

## THE PALESTINIAN SHORT STORY BETWEEN 1944 AND 1967: BEGINNING, COMMENCEMENT AND APPROACHES

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**ABSTRACT:** *The events of Nakba in 1948, when the Palestinians lost their homelands paralyzed every intellectual movement including literature. Scholars and writers fled the country and emerging writers did not find ready models or patterns they could duplicate or learn from. Their short stories relied on offering life concerns, circumstances and social conditions like poverty, human relations, change of customs and traditions under the influence of new social conditions and sales or confiscation of land. What dried the fountains of writing even more was the military rule imposed on Arabs by the Israeli authorities after the establishment of Israel. It constituted a considerable burden on the population and had a clear negative effect on various spheres of the Arabs' life in Israel. With the help and guidance of the Israeli Communist Party, the only political organization that stood in the face of Government policy and practices including the military rule, some Palestinians intellectuals and patriots, writers managed to pursue their writing activities and struggle. What helped energized Palestinian literature was the engagement of Iraqi Jewish writers merged with the Arab writers in the fields of poetry and story and had extensive accomplishments in translation from and to Arabic. Subsequently, new signs began to appear in the path of the Arabic short story in Israel, in line with the general trend emerging in the Arab society. One of the most important features was the emergence of new trends endorsed by storywriters. Of these trends the major ones were The Romantic Approach, the Realistic Approach, The social Realistic and the Ideological Committed Literature and the Symbolical Approach.*

**KEYWORDS:** Palestinian Short Fiction, the Israeli Communist Party, Nakba, Iraqi Jewish Writers, Literary Trends and Approaches, and Military Rule.

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## INTRODUCTIO

### Beginning

Since the beginning of the twentieth century until its mid, the Palestinian narrative art had adopted the Western stories translated to Arabic as a model, with complete disregard for the old Arab narrative tradition and inheritance (Abdel Rahman Yaghi, 2001, 108-118).<sup>1</sup> Short story writers simply imitated the Western short story with the view of entertaining readers as

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<sup>1</sup>. All quotations from Arabic or Hebrew sources including the titles of the cited sources were translated by the writers.

well as educating them. Therefore, when translating stories, translators purposefully chose Western stories appropriate to the spirit of the times. Similarly, writers were motivated to satisfy the desire of their audience who, in all circumstances, expected stories to provide them with amusement and enjoyment (Emil Tuma, 1963 6; Mahmoud Ghanayem, 1995 37-38).

That period witnessed great political changes that drifted the majority of the Arab countries and had a negative impact on the different aspects of people's life. Under such circumstances, the narrative art was still stumbling in search for a natural path. This explains why authors failed to invest the social and political realities in such a way that could be reflected in the narrative art which could not only deal with the bitter reality of people but also propose promising hopes and great expectations for a bright future (Hisham Yaghi, 1966 5-9; Emil Tuma, 1956 10-17).

Step by step, the drastic political and social interactions started to be echoed in the contents and form of the Palestinian story and in the general intellectual and literary movements. Scholars can easily note that the written stories were a reaction to external stimuli which affected the various aspects of the citizens' lives especially their desire to develop and attain prosperous achievements.

With the progress of time, many attempts of writing began to appear in the narrative art, though none of these acts received any literary significance. One reason is related to the supremacy of poetry over the other literary genres. Besides, the writers' experience was still in the rudimentary stage and, in consequence, they were not able to create interesting literary works. Hence, the genre did not develop but remained confined to the educational trend prevalent in most literary works in that era.

Strangely, this tutorial trend was concerned with social problems and did not pay attention to political glitches, despite the hotness and intense persistence of the political scene because the political consciousness of the story writers was not yet part of their artistic commitment. Still, writers with political orientation focused their attention on concretizing the suffering people in the period of the British mandate and the Jews' pursuit to establish their state, an act which meant the killing, destruction and displacement of Arab citizens. The best example that illustrates this point is "Um Khalil," by a non-identified writer, where the third person narrator describes the state of horror that strikes the people who are awakened by the thunderous roars of shells and are confronted with scenes of terrible destruction:

The residents of K Village located on the border were woken up by the roaring canons which sent death and destruction along with their shells, dropping like heavy rain on the innocent village, reaping souls, tearing houses and mercilessly and ruthlessly eradicating any recognizable features.

.... It seems hell has opened its jaws! ....Like fire burning in a field of hay, the news spread. Like agitated zebras, the villagers left their village. (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 8, 1944)

In addition to depicting scenes of upheaval and demolition, the writers highlighted the values of courage, patience and resistance, and the search for salvation. Nonetheless, it can be assumed that the treatment of political subjects in art narrative rarely appeared. It is very likely that it was not an easy task for amateur writers to address these issues. Furthermore,

they lacked the ability to visualize the realistic attitudes of characters presented in modern stories. Their characters were always faultless and, therefore, far from being real or convincing. Moreover, it is very thinkable that the writers themselves did not have political awareness that could cope with the everyday real experiences faced by the broad public. In other words, the writers underwent a tough *mêlée* through which they had to relax their grip on the techniques of writing of this new genre and to take a clear position towards all variables on the ground, which came as a result of the policies of the West in this country. Oddly, they did not comprehend the gravity of such policies until after the *Nakba* of 1948, which fashioned a deeper awareness of the seriousness of these policies.

Conversely, the writers' grasp of inherited values was remarkably affirmative because people remained glued to these values upon which they were reared and raised. After the Arabs' attempt to regain their land lost in 1948 and to return the people to their hometowns failed, people could not reject, attack or abandon these principles which kept them linked to their roots and history.

Also, the writers in that period did not find ready models or patterns they could duplicate or learn from. Their short stories relied on offering life concerns, circumstances and social conditions like poverty, human relations, change of customs and traditions under the influence of new social conditions and sales or confiscation of land. Therefore, the predominance of social problems over political issues in the stories written before 1948 is fathomable.

What dried the fountains of writing even more was the military rule imposed on Arabs by the Israeli authorities after the establishment of Israel. It constituted a considerable burden on the population and had a clear negative effect on various spheres of the Arabs' life in Israel. The Arab citizens of Israel felt that the authority's strategic policies towards them concentrated on embracing all methods and schemes to weaken and control them. For that reason, they found themselves facing real and daily struggle to survive, defend their land, preserve their presence on it, and protect their language, culture and heritage (Sarah Ozacky-Lazar, 2002 103-131; Yair Boimel, 2002 161-181). Despite their strong determination to fight and maintain hopes, a great number of writers were frustration-stricken and, in consequence, disappeared from the scene while others even lost hope in everything. As expected, this atmosphere in the writers' circle had an ultimate impact on the development and refinement of Arabic literary creation in Israel. Unavoidably, the field of literary creation was destined to emerge incomplete and deficient at the outset.

Luckily, the literary movement started to grow gradually (Nabeeh Al-Qassem, 1991 8). With the help and guidance of the Israeli Communist Party, the only political organization that stood in the face of Government policy and practices including the military rule, some Palestinians intellectuals and patriots, writers managed to pursue their struggle. These were willing to support the Communist Party openly or secretly. One way the Communist Party offered its help was through its press, the only platform to which writers and intellectuals had access. It should be pointed out, however, that the alliance of writers and intellectuals with the Communist Party did not necessarily mean an adoption of its ideology. Rather, it was chiefly a coalition with a power that rejected the policy of Israeli governments, which practiced all sorts of authoritarianism and bias against the Palestinians. Through their magazines, newspapers and brochures the communists were not only an active part of the struggle. They also embraced the committed writers and encouraged them to resist the Israeli policy against the Palestinian population and guided the writers to address social and class

topics more deeply (Abu Saleh, 2010 43-58 and Mahmoud Ghanayem, 2000 293). The fight against the despotic dogma of the authority and the tireless endeavors to condense its negative impact or change it was the first priority of the Palestinian intellectuals. The multitude of the literary works, essays and research during that stage sought to lift the mask off the domineering Israeli policy and to affirm the right of the Arab citizen to learn his literature, history and civilization (Abu Saleh, 2010 18, Al-Qassem Nabeeh 2003 33-49 and Amin Ataya, 1990 15-42)

From 1948 until 1967, this situation hardly changed. The social and political factors played momentous roles in guiding the Arab intelligentsias and in shaping their writing. This reality generated its distinct features which were indeed demarcated in period that preceded the State and the ensuing interlude. Nothing more than literature reflected the permanence of the Palestinian culture and life. Thus, literature emerged in various types to constitute the crown of this culture, and through literature writers sought to attain national unity away from sectarian affiliations.

The harshness of the ensuing conditions found resonance among poets and writers who were not isolated from the concerns and pains of the people. On the contrary, they stood by people's side in their attempts of challenge. Indeed, writers commenced the confrontations against Israeli policies with a view of unifying the Arabs within the Green-line and recruiting the Arab peoples in the region.

The struggle of the writers and poets took multiple directions. Through the written word, they stood at the forefront of the battle. They also attended conferences where they delivered inflammable speeches and poems in addition to leading demonstrations and initiating strikes. As a result, they were prone to all kinds of harassments like imprisonment, house arrest, dismissal from jobs in governmental and non-governmental institutions and firms, and loss of all kinds of privileges.

Yet, these repressive practices only enriched their writing, energized it and provided with distinct particularity and unique quality. It is the self-experience of revolution with which one can recognize the identity of this literature. It is perhaps the opportunity to refer to the effect of this feature on the titles of the stories. The majority of the stories published in this period did not deviate from the spheres of the classical title. The title of the story often outlined and summarized it. Apart from a few exceptions, the titles were not subject to many interpretations. Rather, like the story itself, its title was always so clear that it directly revealed the target of the story. Since the stories were mostly a monitoring of reality, they can be described as the autobiography of the people. Indeed, we read stories about the demise of the British in Palestine, the beginning of the establishment of the state of Israel, and the bitter consequences of injustice and oppression of the Arab citizens and the Arabs' attempts to address such practices that undermined all aspects of their lives. Perhaps these are the special facets that provide the stories with the greatly significant value of being cherished historical documents.

Today, after the passage of decades, the situation has not improved.

### **The Commencement of the Palestinian Short Story**

The Palestinian short story arose under the shadow of the romantic trend prevalent in the Arab world. The storywriters did their utmost to emphasize their free will and sought to deliver their voices to a wide spectrum of readers Yet, their efforts encountered major

hindrances. The tough social and political atmospheres affected so largely the literary movement that these atmospheres pushed the poetic movement forward, thus blocking the smooth advance of the short story. Indeed the political changes that isolated the Arabs, the citizens of Israel, from the Arab world deleteriously swayed the literary movement in a number of ways. The storywriters could not have access to literary works published in the Arab countries, the natural source of Arabic literature, because of the state of enmity between the Arab countries and Israel. Worse, owing to the military rule, there were no means of communication between the Arab towns and villages inside Israel. The military rule forbade all sorts of literary meetings between writers, and banned the organization of literary events and activities. They were bound, therefore, to deal with their own creative writings. Consequently, the writers found themselves entering a tough stage of loss, confusion and wavering for many years. It was extremely demanding for the writers to cope with the dilemma, adapt to the new situation and set upon new tracks without new literary background, guidance or models. On account of the *Nakba* and the creation of Israel, large numbers of intellectuals left the country voluntarily or involuntarily. The greater part of those who remained were amateur writers, novices and non-specialists, who lacked real experience and practice. Most people who worked in journalism and literature were mostly teachers or secondary schools students. These factors led to a recess and sluggish movement in narrative creativity.

Years of the 1950s witnessed a period of sharp political conflict among the Arabs in Israel led by the middle class. This conflict was accompanied by political popular awareness and vigilance especially among the emerging generation, upon whose shoulders the responsibility for confrontation and change was placed. Intellectuals who were influenced by militant ideas took part in this responsibility, too. The short story, along with poetry, was selected as an efficient tool to confront the political situation. Therefore, with the full and direct support of ideological leaders, young writers recruited the genre of short story to serve the objectives of the political and social battle. Systematically, the short story, combined with poetry, started to occupy a remarkable location in national events. It was distinct that the majority of the writers at the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century relied on Marxism-Leninism in their ideological attitudes (Abu Saleh, 2010 88-95). Logically, *Al-It-Tihad* endowed the young writers with unconstrained support and stimulated them to write short stories and plays. The newspaper, for example, offered cash prize for the best story or play that satisfied the newspaper's certain conditions. One long statement published by *Al-It-Tihad* said,

Due to overwhelming response to the literary appendixes of *Al-It-Tihad*, the editorial board decided that these appendixes be issued once a month regularly. The board also made a decision to give these appendixes the necessary care in the choice of literary materials... As the main tasks carried out by these appendixes are the promotion of the art of local story and the provision of drama to the Israeli-Arab public, the board resolved to offer 10 lire to the writer of each story or play, published in one of the literary appendixes. (*Al-It-Tihad*, 50 1953)

Then, the announcement detailed the conditions to be met by the writers. Afterwards, it illustrated the fact that the board pursued this path in an attempt to sponsor local fiction and drama and to embolden rising young writers as possible as they could.

The end of years of the 1950s and early 1960s were characterized with the resurrection of the Arab patriotism, the Egyptian-Syrian unity and the national revolutions in Lebanon and Iraq.

These crucial events were well reflected in literary works which witnessed a remarkable rise in their number. A rapid examination of the literature published in *Al-It-Tihad* indicates the upsurge in the number of the short stories on paper. It can also be noticed that the authors were keen on discussing the theme of unity and the endorsement of joint action.

One of the chief features of content of the local short stories at this stage is the sense of class perhaps because the majority of Arabs in Israel were affiliated with the working class, peasants, and small bourgeoisie. One can hardly find a single narrative instance without this sense of class manifested in it. Besides, the stories reflected the writer's extent of his perception of reality in addition to his readiness to contain the historical and spatial aspects of the Palestinian question. According to *Al-It-Tihad*, the conditions under which the writers lived were extremely unprecedented. It reckoned that

...in Palestine there is another kind of war. It is not formal at all. The press does not publish any item of news about it and the news agencies do not report a single update. It's the war of the people that refuses to die—a war on the forces of death and occupation. How many heroes does this war create and how many lessons does it teach?" (*Al-It-Tihad* 20 1949)

The literary activity in the area of writing was accompanied by follow-up criticism initiated by communist scholars and guided by the press of the Communist Party. The notable critic, Emil Tuma, for example, participated in a wide range of articles, through which he expressed his rejection of stories amputated from reality, and called for a type of literature that was committed to real events, and rose to the level of challenges (Tuma, 1965 5-9). Moreover, Tuma insisted that writers should offer new innovative creative works that were far removed from imitation thus triggering an attention-grabbing controversy in which a big number of writers and critics took part (Shakib Jahshan, 1968 15-16; Mahmoud Abbasi, 1998 24-25; Al-Qassem, 1968 41-42 and Lutfi Mashour, 1968 28-29).

Tuma also launched a severe attack on a collection of short stories issued by the Arab Publishing House and on other stories. His article which acquired colossal historical and critical significance directed invasive remarks at story writers who dissociated themselves from committed and realistic literature (Ghanayem, 1995 42-43).

Against all odds, the Arab creative narrative art in Israel experienced substantial progress that can be attributed to two key factors. One was the intensive activities of the press of the Communist Party represented by *Al-It-Tihad*, *Al-Jadeed* and *Al-Ghadd*. It should be illustrated that in the 1950s the press items went through stupendous growth and prosperous advancement, thus becoming a central platform for local literary works of the new generation of writers (Abu Saleh, 2010 71-77; Salem Awad, 1999 pp. 83-87 and Cameel Mansour, 1990 98-101). Accordingly, numerous stories, reviews, critiques, which focused on global and local stories, were published. These items of press showed particular interest in the intellectual and artistic levels because they sought pointedly to attain the support of the educated class.

The second factor is related to the engagement of Iraqi Jewish writers in Arab literary activity in Israel. These Iraqi writers played a crucial role in advancing Arab literature in Israel, merged with the Arab writers in the fields of poetry and story and had extensive accomplishments in translation from and to Arabic. Through their social and literary writings, time and again the Jewish writers expressed their zealous faithfulness to all that was relevant

to Arabic literature in Israel. Nowhere was their commitment more apparent than in their significant contribution to the establishment of organizations and arrangement of conferences for Arab and Jewish writers and poets. Unfortunately, their activities slowed down in the early 1960s (Shimon Ballas, 198 27-60).

In short, we can assume that at this stage, there were some important points associated with the evolution of Arabic narrative art in Israel. The first concentrates on the emergence of a significant number of storywriters, including Jewish writers of Iraqi origin who published stories in *Al-It-Tihad*. Secondly, the stories were general with no specific topics or features. Besides, these stories were prominently affected by Lebanese and Egyptian stories because prior to 1948 Palestine had been an important center for commercializing literary works from Lebanon and Egypt. Therefore, local writers intended to mimic their counterparts' stories for Palestinian writers had no access to other writers. And apart from rare cases, the direct treatment of political topics remained outside the interests of writers.

One major import of the short stories published in *Al-It-Tihad* is that they documented the process of social evolution and to chronicle that difficult period under which the Arabs lived after the establishment of the State. Moreover, through their stories the writers took upon themselves the task of guiding the conduct of their public. Therefore, it can be noticed that what distinguished the style of stories at this stage was the direct steering and preaching and an invitation to maintain good human relations. Some writers even sought to enlighten people, clarify the process of affairs and highlight the common concerns and the oneness of destiny. In "My Friend, Abu Hassan," Michael Awad, through the mouth of his protagonist, gives the readers his hard-learned lesson with explicit terms:

“I have lost the three pounds and the costs of the seeds and dispossessed of my right for half of the crop. However, I won one thing: my consciousness. Now I realize what you have always tried to make me understand....”

He raised his head and looked at me. In his eyes, I saw a glittering flash: the flash of consciousness and hope in the future. (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 25, 1949)

Assisted by the first person narrator, the protagonist, who has submitted himself to a various types of repressions and coercions, along with the readers, does not only appreciate his gain of consciousness but is also grateful to the narrator's different guiding lesson about history, general affairs and politics. In addition, the narrator is sure about the future benefits of his lessons represented by "the flash of consciousness and hope in the future" he sees in his friend's eyes.

Awad's commitment to the education of his people sometimes takes practical steps. He, for instance, "In the Poor Neighborhoods," teaches the people how to conquer their fears and defy the authorities, organize demonstrations, unite their efforts and agree on their demands:

The police violence, however, did not frighten people. The news spread in the town in a flash. Hundreds of people flowed into the scene as if they had had an appointment. Within minutes, a huge demonstration set off. Angry demonstrators released their rebellious slogans amid the town: “Let the Municipality of the Military Rule fall!” “We want free elections!” and “We want a municipality from the people and for the people!” (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 34, 1953)

So, all in all, the stories dealt with classical themes, i.e. they offered human forms, living in communities and conditions similar to those of the Arabs'. In other words, the writers did not try to go deep into the characters' life experiences or the internal psychological realism of the characters perhaps because the structure of these stories was based on narrative reports. Therefore, the heroes of these stories were forged without distinct features or clear personal traits. In terms of shape, these stories mimicked weak traditional narrative stories with a style that wavered between realism and socialist realism. Worse, some stories appeared as totally discrete panels, or a container into which author could flow his information. Furthermore, the conflicts presented lacked tension, action and exciting clashes. Rather than change reality, the stories were created to coexist with reality as it is. In addition, the writers were keen to highlight clear ethical attitudes. They encouraged good behavior, called for morality and preservation of established customs and traditions and were often inclined to affirm social reform (Reuven Snir, 1990 249-251).

The number of the local stories published in *Al-It-Tihad* between 1944-1967 totaled 37 stories written by a big group of writers. These are Tawfiq Mo'ammam, Ali Ashour, Mohamed Khass, Emile Habibie, 'Aref Al-'Azzounie, Michael Awad, Salem Haddad, Zaki Darwish, Najeeb Susan, Deep 'Abdi, George Ghareeb, Riyadh Hussain Mahmoud, Tawfiq Zayyad, Mohamed Naffa', in addition to a number of writers who signed their stories under pseudonyms. Of course, the stories varied widely in terms of level, artistic vision and cultural level.

### **Currents and Trends in the Palestinian Short Story**

In the beginning, the local short story did not have an evident trend. The writers simply adopted the romantic approach and the traditional rhetoric with continuous attempts to find new trends and innovative literary currents. Besides, their writing was about classical subjects dyed with traditional shades (Mohammad Salem Khalil, 2009 53-66 and Ghanayem 1979 17-41). Indeed, at the outset of his story, "The Mortgaged Ring!" Riyadh Hussain Mahmoud expresses his desire to deviate from the classical approach and expected fine descriptions with the aim of treading new paths. He says,

You must have been used to the tradition that stories often start with beautiful descriptions, like: the air was soft, the evening pink and we met. My story, however, had a different beginning. It started on a black day when I was handcuffed, pushed by a police officer to the police station where the prison was cold, the food was cold ... so were the faces. (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 83, 1966)

In terms of content, the stories mostly addressed social issues. Therefore, as already maintained, these stories were packed with guidance, and ethical lessons and instructions. Their structures lacked logical sequence of events and convincing artistic links.

Gradually, the writers did work hard to develop content and to take their subjects from the heart of the social and political reality of the Arabs in Israel. Moreover, writers sought to make use of artistic tools, and entered them in their stories to move forward away from conventions.

The situation remained unchanged for several years until some new signs began to appear in the path of the Arabic short story in Israel, in line with the general trend emerging in the Arab society. One of the most important features was the emergence of new trends endorsed by storytellers. Of these trends the major ones were: The Romantic Approach, the Realistic

Approach, The social Realistic and the Ideological Committed Literature and the Symbolical Approach.

### **The Romantic Approach**

This approach was endorsed by the bulk of the storywriters, and became popular among new writers who were influenced by the earliest romantic stories of the pioneers or the foreign stories translated and published by *Al-It-Tihad* and particularly by *Al-Jadeed* (Abu Saleh, 2010 64-65). Additionally, the new generations were familiar with some global as well as regional romantic creative works.

During this stage, the story was characterized with the employment of prominent features like the inclusion of natural elements in the exposition, the call for the reform of society, the implantation of human values, such as love, fraternity, cooperation and peace, the fusion of memory as an expression of social solidarity with the poor, as well as the penetration into the psychological depth of the characters. However, it was also noted that the story suffered major deficiencies. It neglected the style and other technical and artistic elements, and it gave supremacy to content aimed at the readers over any other element. Furthermore, the story did not adhere to a definite framework in terms of time or place. Worse, the style was superficial, the link between the different characters was frail and the sequence of events was not well-interwoven (Tuma 1965 45; Abbasi 1998 56-57).

In "A Scene from Life," a story written before the establishment of the State, the un-named writer makes an extensive use of romantic imagery to introduce a fine-looking young man. Although this exaggerated portrayal of his outward appearance deprives the young man of the element of realism and plausibility, it nonetheless sharpens the descent of his moral attitudes. The first person narrator of the story says,

“I was playing backgammon one night with my friend when a young man, probably about 25, entered the room abruptly. He was handsome, tall, hat-less, hair-polished, moustache-less and harmoniously dressed. He wore a brown suit with matching tie and shoes. Overall, he was in the most perfect and suave appearance that a young man could desire—a bride dawning radiantly amid her wedding party. Impressed by his fascinating appearance, I could not but over-respond in receiving and greeting him. In fact, I used all I acquired of the arts of respect and reverence. (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 6, 1944)

Likewise, in "The Victim: Every Day's Story," 'Aref Al-'Azzounie presents a very intimate relationship between a gentle father who finds no difficulty in convincing his obedient daughter to get married to a very rich man whom he chooses for her. Yet, both characters are too ideal and romantic to be convincing. Their characters lack the moral and psychological truths that underlie human behavior. The father says,

“I repeat, my dear, you will be as free as the air. Let us talk about our work a bit. I am your father that loves you and I desire to tell you something I am sure you will listen to attentively, as you passed puberty. We are friends and both live happily, but we do not have what people call a stable fortune and you know that I have achieved this grace late, very late. Floods may sweep the soil under the bridges before I collect a large fortune for you. Nobody knows when that will happen. Today you are twenty years and the proposition that you have now should not be rejected. In fact, it is a

catch, a finding. Mr. Sami is not a mere happening, but he is a polite, mature person with a fortune, a big fortune.” (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 3, 1946)

Without any further effort, the daughter is convinced and the events are channeled into their destined course.

### **The Realistic Approach, the Social Realistic and the Ideological Committed Literature**

The dominance of the realistic approach over literature and the urgent call for moral obligation in literature amid the Arabs in Israel boomed the controversial discussions and dialogs among the circle of writers and intellectuals, some of whom supported realism and some of whom maintained their espousal of romanticism in literature. Among the notable philosophers and sponsors who reinforced the former approach were Emile Habibie and Jabra Nicola, both of whom outlined its attributes. According to Habibie,

The type of literature we call for is that of the people. We aim at a literature that serves the people in his struggle towards the promotion of the future—a literature, which triggers self-awareness in the people's psyches and grants the people a deeper perception of his role, and an understanding of the world around him, and of the basic contradiction in society between those who work hard to earn their bread and those who steal it. The people's literature we seek is the literature that arises from the right idea. The people is the creator of the material wealth, the major force in the world history. As such, the people should be the hero in the literary work... The subject of literature is man. Don't you hear, dear writer, the word ringing in your ears? Where man exists there is a subject for literature. This man who has created literature, has done so to be its subject. (Husam Al-Khatib, 1996 157-158; Habibie, 1954 40 and Tuma, 1993 11-12)

Obviously, Habibie's outline, clear and meaningful as it is, lacks distinct points of definition and offers no definite principles of assessment. It is militant and academically superficial and triggers emotions rather than the mind.

Conversely, Jabra Nicola's perception was academic, intellectual, analytical and far from populist statements and slogans. More significant, although both regard man as the center of their approach, Nicola places literature for the promotion humanity and man in general rather than one society or people. He says,

The aim of literature, or art, is not confined to photographing the apparent reality. Rather, it should transcend that to the analysis of reality, interpreting it and demonstrating its gains and handicaps, good features and shortcomings. Moreover, it should be submitted to help change society and humanity. Freedom to write is fully consistent with the interests of society and humanity. Therefore, the artist must be a citizen of and a son of his time, adoptive and defendant of its interests and aspirations. This is the doctrine of socialist realism. (Jabra Nicola, 1953 5)

In harmony with the suggestions of Nicola and Habibie, the preponderance of literature focused on the Marxist perspective and the imprints of the Communist Party's slogans and all related logos such as internationalism, brotherhood, comradeship, and the achievements of the Socialist Revolution. Emile Habibie, Isam Al-Abbasi, Hanna Abu Hanna, Issa Lobani, Ali Ashour, Jamal Musa, Zahi Karkabie, Tawfiq Zayyad, Hanna Ibrahim and Mohammad Khass best represented this current. Through their stories, they launched severe

criticisms against the Israeli government policy on the internal as well as on the external levels. In order to give a true reflection of the ideas of Tuma and Nicole, they inspired the plots of their stories from actual reality stories. Hence, they dealt with the pressing issues of their community away from fantasy, which characterized the patrons of the romantic approach. Thus, although the mass of stories were accurate snapshots of reality, these stories endorsed direct registration of events and straight reporting about episodes and experiences and, in consequence, were incomplete in terms of artistic structure (Abbasi, 1998 222).

The triumph of this approach in Arab countries empowered its growth among storywriters among the Palestinian community in Israel. What helped root and energize it intensively, however, was *Al-It-Tihad* which granted its promoters unconditioned patronage. The newspaper, alongside with *Al-Jadeed*, played a large role in consolidating and developing the realistic, pragmatic and socialist approach. In effect, it adopted it largely and did its utmost to advocate its significance with the view of paving the way for the commitment to Arab local as well as regional issues. In spite of this, the influence of Marxist approach on the readers, especially through the story that, unlike poetry, is a written literary genre, was not significant. According to Ghanayem, for objective reasons, the ruling establishment considered both *Al-It-Tihad* and *Al-Jadeed* treacherously enticing, so some writers hesitated to publish in them, while readers feared to profess reading them under the shadow of military rule. Hence, the desired social and political transformations, considered a high value in the Marxist ideology and which Arab literature sought did not notoriously happen to the Arab community in Israel during the period of military rule (2011, 152).

The patrons of the realistic approach drew the topics of their stories from the heart of reality in the various spheres of their own life. Therefore, their stories were linked to the writers' personal ideas and tendencies and reflected their personal attitudes. Within the folds of stories, one could sense the writer's political slogans and social attitudes. Besides, the stories of the realistic approach addressed topics and concerns regarded by the Arab community as highly sensitive and insistent. Furthermore, the backers of the realistic approach demonstrated their zest support and commitment to the ideology of Marxism-Leninism. Since the majority of writers were poor, they derived their story characters and events from the core of their lives. Hence, the poor class was the well from which the writer pumped his material, thus confirming his adhesion to the realistic approach.

Nowhere was the endorsement of the realistic approach and its application was more apparent than in Mohammad Kass' stories. In "Two Hundred Humans Work with Soil, Eat with Flies and Inhale Hideous Odors," Khass concludes the story with a call for the poor to endorse communism where the solutions for their social and economic problems can be found. Addressing the poor audience, the protagonist says,

“Have you heard about a better life?” They looked towards Carmel full of glittering lights. I understood but I asked again, “I mean better life for us, we, the laborers.”

“Who has not heard about Russia? About Communism?”

Even here in this place, geographically close to Haifa but far from the features of life in it, look at the future and see it in communism. While I was pushing my way along the paths stumbling, the image of the child with the stained shirt was occupying my

sight. He certainly wanted games and toys different from the ones he used. Not from metal and cans but humane games. (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 47, 1957)

The story in general and the scene in particular are a faithful record of the writer's character, environment and tendencies. Indeed, the story characters are obtained from the underprivileged class, the writer's circle; the protagonist is a journalist, the voice of Khass, and the attitudes of the journalist are those of the writer himself. The story's reality and subjects do away with the artistic elements expected to be found in a short story. We are referring to the complexity of plot, narrative point of view, characters, language, style, tone and irony. The story is simply reduced into a news account. Yet, it manages to reveal the elements of false appearances, cruelty and injustice behind Haifa's glittering lights and to affirm the authenticity behind the ugly appearances of the deprived living in ugly dump next to probably the most beautiful town in Israel.

### **The Symbolic Approach**

In the mid-1960s the short story writers headed towards the symbolic approach, believing they were taking the story on the road to further progress and development. Their step rose in the wake of their realization that the contents no longer pulled readers to their stories and no longer enticed them. Therefore, they were obliged to search for new narrative techniques, attention-grabbing themes and innovative styles and approaches. Consequently, some resorted to the employment of symbols in their writings as a device to change and evolution, and as a new artistic tool that helps in getting rid of direct narration and frank reporting in the presentation of themes, thus leading the genre into a new phase of creativity. What helped accelerate the emergence of this trend even further was the need to focus on man and to place him at the center of the event in the story and unswervingly tell about man's world. Another reason was inherent in the writers' fear to lose their livelihood or be dismissed from their jobs. However, Abbasi rejected this claim remarking that the majority of the writers who used symbols extensively, like Zayyad, Ahmad Nemer or Qassem Kewan were not teachers or governmental officials (1998, 224).

Against the expectations of creative writers, this approach did not yield its fruits. To the contrary, it had a negative impact on story readers because they had to cope with decoding the symbols without having the slightest experience. In so doing, writers doubled the feeling of estrangement, sadness, disorientation and loss which relaxed its grip on the crowds of readers. The codes employed in the stories created unnecessary mystery and bewilderment, and confused events and images thus demanding the readers to have a high cultural background. Consequently, some prominent critics, academics and scholars, like Emil Tuma, inveighed strongly against this approach. Tuma complained that, "A number of hoax writers moan because Arabic literature... encountered abuse and fatigue. As a result, its development and growth was aborted." These moaners together with critics and writers, Tuma maintained were frightened by the authority and, in consequence, submitted to its power by either resorting to "metaphysics and symbolism" or by segregating themselves from "the people's concerns" (Tuma 1993 146).

A good example of stories written in the shadow of this approach is "Such Are the Dreams of Our Children," which tells the story of a teacher who while checking the compositions of his students, exceedingly approves of one dream. The student writes,

I dreamt that many troops came to destroy our village. Indeed, they demolished many houses and killed many people. I was extremely terrified: I clamped down my voice and my mouth went dry. My mother quivered while my brothers and sisters cried. I looked out through the window and I saw among the soldiers an officer who often visited the *Mukhtar*'s house. While the soldiers were killing people and destroying houses we hid in the nearby monastery, and we survived." (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 85, 1966)

Evidently, fearing the response of the authorities, the writer prefers to be a puzzle to his readers. Besides, instead of presenting an event derived from the reality where his people live, he fanaticizes it and turns it into a dream thereby segregating himself from his own people's worries and escalating their sense of confusion and defeat.

### Language and Style

The chief part of stories relied on the neo-classicism to a large extent as indicated through sentences and sections which authors made use of in their stories. The list of illustrations is lengthy. Consider "A Scene from Life," which is pregnant with very classical terms. Impressed by the glamorous appearance of the young guest, the narrator says, "I used all I acquired of the arts of respect and reverence." When the latter visits the young man's parents, the mother complains about his misconduct saying he is always "courting taverns' lasses" and begs the narrator to advise her son remarking, "Perhaps he will rein in his waywardness and regain a straight mind." Then he concludes the story while full of sympathy with the victimized parents: "with a heart bleeding with soreness and agony" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 6, 1944). Also in "Um Khalil," the unknown writer appeals to highly eloquent expressions. Describing the condition of the mother fleeing the surprising attack of terror, he says, "Amid this context of reigning horror, Um Khalil could not help but dispose of her load, which hindered her movement and restricted her undertakings" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 8, 1944).

But this apparent use of the literary language should not imply that it is the chief characteristic. On the contrary, the language employed was characterized with its plainness of expression, simplicity of structure and clarity of meaning because the writers took up a middle jargon, a blend of literary language and dialect. Sometimes the writers endorsed slang words to obtain the most accurate meaning that could serve their message. In "And The Bullets Reaped the Sons of My Village," for example, the non-identified writer resorts to the simple, everyday language to mirror the domestic atmosphere dominating the scene. After preparing the breakfast for her husband, Um Riyadh wakes up her family members who gather around the table. Then, in a kind tone, she turns to her husband and says, "I swear to *Allah*, Raja, you tell me how you saw the kid in your dream!" On his way home, together with a group of co-workers discussing their work conditions, Abu Riyadh stops to listen to a shepherd playing his pipe with a group of young people singing moving songs. Again the writer appeals to simple but meaningful expressions to give the scene its appropriate due. One laborer asks Abu Riyadh fervently, "Listenin' to this folk song, Abu Riyadh? No single child in our neighborhood who don't sing it; even my little kiddy." (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 53, 1958).

More than any other writer Mohammad Naffa' not only makes use of everyday language but endorses the local jargon so much that many lexical items remain incomprehensible to people, especially the young generation, out of Beit Jann, the native village of the writer in his stories. In his story, "Nur's Red Wall-Cart," which depicts the hot incidents of an election

period, Naffa' harnesses the everyday language to give the scene its desired effect. In a hot argument between a young communist repelling against the traditional, meaningless faithfulness of the old to the authority and the *Mukhtar*, the representative of this stream blindly supporting the authority, the former shouts, "O, folks! What's so unusual about the red wall-cart? I not know what. A star with a tail, ha? It's like all stickers. Why makin' a mountain out of a molehill? I ain't votin' for the gove'nmen'!" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 41, 1965).

Similarly, in "A Crime or Penalty?" the anonymous writer reveals the difficult life of a train driver who lost his wife in a tragic accident. Without her, he has nobody to do chores as basic as lighting the primus, an outdoor stove on which the Arab housewife relied to make food and prepare hot drinks. He says, "His daughter, So'ad, for example, did not know how to light the primus to make coffee" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 4, 1947). And, in "October 29," which is about a daydreaming father awaiting the birth of a boy in the wake of some girls. On his way to work, he imagines the expected scene: "And he saw his old mother at home chuffed and pleased as pie speaking with the visitors and moving with apparent energy" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 53, 1958.) The use of slang when referring to the old mother gives the scene genuineness and authenticity.

In addition to the everyday language, the writers adorned their language with verses from the holy *Quran*, sayings of Mohammad, the Prophet, or Jesus Christ, proverbs, wisdoms, aphorisms, idioms and metaphorical expressions with the view of enhancing the preferred meaning. In his, "The Bank Which Has a Credit in the Bank," Mohammad Khass, a devoted communist, quotes the talk of a certain Imam in Moscow to show the large extent of freedom Islam enjoys in a communist country. To further cement his message, Khass depicts the Imam's quotation of a verse from the Quran: "And pilgrimage to the House is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither" (*Al-It-Tihad*, 43 1957). Similarly, in "And The Bullets Reaped the Sons of My Village," the writer finds in Christ's saying, "man shall not live by bread alone," the innermost meaning to describe the condition of a Muslim family that gives no significant meaning to material life despite its paucity (*Al-It-Tihad*, 53 1958).

It is noted that some writers were keen to decorate their stories with well-known sayings, parables and wisdoms to express a gist or an idea whose parallel can be traced nowhere but in these inherited literary genres. It is only logical to see that many stories are imbued with cultural spirit. In "By God, I Have Never Betrayed You Except Once," which discloses a factual story of a married couple visited by two men representing the repressive authority. In an endeavor to convince the man to vote for the governing party, the two men resort to malice, blackmailing rhetoric and a well-known proverb encouraging commitment to the ruling power: "He who eats the bread of the *sultan* must strike with the *sultan*'s sword." And while leaving Abu Saber's house, the two guests warn their host against the communists' danger remarking, "If the communists visit you again, tell them to find themselves a sewing tool different from this one and to go somewhere else" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 43, 1965). And in "Dalia: A Story from the very Bottom of Reality Heart," Emile Habibi employs terms and metaphors derived from the Palestinian culture and traditions to describe the Palestinians' difficult life conditions. He says: "Her sons were still treating their wounds and returning to the good land whose udder had dried up and whose milk was lost in summer" (*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 31, 1944).

Conscious of their popularity and profound impact on masses, some writers recruited folk songs hoping to reach wide spectrums of readers. For example, in "And The Bullets Reaped

the Sons of My Village,” Abu Riyadh, the protagonist, smiles while listening ardently to the songs, which summarizes the plot of the famous Kufr Qassem’s Massacre,

The troops appeared at the bottom of the vale  
And the roads packed with soldiers and chiefs  
And at the entrances of the village they stopped, faces like devils  
Detecting victims were the ready rifles

From the top hills our beloved ones appeared  
Their only wish is to return safe and sound  
Whence are you come? The chief shouted.  
“We’re from Kufr Qassem,” they all answered.

The women wept and the children cried:  
“Father take down and hold my hand.”  
The officer shouted: “Line up! I want to yelp.”  
Men and women all lined up.

They asked the Lord’s mercy  
But the officer said: “Reap them and throw them into the valley  
The Arabs are our enemies.”  
Such was the officer’s order! Woe to the oppressors!  
(*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 53, 1958)

Correspondingly, in “The Grandchildren” Mohammad Naffa’ tells the story of a grandfather thrilled with his grandchildren’s coming to the field. Seeing how the children’s tiny tender hands stroked the long sheaves, the *sheikh* is touched. He becomes so pleased that his voice is heard singing gently with vibrations in harmony with his body’s movement, his sickle’s whirring and the sheaves’ crunching:

There is your deer, oh As’ad,  
Grazing on the tops of mountains.  
It grazes camation and greenery  
And drinks pure water.  
(*Al-It-Tihad*, issue 61, 1965)

In terms of style, some stories are extremely deficient and suffer weakness of plot and unnecessary expansion in detail especially in the description of some marginal things, which made some stories vulnerable in their artistic structure. Therefore, instead of providing the reader with a fictional work, these stories offer the author’s personal attitudes on current issues turning the story into an account-mirroring author’s personal outlooks and opinions on what is going on around him. As a result, some stories look like a blend of historical and social documentation while others emerge as stories containing direct social criticism warning against the mire social consequences of underdevelopment and calling for catching up with enlightenment and progress. Some stories also invest glorious historic events and traditions to install hopes and great expectations within the frustrated and disappointed people for a promising future and possible thriving present.

In the beginning, the storywriters, as already indicated, endorsed a realistic approach. Their stories were traditionally shaped having no complexity in plot or structure. This was very natural since writers were still novices too much preoccupied with questions related to the

concerns the wretched and exploited poor classes to be worried about finding a new form or content for his stories. Gradually, writers became more thoughtful of the genre as an art.

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