue that is determined by the relationship of the Self with the Other. That is to say, that awareness of the tragic reality of Arab women has only been felt after the Arab man saw his face and reality in the woman who is represented by the West. Literature, on the other hand, has played a positive role in social and political changes experienced by Arab society during the Renaissance, as it deepened the spirit of rebellion and revolution against the injustice of the colonizer and the tyranny of man. The Arab woman had the opportunity with her education to contribute and to be actively present in various fields, including the literary field.¹⁰

Since the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Arab woman has been engaged in literary fields alongside men, but she has expressed her issues in the first place shyly and reluctantly, even by pseudonyms. Some phenomena and obstacles have stood in the way of the creative woman. For example, in its early stages, Arab woman's literature was shy hiding literature. The woman did not dare to show her literature publicly and began her literary activity in closed circles such as women's clubs, charitable institutions, and private homes. The press has played a significant role in encouraging women to publish their works. The literary salons that the woman had set up or participated in assisted her, too. Women's liberation movements have contributed through many feminist journals, paving the way for women to publish their products in the public press to announce their full participation in the creative experience.¹¹

There are those who tried to emphasize the existence of feminist writings that emerged in the late 19th century, especially women who had the opportunity to learn and the ability to write.¹² The reason they are not famous may be that their stories are less

⁸ Ibid., p. 90.

⁹ Ibid., p. 484.

¹⁰ Benmas'oud, Rachida (1994). *al-Mar'ah wa al-Kitaba*. al-Dar al-Bayda': Afriqya al-Sharq, p. 75.

¹¹ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard al-Nisawiy*, p. 485.

¹² Cooke, Miriam (1992). "Arab Women Writers" in: M.M. Badawi, (ed.), *Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 443.

violent than men, and their writing does not parallel in terms of stylistic artistry.¹³ Some people return the highly revolutionary feminist voices to the beginning of the 1950s when feminist voices were charged with protest, revolution, and rejection were so high. During this period, the new term "women's literature" spread, which generated debate and argument about the classification of literature on the basis of sex differences.

Besides, there were other points that were a subject of controversy, such as wondering about the importance of feminist writing, if the woman actually writes differently from the man, and if it has language specificity.¹⁴

Iman al-Qadi supports the view that the beginnings of feminist literature were in the 1950s. She saw it exactly as the Arab modernism that had been rising in this period, which began in 1950 because this year is the true beginning of the novel. Previous novels, the first of which appeared in 1895, can be considered the first feats of feminist narrative art.¹⁵ Many believe that the transformation of Arabic literature in general, and feminist literature in particular, began in the 1950s in all literary genres. Feminist literature of short novels and stories has not only spread in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, and Iraq but also in the Gulf States.¹⁶

It should be noted, however, that despite the rights discovered by the Gulf woman after the development of the Gulf region since the beginning of the 1950s, it's her right to learn and eradicate illiteracy, improve her general conditions, and her ability to express herself. However, she remained governed by some of the customs and traditions that deprived her of the most basic rights and kept her under certain limitations, such as preventing her from having the right to political participation until the nineties¹⁷. It was natural for the power of backwardness in its majority to fall on her, because the man is the guard of these traditions and norms, depriving her of the right to express her emotions in her public discourse, and being exposed to a "perfectly typical codification of the relationship with the outside world."¹⁸

Since the conservative Arab society wraps the woman's body with a halo of sanctity and invites her to cover up her body, the feminist narrative resorts to the woman's body as a means of resisting these norms and rejecting the man on which who is in charge of

¹³ Ibid., p. 449.

¹⁴ Benmas'oud, *al-Mar'ah wa al-Kitaba*, p. 75.

¹⁵ al-Qadi, Iman (1992). *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya fi Bilad al-Sham – al-Simat al-Nafsiya wa al-fanniya (1950-1985)*. Damascus: al-Ahali li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, p. 7.

¹⁶ Cooke, "Arab Women..", p. 443.

¹⁷ Ramsay, Ramsay, Gail (2002-2003). "Styles of Expression in Women's Literature in the Gulf". *Orientalia Suecana*. Sweden: Uppsala, Vol. LI-LII, p.377.

¹⁸ Michalek-Pekolska, Barbara (1997). *al-Turath wa al-Mu'asara fi Ibdā' Laila 'Othman*. Tr. Hatif al-Janabi: Dar al-Mada li al-Thaqafa, p. 15.

it. So most of the women writers in the Arab world in the 1950s and 60s adopt love and sexual freedom as a title for the woman's freedom.¹⁹ Some women writers started boldly to express a breach of the ordinary and depart from the prevailing moral norms²⁰ since the current circumstances have imposed on the woman a social siege that suppresses her emotions and prevents her from making her feelings known. Besides, demanding freedom of sex is the top challenge to society's concepts because it affects the most sacred concepts and because departure from them is considered a violation of taboos and the concept of honor.²¹

The woman in the novels of the 1950s rejected the man's authority and the social traditions that prevented her from exercising her freedom and choosing the life that she wants. She is an educated and active woman whose acquired awareness made her refuse what is imposed on her and she rebelled against it in an attempt to override it as a father's authority, social class, or social traditions. But this rebellion was individual, and therefore, it was negative and flawed and failing. The rebellion of these women was confined to advocating free love, sex, and rejection of authority, especially the authority of literature.²² That's why the concept of the woman's freedom at its beginning often seemed to be a blur that did not give itself easily. A deteriorated reality has often been introduced that requires refusal and overreach, and thus, the author was quick to offer alternatives that tend to prove unconvincing, giving up her demands and alternative projects after an experience that is full of failure. But since the mid-1950s, we have been meeting some female writers who boldly distinguished themselves by boldness from breaking the ordinary and departing from prevailing literary norms.²³

The concept of the woman's freedom and her revolution on two levels: "The concept of individual liberty, and the concept of collective liberty. The concept of individual liberty is summarized in easing social constraints that pressure and advocate free love and sex. Some of them joined the relaxing of social constraints with the need for science and work and saw in them a way to reach the desired freedom. In addition to the dream of the man who donors for security and stability. Collective freedom takes place at the level of society and homeland. And there are those who incorporate individual liberty into collective freedom and saw two important cohesions and a significant correlation."²⁴

With the years of the 1960s, there was has a significant development in the woman's creativity, and it was no longer possible to separate the woman's issues from society's issues at all levels because of the close link between women's emancipation and political reform. The period 1960-1967 was called a period of fermentation of the constituent factors of the Arab feminist novel. Besides, women did not live on the

¹⁹ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, p. 32.

²⁰ Saffouri, *Dirasa fil-Sard*, p. 115.

²¹ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, p. 32.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 393-394.

²³ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 115.

²⁴ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, p. 398.

fringes of political and social life during the harshest trials and volatility that ravaged the Arab world. Moreover, the exclusion of the feminist product in this field from the Arabic novel of war literature impoverishes the literary landscape.²⁵

The mid-70s are considered to be one of the most important periods in feminist writing at the global level, and feminist literature was no longer a substitute, but an important and necessary literature. This development then increased during the seventies and the eighties,²⁶ as Lebanon's Civil War was seen as an important motive that further evolved feminist literature.²⁷ The tragedy of the war made the woman reconsider her role, believing that her role must be changed to effective participation.

Thus, feminist writing became more extreme and destructive of social structure in its handling of women's issues. The Arab author not only addressed social issues and relationships between herself and the man at the social and emotional levels, but also sexual relationships. Sex constituted a clear example of the most important forms of rebellion due to restrictions on women in this area and the fact that women were not granted the right to express themselves in this context, as it was considered to be within the scope of the taboo and the prohibited. In these circumstances, the Arab woman challenged and rebelled against male moral norms and her contents were centered on resistance to social norms, such as marital relations, women's rights to love, marriage, men's control, and so on.²⁸

Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s, women's models were transformed into positive transmission models that were different from negative ones. They are more aware, more resilient to social pain, and more independent, able through suffering and experience to eliminate all the sediments of the past that limited their start to work with men to build a bright future, transforming their relationships from rivalry to understanding, assimilation, and cooperation.²⁹ It was precisely in the 1980s that the Arab woman's literary activity reached its height, with feminist voices increasing in the Arab world in these years, with the increasing number of readers reading this literature, especially the increasing number of female learners and intellectuals in the Arab countries and the increasing culture of university writers.³⁰

However, at the revolutionary stage, from the 1980s to the present day, the Arab woman writer was freed from being the victim's personality and emerged with a strong personality who had the will to be offensive and fighting, and even an initiator to have

²⁵Sha 'ban, Buthayna (1999). *100 Years of Feminist Novel*. Beirut: Dar al-Adab, p. 6.

²⁶ Cooke, "Arab Women..", p. 457

²⁷ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 119.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 119.

²⁹ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, p. 395.

³⁰ Cooke, "Arab Women..", p. 457.

a sexual relationship. This affirms the woman writer's transgression of the norms of society and a violation of taboos and the prohibited.³¹

Feminist Literature

The Term "Feminist Literature"

Reverberations about the emergence of the term "feminist literature" were not feedback-free, whether acceptance or rejection. The term has been rejected in the Arab world, in addition to the multiplicity of the names of the term.³² This reflected difficulty in reaching a single agreed definition, which was received by male literary and critical circles with unparalleled cynicism, including those who called it "long nail literature", "literature of rouge and manicure" or "season of girls' writing". Another group exaggerated the value of "feminist literature", calling it "pornographic" literature, which expresses the fall of values, emptiness of the mind, and the shallowness of thought, influenced by the rising power of religious trends, which is often preoccupied with women and consider their writing a taboo".³³

It seems that the motive behind the problem of its definition and the use of labels that imply ridicule and mockery seems to be motivated by diminishing, suppressing, and questioning women's creativity. Some felt that the term's problematic nature arose because it was a term in which many different opinions were expressed. Some deny it because literature is a general human sequence, irrespective of gender and who wrote it. Some endorse it because women have characteristics that are different from men. Others accuse this literature of being self-centered and of being the product of feminine emotion.³⁴ Besides, there are also a number of critics who "avoid defining it because of the ambiguity it entails arising from the failure to define the concept of the word "feminist", which reflects indications that are charged with the notion of the contemptuous concept of 'harem'.³⁵ Besides, "The woman's writing is always suspicious, provoking men's reading, most of whom approach it driven by their desire expose the secrets of the author's personal life". "The man raises doubts regarding the artistry of female writing, does believe the writer and does not differentiate between reality and imagination".³⁶

The rejection of the term is not confined to the crowd of critics, but most Arab women writers are unanimous in rejecting the classification of their literature in this term because of the disparagement of women and the inferiority of their literature under the influence of male society, which strengthens men's power and marginalizes women.³⁷

³¹ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Srad*, p. 123.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 480.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, 7.

³⁵ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Srad*, p. 480.

³⁶ Moqaddam, Yosra (2005). *Mu'annath al-Riwaya – al-Dat, al-Sura, al-Kitaba*. Beirut: Dar al-Jadid, p. 10.

³⁷ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 482.

Ibrahim Taha maintains that their rejection of the term is consistent with the strategy of feminist creativity that rejects all masculine norms, and since this term was a male product in its origin, the women writers faced it and rejected it sharply.³⁸ Buthaina Sha'ban asserts that the phrase "An Arab woman writer" has not conveyed an encouraging position in the Arab world, even among women writers themselves, because it includes discrimination by women writers that necessarily goes beyond the social injustice experienced by women in the literary field. Therefore, the writers were vehement in refusing to classify them as women writers, hoping to simply be described as "writers", in the hope that they would receive more serious and objective treatment of their creativity.³⁹

Conversely, a number of women critics viewed the term objectively as a term that did not reflect a preferential connotation, but as indicative of the literature produced by women free from male literary norms, adopting a new thought that is based on their own life experiences,⁴⁰ and through it, she confirms that her literature that had been marginalized with premeditation and with premeditation and surveillance, regained its right to exist on the literary scene. regained its right to exist on the literary scene. Some women writers have defended this term, including Buthaina Sha'ban, who said: "An in-depth reading of the Arab feminist literature creates surprise at the reactions of most Arab writers who want to deny the charge of (woman) about their works. Understanding how feminist sensitivity has enriched the social, political, and objective dimension of the literary work undoubtedly makes this quality (woman) a valuable quality that women writers are entitled to take pride in rather than fear and avoid".⁴¹ Iman al-Qadi maintains that the term "Feminist Novel" is a legitimate and valid term because it has an interest in the feminist subject and in highlighting feminist suffering. She believes that the validity of this term will remain until the persecution of women has ceased and until her social reality is exactly the same as that of men, emphasizing, on the other hand, that there are works by female writers that matched works by male writers and introduced works with great perfection and have great intellectual and artistic maturity.⁴²

Contents and Features of Feminist Literature

When the woman decided to resist all obstructive oppressive conditions, there was no doubt that writing constituted a weapon for expressing, shaming exposing, and disclosure of all her suffering and issues. She realized that she had to write herself, "She pours her fragmented self on paper to reformulate itself directly upon contact with this paper. It is a response to the call of Helen Cixous, a prominent theorist of the feminist movement who emphasized: "Write yourself" in her famous article "The Laughter of

³⁸ Taha, Ibrahim (2006). "Beware men, They Are ALL Wild Animals", *Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight, and Repudiation. al-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*. Volume 27, p. 27.

³⁹ Sha 'ban, *100 Years of Feminist Novel*, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 480.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141

⁴² al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya*, p. 10

the Medusa", which became the document of independence in feminist thought.⁴³ The woman responds to this call only boldly to this appeal and writes it in order to break free of its power. Cixous invited the woman to rebel in her writing, to break and destroy previous customs, seeking to encourage her to revolt and to free herself from the restriction of her dependence on men. She also emphasized that the woman's writing should be in two inseparable respects: first, the personal one that manifests itself in writing herself and returning to her body which was confiscated from her. Secondly, to formulate from her writing a weapon that gives her the will to be the decision-maker and initiator of her right in every symbolic system and every political process.⁴⁴

Feminist literature constitutes a revolution over the power of male literature and aims to assert its specificity as a representation of women's world. Perhaps the most important reference to the notion of feminist thought is the cultural perception that women are not treated equally -- for no reason other than being women -- in a society that regulates their affairs and prioritizes them according to men's vision, interests, and experiences. Under the patriarchal cultural paradigm - contrary to feminist thought - the woman is placed in a perspective that associates her with every sphere of inferiority and denies access to public life. Feminist literature comes with its feminist thought to change women's living conditions.⁴⁵ Thus, feminist literature, as expected, is preoccupied with the woman's propositions and revolt against the patriarchal male reality, and her rebellion and confrontation with all the scars of disability and underdevelopment in her society. Her entry into the field of education and work led to intellectual and psychological changes, and there have been fundamental changes in her concepts and vision, which encouraged her to approach the forbidden areas for her. It was natural for feminist pens to begin expressing the woman's reality and highlighting her pain, and then the task of changing and demanding their freedom, in order to convict the man in a way that could amount to bitter satire, and then to challenge all taboos of the forbidden trinity: politics, religion, and sex, boldly.

In her revolting feminist narrative, since the 1980s, the woman has shown her offensive tendency to the social and moral norms established by the masculine, dictatorial foundation. Her revolution was not only against the contents, but it included artistic and stylistic techniques that work on undermining the male literary theory and establishing new literary norms of their own that works on reinforcing the woman's status and giving her the position of the center of the text, and thus, she becomes the active dominant personality, the heroine and the central character and in order to remove the man to the margins of the narrative text or keeping him away from it, and thus, she dominates the imaginary world of the script, yearning for the achievement of her dominance on reality.

⁴³ Taha, *Fitnat al-Adab*, p. 11.

⁴⁴ Cixous, Helen (1976). "The Laugh of the Medusa". Tr. By Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen. *Sign: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 1:4, pp. 875- 880.

⁴⁵ Ibrahim, Abdullah (2011). *al-Sard al-Niswi – al-Thaqafa al-Abawiya, al-Hawiya al- 'Onthawiya wa al-Jasad*. Beirut: al-Mu'asasa al- 'Arabiya li al-Dirasat, p. 12-13.

Therefore, feminist literature gives the platform of telling and revealing to women writers, who take over and dominate the power of the narrative.⁴⁶

The woman writer tries to monitor the woman's life, who is a prisoner of customs and traditions, through rejection, revolution, and rebellion against all forms of authority, masculinity, and social order. By rejecting and revolting against the authority, control, stereotyping, rules, and regulations that were imposed on her by the man, she resembles modernism itself. That is no wonder since feminist literature is one of the most prominent secretions of modernism. Modernism is also a rejection of all forms of stereotyping, rules, authority, and form. As long as the woman endeavors to transcend the residual legacy and disintegrate social norms and constraints, and as long as they aspire to access freedom without being assured of access due to the various obstacles and taboos that impede her and which she still collides with, she is also like modernism in her anxiety, revolution, dismantlement, and rejection of the social system and her search for a better life. Therefore, she depends on artistic methods that in turn smash traditional artistic patterns, such as place and time division, fragmentation of the traditional plot, reliance on the stream of consciousness, monologue, retrieval, associations, dream, multi-voices, meta-text, anti-hero, employment of intertextuality, myth, outlandish language (*ighrab*), irony, and the open wondering text and other things.⁴⁷

Hence the feminist writings entered from two doors: the door of rebellion and the door of experimentation. Experimental writing is a rebellion in form and is at two levels: content and form. Content is also on two levels: first, the focus of writing should be on women and everything about them. Second, writing should be about authority where they rebel against authority in all its colors and types, from religious, political, social, or authority of the husband, father, or brother. The form also has two levels: first, it rebels against the qualitative norms and does not submit to a particular literary genre. Secondly, at the level of textual standards, they started moving away from the textual standards that the man had followed. This means that the woman started looking for new, different forms of writing and new creative tools that were different from the man's pen and form of his writing, looking for a form that refuses to be formulated. Hence the prerequisites for her feminist writing are not to adhere to theory, neither to the theory of literature nor to the theory of literary genre and its norms, but to refute the existence of such norms because it is the man who set them, and they are a symbol of his masculine power of repression.

⁴⁶ For more information about the Arab woman propositions in her feminist narration and its contents, themes, and particularity of her discourse see: al-Bustani, Bushra; al-Manassera, Hussein et. al (2018). *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya al-'Arabiya*. Ed. by Najm 'Abdullah Kazem. Qatar: Dar Katara li al-Nashr.

⁴⁷ For more information about the aesthetics of style in the feminist Arab narration, see: Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard al-Niswiya*, p. 331-478.

As Mohammad 'Anani states, the woman's starting point for true emancipation began by questioning the theory of literature and criticism if it is a theory. In his view, 'Anani relies on Mary Eagleton's wondering: "Why do we theorize? are we looking? And how do we look? Doubt in the viability of the theory is widespread in the length and width of the movement. We face a long history of patriarchal theories (that is, those put by men), which claim to have proven conclusively that women are inferior to men, and it is not surprising to be careful.

Many female leaders of the feminist movement see that the theory, even if it is not male by spontaneity - as women are able to theorize - it is certainly dominated by men when applied and its curricula are biased towards men.⁴⁸ "So the woman writes out of the self-experience and doesn't write out of the theoretical experience. This is confirmed by Buthaina Sha'ban that feminist literature is almost devoid of glamorous slogans and abstract ideologies and it attaches itself to the heat of living experience and current life,⁴⁹ especially because the theory means masculinity, authority, rules, laws, and influence.

Thus, the Arab woman author succeeded in employing many mechanisms of modernism and postmodernism, achieving her goal of revolution against reality, transcending it from the inside, and undermining and violating the literary genre. She does that in order to establish a literary theory that is different from the male theory so that all her concerns will appear in resisting traditional literary currents at various levels, considering that as a manifestation of protest and resistance to prevailing customs in order to demonstrate her distinction from the man and as proof of her departure from the male writing patterns, pointing out by that her ability to be independent of the masculine system in the practice of creativity,⁵⁰ and emphasizing that she is no less capable or creative.

The Woman's Creativity Versus the Forbidden Trinity

The foregoing confirms that feminist literature is a revolutionary ideological stream that seeks to affirm the triumph of the woman after she has been deprived of her rights for so long and to assert the dismantling and undermining of the man's power. Self-writing is no longer a woman's concern. That was true in the beginning when the woman did not aspire to more than expression in writing. In recent stages, feminism is not satisfied with restoring its right only to her voice, or extracting its voice from masculinity, but insists on two things: raising the voice and condemnation. Feminist writing is no longer a defensive device for the woman, but a violent offensive device. When the author succeeded, she is no longer afraid to confront the forbidden trinity:

⁴⁸ 'Anani, Mohammad (1996). *al-Mustalahat al-Adabiyya al-Haditha*. al-Jiza: al-Sharika al-Misriya al-Alamiya li al-Nashr, p. 188.

⁴⁹ Sha 'ban, *100 Years of Feminist Novel*, p. 8.

⁵⁰ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 123.

politics, religion, and sex, and its authoritarian oppressive censorship: politically, religiously, and socially.

Undoubtedly, when the woman presents her concept of freedom, she presents it differently from the man, because she is the most oppressed group in society. Afif Farraj acknowledges that when a woman "presents her concept of liberty, she delivers it very privately by sensitizing the specificity of her situation and distinguishes her suffering from the power of fertilization advocated by nature, the power of curbing and social disruption of energy of creativity and self-fulfillment. The woman's message through their stories says that the Arab woman especially moves in the world of men, destiny, the man devil and mercy, grace, curse, and judgment. She revolts against him and returns to him, declaring her independence from him and seeking his protection.⁵¹ "This is why Buthaina Sha'ban believes that the Arab woman must fight two wars: a war against colonialism alongside men, a war against repression and oppression imposed on women by society, at the forefront of which are veiling (hijab) and unveiling (suf ūr), and then the freedom of the woman to choose her partner, her education and her work.⁵²

Since writing is the first step in the rebellion, the fear that accompanied the woman at the beginning of her literary life prompted many to publish their products under pseudonyms, as did the woman writer Malak Hafni Nassif, who called herself "Bahithat al-Badiya/ "Bedouin Researcher." Sometimes the author took more than a pseudonym for her, like May Ziadeh, who called herself Isis Kobia, and other times, she turned to Khaled Raf'at.⁵³ The pseudonym phenomenon came out of fear of reverberations and caution against abusing her name in a traditionally conservative society, besides the man's wobbly attitudes to her creativity. Other women writers deliberately started their literary works with some observations intended to remove the suspicion from them, as "at this point, women writers were exposed to numerous obstacles, as their patriarchal society observed them, and prevented them from continuing their literary creations in many different forms and means, such as the family's rejection of them or pressure by the husband or father. This situation made so many writers withdraw from writing while others resorted to writing under pseudonyms due to the stinging attack on women's literature, not to mention the attitudes of male critics of women's literature and their disregard for or ridicule of their production, claiming that women's imagination and experience are limited and that women cannot get out of the world of home and children in their writings. One manifestation of women's inhibition of writing during this period is the widespread falsification of certain literary works written by men and attributed to women".⁵⁴

⁵¹ Farraj, Afif (1980). *al-Hurriya fi Adab al-Mar'ah*. Beirut. Mu'asasat al-Abhath al-'Arabiya, p. 9-10.

⁵² Sha'ban, *100 Years of Feminist Novel*, p. 5.

⁵³ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 101-102.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

On the other hand, Iman al-Qadi assumes that if we study the feminist narrator, we can identify an important aspect of the woman's social reality. Women writers are an important indicator of the Arab woman's development because it is not easy for the woman to write a creative work in which she talks about her own self and about her vision of what is so clear about for which she may be criminalized, and suffer socially severely because the society in which she lives is still governed by a traditional masculine outlook, based on her passivity, shyness, obedience, and distance from the rich social experience that is one of the important components of an active human being.⁵⁵

Despite the qualitative leap in Arab societies in the last three decades of the twentieth century, the woman remained a minor creature who is dominated by men, who infringed her rights and imprisoned her with customs and legacies, seeking to exercise all kinds of oppression against her and prohibiting her from writing and publishing her literary products. As a result, the woman suffers twice as much as the man, and she becomes the creature that is closest to the problem of freedom and the oppression of the forbidden trinity: politics, sex, and religion. With the formulation of feminist writing in the face of a full history of taboos and prohibitions,⁵⁶ the woman who is living on this narrow horizon of freedom has no choice but to choose between withdrawal and non-publication or migrate to an exile that provides her with such freedom. However, many women writers began to be aware of their literary role and refused to withdraw from their creative project, and chose to flee from an oppressive homeland and migrate to other Arab or European countries in search of lost freedom at homeland and continue writing. Fadia Faqir described these women writers who fled their country symbolically and in the words of Shahrazad, the mistress of narration, who resisted death by the power of the word, saying: "Shahrazad wanted freedom and therefore, she left Baghdad,"⁵⁷ but Nizih Abu Nidal asserts that "Shahrayar's sword became blunt and Shahrazad became stronger and more able to tell herself and declare that the thing that people are silent about. Writing has become a quest for a broader horizon of freedom".⁵⁸

Despite the author's expressions of this challenge, the negative view about the woman's literature did not change and even became sharper with the passage of time until it reached its highest point in modern times with an increase in the voices and oppressive strict currents.

⁵⁵ al-Qadi, *al-Riwaya al-Niswiyya*, p. 7.

⁵⁶ Abu Nidal, Nazih (2009). *Hada 'iq al-'Ontha*. Amman: Dar Azmina, p. 12.

⁵⁷ Faqir, Fadia (1998). *In The House of Silence: Autobiographical Essays by Arab Women Writers*. Reading: Event Publishing, p. 53.

⁵⁸ Abu Nidal, Nazih (2009). *Hada 'iq al-'Ontha*. Amman: Dar Azmina, p. 12.

When the woman gets free, in Nawal al-Sa'dawi's view, from the constraints of society and begins production, she faces many obstacles in publishing her creativity. When the creative woman overcomes the problems of publishing, she faces the problems of critical movement as critics attack or ignore her literature. If a woman gets away with it, she faces the government or the State. She may be dismissed and displaced, or be imprisoned and her life may be threatened. Latifa al-Zayyat emphasizes this marginalization of women writers. She says: "The literary movement still denies the achievement of the Arabic woman writer and puts her creativity on the fringes of Arab creativity and out of its context, and the term "Feminist Literature" continues to be an attempt to demean the literature written by women".⁵⁹

Since the woman lacks personal liberty in a society that objectifies her and imposes social deprivation on her, she must be the most harmed group in society and the closest creature in her society who is close to images of oppression, authoritarianism, suppression, and the most suffering from the prison of customs and the forbidden trilogy. Besides, she is the most suffering group in society because of the deprivation of literary freedom. But for the sake of all this, she has become the most conscious and capable of expressing the problem of liberty and its whereabouts. So she does not fail to look for this stolen freedom across the world, and by the word, she resists and challenges censorship without fear of consequences. This explains Ibrahim Taha's statement that Arab women writers do not fail to challenge censorship. Young Arab writers show a violent challenge to patriarchy and combat social and religious norms despite the harsh punishment they are threatened with. The woman was punished as a result of her challenge to the religious and political establishment, and her interference in political affairs led to more difficulties due to her breach of the prohibitions that were raised in her face, first, and second, because of her being a woman. Besides, she was often held for authority investigations or imprisoned.

Some women writers chose to leave their country and live in exile looking for freedom and to escape authority.⁶⁰ In their search for lost freedom, politics as a taboo was not far from the woman's revolution, and the writer did not fail to challenge censorship, but rather demonstrated courage and audacity in her fight against it.

After monitoring the experiences of many women writers in Egypt, Syria, and Iraq regarding creative freedom, we found that the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi writers,⁶¹ to name a few, were subjected to multiple censorship forms under a repressive regime and a male society. Some of them withdrew in fear while others continued in most cases

⁵⁹ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 31.

⁶⁰ Taha, "Beware men", pp. 31-34; Faqir, *In The House*, pp. 175-176.

⁶¹ See: al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, Lina (2016). *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq- al-Hurriya wa al-Raqib*. Baqa al-Gharbiya: Majma' al-Qasemi- al-Qassemi Academy. Haifa: Maktabat Kol Shay', p. 192-219; al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, Lina (2016). "Hurriyat al-Mar'ah al-Ibda'iya wa al-Thaluth al-Muharram fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq" in "*al-Majma'- Abhath fi al-Luga al-'Arabiya wa al-Adab wa al-Fikr*". Baqa al-Gharbiya: al-Qassemi Academy, Issue 10: p. 183-192.

until the writer in recent decades became bolder to rebel against political, religious, and social constraints. Now, we can make sure that women actually succeeded in challenging the trinity, although they were often held accountable for authority or imprisonment. After leaving prison, they sought to expose this repression in a literary script, as was the writer's man who lived through this experience, and they were able to enrich the Arabic Library with the literature of prisons and reinforce it. Among them, there were those who had chosen to leave their homeland and seek exile that would provide them with their own freedom and creativity, guaranteeing them personal safety and spiritual peace.⁶²

The body was considered to be one of the fundamental pillars in the subjects of Arab feminist literature. It was part of the system associated with the cause of women as the premise of feminist literature is based on the glorification and celebration of the female body, or exposing its transformations in a culture that oppresses its freedom or degrades it. Portraits of the body in women's writings have made the female body a fertile topic that has been narratively represented in multiple ways.⁶³

The specificity of feminist literature derived its legitimacy from the specificity of the woman's human type, from her cultural profiling, and from the nature of her body: because she is organized in cultural and psychological relations with the world, on the one hand, and with her Self, on the other. While these relations were originally normal under the coercions of the masculine culture, they became distorted, because the woman was reduced to a marginal component, and her body became a subject of religious, social, economic, and cultural conflict.⁶⁴

There is no doubt that the Arab woman writer dares, most audaciously, to rebel against the taboo of "sex" and confronts it as a kind of rebellion against the authoritarian male society. That's why sex was the most broken and destructive pillar of the trinity by the Arab woman writer in general. Other rebellions against politics and religion met with the man's rebellions.⁶⁵ Both the man writer and the woman writer face institutional and legal punishment, but the woman writer in this regard also has a harsher and stricter confrontation, due to the nature of the social reaction associated with the culture of Arab society, which still distinguishes between men and women.⁶⁶ The woman's treatment of her relationship with her body still upsets the Arab reader because he sees it as a breaking of the sacred taboo. Rana Idris indicates in this context that bold female writers are subject to double censorship; "How can a decent woman write a novel so obscene?" The problem - as she describes is that "the often uneducated "censor" does not differentiate between "eroticism" that addresses the philosophy of sex and the

⁶² For more information about prison-literature and the experiences of men-writers and women-writers, and the study of samples from it, see: al-Sheikh-Hishmeh (2016). *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq*.

⁶³ Ibrahim, *al-Sard al-Niswiyy*, p. 215,

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

⁶⁵ Abu Nidal, *Hada'iq al-'Ontha*, p. 117.

⁶⁶ Qannawi, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiyya*, pp. 94.

pornography that deals with sex scenes whose sole purpose is of sexual excitement".⁶⁷ But the Arab woman writer dared to break these restrictions that limit her creativity and revealed the unspoken about without fear or evasion.

Therefore, the most prominent manifestation of the Arab woman author is her super attention to the subject of sex as if she declares by that that she is not afraid and that she rejects all forms of cultural, emotional, and political authority. Repression has led the woman to move from the position of rebellion against male literary norms to that of revolution and to attack and condemn men. She violated the norms that were established by the man and penetrated the forbidden trinity.⁶⁸ The author's revolution has emerged against society's postulates about her liberation from being the victim's personality and her emergence as a strong initiator of a sexual relationship.⁶⁹ This means that she exceeded society's norms and violated the prohibited sex taboo. Therefore, the dominant tendency in her writing was to highlight body issues in revealing ways and without covering herself up behind symbolic phrases.⁷⁰

So, sex in feminist literature is a present theme that is not absent from the contemporary Arab woman author's narrative. The woman sees herself as equal to the man in various fields, so she does not feel any embarrassment about writing about sex, and describing the adventures of her sexual heroines for her belief that it is her right as it is for men.⁷¹ A woman's body is no longer forbidden or prohibited, and sex is no longer a defect or a taboo. Practicing sex in most modern-day women's writings is no longer a sin, as it is seen by the woman as a right, a personal issue that does not concern society. Add to that, it is the first step in the path of liberation and rebellion against the masculine society.⁷² Many feminist narratives reveal the pleasure of women as they talk about their bodies, so the feminist narrative takes many forms to express women's sexual needs, hitting against the wall all the inequitable norms of society against women.⁷³ If the woman is looking for a rebellious door, if sex is represented in underdeveloped societies and in religious belief as a sin, and if the woman is the source of this sin because she owns this body, which must be fortified with all kinds of forbidden things so that sedition will not threaten religious-based social peace, breaking this taboo becomes the first prominent challenge for the Arab woman writer.

⁶⁷ Idris, Rana (1996). "al-Nashr wa al-Raqaba" in: *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya fi Muwajahat al-Asr – Buhuth wa Niqashat al-Nadwat al-Fikriya*. Cairo: Nur- Dar al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya li al-Nashr, p. 361.

⁶⁸ Faqir, *In The House of Silence*, p. 38.

⁶⁹ Cixous, "The Laugh of the Medusa", p. 877.

⁷⁰ For more information about "censorship that followed the Egyptian, Syrian and Iraqi woman writer, see: al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq*, p. 192-219; al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, "Hurriyat al-Mar'ah al-Ibda'iya", p. 183-192.

⁷¹ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 237.

⁷² Taha, "Beware men", pp. 57-61.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.61.

Confrontation with the Forbidden Trinity: Testimonies and Samples

Egyptian author Nora Amin emphasized the relationship between the narrow space of freedom of expression and the shrinkage of opportunities for creativity: "In the absence of a climate of freedom, creativity disappears." She also emphasized the role of the Arab writer's censor as a major obstacle to her literary creations.⁷⁴ The condition of the Egyptian author Salwa Bakr was not better than her relationship with the internal censor. She says in one of her testimonies: "I thought I was a free writer, but as soon as I started writing the letters, the censor emerged from my interior with his amputating sword that is cast from the values of the past, and the conditions of the present and the future. The author Salwa Bakr al-Misriya was no better than her relationship with the internal sergeant, saying in a testimony: "I thought I was a free writer, but as soon as I started writing the letters, the sergeant emerges from my interior with an amputee sword cast from the values of the past, the conditions of the present and the future. The situation may end up eliminating a whole creative work, and there are so many stories that I chose not to publish, and a creative idea I resorted to burying 'Alive because of the instructions of that "terrible internal bogeyman." Bakr refers to this censor as "our ancient heritage of intellectual repression", from which the internal censor draws his strength, referring by that to her experience with censorship in publishing her stories "Ajin al-Fallaha/ The Peasant's Dough" and "Ihda wa Thalathun Shajara Jamila Khahdra 'Thirty-One Beautiful Green Trees", where she is accused of touching a side of the forbidden or taboo creativity.⁷⁵

Some believe that opportunities for women's creativity increase and expand when women are free from men's power. This is confirmed by Shadia Qannawi in her research conducted among 16 Egyptian woman writers that the opportunities for the creativity of the Egyptian woman writer are wider in cases of independent life, whether by non-marriage or divorce.⁷⁶ Since the status of women was part of a totalitarian repressive hierarchy, some of them published their literary products under pseudonyms, such as the writer "Alifa Raf 'at", who resorted to writing under pseudonyms: "Bint Banha," "Aida" and "Alifa Sadiq", between 1955 -1960. Publishing and writing were also a cause for Nawal al-Saadawi's divorce of two husbands for her opposition to that.⁷⁷ Latifa al-Zayyat also announced her desire for divorce when her husband insisted that he was the one who made her and he has the right to own her.⁷⁸ The world can be narrow for some of them and choose suicide as a solution, such as the woman writer Arwa

⁷⁴ Qannawi, al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya, p. 66.

⁷⁵ Bakr, Salwa (1992). "Shahada". *Fusul*. Cairo: Autumn, p. 155.

⁷⁶ Qannawi, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya*, p. 92.

⁷⁷ Badran, Margot and Cooke, Miriam (1990). *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. London: Virago Press, p. xxix.

⁷⁸ al-Zayyat, Latifa (1992). "al-Katib wa al-Hurriya". *Fusul*. Cairo: Autumn, p. 229.

Saleh,⁷⁹ or they may leave their country as Ahdaf Sueif who resides in London, and Safa Fathi, who resides in France, and Iman Mursal, who resides in Canada.⁸⁰

As if the author were to succeed in leaving her country with the strict censor strict and social brake that is imposed on her, she would become "bolder to say and declare the things that people keep silent about. She would declare her love and hears the sound of her body, even if her departure was to a more conservative Arab country".⁸¹

One of the manifestations of censorship that also limits a woman's creativity is the inspection experience that she always faces if she writes on the subject of her relationship with a man. Everything she writes is projected on her personal life and is seen in her heroine's life as an expression of her own life, and so, her creativity is always subjected to suspicion.⁸² This is represented in a description by Itidal Othman as: "Looking at the woman or peeing at her through the hole of the door key." Mona Rajab, Naimat al-Buḥayri, Afaf al-Sayed, Samia Ramadan, and others agree with her.⁸³ Besides, one of the most significant obstacles to literary creativity is the framing of women's creativity in what has been termed "the creativity of the harem cage." This is what Itidal Othman refers to saying, "there is a particular sensitivity to what women write. There are still very deep roots for guardianship on the woman." Naimat al-Buḥayri points out that treating the woman as a body has no right to participate in intellectual and creative activity".⁸⁴

The author, Bahija Hussein, stated that she had been accused twice of withdrawal from Islam (ridda): "The first time was by a university professor who accused me at a seminar of "apostasy" (ridda), and denouncing "that my novels included a love relationship between a Muslim and a Christian." The second time was by a Marxist critic who described her as an "apostate leftist", denouncing her as a "negative left-wing personality".

If the author Nimat al-Buḥayri had praised God because she was not married when she experienced censorship, the author Bahija Hussein asserts that when she started writing the novel "Ra'ihat al-Laḥazat/Smell of the Moments" she was married, but she would not be able to finish it without a divorce. Her relationship with him continued to the

⁷⁹ al-Ansari, Mohammad Jaber (1998). *Intihar al-Muthaqafin al-Arab*. Beirut: al-Mu'asasa al-'Arabiya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, p. 11.

⁸⁰ Handal, Nathalie (2001). *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*. New York-Northampton: Interlink Books, p. 13.

⁸¹ Abu Nidal, *Hada'iq al-'Ontha*, p. 78.

⁸² Muqaddam, *Mu'annath al-Riwaya*, p. 10.

⁸³ For more information, see: al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, "Ḥurriyyat al-Mar'ah al-Ibda'iya", p. 183-192

⁸⁴ Qannawi, *al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiyya*, p. 76-77.

point that she asked her husband to separate. If she continued to be his wife, her husband would have dropped all the events of the novel on her personal life. She added that one critic once confirmed that most female creators had completed their novelists' work under divorce. When she published the novel, many women criticized her by saying, "How can a wife cheat on her husband, and then how does she cheat on him in a forest?!" which made her say: "It seems to me that censorship is not just laws prohibiting books, but a social and cultural climate." In addition, she was arrested in 1975 for her political activity.⁸⁵

When the woman tried to rebel against her reality by rebelling against its trilogy and postulates, she must be one of those writers who had been prosecuted, imprisoned, or prevented from publishing their literature. Many women writers from various Arab countries have been prosecuted because of their anti-political writings, their criticism of religion and its laws, or their penetration into the customary taboo, sex, and tradition. For example, the Lebanese author Hanan al-Sheikh, whose novel "Ḥikayat Zahra/A Tale of a Flower" was banned in most Arabic countries, Lebanese Layla Ba 'labaki was tried for violating moral values in her collection " Safinat Hanan al-Qamar/ The Ship of the Moon Affection"; the Jordanian writer Suhair al-Tall was jailed for describing sex scenes in one of her short stories, and the Egyptian Salwa Bakr, who was jailed for her political activity.⁸⁶ Then, the Lebanese writer Hoda Barakat, the Jordanian Fadia Faqir, the Palestinian Hamida Nana, and the Emirati Dhabiya Khamis, who was imprisoned and denied return to her homeland.⁸⁷

Sex was not the only taboo that women writers revealed but even dared to expose the political taboo. The Egyptian author Mona Rajab revealed in her story "Ana Atakallam/ I Speak" from her collection " Indama Tathur al-Nisa' / When Women Revolt" the prevention of Arab women from interfering in political affairs.

Nawal al-Sa'dawi and Salwa Bakr criticized the political authority, and the practices of the regime, and exposed concealed things. Nawal al-Sa'dawi's novel "al-Riwaya/The Novel" was confiscated and caused a great fuss. Salwa Bakir, in her novel "Lail wa Nahar/Night and Day", also criticized political authority, and the oppressive practices of the political regime and revealed the concealed.⁸⁸

Nawal al-Sa'dawi was one of the most prominent Arab writers to face the forbidden trinity without caution. She was a bold and revolting advocate for women's rights, who by her creativity penetrated the taboo of religion⁸⁹, arguing that the effect of writing was one of the most important effective means of changing the circumstances of Arab

⁸⁵ Hussein, Bahija (2002). "al-Raqaba Manakh". *al-Adab*. Beirut, Issue 11/12, p. 88-89.

⁸⁶ Taha, "Beware men", p. 31.

⁸⁷ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 31.

⁸⁸ Saffouri, *Dirasa fi al-Sard*, p. 296-303. See also: Booth, Marilyn (1993). *Stories by Egyptian Women*. Tr. by Marilyn Booth, Austin: University of Texas Press, p.viii.; Booth, Marilyn (1993). *Stories by Egyptian Women*. Tr. by Marilyn Booth, Austin: University of Texas Press, p.viii

⁸⁹ al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr*, p. 196-199.

women.⁹⁰ al-Sa'dawi's problems with censorship began in 1971 when she tried to publish a collection of scientific articles entitled "al-Mar'ah wa al-Gins/The Woman and Sex", confirming that this collection directly disappeared as soon as it was published. This was why she was dismissed from her job at the Ministry of Health in 1972, finding herself without work.⁹¹ Her collection "Mudakkarat Fatah Ghayr 'Adiya/Memoirs of an Extraordinary Girl" was forbidden because it touches religion and holy things.

Her novel "Mudakkarat Tabiba/ Memoirs of a Doctor", which takes the form of an autobiography, was also exposed to deletions and amendments. Her autobiography, "Mudakkarati fi Sijn al-Nisa'/My Memoirs in Women's Prison", was written while she was in Qanater Prison for three months, in 1981. She detailed her experience behind bars, stating that: "The great crime is that I am a free woman in a time when they only want servants and slaves. She was born with a mind thinking at a time when they were trying to abolish the mind",⁹² stressing that imprisonment for the woman not only means walls, it is the imprisonment of society and its limitations and discrimination against her, where political oppression at one level becomes equal to social and religious oppression".⁹³ Her writings have often been rejected and prohibited in Egypt and many Arab countries.⁹⁴ The Egyptian authorities closed her journal "Majallat al-Siha/ Health Magazine" in 1972 for her bold writings.⁹⁵ al-Sa'dawi is one of the most boldly rebellious writers on women's issues, such as love, sex, and their relationship with men, especially when fundamentalist Islamist movements were spreading and intensifying in the Arab country, especially Egypt, until they sued her demanding her separation from her husband and dismissal from under the pretext of "al-Hisba". She was also subjected to atonement and her name was placed on the "Death List", which is worse than the "Black List".⁹⁶

Women may sometimes be demanded to withdraw, as, for example, Farida al-Naqash was demanded to withdraw and give up political work for the sake of her children, which is not considered a man's duty. However, the al-Naqash rejects this, noting that women suffer as well as men prisoners, in addition to fighting them in order to establish their identity and rights. Farida al-Naqash revealed her experience in prison in her book "Dam'atan wa Wardah/Two Tears and a Rose".⁹⁷ Egyptian author Salwa Bakir took an interest in political issues and participated in demonstrations against foreign interference and coloni'alism in the 1960s, and was then imprisoned in 1989 on

⁹⁰ Cooke, "Arab Women", p. 453.

⁹¹ Stagh, *The Limits of Speech*, p. 108.

⁹² al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (2006). *Mudakkarati fi Sijn al-Nisa*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli, p. 12.

⁹³ Harlow, Barbara(1992). "Min Sijn al-Nisa': Riwayat al-Alam al-Thalith 'un al-Sijn". *Fusul*. Cairo: Vol. 11, Issue 3, Autumn, p. 353-367

⁹⁴ Faqir, *In The House*, p.13.

⁹⁵ al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr*, p. 196.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.199

charges of participating in iron factory disturbances in Ḥolwan.⁹⁸ There were a number of Egyptian writers who were also imprisoned for political reasons. They expressed the experience of prison through autobiographies such as Safinaz Kazim and her autobiography "Un al-Sijn wa al-Ḥurriya/About Imprisonment and Freedom", Zainab al-Ghazali and her autobiography "Ayyam Ḥayati/Days of My Life".⁹⁹

In Syria, the rebellion was intensifying. Many Syrian women writers were forced to migrate and choose exile as a result of oppressive political order, as well as the stringent social conditions preventing and limiting freedom, such as the Ghada al-Samman, who migrated from Damascus to Beirut and Europe¹⁰⁰, where al-Samman was attacked for daring to deal with and exploit freedom that was not fully available or recognized.

al-Saman often tried to bump into the postulates of the Moslem society with her stories and titles, expressing the female right to love and freedom. al-Saman was also exposed to the accusation of disbelief by Saudi Sheikh Awad al-Qarni, who mentioned her name with other Arab writers in his book "Modernism in the Scales of Islam" to accuse them of atheism and blasphemy.¹⁰¹ Both Colette Khoury and al-Samman - in the words of Mohammad Qarania - acted by the keys of the body daringly.¹⁰² When each of them genuinely continued to express herself, there was a huge uproar about her, such as the one made by Colette Khoury in her novels "Ayyam Ma 'ahu/Days with Him" and "Laila Waḥida/ One Night", where the writer tore up the mask of shyness and sensitivity and expressed what was going on in her chest as a woman. That fuss was raised about her just because she was a "woman". This is what awaited Ghada al-Saman after she wrote "La Bahr fi Beirut/ No Sea in Beirut", "Lail al-Guraba' / The Night of Strangers", and "A'iantu 'Alayka al-Hub/ I Declared Love on You", expressing the woman's hues loudly and violently that outraged our conservative East. al-Samman was attacked and abused for publishing Ghassan Kanafani's letters to her, provoking literary and intellectual battles.¹⁰³ Author Samar Yazbek did not fail to reveal in her novel "Salsal/ Clay" the operations of looting and prevalent corruption in Syrian official circles, criticizing the authority for that. Samar Yazbek was also known for her daring to deal with the prohibitions and taboos.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 199.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p.199.

¹⁰⁰ al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, "Hurriyat al-Mar'ah al-Ibda'iya", p. 193-195.

¹⁰¹ al-Qarni, 'Awad bin Mohammad (1988). *al-Hadatha fi Mizan al-Islam- Nazarat Islamiya fi Adab al-Hadatha*. al-Jiza: Hajar li al-Tiba'ah wa al-Nashr, p. 114.

¹⁰² Qarania, Mohammd (2004). *al-Sata'er al-Mukhmaliya- Malameh al-'Ontha fi al-Riwaya al-Suriya Hatta Am 2000*. Damascus: Ittihad al-Kuttub al-Arab, p. 249.

¹⁰³ Suleiman, Nabil (1994). *Fitnat al-Sard wa al-Naqd*. Latakia: Dar al-Hiwar li al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi', p. 31.

¹⁰⁴ al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq*, p. 210.

Iraq, however, suffered from the tragedies of war, repression, and a totalitarian regime for three decades from the end of the twentieth century until the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime. It goes without saying that the weak and subordinate segments have suffered the most severe conditions, and the creative woman usually feels twice as distressed. Once because they touch the whole country, and once because they affect the woman in more private and harsher ways.¹⁰⁵

The author Su'ad Khairy, who suffered in Iraqi prisons, probably is the best who described the reality of the woman and what she suffered under the dictatorship in her book "Iraqi Women as a Struggle and a Giving", stating: "The woman suffered from all catastrophic outcomes like men, in addition to her own suffering."¹⁰⁶

Emigration was a phenomenon that was forced on Iraqi women, just like men. Novelist Dona Taleb emigrates to Denmark, Novelist Daisy al-Amir to Beirut, novelist 'Aliyah Mamdouh to Paris, Mai Muzaffar to Bahrain, Samira al-Mani' lives in London since 1965, and Haifa' Zanghana lives in London since 1976.¹⁰⁷

In addition to 'Aliya Mamdouh, each writer of the group: Safera Jamil Hafiz, Ibtisam Naim, Zakiya and Khalifa, and Haifa' Zanghana wrote about prison literature.¹⁰⁸ Besides, Balqis Sharara wrote with her husband Rif'at al-Jadirji their biographies about their experience with the prisons of Saddam Hussein titled "Jidar Bayna Zulmatayn/ A Wall Between Two Darknesses".¹⁰⁹ However, Safira Jamil Hafez was arrested several times for her political activity starting in 1952, then she was placed in the prison of "Qasr al-Nihaya/ Palace of the End" in 1963. After that, she was tried at a military court in 1964 and sentenced to one and a half years of house arrest, as well as barred from traveling.¹¹⁰

Nathalie Handal, in her study of Iraqi poets, also mentioned the names of other poets who emigrated to reside outside Iraq, such as Amal al-Jabouri, who resides in Germany, expressing in her poetry her exile and the poor conditions experienced by Iraq in that period because of the regime's cruelty.

¹⁰⁵ Ghazoul, Ferial J. (2008). "Iraq" in: Ashour, Radwa. Ghazoul, Ferial J. and Reda-Mekdashy, Hasna (eds.), *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide 1873- 1999*. Cairo: The American in Cairo Press, p.190. About the reality of the Iraqi woman and the history of the feminist movement in Iraq since the twentieth century, and its role in the struggle and rebellion, see: Khayri, Suad (1998). *al-Mar'ah al-Iraqiya Kifah wa Ataa'* Sweden. About the Iraqi woman and the development of the women's literature in Iraq, see: Ghazoul, (2008), pp. 178-203.

¹⁰⁶ Khayri, Su'ad, *al-Mar'ah al-Iraqiya Kifah wa 'Ataa'*, p. 117-118.

¹⁰⁷ al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr wa Suriya wa al-Iraq*, p. 215.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., p. 217-218

¹⁰⁹ About the study of this biography and al-Jaderji's experience in prison, see: al-Sheikh-Hishmeh, *Adab al-Sujun fi Misr, Suriya wa al-Iraq*, p. 213-219; 364-417.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 215.

Lami'a 'Abbas Amara emigrated to the United States in 1986, and her poetry included political and national issues, and she was exposed by her political views to persecution and pressure. Donya Mikhail also left Iraq in 1995 to live in the State of Michigan in America. The poet Amal al-Zahawi and her husband emigrated to Syria in the 1970s. Balqis Hamid Hassan moved from Iraq in 1979 to settle in Holland.¹¹¹

The Kuwaiti women writers Leila Al-Othman and 'Alia Shuaib faced an issue where religious censorship intersected with social surveillance because of a complaint filed by four of the fanatic strict fundamentalist complainants.¹¹² They were accused that in their writings, they call for vice and corruption which contradicts their social and religious values. The case lasted for three years and three months, from 1996 to 2000. Several sentences were issued against the authors, inter 'Alia, to two months imprisonment with a stay of execution, but they intercepted and appealed until the last sentence was taken and they were fined, and their books, which were the cause of the complaint, were confiscated.¹¹³

According to the indictment, these four, after reading the al-Othman collection of stories "al-Rahil/Traveller" and "Fi al-Lail Ta'ti al-'Uyun/The Eyes Come at Night", found that these books advocate the practice of vice and carry explicit sexual expressions, and sometimes by suggestion. The complainants claimed that the author disregarded their values and social habits and aimed to promote the abnormal sexual practices she advocated. It should be noted that the two groups had long been published. The author was surprised by the reason for the complaint after all that period since their publication release to the day of the case.¹¹⁴

Her colleague 'Alia Shuaib was subjected to this trial because of poetry texts that were included in some of her poetry collections, especially her book al-'Anakib/ Spiders," in which she was accused of touching the Divine Self in her poem. In his book *Didd al-Ta'assub/ Against Intolerance*", Jaber 'Assfour expressed his opinion on this issue: "The two writers who, on behalf of women, intervene in the plight of the experience we have thought it to be limited to men. They are the authors chosen by the culture of intolerance in Kuwait to precede other Arab intolerance cultures in the greet deed of women writers' imprisonment. They are the authors who will be mentioned by Arab cultural historians as the first two convicts of imprisonment for their creative writing. After all that, and above all, they are a practical manifestation of repression that affects writing every day, where there is no difference between the writing of a man and the writing of a woman. This affirms the equality of men and women in creative writing, which defies the requirements of necessity and seeks to extract their freedom from societies where the spaces of this freedom are curtailed by extremist streams that

¹¹¹ Handal, *The Poetry of Arab Women*, p. 23-24.

¹¹² 'Assfour, Jaber (2001). *Didd al-Ta'assub*. al-Dar al-Bayda': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi, p. 280.

¹¹³ Saffouri, Mohammad (2006). *Imra'ah Bila Quyud- Dirasa fi Adab Laila al-'Othman*. al-Hakim li al-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr, p. 210.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.57.

deceive the simple people in the name of religion".¹¹⁵ On the other hand, two novels are forbidden by the Kuwaiti writer Khawla al-Qazawini: "Indama Yufakker al-Rajul/When a Man Thinks" and "Jirahat al-Zaman al-Radi'/Bad Time Surgeries," because they touched political matters.¹¹⁶ The novel "Khara'it al-Tih/The Maps of the Labyrinth" by the Kuwaiti author Buthina al-Issa (2015) was banned from circulating in Kuwait and the International Book Fair in 2018, under the accusation of scrapping public morals because of a scene of sexual assault in it.¹¹⁷

CONCLUSION

After the male society has been able to imprison and capture women with its taboos for decades, it is not surprising that the woman author should make her first concern the woman's cause and her freedom. Therefore, in spite of all the obstacles, the Arab woman seeks to penetrate the prohibitions, antiquated legacies, and coercive rules. As she chose not to stand idly by and decided to resist all the oppressive and obstructive conditions, the writing undoubtedly served as a weapon of intimidation, shaming, revenge, and breaking all the taboos of the forbidden trinity. Many no longer want to be silent, nor to write under a pseudonym but to speak their minds freely and unrestrictedly, and with extreme audacity disregarding punishment. That's why the feminist narrative was the title of this audacity. The yearning for freedom, the expression of rights, and the freedom from different colors of oppression and the revolution on it was a basic title of feminist literature. The author penetrated all the taboos by writing, telling, and the power of self-revealing in order to enhance her image: The image of women's self and female identity, and then the affirmation of her rights, eligibility, and entitlement to existence. She broke down the taboos and challenges the prohibitions despite her assured knowledge of the harsh punishment that awaits her in an authoritarian male society. She has turned into a "Shahrazad", telling her story, without fear of a censor or a sword that might be brandished in her face.

¹¹⁵ Assfour, *Didd al-Ta'assub*, p. 283.

¹¹⁶ See the interview with al-Qazwini in: al-Hilal, Ahmad. An interview with the writer Khawla al-Qazwinin: "Freedom for me does not mean debauchery at all!" See the Saudi newspaper "al-Iqtissadiya" at:

<http://www.khawlaalqazwini.com/JournalArticleDetail>.

¹¹⁷ Meman, Zayyad (November 18, 2018). "Buthayna al-Issa Takhruj un Samtiha Hawla Mani' al-Kutub fi Marad al-Kutub". Wakalat Anba' al-Shi'r/ Poetry News Agency at: <http://www.alapn.co/ar/?p=13647>

For more information about al-Issa and her autobiography and her creativity, see: al-Issa, Buthayna. Katara Award for the Arab Novel, at:

Assfour, Jaber (2001). *Didd al-Ta'assub*. al-Dar al-Bayda': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi, p. 280

Meman, Zayyad (November 18, 2018). "Buthayna al-Issa Takhruj 'un Samtiha Hawla Mani' al-Kutub fi Marad al-Kutub". Wakalat Anba al-Shi'r/ Poetry News Agency at:

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For more information about al-Issa and her autobiography and her creativity, see: al-Issa, Buthayna. Katara Award for the Arab Novel, at: <https://www.kataranovels.com/novelist>

So, after the fact that, at its beginning, woman's literature was once shy, and at other times under a pseudonym, the creativity of so many Arab women writers became bolder and turned into a revolutionary breakthrough narrative by its confrontation with all the oppressive male taboos. But, on the other hand, there is no doubt that the samples and testimonies that are introduced in this study, despite their small number, due to research considerations, revealed the woman's struggle with the pillars of the forbidden trinity to assure us that the woman writer has neither sacred nor aid nor immunity due to being a woman in the event of a confrontation with a religious, political or social taboo. It is certain that because she is a woman, she will be repressed twice; once because she is a woman, once because she has raised her creative voice and countered the taboos, which, consequently, affirms that the woman continues to live under the constraints of the 'haram', the forbidden and the 'shame' in a more severe and violent way than men. This can hamper her creative production and often suppress her freedom. However, many in recent decades have refused to give up and withdraw, no matter how much they will pay for that. One of them insists that her literature which had been premeditatedly marginalized has regained its right and has a real presence and legitimacy on the literary scene, and her literature is not less artistic or aesthetic than a man's creativity.

The woman's writing has become a weapon of defense, conviction, and attack against anyone who robs her right and grabs her freedom, and she no longer fails to express all her rights and concerns, and she raises any weapon she deems appropriate and expresses her dreams and wishes, which means that the Arab woman writer, in general, has become bolder to talk, and writing for her has become search of a broader horizon for freedom.