

**المفاهيم الشرقية والغربية للنسوية في الأدب  
المعاصر**

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***EASTERN AND WESTERN PERCEPTIONS OF  
FEMINISM IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE***

ABSTRACT

Western Feminist Movement started to spread after the French Revolution. That is why it acquired political tent and inclination that has helped to promote feminist ideology. However, feminine literature in the Arab world had started much earlier (approximately 1400 years ago) and it covered different purposes such as pride, elegy, religion, and romance.

The research has some major results:

1. Feminism is a range of political and social movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of the sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men.
2. Western authors were not fully convinced by all ideologies that they believed in; as a result, authors can change their faith and ideology several times. They did not only believe in those ideologies but even wrote about them and praised them extensively.
3. Eastern feminist authors invested in feminist fiction by creating their own style of writing and using deep symbolism and various techniques to present a successful depiction of the Iraqi reality. They have been very faithful in depicting the statuses of Iraqi women during times of turmoil.

**The structure of the research.** The research consists of an introduction, four chapters, a conclusion, and a bibliography which includes 18 items. The total work volume is 25 pages of printed text.

**Keywords:** FEMINISM, WAVES OF FEMINISM, FEMINIST LITERATURE, ENGLISH LITERATURE, ARABIC LITERATURE, POLITICS, SYMBOLS.

**The objective of the research** is to reveal key features of feminist literature.

**The research task** is to characterize feminism and its waves in the wide context of Western and Eastern cultures.

**The object of research:** a group of Arab and western novels.

**The research subject** is feminism and its influence on eastern and western contemporary literature.

**The theoretical bases of this research pape:** are the works of the following scholars: Mary Wollstonecraft, Qasim Amin, Betty Friedan, Germaine Greer, Soad Al-Mana, Cornelia Alkhalid, and Sarah Gamble.

## الخلاصة

بدأت الحركة النسوية الغربية تنتشر بعد الثورة الفرنسية. هذا هو السبب في أنها اكتسبت الخيمة السياسية والميل الذي ساعد في تعزيز الأيديولوجية النسوية. بدأ أدب المرأة في العالم العربي في وقت مبكر (قبل حوالي 1400 عام)، وغطت أغراض مختلفة مثل الكبرياء والرفاء والدين والرومانسية. البحث لديه بعض النتائج الرئيسية:

1. النسوية هي مجموعة من الحركات والأيديولوجيات السياسية والاجتماعية التي تشترك في هدف مشترك: تحديد وإنشاء وتحقيق المساواة السياسية والاقتصادية والشخصية والاجتماعية للجنس. ويشمل ذلك السعي لإنشاء فرص تعليمية ومهنية للنساء المساواة مع الرجال.
  2. لم يكن الادباء الغربيون مقتنعين تمامًا في جميع الأيديولوجيات التي يتخذونها؛ نتيجة لذلك، يمكن للادباء تغيير عقيدتهم وأيديولوجيتهم عدة مرات. حيث لم يؤمنوا بتلك الأيديولوجيات فحسب، بل كتبوا عنها وأشادوا بها على نطاق واسع.
  3. استثمر الادباء النسويون الشرقيون في الخيال النسوي من خلال إنشاء أسلوبهم الخاص في الكتابة واستخدام رمزية عميقة وتقنيات مختلفة لتقديم تصوير ناجح للواقع العراقي. لقد كانوا مخلصين للغاية في تصوير أوضاع النساء العراقيات خلال أوقات الاضطرابات.
- هيكلية البحث:** يتكون البحث من مقدمة، وأربعة فصول، وخاتمة، و قائمة مصادر تتضمن 18 فقرة. إجمالي حجم البحث 25 صفحة من النص المطبوع.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** النسوية، موجات النسوية، الأدب النسوي، الأدب الإنكليزي، الأدب العربي، السياسة، الرمزية.

**الهدف من البحث:** الكشف عن السمات الرئيسية للأدب النسوي.

**مهمة البحث:** وصف النسوية وموجاتها في السياق الواسع للثقافات الغربية والشرقية.

**موضوع البحث:** النسوية وتأثيرها على الأدب الشرقي والغربي المعاصر (مجموعة من الروايات العربية والغربية).

**الأسس النظرية لهذا البحث:** هي أعمال الباحثين التاليين: ماري ولستونكرافت، قاسم أمين، بيتي فريدان، جيرمين جريير، سعاد المانع، كورنيليا الخالد، وسارة جامبل.

## Theoretical and Mythological Approach

The feminist movement produced fictional literature, non-fictional literature and feminist poetry, which created a new interest in feminist writing. It also led to a general reassessment of the historical and academic contributions of women in response to the belief that the life and contributions of women are an imperfect representative as academic interest. There was also a close connection between feminist literature and feminist activity, as feminist writing usually expresses the main interests or ideas of women in a specific era. A large part of the early period of feminist literary texts is devoted to re-discovering and restoring the texts written by women. Some Western feminist literary texts insisted on new horizons for their controversy that women have always been writing, some studies include the mother of the novel *Mothers of the Novel* (1986) by Del Spender, and the rise of the novelist woman *The Rise of the Woman Novelist* (1986) Jane Spencer. Various presses have started the task of re-issuing the texts whose prints have long been depleted in proportion to this growth in academic interest. Fergo Press began to publish its large list of the nineteenth and early twentieth century novels in 1975 and became one of the first commercial presses that joined the reclamation project. The Pandora Press, responsible for publishing the Spender study in the 1980s, released a line accompanying the eighteenth century novels written by women. The Prodivio Press has recently continued to issue novels from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Kentucky University has a series of re-publishing early women's novels.

## INTRODUCTION

Comparative studies belong to the most prolific areas of modern literary criticism. They have proven to be not only acceptable and popular among scholars, but very effective in assessing and comparing individual works of literature. Comparative research makes it possible to penetrate deeply into fine details of the pieces of literature in hand. In addition, it helps to analyze and assess each author in presenting his thoughts, ideas, and selection of terms, including similarities and differences. Although comparative literature was actively practiced long ago in Arabic literature, it was not given the title 'Comparative Literature'. We have great comparisons of different Arab poets of both the pre-Islamic eras as well as post-Islamic literature. An example of that was the comparisons between Jarir Ibn Atiyah and Al-Jahiz. Later in the eighth century, Bayt Al-Hikma (House of Wisdom), founded in the Abbasid era, was translating from all living languages into Arabic and vice-versa and making many comparisons between pieces of literature and science. The research consists of an introduction, four chapters of the main part, a conclusion, and a bibliography. The first chapter deals with definitions of the feminist movement and its waves in Western Europe and the United States of America, and the Arab world. Then I will come to define and distinguish between feminist literature and women's writing. After that, I am going to finish the chapter by selecting some literary texts as examples of feminist literature. In the second chapter, I will assess the feminist movement in Eastern European and Soviet Societies. The third chapter is dedicated to talking about Feminism in Arab culture in the twentieth century. The fourth chapter focuses on feminist literature and concentrates on religious, political, and social issues as well as any other probable features that I might come across.

## CHAPTER ONE

### *An Overview of Feminism and its Waves in the Western Europe and the United States of America*

Feminism is one of the modern critical terms that many scholars talk about with varied indications of use at the academic, media, and literary levels. We may call it a movement because of its variety and continuous change. It is necessary to give some definitions of this term starting with *Oxford Dictionary*: "The issue of rights for women first became prominent during the French and American revolutions in the late 18th century. In Britain, it was not until the emergence of the suffragette movement in the late nineteenth century that there was significant political change. A '**second wave**' of feminism arose in the 1960s, with an emphasis on unity and sisterhood; seminal figures included Betty Friedan and Germaine Greer. A '**third wave**' was identified in the late 1980s and 1990s, as a reaction against the perceived lack of focus on class and race issues in earlier movements (Oxford, 2018)". A well-known feminist critic Sarah Gamble says: "Feminism is a movement that is working to change the conditions to achieve the absent equality between man and woman" or "It is a struggle to give women the equality in the world of culture that is controlled and dominated by men" (Gambel, 2002, p. 14). While Cornelia Alkhalid, a feminist researcher, argues: "Feminism is not just a discourse tied to the struggle against the masculine system and against racial discrimination or works on achieving gender equality, but it is a thought that aims to study the history of women and to confirm their difference from the traditional stereotypes that they are placed in, and to raise

their voice and above all to call for a radical rethinking in the deep structure of the society". So she is closer to those who adopted the radical feminist movement. (Ghali, *The Farthest Point*, 2000, p. 17.18).

This diversity in the definition of the concept "Feminism" is a result of the vastness of perceptions of women elaborated by men. We find out that a cultural and philosophical variety has dominated to some degree and helped to elaborate a comprehensive vision of the concept **Second-Wave Feminism**. That is why we see a lot of branches of feminism such as radical, liberal, Marxist, patriarchal and Islamic ones (the latter opposed the issues of discrimination in inheritance) and a lot of other versions of this movement. Yet, all these references confirm the necessity of cooperation to remove the boundaries, constraints and impediments to the advancement of women in their tasks which are traditionally usurped by males. They consider themselves the only ones capable of making political, economic and legislative decisions. As a result, they give women a right to stay emotional only and keep the house supporting children and family.

The world faced many political, social, technological, industrial, and anthropological changes in the last three centuries starting from the French revolution in 1789. This historic event called for the principles of liberation and equality for men and women and provoked the appearance of **The First-Wave Feminism**. It emerged in the nineteenth century when some feminist voices and organizations appeared in Europe to defend women's rights and to gain women's liberty in all aspects of life. One of the prominent forerunners of feminism was Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) who called women to be rational and seek for good education to release themselves from economic dependency while still keeping the household life. (Lisa, 2016) In America, women's rights were discussed for the first time at a major conference in Cincinnati Falls in 1848, where more than 300 people (including 40 men) took part. One of the most important demands of this conference was to stop discrimination against women. Americans were focusing on education, justice, slave labor, and the right to vote. At the same time in England women's demands in the 1850s were focused on the right to education and work and the amendment of marriage laws (the rights of married women to property and nursery). Feminist activists led the 1838 Child Custody Campaign and the Claim of Property Rights for Married Women in 1857. But the thing is that British women's movement was accused of restricting attention to the problems of middle-class girls only. Women's activism increased in the United States, the United Kingdom and Europe in general in the 1960s. At this stage, women's movement began to take on a global character that included "women" all over the world. It exceeded the demand for equality and adopted rational criticism, in which many streams and doctrines emerged, adopting the language of liberation from political, social and sexual oppression. Advocates of this wave see that if the first feminist wave is characterized by individualism and reformism, the second one is rather severe or radical because it is a collective and revolutionary movement aimed at uniting women against common repression. They proclaimed a necessity to achieve better conditions for women in all aspects of life. The book *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan (1963) was of great importance for establishing this wave in the United States. She starts the book by saying that "Feminism for women who were born after 1920 is nothing but a past that is over, that is ended as an active movement in America with the acquisition by women of the last right which is the right to vote". Friedan called for a complete reshaping of the cultural image of femininity to allow women to attain maturity, identity and self-realization. (Gambel, 2002, p. 57) Due to the fact that a large number of women's organizations and associations got what they had been searching for, in the 1990s there began what can be called **The Third-Wave Feminism**. The younger feminist generation experienced the need to renew interest in feminist advocacy. This wave is characterized by the desire to address the problems of economic and racial imbalance, besides women's issues. The feminist discourse expanded to include some male thinkers and received a high degree of recognition in the speeches on philosophy, cultural criticism, social and human sciences. As a consequence, many critics and philosophers have engaged in the preparation of a critical theory that helps to change society and women's perspective. (Byerly, 2011, p. 6) Gamble adds that the origin of this wave is due to criticism directed at the white Feminist Movement by colored women like Bell Hooks and Angela Davis and others, along with allied efforts by feminists from the Third World who live in America such as the Indians Gayatri Spivak and Chandra Mohanty.

**Post-Feminism** is a trend that emerged in the early 1980s in conjunction with the **Third-Wave Feminism**, and many scholars still confuse these two trends. *Concise Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term **Post-Feminism** as "what is related to the ideas and attitudes and so on, which ignore or reject feminist ideas characteristic of the 1960s and the following decades" (Gambel, 2002, p. 78). A post-feminist activist Rene Denfeld believes that "Feminism swept through the academic institutions and became an inclusive and

inflexible trend, dominated by an extremist group that alienates the young generation by insisting on pursuing priorities based on a firm belief that the female is a victim of the patriarchal system that has all the obvious causes of violence and hostility to sexual practices between the sexes" (Gambel, 2002, p. 82). Also this term is related to its linguistic consort (Postmodern) in that they are both indicating something unspecified. (Alison, 1989) As it was discussed at the beginning of the chapter, one can ask: what does feminism mean nowadays? It is important to note that Jennifer Baumgardner and Amy Richards add that Feminism means that women have "the right to know enough information to make informed choices about their lives" (J. Baumgardner and A. Richards, 2012, p. 56). According to their point of view, there are three main foundations of Feminism: "It is a movement, meaning a group working to achieve specific goals. Those goals are social and political change—implying that one must be engaged with the government and laws, as well as with social practices and beliefs. And implicit in these goals is access to enough information to enable women to make responsible choices" (J. Baumgardner and A. Richards, 2012, p. 56). Which also means creating an atmosphere of action in which people realize the consequences of their decisions; the eradication of racism and homophobia can also be seen as continuing aims. In short, the fact is that Feminism does not limit people, whoever they are, but it welcomes those who are aware politically. When Rebecca Walker talked for *The New York Times* in 1992, she had in mind to show her anger and consciousness, which had to be translated into actions. She also explained what it means to be a feminist in her view: "to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into the very fiber of my life. It is to search for personal clarity in the midst of systemic destruction, to join sisterhood with women where often we are divided, to understand power structures with the intention of challenging them". In her view it is exactly the kind of attitude many of her peers are unwilling to take. (Walker, 1995, p. 80)

## CHAPTER TWO

### *Feminism in Eastern European and Soviet Society*

Socialist Feminism was more flexible and louder than the liberalist one because the second recognized that the family is an institution and women's issues can be raised within the domain of the family only. While socialist streams (especially communism) do not always recognize this, some of them even see the family as an institution that could be eliminated and concentrate on women's rights. Moreover, they claim that whatever the status of women seems natural, it does not have to be imposed, but rather must be changed. After the fall of the Berlin Wall there were two female reactions in Eastern European countries. Some saw a decline in the status of women, both in the workplace and political life. Others saw that women enjoyed the freedom that made them feel independent in terms of dress, beauty culture and motherhood. While the first category of women bemoaned the formal equality of the real communist system, the second category saw the restored pleasure in a tense way. In Soviet society the status of women goes some steps forward and becomes louder. In his book *Revolution and Everyday Life* Leon Trotsky says that one of the "easiest" achievements of the October Revolution is to achieve political and legal equality between men and women. Equality in decrees and laws is easy, but turning it into reality is difficult. (Dolores, 1938) Can political and legal theoretical equality be transformed into economic equality? And the most difficult question is: can it be transformed into social equality (i.e. equality in everyday life)? These are the major questions and challenges that October Revolution faced and had to address. Thus, it was not easy to find solutions. Political and civil equality between men and women has not yet become actual in real life but at the same time without this theoretical equality the issue of liberation of women cannot advance towards economic and social life practice equality. In fact, the young Soviet state had much to do in this regard: for example, in the 1920s the proportion of educated people in the Soviet Union was only 50% of the population (half of the population was illiterate) and less than 36% among women. Rural and remote areas made up 75% of the country's population, where women lived in conditions of backwardness, enslavement and social and quasi-feudal retardation. As for Asian and Eastern regions, it was even more difficult and cruel: most women lived in semi-nomadic conditions and practiced tribal lifestyles being removed from any contact with civilization or urbanization. A famous Russian writer Maxim Gorky describes the life of Russian women at that stage: "Women in the countryside have been and have long been burdened with the hard work that drains their forces prematurely. At the same time, a woman works as a washing machine, babysitter, housewife, tailor, horticultural and cook. It is difficult to enumerate all her "homework" that degrades her value as human to the level of the local animals, which is valued at a much lower of the Persians, although the Persians do much less than a woman-farmer!" (Zreik, 2017).

Having taken into account these facts, the Communist leadership had to focus on the issue of Feminism in the Union and give it enough attention. In the 1930s there were three women's magazines published by the Central Committee of the Communist Party whose tasks were to familiarize women workers and peasants with the main political issues and the new social and economic rights of women, to generalize the work experience of women's organizations and to shed light on the global women's movement. In 1925 the Central Committee of the Soviet Women founded the so-called Women's Work and Living Improvement Committees whose tasks were to involve women in industrial production and agricultural institutions, and to provide social care (opening kindergartens, improving living conditions and developing education and medicine). The third and most important task was to increase the activity of women in the political, governmental and civil life of elected unions, councils and party committees. The number of women participating in committees in 1925 was about 95,000 and reached the number of about 2.2 million by the end of 1933. (Zreik, 2017) One of the most important partisan trends in the early years of the Soviet state was combatting unemployment among women, especially in the eastern regions. In 1925 a whole set of workers' laws was specifically formulated on this issue. The so-called "maternity leave" was established, as well as preference was granted to women who had similar qualifications to men and exercised the same work in cases of demobilization or dismissal. Gorky's article in a women's magazine drew attention to the revolutionary role played by shopping centers dealing with ornaments and women's clothing. For the first time Uzbek, Kazakh and Azerbaijani women had the option of choosing a dress beside the traditional veil. The Soviet Union had been a practical proof that the issue of women's liberation was a matter of socialism par excellence. The 8th of March (The Women's Day) was proposed by the German socialist activist Clara Zetkin in 1910 at the World Socialist Women's Congress. Less than 50 years after the founding of the first socialist country, the Soviet Union ranked first in the world in terms of the number of women specialized in higher fields, where women constituted 31% of agricultural engineers, 33% of civil engineers and 40% of scientific researchers. In the field of medicine the percentage of women was about 70%, of all the graduates with higher education certificates 52% were women. (Dolores, 1938) According to a study by the Brookings Institution issued in 2004, women's wages were only about 59 percent of men's wages at the time when the Soviet Union had achieved full equality in wages between men and women with favorable conditions for women in the case of equal work. In 1982 Soviet women achieved the highest level of political representation in the world, with women accounting for 49.5% of the deputies of local councils. In the Supreme Soviet (the highest legislative authority in the country) the representation of women reached 32%. (Zreik, 2017).

### CHAPTER THREE

#### *Feminism in Arab Culture*

"God almighty in his wisdom has never created a man who is capable of satisfying all his needs independently on his own". This historical saying which Al-Jahaz said in ancient times did not arise out of nowhere, but came from the full knowledge of what a woman deserves and the importance of her role in Arab societies throughout the ages. It has been emphasized by many poets and writers in ancient and modern literary texts. In the twentieth century the Arab culture was not socially and politically isolated from what was happening in the West, and the concept of Feminism was of great influence. It is still a very important issue, and the ideology has swayed between acceptance and rejection. Conservatives regard it as an offspring of Western culture, seeking to propagate the concepts of disintegration in the Arab and Islamic society. They argue that these ideas must be rejected and people must return to the essence of their culture to preserve the Arab identity. Liberals, on the other hand, see it as a product of Western cultural interactions and claim that it is necessary to take advantage of the values that are beneficial, and to create new awareness, based on science and intellectual openness, and erase the rigid traditional foundations and heritage of the Arab society. These thinkers argue that Islam does not oppress women, but the Arab male culture does. They claim that all problems of Arab women are political, but the West sees all Islamic countries as good followers of the real instructions of Islam. (Awadh, 1966) The first fruits of the openness to Feminism in the Arab culture were represented by books and articles focusing on the status of women and their role in upbringing new generations, and the need to teach them proportionally to this important role. We should also mention the emergence of a large number of associations, organizations and cultural women's forums in Egypt, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Morocco, which focus on advocating the liberation of women and demanding that they must be given appropriate opportunities of good education and be liberated of all forms

of discrimination. Qasim Amin (1863–1908) was a pioneer of Arab Feminism and the most prominent advocate of women's liberation in Egypt and the Arab world in general. He issued books *The Liberation of Women* (1899) and *The New Woman* (1901) calling Arab and Islamic societies for openness to Western culture. He proposed to take advantage of the visions, which enabled women to proceed in the fields of progress and development, to liberate Arab women from the constraints of backward customs and traditions that had prevented them from realizing their important role in the development of society and deprived them of their basic rights to life. So his first goal was "to advocate for women's education and prepare them to face life through work". As a result of his attitude towards freeing women Qasim Amin faced a lot of harassment to him and his family members. As a result he had to retreat back home and stay there until his death in 1908. Arab feminist writers that followed Qasim Amin raised through their works issues of reinterpreting and re-explaining religious texts and showed the real meaning of them through feminist or modern concepts. (Awadh, 1966, p. 70) It is also necessary to mention the writings of Nawal El Saadawi (b. 1931) from Egypt who westernized herself and went further to doubt the essential religious beliefs. In her books *Memoirs of a Woman Doctor* (1958), *Women and Sex* (1969), *The Naked Face of Arab Women* (1974) she raised a many women's issues that had been ignored, crossed taboo barriers and explored the places of repression against women as she stood on the balance of power between the spouses. Being a physician, she has seen many cases of violence herself and dealt with many of the victims. (Hanawi, 2021) One of the prominent writers concerned with women's issues was Al-Tayeb Salih (1929-2009). He was born in Sudan, studied in Khartoum and then moved to London. He worked for the British radio and was also active as an expert at Sudanese radio. He enriched the Arabic library and intellectual forums with his novels and articles. His novel *Season of Migration to the North* was classified as one of the best novels of the twentieth century and the most important Arabic one. The book dealt with cultural, social, political and feminist issues, but the novel was banned from publishing in Sudan because it included scenes of sexual nature. (J. Baumgardner and A. Richards, 2012) An interesting case of liberation can be found in Iraq. Iraqi women, like their other Arab counterparts, had been subjected to harsh restrictions and unfair traditions until the dawn of modern renaissance in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which included most aspects of political, social, scientific and literary life. The liberation of Iraqi women was at the forefront of the goals advocated by the pioneers of this awakening, who called for giving women their legitimate rights for education and legal views on their public and private affairs and freeing them from all types of underdevelopment which they had faced in various areas of life. Advocates for women's liberation in Iraq were realistic and understood the sensitive social status of women at the time. That is why they first called for the education of girls in order to enable them to become qualified scientifically and socially and preserve themselves in public life. They simply demanded that the face should be shown, not veiled (taking into account the culture of conservative Iraqi society) (Ezzeddine, 1960, p. 252).

#### CHAPTER FOUR

##### *Feminism in Literature*

Women have long built their existence in English literature, but this was forgotten by the middle of the twentieth century and should have been restored. For example, since the eighteenth century some educated women have written under pseudonyms to avoid poverty and the workhouse. One of the first writers who earned a living by her writings was Aphra Benn. She opened the doors to other women writers in the eighteenth century. The most famous writers Jane Austen, Bronte sisters and George Eliot formed the literature of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and also formed opinions of readers who followed them. It's a proof of patriarchal society of that time as Charlotte Brontë was originally writing as Currer Bell and George Eliot's real name is Mary Anne Evans. Such works as Virginia Woolf's writings paved the way to modernity and rethinking of the novel in the early twentieth century. Woolf claimed that a woman needs her own room and 500£ a year to write. She also claimed that if Shakespeare had a sister willing to write, she would more likely die during childbirth than become a successful playwright. (Sandra M, 1986) Despite the fact that for many centuries there have been a lot of professional women writers, female writing tends to certain types or genres: fiction, travel, health and history, and these works received little attention from both men and women. Intensive research carried out by the women's press, historians and feminist writings led to the discovery of many forgotten women writers from the past. By the middle of the twentieth century, with the growth of education and the raising of living standards, a wide range of female voices had begun to be heard. Like many social movements in the 1960s and 1970s, the Women's Liberation Movement found its own role in possessing the means of literary production and publishing. Women studied printing

skills so that they could work with the press to create and produce their texts. This was considered a means of regaining cultural production from the patriarchal reign and the media. By the end of the 1980s there were about twenty feminist publishing houses in the world. These publishers were committed to publishing feminist studies of the past and the present. In addition to women's publishing houses, feminists established radical independent libraries, magazines and a prosperous feminist book scene. The most effective ones were *Silver Moon* and *Sisterwise* in London, *Café Collective* and *The Women's Bookshop* in Manchester, *News from Womenzone* in Edinburgh and *Nowhere* in Liverpool. They served as unofficial meeting places where social and cultural events could be discussed and women (and some men) could communicate. (Sandra M, 1986) A realistic fantasy describing life, work and relationships of women became the cornerstone of feminist literature that has been produced in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. It described an important task for the Women's Liberation Movement in everyday life of women as an important step to uncover the suppressed and unvoiced oppression that women experienced in their daily life. For example, Sheila Rowbotham wrote about history, Margaret Atwood and Zoë Fairbairns created dystopian alternative worlds, Buchi Emecheta wrote about motherhood and being an immigrant in the United Kingdom, Margaret Drabble wrote about a single motherhood in *The Millstone*, and adultery in *The Garrick Year*. Women also enjoyed and transformed a wide range of different styles: Val McDermid wrote detective novels, Ellen Galford wrote lesbian historical novels, and Jeanette Winterson mixed fairytales with lesbian stories, and Angela Carter used magical realism and irony. In the 1970s and 1980s there appeared a huge community of female poets. Famous poets such as Carol Ann Duffy (United Kingdom poet laureate since 2009), Selima Hill, Jackie Kay and Grace Nichols were describing feminist feelings in verse, as well as many others such as Alison Fell, Denise Riley, Mary Dorcey and Liz Lochhead. Writing and poetry groups were formed and anthologies were issued. They collected the poetry of many women creating a collective voice for the movement and gave a poetic dimension to the movement. (Awadh, 1966)

#### **Arab Feminist Movement in literature**

One cannot say much about feminist literary criticism in the Arab world as there is no academic research or productions in terms of quality and quantity that make this subject (feminist literary criticism) a critical phenomenon evident in modern Arabic literary criticism, which is transferred from the West and has not been produced yet. Neither at the theoretical nor at the practical level, Feminism itself and the women's liberation movement produced something very important in the Arab world which may create debate and discussion. We hear and read only about individual experiences here or there which were quickly rejected or suppressed as soon as they appeared. If we want to address Feminism in the Arab world, we have to turn to hundreds of non-Arabic sources and references that speak of what is called **Postcolonial Feminism** or **Third-Wave Feminism**. Very few of them are translated into Arabic and we note that Arabic studies on the subject are usually articles or short research papers published in magazines or pages and chapters in many books. They rely entirely on non-Arabic sources and do not produce any new or authentic ideas. (Zreik, 2017) Feminism in the Arab world faced suppression, fighting and accusations. It has been perceived as something originating from Western ideologies and hostile to the heritage. Thus, further accusations confronting any new issues are possible. So as a result of the lack of production and the limited effectiveness of Feminism in the Arab world, it is clear that Feminism has already reached the stage of the so-called **Post-Feminism** in the West while in the Arab world it has not yet achieved the level of Western **First-Wave Feminism**. As well as in the West the Feminist Movement in the Arab world began with the writings and efforts of those who advocated the liberation of women from social restrictions and called for granting women civil rights equal to those of men such as their right to education, leaving home, work and political participation. The most famous of these writers were Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi, Qassim Amin, Ahmad Faris Shidyaq and Muhammad Abduh. (Ezzeddine, 1960) Then began the generalization stage of women's issues. There appeared a lot of brilliant authors such as Malak Hifni Nasif, Huda Shaarawi, Munira Thabit, Doria Shafik and others, who politically and socially dealt with women's issues in both written and practical way. The stage in which all these were found was called the Arab Renaissance and their main representation was in Egypt. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Arab women became literate with the beginning of the Renaissance and all the levels of creativity were established. In order to highlight the issue of women, women's magazines were published between 1892 and 1950. About fifty magazines were published; they helped to spread the feminist writing, develop liberal women's ideas and write some novels, educational poems and provoke research. Thus, the first Arab feminist ideas appeared in the mid nineteenth century with Rifa'a Al-Tahtawi and Ahmad Faris Shidyaq, while the Western ones appeared in the 1790s with the book



of Mary Wollstonecraft *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. (Alison, 1989) Arab Feminist Movement in literature in its entirety is not different from the Western one. Thus the researchers agree on the essence of Arab feminist cultural communication and its links to the writings of Western feminists. Some even accuse Arab Feminism of westernizing the issues of Arab women which does not take into account cultural and social specificities of women in Eastern societies, so they call for discussion of Arab women's issues away from Westernization. This may be explained by the large number of female feminist writers who use Western feminist quotes and ideas. The effect is severe and authentic Arabic theoretical researches that can be relied on this subject are scarce, forcing Arab feminists to adopt Western ideas. On the other hand, it is clear that an Arab woman writer cannot cancel her personality and culture. She belongs to a cultural and social system which has a long heritage influencing her during the process of writing. Thus, any judgment made on female writing in this regard without attempting to search for and refer to that specificity is an unjust marginalization. (Awadh, 1966) A researcher Soad Al-Mana says in her study *Feminist Literary Criticism in the West and its Implications in Modern Literary Criticism* that there exist two levels of Arab feminist criticism which made use of Western feminist critiques, some are liberal in interacting with these statements and many of them seem to be searching for the use of evidence from the heritage or language to prove the truthfulness of one of the sayings. Feminist narrative is a product of the exclusion of women's role in public life. As a result, feminist movements called for change to promote the status of women and to deal seriously with what they write (especially novels). It has elaborated a narrative identity depending on two main components: the feminist vision of the world and the celebration of the body. (Awadh, 1966) Feminist narrative differs from women's writing. The second one may be like men's writing while the first one seeks to differentiate identity to form a feminist vision of the self and the world, which is carried out within a feminist thought framework. It takes advantage of its hypotheses, perceptions and statements and seeks to crystallize the concepts of femininity and criticize the patriarchal system. Thus, feminist narrative especially in the novel is meant to be a writing that takes feminist thought as a starting point and seeks to contribute to the formation of a feminist identity that is equal to the identity of the patriarchal society which marginalized and excluded women from public space and treated them as inferior as if they were different beings in a low social position. So the essence of feminist writing or narrative is in the thought that stands behind it, and not the sex of the writer, as women may distinctly write male literature. Feminist narrative can also be defined as the narrative produced by a woman freed from the shackles of patriarchal literary norms and expressing women's reality and issues through female writer herself rather than through others, depending on her own experience and making her first concern the issue of women and positioning them in the center of the literary text. The most important issue in the feminist narrative is the status of women without complying with the rules of writing. (Awadh, 1966) The language and literary structure in the feminist narrative comes in the next place. It is not at the top of the priorities of a feminist novelist. The dominant male culture in Arab societies found language divisions: male and female languages. Patriarchal culture gives the male discourse the feature of power. It is clear, assertive and deals with serious and important life issues such as war and knighthood while feminist discourse focuses on emotional and fragile issues like marriage, motherhood, children and trivial daily details. (Dolores, 1938) Thus, female language in fiction cannot produce or compete with male language. This led some scholars to demand women writers to create a language that suits their identity. They think that the only way by which women can gain a distinctive position in language is the conscious attempt to establish creative value of femininity. That matches and competes with masculinity. Through a narrative which bears feminist characteristics. Thus, feminist narrative in essence is a revolution against male cultural system in all aspects starting from the marginalization of women and their transformation into male subordinates, to the demand for equality and to the creation of a new feminine language parallel to and equal to the dominant male language. Arabic feminist narrative has a rebellious tendency towards the domination of man which is attributed to three main reasons: first the influence of the western feminist thought on Arab women mentality. Second is the emergence of Arab women's liberation movements and finally the increase in the number of female writers. This narrative took the lead and resisted the authority of the man and his traditions and it was self-reliant in all its affairs expressing its concerns, desires and issues in the way which it has gained from experiences in life. (Awadh, 1966) Feminist narrative is about a variety of subjects and content and it is necessary to review some important issues: "dispossession of women's will" who have lost most of their human rights (the right to accept, to reject, to love or to hate). Thus, women live in the mold of others as they plan for them and then decide and determine their position in the family and the range of the

roles assigned to them away from their female sex, besides the nature of the work required of them which leads to a threat to their humanity. This dispossession is not of a single form, but a variety of forms including family, political persecution and the acquisition of the right to learn and to choose or refuse marriage, and here we are showing some examples of what has already been mentioned. (Awadh, 1966)

Dunna Ghali's novel *The Farthest Point* was the best example of the state of dispossession. The novel consists of chapters bearing the names revealing the oppression of women and selfishness of men. Here the writer defends women's rights showing the injustice and restrictions that have beset her and her dignity and freedom. Bushra is one of the oppressed characters; she is a smart and ambitious girl who leads a difficult life since childhood. Her mother dies and she suffers a lot from her bossy stepmother whom she did not like and who mocked at her because she had a chronic illness in her childhood that could easily kill her.

Her father despised her and never had mercy on her or provided her with anything she needed. So she sometimes had to steal to buy what she lacked. The novel traces her social life and the nature of her marital relationship. She got married to her university professor only to get rid of her father's scorn and his wife's power over her. She was aware of the deprivation state she experienced in her father's house and her marriage to Khalid represented a major turning point in her life. She lived with her family in an old house in a poor district and then lived in a hostel belonging to the university. After her marriage she moved to live with her husband in the district of the professors in the complex of the university.

Bushra was in permanent disagreement with her husband because of her ambition and her permanent search for something new satisfying her desire to compensate for the childhood deprivation. (Abdela'al, 2004)

Although she worked as a teacher of Arabic, her marriage to Khalid was only a way to enter the harsh society. Life manipulated and suppressed her in many ways. Ambitiousness, poverty, her father's neglect, the loss of her mother, the intervention of her stepmother in all her affairs and finally her marriage which was based on interest. All this ends with her death during the Second Gulf War. She is a character who lived on the margins of the society, her loss of rights has led to her desperate attempts to defend her existence within a society that marginalizes women and deprives them of their rights. (Ghali, *The Farthest Point*, 2000)

Alienation is a kind of dispossession imposed on women. Sometimes it can be caused by isolation, closures and restrictions. It can be spatial and psychological that makes the mind keep memories of the past and tries to plan the new life in a way that suits its being. These memories make the mind coexist with time and space to reduce the impact of the alienation.

This can be seen in Marwa's character in Dunna Ghali's novel *When the Scent Wakes Up*. In Danish exile she sees only isolation, closures and restrictions on everyone. Even citizens are in need of help like migrants and refugees. Marwa tells the psychologist: "I do not really mix with the Danish people, but it is as if your upbringing forces you to hide your emotions and surprise together as part of prestige. This is what we hear and read about you from others. Here is what I feel now too that you answered me every question I asked. How can you help me and you need help yourself!". The expatriate character that Marwa represents is quite aware of the place which inflames her feelings because of the sensitivity and severity of alienation. (Ghali, *When the Scent Wakes Up*, 2006, p. 55)

Symbols are appropriate means and framework for criticizing, condemning and rejecting a specific condition. Contemporary novel has constituted a symbol to express bitter reality and deep suffering through its tendency to the strange, fantasy and legendary. Its experimental character helped to create new forms unfamiliar to the art of the novel before. An example of women's symbolism can be found in the novel *The Woman of The Flask* by Selim Matar. Take for example the character of Hagar whom Adam meets in his exile and connects her to his homeland which he left: "I did not realize ones that the woman of the flask is that immortal lady who had lived for thousands of years in a flask. She passed down through generations; she is a mother, a wife and a daughter to me who has been sitting in the flask of my soul". He makes a similarity between them (Hagar and his homeland) as she merges and unites to that city. (Matar, 2010, p. 113)

The character is an essential element in a successful narrative work. Some scholars even go further to consider it the basis of the story. The novel as a literary genre is able to express the character. The character is divided in terms of the role it plays and the importance it represents to main character and secondary character. The main character is the one that leads the literary work and pushes it forward; it is a character around which the story takes place. There are two types: the round character which grows and develops in its interaction with events (in both visible or hidden interaction) and the second one is the flat character

which remains constant along the novel, does not grow and is not affected by the developing of the events. Here are some examples of these characters in feminist fiction.

In the novel *When the Scent Wakes Up* the main character is Nahla Sabah, a round character. Her story starts when she and her husband migrate to escape the pursuits of the ruling power; she melts into the Danish society in a strange way and gets rid of everything that linked her to the past so as to start a new life. She leaves her husband when she arrives in Denmark and gives up her name and affiliation by changing it from Nahla Sabah to Helena Saba and gets rid of the barriers of different cultures and intellectual trends as she deeply renounces her identity.

The character of Nadia in the novel *Beyond Love* by Hadia Hussein who does not evolve or change through the story is a flat character. She is occupied by the only idea of finding her lover who was lost after the Second Gulf War. She never gives up and keeps living in the hope of meeting him until her sudden death (she was hit by a car in Amman). The Iraqi authorities refused to bury her body in her homeland (Iraq), which can be called suppression after death.

There is no novel without minor characters that do not have a key role in the text. They achieve some goals according to their role or appearance in the novel. A minor character highlights aspects of the story and supports the main character and it often comes flat. Thus it is also represented by two types: both round and flat. (Hussein, 2003)

An example of a round minor character is Diari in the novel *Black Iraqi Moons in Sweden* by Ali Abdel Aal. This character tries throughout the story to beat her sister's husband Assad. From the beginning of the novel to the peak of the plot in storytelling, she is presented as a satanic character as Assad points out: "It seems to me sometimes in frightening moments that the devil himself is embodied in a girl" (Abdela'al, 2004, p. 120). She did not hesitate to marry a drunkard, a gambler person. After attempts by Assad, a false marriage is held in the presence of an Egyptian Sheikh and has not been registered in official bureaus in Sweden. The two preferred to live in the way of Sambo (a Swedish way of living. A couple live in one place without ceremoniously registered marriage) to preserve the right of separation at any time they like.

Nargis is a flat minor character in the novel *When the Scent Wakes Up*. She suffers from her spinsterhood and her biggest concern is to form a family and have children. But she does not achieve this dream and does not find someone willing to marry her. The reasons behind this are many (the lack of beauty, the despotic authority that executed her brother for his communist attitudes). Her family is being chased which leads to the reluctance of young people to marry a girl from this family. Nargis dies at an old age while her dream of forming a family and having children has not come true. Her expatriate sister Marwa Al-Basri describes her "Nargis is a Sumerian goddess that was not so beautiful and because people there (in Iraq) love beauty, so she was forgotten in her life. But after her death people began to worship and vow vows to her". Al-Basri thus stresses a negative social phenomenon in Iraqi society. (Ghali, *When the Scent Wakes Up*, 2006, p. 9)

## CONCLUSION

Western Feminist Movement started to spread after the French Revolution. That is why it acquired political tent and inclination that has helped to promote feminist movement and ideology. Nevertheless, feminine literature in the Arab world had started much earlier (approximately 1400 years ago) and it covered different purposes such as pride, elegy, religion and romance.

According to the task of the research there is a major result:

Feminism is a range of political and social movements and ideologies that share a common goal: to define, establish, and achieve political, economic, personal, and social equality of sexes. This includes seeking to establish educational and professional opportunities for women that are equal to those for men.

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