
YEARNING FOR FREEDOM IN A PRISON WITHOUT BARS IN TWO NOVELS: *ŞAMT AL-FARĀSHĀT/SILENCE OF THE BUTTERFLIES* BY LAYLĀ AL-'UTHMĀN AND *LAM 'A'UD 'ABKĪ/I DO NOT CRY ANYMORE* BY ZAYNAB HIFNĪ

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ABSTRACT: *The crisis of freedom that the Gulf woman lives in under a patriarchal male culture that is biased against her and against the Arab woman in general, turns her into a prisoner who lives behind moral bars. Under these circumstances, the Gulf woman's writing becomes a conflict with the man's concepts and the patriarchal male mentality of her society. However, by writing, she reveals the issues of her scandalous oppression, and emancipates herself from her shackles. Writing is one of the forms of freedom, through which she regains her voice that has been stolen from her as a woman and a creative artist. This study seeks to reveal the manifestations of oppression that the woman is exposed to in the feminist Gulf literature in two novels: *Şamt al-Farāshāt* by Laylā al-'Uthmān, and *Lam 'A'ud 'Abkī* by Zaynab Hifnī as samples. The study will reveal the woman's figurative 'prison' and 'jailor': the prison of society with its norms and traditions, and the prison of the Man and his domination as images of her oppression by marriage, and by the siege of social norms, the culture of silence, her prevention from choosing her job and her creative freedom. In return, the study will observe the features of her revolution and rebellion against all these figurative "prisons" such as her refusal of the traditional marriage, her resistance by writing, her search for love, and breakage of the sex taboo. The woman manifests herself between the character of the 'prisoner' and the 'rebellious' woman, between her 'yearning for freedom' and her 'revolt' against the 'bars' in order to realize herself and break the taboos.*

KEY WORDS: Prison, bars, society, traditions, freedom, males, females.

INTRODUCTION

The term 'Feminist Literature' refers to that literature in which the writer is concerned with the woman's issues and her revolution against her patriarchal male society and its norms and customs, besides her revolution against the literary rules. She rejects the man's guardianship on her and marginalizes him through her destruction of his traditional image, and seeks to strengthen her feminine identity, refusing to continue to live in a patriarchal society that considers her subordinate to the man¹. In her book, *al-'Untha Hiya al-Aşl*,

¹ For more information about the Feminist Arabic Literature and its development, see, for example: Şaffouri, Moḥammad (2011). *Dirasa fi al-Sard al-Niswi al-'Arabi al-Ḥadith* (1980-2007). Haifa: Maktabat Kul Shay; al-Qadi, Iman (1992). *al-Riwaya al-Niswiya fi Bilād al-Shām- al-Simāt al-Nafsiya wa al-Fanniya* (1950-1985). Damascus: al-Ahāli li al-Tiba'a wa al-Nashr wa al-Tawzi'; Cooke, Miriam (1992). "Arab Women Writers" in: M.M. Badawi,

Nawal al-Sa'awi points out that the woman's struggle to break her shackles and put an end to her enslavement by the man became in the second half of the twentieth century distinguished by its being a conscious and noticeable conflict, but the woman's struggle has not ended so far. The woman's struggle is still going on under the shadow of a patriarchal society and a masculine culture that has taken deep roots for ages, whose taboos and concepts are difficult to break².

As expected, the Arab feminist literature is busy introducing the woman and her revolution against her reality and her rebellion against all manifestations of backwardness in her male authoritative society. It is natural that women writers raise their voices to express the woman's reality and her pains, and increase their effort to change her reality, demand her freedom, and ultimately, condemn the man and dispraise him bitterly. Therefore, feminist literature is nearly void of bright slogans and abstract ideologies and sticks only to the heart of the lived experience and the current daily life.³ The woman has confirmed her aggressive tendency in her feminist revolutionary narrative against social and literary norms that were established by the suppressive authoritative male institution. She has also shown her clear challenge to the taboos of the prohibited triplet: politics, religion, and sex.

Her revolution is not limited to themes, but includes artistic and stylistic techniques that work on undermining the masculine literary theory, and establishing new literary standards that are specific to her, in order to strengthen the woman's status, place her in the center of the text, and exclude the man to the margin of the narrative text or even to exile him from the text, and thus, she dominates the world of the imaginative text in her yearning for dominating her reality. Hence, it seems that the feminist literature is a revolutionary intellectual and ideological trend that seeks to emphasize the woman's triumph after deprivation of her rights for ages, and to emphasize the collapse of the man's authority and its marginalization. As Taha (2019) says: "Writing in itself, no more occupies the woman's mind. This was true in the beginnings, when the woman aspired to nothing more than expressing herself in writing. Feminism in its recent stages is not satisfied with its regaining of the woman's right in her abstract voice, or grabbing her voice from the man's masculinity, but she insists on two things: raising her voice and

(ed.). *Modern Arabic Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 444-462; Taha, Ibrahim (2006). "Beware men, They Are ALL Wild Animals", *Arabic Feminist Literature: Challenge, Fight, and Reputation. AL-Karmil: Studies in Arabic Language and Literature*. Haifa: University of Haifa. Vol. 27, pp. 25-71.

² al-Sa'awi, Nawal (2017). *al-'Untha Hiya al-Aṣl*. The United Kingdom: Mu'assat Hindawi, p. 126-127. For more information about the woman and her conflicts with the man, see: al-Sa'awi Nawal (1990). *Dirasat 'an al-Mar'ah wa al-Rajul fi al-Mujtam'a al-'Arabi: al-Mar'h wa al-Jins, al-'Untha Hiya al-Aṣl; al-Rajul wa al-Jins, al-Mar'h wa al-Sira' al-Nafsi, al-Wajh al-'Ari li al-Mar'ah al-'Arabiya*. Beirut: al-Mu'asasa al-'Arabiya li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr, p. 261.

³ Sha'ban, Buthayna (1999). *100 'Ām 'ala al-Riwaya al-Nisa'iya*. Beirut: Dar al-Ādāb, p. 8.

condemnation of the man. Writing is no more a defensive system, and it has turned into a violent aggressive system" .⁴

Therefore, this article aims to reveal the manifestations of oppression of the woman in the Gulf feminist literature, and her yearning to be free from restrictions and taboos in two novels: *Šamt al-Farāshāt* by the Kuwaiti writer Laylā al-‘Uthmān⁵, and *Lam ‘A‘ud ‘Abkī* by the Saudi writer Zaynab Hifnī⁶ as samples. The study will move in the following order. First, it introduces a short background about the reality of the Gulf woman and the characteristics of her feminist literature in general. Then, it moves to the analytical part in order to reveal the forms of oppression that the woman is exposed to, and the characteristics of her figurative 'prison' and 'jailor' in the two novels under the following subtitles: the marriage system, domestic persecution, social observer, prison of norms and legacies, marriage of pleasure, culture of silence, sexual assault, suppression of freedom of work, and creative freedom. Then, the study moves to monitor the features of the revolution of the woman "prison", and her yearning for freedom and the manner of her rebellion against all these "prisons" under the subheadings: the rebellious woman, resistance of oppression and refusal of silence, refusal of traditional marriage and resistance by writing, economic independence, the right to love, and breakage of the sex taboo.

The Reality of the Gulf Woman and the Characteristics of her Feminist Literature

Dhabiya Khamis says that "the Gulf woman lived under the burden of major transformations that separated between two types of memory: the *first type* is a time that bears with it a strict reality that is dominated by the power of customs, traditions, and Islamic religious authorities, a closed time on itself where the [woman's] voice turns into an imperfection, and the historical silence dominates that memory. The *second type* of time is the present that includes the stage of the historical social coup that the Gulf societies witnessed at the beginning of the oil stage, and passes through the time of modernization in its different forms and reflections on the woman, and which transferred the female self into the space of literary, artistic, and cultural expression in its various forms".⁷

This *present*, which is mixed with the *past*, is also what the writer Fawziya Rashid expressed in the following statement: "We live in the present and the past alike and both of them are within us" .⁸ This means that the Gulf woman has not been able to split herself from the past of her society and its concepts and legacy. She has been chained by a lot of traditions and norms that are considered a part of the remnants of the ancient times,

⁴ Ṭaha, Ibrahim (2019). *Fitnat al-Adab wa al-Naqd – Maqalat fi al-Adab al-Falastini wa Mulahazat fi al-Zahera al-Adabiya*. Baqa al-Gharbiya: Majma‘ al-Qasimi: Haifa: Maktabat Kul Shay, p. 12.

⁵ al-‘Uthmān, Laylā (2008). *Šamt al-Farāshāt*. Beirut: Dar al-Ādāb.

⁶ Hifnī , Zaynab (2016). *Lam ‘A‘ud ‘Abkī*. Beirut: Dar al-Saqi, p. 25.

⁷ Khamis, Dhabiya (1997). *Al-Dhat al-Unthawiya min Khilal Sha‘irat Hadathiyat fi al-Khalij*. Damascus: Dar al-Mada, p. 41.

⁸ Ramsay, Gail (2002-2003). "Styles of Expression in Women's Literature in the Gulf". *Orientalia Suecana*. Sweden: Uppsala, Vol. LI-LII, p. 381.

especially with regard to marriage traditions, the father's position as a family-head, whose economic role and his social and moral positions give him a far-reaching authority that he imposes on his wife and children. In addition to that, the woman's position and the exaggerated outlook regarding her backwardness surrounded her and deprived her of her right to go out of her home or go to work, and robbed her of her legitimate rights, including her rights to go to school, which she could not get except at a later stage".⁹ Then there is the woman's deprivation, which is connected to a lot of obstacles that she has been exposed to, which apply to the veil (= hijab) that was forced on her; sex segregation, separation in society, her deprivation from choosing her partner, and her agreement that another woman can be another partner with her husband within the legality of polygamy. In addition, the woman was forced to get married at an early age, and sometimes before maturity and puberty. Therefore, the woman's entrance to the literary arena was connected to the social, economic, and cultural development that this area witnessed, and thus, her literary awakening emerged in all the Gulf countries, despite the time difference between one country and the other, when she was given her freedom of education after a long period of prevention and severe besiege that was put around her. Consequently, the number of educated women and university students increased¹⁰.

According to Mu'tassem Mohammad (2009), "It was popular that writing in the Arab Gulf was curbed and broken-winged because it could not always say what it wanted to say due to the numerous prohibitions and severe censorship that were forced by social and political traditions and customs; all of them were wrapped with ideological and religious shoals"¹¹. In the shadow of this traditional extremely strict and changeable society, the woman and her creativity lived under terrible contradictions that consisted of religious rules, norms, and politics. This situation increased the woman's suffering, suppressed her freedom of speech and expression. Judgments on her creativity were severe, cruel, violated and made her mistaken in advance¹².

However, despite the political changes and the constitutional legislations that took place in the Gulf and gave the woman some concepts about freedom, the obstacles that were more severe and more cruel were the concepts of society and its inherited legacy; society defended its legacies and norms by defending constants and parameters that society

⁹ Galloum, Ibrahim (2000). *Al-Qiṣa al-Qaṣira fi al-Khalij al-'Arabi- al-Kuwait wa al-Bahrain*. Beirut: al-Muasasa al-'Arabiya, p. 63-64.

¹⁰ al-Ṭā'ī, Abd Alla Moḥammad (1974). *Al-Adab al-Mu'asser fi al-Khalij al-'Arabi*. Cairo: Ma'had al-Buhuth wa al-Dirasat al-'Arabiya, p. 75.

¹¹ Mu'tassem, Moḥammad (2009). *Balaghat al-Qi'a al-Qaṣira al-'Arabiya*. 'Amman: Dar Azmina, p. 63.

¹² For more information about the reality of the Gulf woman reality and the development of her creativity, see: Ṣaleh, Laylā Moḥammad (1983). *Adab al-Mar'ah fi al-Jazira wa al-Khalij al-'Arabi: al-Mamlaka al-'Arabiya al-Saudiya, al-Bahrain, Qatar, al-Imarat al-'Arabiya al-Mutahida*. al-Kuwait: Manshurat Dhat al-Salasil, Part 1; Saleh, Laylā Moḥammad (1987). *Adab al-Mar'ah fi al-Jazira wa al-Khalij al-'Arabi: al-Yaman wa Oman*. al-Kuwait: Manshurat Dhat al-Salasil, Part 2; al-Sukkar, Ḥatem (2003). *Infijar al-Ṣamt: al-Kitaba al-Niswiya fi al-Yaman*. Sana': Markaz 'Abbadī li al-Dirasat wa al-Nashr; Ramsay, Gail (2002-2003). "Styles of Expression in Women's Literature in the Gulf", *Orientalia Suecana*. Sweden: Uppsala, Vol. LI-LII, pp. 371-390.

imagined to be sacred, refusing to accept the woman's new position, including her right to express her opinions and feelings, and as a result, society chained her and besieged her with its authorities.

As the Gulf societies stick to constants that look at the woman as an inferior creature, the Gulf creative woman artist lived under the burden of obstacles that worked on marginalizing her, without accepting her writings as they accept the man's writings. Thus, the suppression of the male society on her is double the suppression that is exerted on a woman who is not a writer. Under this male culture that is biased against the woman, writing for her becomes a conflict with the concepts of the man and the mentality of his male society in order to destroy these constants.

Therefore, she started in the last decades to raise her voice publicly and dared to reveal her exposure to suppression and its types. Why not, when she is the one who knows most the meaning of freedom?! Thus, she chose to face the man and take revenge on him by her word. By writing, she chose to expose and resist the man and authority, and regain her lost freedom, and destroy her society's look and the walls of 'haram', 'shame' and 'imperfection of her body', 'indecent behavior' and 'blasphemy', and all the 'vocabulary' that turned into a wall of the walls of prison of society. Therefore, the word 'freedom' for her is a sacred word and is opposite to all the previous words.

As a result, the woman writer in the Gulf made her female characters in her texts look for freedom burningly in a rebellious way against norms, traditions, and taboos of sex, patriarchal authority, and for granted male axioms that refuse the woman and the voice of her creativity. The woman also sought to marginalize the man, refuse the idea of marriage, and expressed her yearning for freedom and her right to love. Therefore, "writing for the Gulf woman, more than for other women, is a true objective correlative to self-assertion, which took place later than in other Arab areas. Writing gives the possibility of an alternative and compensation for the late assertion in societies that suffer from causes of underdevelopment, ignorance, and other different means of deterrence. In general, these writings revolved in their beginnings around frustrations of self-alienation and then gradually developed till a broader openness started on broader horizons outside that curbed self by effect of psychological and social accumulation".¹³

There is no doubt that women's writing is considered one of the most important projects through which the woman endeavors to prove her existence culturally, and personally in society because writing for her represents "an explosion of the suppressed and the hidden things that have accumulated over the years only to declare them in her dialogue with the man...the woman's concern is her social, political and physical liberation, and the man is certainly the head of the hindering powers that divide between her and her freedom."¹⁴

¹³ Rashid, Fawziya (1999). "al-Mar'ah al-Mubdi'ah fi al-Khalij". *Majallat Nizwa*. at: <http://www.nizwa.com>

¹⁴Jareedy, Sami (2008). *Al-Riwaya al-Nisa'iya al-Sa'udiya: Khitab al-Mar'ah wa Tashkil al-Sard*. Beirut: Mu'asast al-Intishar al-'Arabi, p. 78-80.

The Metaphorical Prison in the Feminist Literature: *Ṣamt al-Farāshāt*¹⁵ and *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī*¹⁶ as a Sample

The authoritative patriarchal male society still gives the man legitimacy to suppress the woman by force of norms and traditions. Thus, he imprisons her in a moral prison of taboos that limit her movements and treats her in a way that implies that she is subordinate to him and he is her lord. For him, she is a minor creature, who is unqualified to lead herself and needs the guardianship of the man. Some scholars such as Nasr Hamed Abu Zayd, argue that "the discourse that is produced about the woman in the contemporary Arab world is generally a sectarian racial discourse... it talks about the woman/ female abstractly, and puts her in a comparative relationship with the man/male. When a certain relationship is defined as a relationship between two parallel or contradictory sides that requires submission of one side to the other, surrendering to him and entering the area of his territory, the other side, who imagines himself the dominant side, is likely to produce a *sectarian racial discourse* in the full meaning of the three last words and their implications. It is not only this religious discourse that dominates her, but the whole Arab prevailing and dominating discourse that dominates on the public and media level... and in all cases, the man becomes the center of the movement and focus of activity"¹⁷.

Other scholars, however, maintain that "the woman's rival is not the man because he is a man; her rival and opponent is society itself, its traditions and shackles. Every father and every brother want freedom and welfare for his daughter or sister, but the thing that hinders the achievement of her freedom and welfare is the large quantity of shackles and dominating norms. It is that observation and censorship that society imposes, and consequently, prohibits the father or brother from securing or achieving the minimum of conviction that he believes in. Therefore, efforts should be focused on what is considered an obstacle or inhibitor of the achievement of equality and freedom. The obstacle is not necessarily a man by sex, but the nature of the relations that control the two together and turns them into slaves, though at different percentages, as a result of the historical development that started mainly with the acknowledgement of the muscular power, and ended with considering the economic power and ideology that accompanies it as the fundamental cause of discrimination and domination"¹⁸.

This oppressive reality is the factor that leads to tension of relations between the man and the woman and leads to the suffering of the woman. Hence, it is not strange that the woman

¹⁵ The novel *Ṣamt al-Farāshāt* deals with the of nineteen years old girl "Nadia", whose father forces her to marry a sixty-years old rich man. She is persecuted and oppressed but after four years, she manages to escape from his palace, and when she declares her love to her slave, Atiya, her family objects and she is exposed to a strong social observation. See: al-'Uthmān, Laylā (2008). *Ṣamt al-Farāshāt*. Dar al-Ādāb.

¹⁶ The novel *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī* deals with the life of Ghada, a Saudi Arabian woman who paid a high price throughout her life, the innocence of her childhood, her love to a man who disappointed her, her rebellion when she decided to achieve herself in the world of journalism, whose tools are still in the hands of the man only. But she was able to challenge her reality and dry her teas. See: Ḥifnī, Zaynab (2016). *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī*. Beirut: Dar al-Saqi.

¹⁷ Abu Zayd, Nassr Hamed (2004). *Dawa'er al-Khawf – Qira'ah fi Khitab al-Mar'ah*. al-Dar al-Baydha': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, p. 29.

¹⁸ Munif, 'Abd al-Raḥman (1998). *Bayn al-Thaqafa wa al-Siyasa*. Al-Dar al-Baydha': al-Markaz al-Thaqafi al-'Arabi, p. 155.

feel that she lives behind moral bars in a narrow 'prison' that counts all her steps and movements. It is that metaphorical prison that she suffers from daily - the prison of society, its norms, and its inherited legacy. It is the prison that Nawal al-Sa'dawi emphasizes in her memoirs: "The prison today is no more a visible wall"¹⁹. The prison for the woman is no more 'walls' only but the mental prison of society, its shackles and its discrimination against her, where the political oppression is at the same level as the social and religious oppressions.²⁰

The Jailor in: *A Prison Without Bars*: "Cruel Men All of Them Are Sons of Dogs"

As said before, the jailor of the woman can be a man and a whole society in its traditions and customs. Under these circumstances of suppression and oppression, the woman does not care if her jailor wears a police uniform in the prison or a jailor in her patriarchal male society. The woman's life has become a large prison that robs her of her freedom and deprives her of her rights. She moves in a crucible of constant conflict in which she enters a violent confrontation with a stronger rival, to whom her society gives every right to dominate her, while it oppresses her in endless circles of oppression.

Marriage – the Crucible of Spiritual and Physical Humiliation

Probably Nawal al-Sa'dawi's description of the system of marriage in an authoritarian male society confirms how oppressive the man is to his wife. The wife loses ownership of her body, personality, name and freedom to leave her house and move, and her ownership of her money and other property".²¹

The image of the 'jailor' in feminist literature is represented in the traditional image of the unjust, violent, authoritative, exploiting, and selfish man. Besides, he is the man who carries in his consciousness a store of authoritative male culture. He is also an image that embodies his society's norms and legacies. He can also represent the suppressive authority. One of the most prominent images that represent this authority is the image of the husband that is embodied by that old man, Nayef in the novel *Šamt al-Farāshāt*.

Laylā al-‘Uthmān sought in this novel to describe him in a negative image that represents the cruel wild man who seeks to smash Nadia and humiliate her, using all the physical and psychological violent instruments. Nadia was only nineteen when she was planning to continue her academic studies, but her parents forced her to get married to an elderly man who was sixty years old. They oppress her by marriage for fear of firing her father from his work, and in greed of his money: "His eyes picked her tender youth, and the deal was completed"²². The old man's brutality increased when Nadia tried to oppose him. He strongly desired her body and raped her as a way to oppress her and he enjoyed torturing her by his servant Atiya to prove his control over her; the man's control of the woman,

¹⁹ al-Sa'dawi, Nawal (2006). *Mudhakarati fi Sijn al-Nisa'*. Cairo: Maktabat Madbouli, p. 10

²⁰ For more information, see: Harlow, Barbara (1992). "Min Sijn al-Nisa' : Riwayat Nisa'al-'Alam al-Thalith 'an al-Sijn." in: *Fusul*. Cairo: Vol 11, Issue 3, Autumn, p. 353-367; Malti-Douglas, Fedwa (1995). *Men, Women, and God(s): Nawal al-Sa'dawi and Arab Feminist Poetics*. California: Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, pp. 159-176

²¹ al-Sa'dawi, Nawal, 2017, p. 117.

²² al-‘Uthmān, 2008, p. 92.

first, and the control of the jailor over the prisoner, second. He was oppressive and unjust: "The thin man who is able to humiliate me and break my soul and dignity"²³.

He was not satisfied with her humiliation by Atiya on the first night, but she lived another night of smashing her dignity, which Nadia considered "the most terrible and strange night", which turned into the "chapter of the chapters of his tyranny and abnormality". On that night, he brought one of his maid servants called Georgette, and made sexual intercourse with her in front of Nadia, saying to her: "Look... learn." At that moment, Nadia realized that he was a sadist, who was enjoying torturing her: "I realized that he is extremely fascinated by her torturing and injuring her pride".²⁴ The Old Man, her jailor, was putting his body on hers like a prison that surrounded her; it was falling so cruelly with its wall and rottenness on her. He was humiliating her sexually, spiritually, and torturing her physically.

In that palace, no one was allowed to enter and carry to her a breeze of freedom that she craved for, and she could not create a relationship between her and anything in that prison-palace: "I even felt the maid servants like executioners who were ready to scourge me at any second he orders them to do so".²⁵ In this way, Nadia becomes an imprisoned captive to the old man Nayef, like any other prisoner behind bars of a real prison, deprived of her humanity, robbed of her will, unable to move, and without freedom. Nayef forbade her to go out of the palace and visit her family. When she dared to ask to visit them, he tortured her and asked the black slave to scourge her, leaving her falling body on the floor. Her dislocated body was moaning with its wounds, her chopped soul of its pain was torn between feelings of humiliation and grudge.²⁶

This siege that is wrapped with torture and scourge did not stop at this point and the Old Man prevented her family from visiting her; he did not allow them to visit her except once a month, and while he was sitting with them, he was watching her, her speech, her movements and besieging her, as if they were in prison and he was the jailor.

Laylā al-‘Uthmān also deals with other types of the oppressive man and how he turns into a jailor who robs the woman of her honor and denies the love and sacrifice that she offers him. We find that in Şafā's husband, Nadia's friend, who loved and married her driver without her parent's agreement. Şafā defied her society and deconstructed its stereotypes in support of her heart, but her marriage to him revealed to her the man's violence, and his behavior was bitter with every woman who sacrificed her family for her love. Her bitterness increases because it was an incompatible marriage that was made against the parents' desire and society's norms. She probably introduces it in order to emphasize the fact that the problem is not only in society's norms but in the man himself and in his thoughts. For example, when the serving driver became a master of himself, he took revenge to himself on the first night: "Imagine, instead of whispering love words, he was biting my earlobe and blowing in it: "Say 'my lord!.. my prince!" after he was running to perform my orders, he made me creep to fulfill his orders ... I saw his sadistic looks in his

²³ Ibid., p. 55.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 56-57.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 26-27.

eyes when he saw me humiliated and weak". Life becomes "unbearable with a man I used to be his boss one day"²⁷. The woman is forced to stay with such a man because of "first of all, the children, and second, her fear of the parents' and society's gloating; the parents forget the insult that we direct at them; they wait till our defeat occurs; so that they dance out of gloating. However, with regard to society, it depends on our failure. If we fail, it will be a document and argument that they use as an example to anyone who tries to get out of the coat of customs and traditions".²⁸ That is how love lives in these societies in the shadow of "revenge and smashing of dignity"²⁹. This love is dwarfed and marginalized in front of the man's selfishness that conspires with the arrogance of the norms of society and the masculinity of its legacies. Nadia concludes that men in love are not true: "Even birds know love and express it, and they are truer than men in this innocence"³⁰. Şafā, however, says about them, "all of them are cruel, sons of a dog".³¹

We recognize the characteristics of the *deceived woman* through the character of Nashwa, Ghada's friend, in the novel *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī* who married at the age of eighteen a very wealthy businessman, who was fifty years old. She agreed to marry him because of her dream to live a luxurious life. Because of the age difference between them, her husband chains her with his strong jealousy, imprisons her in his palace, and does not allow her to go out alone. When he dies, she marries a young man whose age is close to hers. She gives him her trust, but he takes over all her wealth. When she discovers his betrayal, he divorces her and sells all her property, which he inherited from her ex-husband and his father. He leaves the small villa that she lives in to her and she realizes that "Foolish is the woman who trusts a man!"³²

Nashwa's experience with these two men is a disappointing experience in which the marriage institution turned through the man's selfishness and his commodification of the woman into a prison, and his robbery of her Self and her identity. However, this does not free Nashwa from her responsibility for what has happened to her, because she was enticed by money and gave up learning. Therefore, she turned into an easy prey for the man. This issue confirms that the woman's yearning for her freedom is also subject to her education, her work and her financial independence; otherwise, she will be like Nashwa, who is exploited by the man, who deals with her like a commodity and a source for sexual pleasure.

Nashwa points out an aspect of the *oriental man's treatment of the woman* and his violated relationship with her when he turns into a cruel selfish jailor, who is careless to her feelings. All that he cares for is his "I", his winning male ego. She says: "The man in our oriental societies cannot appreciate the woman's frankness even if he shows his sympathy with her at the beginning. Her past remains in his depth a black spot that occupies his mind"³³.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 273.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 274.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 275

³⁰ Ibid., p. 150.

³¹ Ibid., p. 275.

³² Hifni, 2016, p. 39.

³³ Ibid., p. 87.

This is exactly what Talal admits to his sweetheart Ghada in a message to her after the prison defeated him and he decides to leave:

"I want you to know that I am not an ideal impeccable man; I am a man who is tied by my legacies that I licked in my childhood... I was always weak against my sexual desires, and they pushed me to employ all possible tricks to make every woman I desire, fall". "I refused in my depth to agree that another man should precede me in invading my land of dreams! I wanted to slap you at that moment... I am a man who bears inside him the seeds of possession and selfishness..". "All oriental men have one common quality inside them, no matter how civilized and modern they pretend to be. Every man wants to control the fate of the woman whom he desires from the point of view that she is an integral part of his possessions, and he insists on being her guardian, not only on her present but on her life from the moment that she emerges from her mother's womb till the moment of her death", "and woe on the woman who tells the truth to her husband about her lapses! She will pay for them all her life".³⁴

Culture of Silence

Even the 'silence' that was always imposed on Nadia by her 'jailors' turned into a 'jailor' and a tool for dominating her, and she had to accept it or, she would be punished. If the woman's voice is considered an 'awrah' (a defect) according to her social norms, it is no wonder that 'silence' should be the shackle that forbade her voice. From the beginning of the first night, and since the Old Man ordered her to 'keep silent', her tongue started to freeze. The culture of 'silence' was not new to her. She had already tried it in her childhood: "All of them order me to keep silent". She hated her silence and tried to raise her voice when her father told her about his decision to get her married to the rich old man. She summoned her courage and said that her father is selling her: "My father could not bear it; his winds of anger blew; he started beating me brutally, and I was begging my mother, but she did not show a touch of motherhood. My father closed his fingers on my lips, rubbed them in such a way that reached the nerves of my soul and puffed his threat: I will cut them if you do not keep silent from now till your wedding day".³⁵

During the first night Old Man's palace, he puts Nadia in the prison of silence. He said to her: "From now on, you should be used to silence"³⁶. He used to order her to take off her wedding costume and bring the black slave to have sexual intercourse with her so that he would continue his job after him:

"She was surprised by a black slave as big as a giant approaching her bed... he started undressing me..., and surprised me with the burning fire skewer... the old man pressed my face with his arm, I felt that I was choking and dying and the voice of the slave was leaking to me: Please uncle... My eyes hunted the slave bend to his master after he had prepared the meal for him. The Old Man approached ... I raised my back to fly from the bed, but he, because of my extreme weakness, managed to besiege me,...and started

³⁴ Ibid., p. 145-148

³⁵ al-'Uthmān, 2008, p. 17-18.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

confusingly preying on his meal", and when she started crying he started shouting at her: "keep silent... from this night onwards, swallow your voice and tears".³⁷

After the death of the Old Man, and after Nadia achieves some of her dreams in her academic studies and starts practicing the profession of teaching, she returns to be imprisoned in the prison of 'silence'. That occurred when her medical doctor told her that she had to keep silent for two weeks after she had undergone a surgical operation. Despite her panic, she realized that she had practiced another type of 'silence' inside the Old Man's palace: "Both types of silence are hard and bitter... that type of silence that stole the best years of my life before it bequeathed me any money, and this type that will steal two weeks to bequeath me health and well-being".³⁸ Silence reaches its highest degree of oppression and turns to be her jailor again: "I feel that I am a prisoner for a number of jailors: silence and pain and dumbness... I feel oppression".³⁹ She finds herself imprisoned in a cage of silence and its iniquitous bars.

In my opinion, the writer symbolizes by this type of silence the condition of the woman and the creative writer under the authority of the patriarchal male societies, in which the woman is oppressed, dumbed, veiled, marginalized, and without freedom of speech to express her desires and thoughts. 'Silence' is a symbol and an objective correlative for robbery of the woman's freedom and confiscation of her identity and existence.

Marriage of Pleasure – a Prison of another Kind

The image of the *opportunist man* is revealed in the character of Dr. Jawad, who reflects the fake 'educated man', who claims to be one thing and does the opposite. He was a mean and a coward person, who exploited Nadia's injury and tried to fulfil his interest at her expense through gaining a sexual pleasure and nothing else. Nadia's major tragedy took place when he suggested that they get married secretly: "The mean person wants to come to me secretly to breathe his freedom and satisfy his desire as if I were a concubine".⁴⁰ He wanted to satisfy his desire and imprison her by that relationship, without taking into consideration her feelings, justifying that by saying: "It is a period that we define, but it does not obligate us to declare it publicly... a marriage of convenience/ *Nikah mut'ah*"⁴¹. Her tragedy intensifies by that type of marriage for pleasure, according to the Shiite doctrine, which contradicts her family's Sunni doctrine, means a marriage for a limited period, whose aim is only a satisfaction of the couple's 'physical pleasure'. Nadia considers this type of marriage a coward and humiliating one, despite her realization that, according to the concepts and values of her society, she is a 'widow', who was occupied by a certain man, who picked her virginity. No one will think about marrying her except a widower or a married man like Jawad out of desire in a second marriage and just for satisfying his sexual pleasure.

Thus, she becomes the widow who is considered in her Arab society, as she was described, 'second hand' and not a 'bint byoot/ a firsthand' virgin girl. Besides, the more horrific

³⁷ Ibid., p. 20-22.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 154.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 154.

oppression in this marriage in her opinion, "will not give me a feeling of my value as a woman who deserves to have a husband, who can boast of her in front of people, and she can go out with him.. Besides, he will not achieve for me the project of motherhood that every woman dreams about. Since it is secret and temporary, it means that the man will not accept a baby who will point at him and expose him".⁴² His deception is revealed to her when she knows that he has had relations with a number of women when he was dating with her.

Family Oppression

Even the Mother becomes a jailor in her stereotypical character, who is antagonistic to her daughter's freedom. She was a symbol of norms and legacies, and thus, she played the role of a 'jailor'. She cooperated with her husband into force Nadia to marry the old man, Nayef, dreaming to inherit his palace and money:⁴³ The Mother also participated with him in prohibiting Nadia from getting her independence and living alone. She observed her movements after the death of the Old Man. When Nadia loved Jawad, she imprisoned her with her eyes, which kept observing her: "My mother did not have mercy on me...while she was observing me:" You are a widow... your burden is larger than the burden of a daughter".⁴⁴ She kept insisting on her marriage, unsatisfied with love without it. Nadia realized that she, "in her mother's view, and the view of the cruel society, is merely a young widow who is exposed to suspicions and gossip"⁴⁵.

Her mother besieges her as a cruel watchwoman. She looks through her face at the moments of her joy, silence, anger, and her going out frequently. She captivates her by a wild social observation and control. In her scrutiny, she looked-like "a spider's eye that surrounded her with its threads and strangled her; her justification was "people's talk". "Remember that people have eyes that do not sleep and tongues that do not have mercy"⁴⁶, though she was the mother who stood against her daughter's love and marriage to Atiya. Her mother's look at Atiya represented the superiority look of the Kuwaiti society to the class of black slaves, who discriminate between people on standards of class discrepancy. Though the Old Man emancipated him from his slavery, and granted him a large amount of money, and then, Nadia encouraged him to learn and thus, emancipated him from his illiteracy and his job as a watchman and granted him a job at her office, her mother did not hide her resentment and refusal to him, insisting that he will continue to be a slave; she incited her son Faisal to beat Nadia and forced her to withdraw from her decision.

Nadia realizes that the traditions and customs are the tools that oppress love and imprison it in the crucible of the 'prohibited': "They hide behind traditions and customs that they suck from the breasts of underdeveloped societies and feed their milk to the minds of generations that inherit them out of ignorance and fear".⁴⁷

⁴² Ibid., p. 160.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 50.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 123.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 124.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 263.

Ghada in the novel *Lam 'A'ud 'Abkī* is not in a better condition than Nadia in *Šamt al-Farāshāt* with regard to the Mother's fear, which turns into a jailor. Ghada suffered from chains of invisible bars with which her mother surrounded her when her femininity started exploding at the age of thirteen, and all those who were around her started talking about her beauty. Her mother's fear about her started to escalate, and she started asking her to give accounts about her behavior. She started forbidding her to go out to the garden on her own or talk to Zayd without putting a shawl on her head: "I felt then as if I were in a solitary confinement, and something beautiful in my life was cut off from me".⁴⁸

Ghada lived crying about her childhood love to Zayd, and then she cried again about her love to Talal al-Sa'di and their relationship that continued for four years. Ghada became thirty years old but she was pushed again behind invisible bars like an oppressed prisoner, who is robbed of her will. "Ghada paid a lot of prices throughout her life; she paid for the innocence of her childhood; she paid for her loyalty to two men, whom she loved strongly but they betrayed her and turned their backs to her; she paid for her rebellion when she decided to assert herself and find a place for herself in the world of journalism in order to defend her rights as a human being within a strict society with its traditions and norms"⁴⁹

However, Faisal, Nadia's brother in *Šamt al-Farāshāt*, is an uncertain, volatile, and moody in his attitudes towards his sister's freedom. He represents the double-faced man who is governed by inherited attitudes that give more weight to his decisions. For example, in his attitude towards Jawad's relationship with his sister, Nadia, he warns her of him in an extremely reasonable and civilized way, but in his attitude about the slave Atiya, he robs her of her right to choose her partner in a completely opposite way. He behaves with his sister as if he were her jailor. He deprives her of achieving her desire in marrying Atiya, and thus, he robs her of her right to choose the husband she wants in the name of norms and traditions. When he discovers that she loves Atiya and wants to marry him, he attacks her, "He subdued her face, her chest, and her shuddering limbs to the hits of his lashes"⁵⁰. Faisal objects to this relationship for class reasons; Atiya is nothing but a black slave who is inappropriate for her according to the norms of his society. Her decision to marry him was a stunning decision; her brother Faisal beat her severely: "The pain of the slaps was so severe that it could silence the roar of challenge inside me"⁵¹. She realizes that her society will overcome and it "will direct at her its cannons and put up the gallows for her"⁵² in the center of a city that does not forgive" if this marriage takes place.

Here, the authority of norms overcomes Faisal's objectivity and reveals the brutality of authoritative male culture that feeds on the dominance of social legacies, which confirms his double standards and his contradictory personality.

My view regarding Faisal's attitude is this: if Nadia was not the money-owner and economic authority from which Faisal himself also gains, he would not keep silent about Nadia's relationship with Jawad or claimed that he is civilized and sophisticated. However,

⁴⁸ Hifnī ,2016, p. 25.

⁴⁹ Ibid, Back cover page.

⁵⁰ al-'Uthmān,2008, p. 254.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 254-255.

⁵² Ibid., p. 266.

in his attitude towards Atiya, the authority of norms and social legacies were stronger than money and authority, and thus, they revealed his fakeness.

The Social Observer and the Prison of Norms and Legacies

Nadia insisted on finishing the years of her oppression, shake her memory, and prepare herself for her coming dreams: Joining the university, going to work, living alone in a small apartment that looks onto the warmth of the sea⁵³, but, despite her insistence on achieving these dreams, her family stood against her desire to be independent in an apartment on the seashore. Her inability to achieve her victory that is dwelled by her yearning for freedom is reflected in her parents' refusal and the power of social norms. Besides, she was hesitant regarding her independence, which is new to her, and was afraid of the experience of freedom that she was not used to, and lack of experience in life after her marriage to a suppressive husband, who snatched her confidence from her, shook her entity, and stole some years from her youth. She wonders: "Am I really able to continue alone in the complex roads? How will I face the life that I kept away from, and from the people who I have no idea about their behavior, thoughts, and intentions towards a woman of my position".⁵⁴ She was full of fear and anxiety from the unknown, realizing that no matter how much she rebels, she will remain tied to the reality that will not ease her rebellion for her, and will not let break its frustrating laws that besiege her, and achieve freedom for her, from her society's prison.

Nadia realized that society is heavy on her with its weight and shackles. The solution that her father suggests to her emphasizes her inexperience and unpreparedness to face the world by herself, without her parents' guardianship, and buy an apartment that looks onto the seashore, where all of them can live: "In this way, you will protect yourself from the evil of tongues and protect us from our fear about you"⁵⁵. This is the tax that the woman who seeks to get her independence and freedom pays. Consequently, her close relatives destroy her by their fear of 'norms' and 'society,' and their emphasis that she is a minor.

When Nadia realizes that she loves Atiya, the slave who raped her and tortured her, she stands against her family, who refuses this relationship, knowing that this challenge will not work in her society. Besides, she is surprised that Atiya decided to withdraw. She tries to make him change his decision, as if she was attaching to her right to be in love; she besieges him by her arms and falls with him on her bed: "And with all my temptation I tried to draw him to the gate that he raped at the Old Man's palace so that he might plant from him in my womb to be the *fait accompli* that we face my frozen parents, who will surrender".⁵⁶

Nadia thought that if she succeeds in breaking this taboo, she will succeed in freeing her wings towards her freedom, but she did not succeed this time, either. Atiya continued keeping away and this secret puzzled her. Atiya admits to her of his impotence each time he approaches her as a result of that night in which he had a sexual intercourse with her,

⁵³ Ibid., p. 100.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 102.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 282.

when he prepared her for the Old Man. The winner in this confrontation was the social taboo and the rooted norms for long generations. If Nadia achieved her victory in several issues, her marriage to Atiya crossed all borders for her parents and the norms of their society. It was a red line and they refused it categorically, without bargaining. She realized that "A lord is a lord, and a slave is a slave"⁵⁷.

As we see, Nadia did not manage to break the social taboo, and the social traditions and norms broke her wings, the wings of love and freedom. Consequently, she is imprisoned in sad silence and licks the sufferings of her marginalized soul, realizing that she is nothing but a captivated woman, and her battle against the social censor and his taboos is a losing battle. She whispers: "I envy you a lot despite everything that I suffer from; you are now the free master who takes decision with the courage of knights, but I, the weak slave, lurk in my captivity, and wait for someone to give me the certificate of my emancipation"⁵⁸.

Thus, the novel ends and she is still emphasizing the female's loss and the victory of norms in a male society that confiscates her rights and her yearning for freedom. The novel confirms that even if the man is a slave, he can be freed and can soon become the master of himself and regain his freedom, because he lives in a patriarchal male society that will support him in that. However, even if the woman is of a high status in her society, she will remain in the eyes of her society and its rules nothing but a weak slave, who is a minor who lacks mind and ability. In this kind of society, the woman will continue to live in captivity. It is her prison and jailor, and the man in it is her executioner. No matter how much her character develops, progresses, and becomes independent, she will wait for her certificate of emancipation from the man. Thus, Atiya gives Nadia up and moves, and the novel ends with her feeling that she is the slave who will wait for someone to liberate her.

On the other hand, it was possible for Nadia to continue her insistence on challenging and marrying Atiya in case he managed to plant his seeds in her womb, but he was unable and surrendered, which means that inability to achieve this goal does not indicate Nadia's full submission to the social norms, but is related to Atiya, the man, too.

Zaynab Ḥifnī, however, and though her novel ends with Ghada's insisting declaration that she will not cry, was unable to persuade her lover, Talal, to stay. He let her down and turned his back to her. In this respect, Atiya resembles Talal al-Sa'di in the novel *Lam 'A'ud 'Abkī*, where Nadia failed to persuade Atiya to stay and stick to her as Ghada failed to persuade Talal to stay. Consequently, the two men abandoned their sweethearts, leaving them to be defeated by the tool of repression and norms.

Though the woman shows strong will, determination, and success in achieving a lot of her dreams, she sometimes fails due to hindering circumstances. As a result, she breaks up and suffers from the bitterness of loss and alienation. Her suffering in the journey of yearning for freedom and liberation intensifies in the shadow of imposing a culture of

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 266.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 286.

silence on her. No wonder, because society still robs her of her freedom like someone who steals the bread of a hungry one.

Sexual Assault and Incest

Sexual aggression and 'incest' for the woman in the oriental society that sees her chastity as the most precious possession, is the most horrific type of oppression. This is what is revealed in the story of raping Aisha, who is one of Nadia's students, by her brother, who robbed her of her honor and then forced her to wear a veil (hijab), which forced her to give in and pushed her to commit suicide for fear of a scandal.

However, in her novel *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī*, the writer Zaynab Ḥifnī deals with the issue of *oppression of the Saudi writer* through the story of Ghada, who lived under her parents' care after her father divorced her. The Yemenite young man, Zayd, exploits her innocence. He was working as a servant at her house. Ghada was only eight years old and she did not understand the meaning of "that game", which Zayd played with her, during which he untied the shackles of his virility. She gave in to his foreplay with the ecstasy of an innocent girl. She did not realize that Zayd violated her innocence by his boiling youth⁵⁹ in such a way that made her fall in love with him. She gave in to him and realized that she is not a virgin anymore⁶⁰, and Zayd suddenly disappears from her life.

3.7 Suppression of Freedom of Work and Creative Intellectual Freedom

After she gets her secondary school certificate, Ghada faces her father's oppression. He prevents her from fulfilling her dream by travelling abroad to study Media and Journalism. She unwillingly submits to his orders and joins the Faculty of Humanity- Department of Librarianship. After she graduates, she gets a job at a certain school, but she faces another type of oppression: censorship of books within the school. Department of the General Presidency of Girls' Education issues daily general orders that cancel the use of certain books from the lists of the library. As a result, a large number of books were forbidden at school under the argument that their contents might negatively influence the female students. Ghada submits to the rules of confiscation and prohibition silently".⁶¹

Four years later, she finds herself unable to continue. The idea of studying Journalism insists on her but, again, her father refuses to let her study, and swears that he will not help her in any issue after that day⁶². Her friend Nashwa warns her and reminds her of the social and religious taboos against the woman: "I did not hear about a Saudi journalist who became a celebrity. You live in a country that is hand-cuffed by a lot of social shackles, which will certainly hinder your ambitions. Don't forget that your society is full of masculinity".⁶³ When she goes to meet the Head of the Newspaper Section, she faces another obstacle: A Request of Acceptance from her father. Ghada tries to refuse this request justifying by arguing that this decision belongs to her, but the Head of the Newspaper Section reminds her sharply that she lives in a conservative society. Because of this reality that is full of masculinity and robbery of the woman's free decision to choose

⁵⁹ Ḥifnī, 2016, p. 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 27.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 41-42.

⁶² Ibid., p. 43.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 44.

her job, Ghada has no choice but to face her father, and she succeeds this time, despite his insisting attempts to refuse.

Zaynab Ḥifnī also deals with the issue of *oppressing the educated man* and prohibiting him from practicing writing. The authorities confiscate his books and then imprison him for practicing debauchery, for his cynicism and for his underestimation of Islamic teachings, and writing about a sacred taboos, which people are not allowed to deal with regarding "women's rights" .⁶⁴ Ghada also clashes in her work with the brakes that the Arab writer in general faces, discovering that "not everything that is known is talked about" in the Arab world, and that there are red lines that are hard to jump over"⁶⁵.

Ḥifni exposes the issue of the *cruelty of the religious censorship* that follows the male and female creators in the Saudi society and other Arab societies, which mix with the censorship of the popular legacy and norms. Thus, religion and norms mix with each other and traditions dominate the religious legislation. Ḥifnī "dealt with the most important issues that she lived in the Gulf society such as: man's and woman's freedom, freedom of thought and creativity, freedom of society from its mighty shackles: customs, traditions and norms. Thus, the writer rises from the single personal case to the phenomenon that men writers and women writers live in those societies".⁶⁶

Ṣamt al-Farāshāt also refers the issue of *harassment, abuse of the woman writer*, oppression of unjust social observation, censorship, and judging her creativity on grounds of prejudiced attitudes rather than reading her works. Probably, Laylā al-'Uthmān refers to her harassment and prosecution as a daring writer, who nearly entered prison because of those unfair and unjust rulings⁶⁷. By this metafiction (meta-realms), she seems to be defending herself against preconceived ideas that accused her of debauchery and indecent behavior or exposure.

The Imprisoned Woman: Yearning for Freedom

The novel of *Ṣamt al-Farāshāt* introduces the prison and the jailor in their metaphorical meaning. The suffering that Nadia was exposed to inside the palace/ prison, and her torture by the slave by order of the Old Man makes the reader wonder at the nature of this prison and its reality. It is a mental and moral invisible prison whose impact is not less horrible than the real prison with its iron bars and thick walls. It can be destructive to the woman's soul and frustrating to her determination. Nadia was insulted, her freedom and humanity were robbed, she was imprisoned, beaten, and tortured as if she were in a real prison, except that the jailor did not wear official uniform while doing his job. Since the first night, the journey of the prison and silence started, when she was welcomed with the "torturing party", as a prisoner in a real prison who is received in the investigation room

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 114.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 88.

⁶⁶ Mu'tassem, Moḥammad (2007). *Bina' al-Ḥikaya wa al-Shakhssiya fi al-Khitab al-Riwa'i al-Nisa'i al-'Arabi*. al-Ribat: Dar al-Aman li al-Tiba'a wa al-Nahsr wa al-Tawzi', p. 167-169.

⁶⁷ See her biography in: al-'Uthmān, Laylā (2000). *al-Muhakama – Maqta' min Sirat al-Waqi'*. Damascus: Dar al-Mada li al-Thaqafa wa al-Nashr

with all kinds of torturing and threatens. Her torturing continued during the first days and nights, and her soul and body were pressured with pains.

After the scenes of torture and humiliation, the reader does not find any difference between Nadia's suffering as a prisoner from a suffering of a prisoner who is tortured behind its bars. This oppression and confiscation of freedom at home, and then the suppression and physical and spiritual torture at the palace, were not different in essence from the suppression of the authorities and their confiscation of her freedom at the prison. The Father at home and the Old Man/husband at the palace are symbols of authority. The Old Man was the ruling lord, and his slave was the executioner, who raped her in order to prepare the way for him to whip her if she dares to object or to ask for something that her lord does not agree to do. The slave was ordered to observe all her movements when the Old Man left the palace for fear that she might try to escape.

Atiya used to prepare daily reports for him, playing the role of a real jailor. Then, isn't this 'palace' a real prison that robs Nadia of her freedom for four years? Isn't the real prison a place whose indication is associated with loss of freedom and its absence? Isn't it a tool to disrupt one's movement and robbery of her freedom? Isn't the 'palace' here a prison? Actually, the 'palace' and the 'prison' do not differ except in their names! Thus, after all this, Nadia is nothing but a prisoner in a prison!

The image of this place is not separated from the psychological condition that Nadia feels and lives, and its relationship with it is the same. No wonder then that her home and palace become like a prison through their suppression to her. Her conception of them is given through her psychological excitements and her emotional awareness of them. Due to the culture of silence and suppression that were imposed on her, it was impossible for her to feel that the palace was a warm intimate home that is connected to the value of familiarity or attachment or protection, according to Bachelard's conception. If the woman is the one who is most suppressed, and whose movements are most narrowed in her society/ place, then she must be the one who feels most alienated in that place, which turns, by the severity of its suppression and the thickness of its walls, into a prison with invisible bars that continue to captivate her; a prison/a hostile repulsive, unmotherly, and unfriendly or familiar place, where she turns into an imprisoned disempowered captive, which makes her relationship with it a relation of alienation and refusal. Alienation in a certain place inevitably means alienation from the self and loss of identity. Thus, this place becomes 'threatening' because it interferes in the integration of the personal identity and its confusion"⁶⁸. That is how the woman necessarily feels about the robbery of her freedom and entity.

In this case, the more intense the suppression is, and the thicker the walls of the prison are, the more intense the yearning of the imprisoned woman for her freedom is. In the prison/ palace the light of freedom was concealed from her, and consequently, she was full of yearning for it. She was imprisoned inside it, but she was not aware of what was

⁶⁸ Jaber-Qassoum, Kawther (2019). *Al-Tashkilat al-Makaniya fi al-Riwaya al-Falstiniya*. Haifa: Dar al-Raya li al-Nashr, p. 37.

happening outside its walls: "Three years and nine months, my eyes did not see a street, buildings, or names, except those that I see through the palace window"⁶⁹. She reveals her yearning for freedom in the shadow of her suffering as a prisoner who is pouring out her sufferings and dreaming through escape⁷⁰.

Nadia often dreamt about her freedom and yearned for it when she was a prisoner at the palace: "There was a wish in my bosom, 'I wish someone could bring me feathers of a bird that cover my skin and make me fly!'"⁷¹ She yearns for a breath of freedom that can purify her; for wings that make her escape through the bars; she finds nothing except dreams that help her fly by imagination that is able to offer her hope and some of her robbed freedom. Nadia lived in the palace lonely, and with a very heavy heart, like a broken-winged bird that cannot get out of its cage: "I am a hostage of the darkness of days and nights; swimming in the orbits of my wandering dream that pushes me to invent a way to escape, to dig me up from this grave".⁷²

Four years later, Nadia succeeds in escaping from the palace, but she was afraid of having forgotten the location of her home and the road that leads to it. It is the cruelty of marginalizing one's memory and excluding it into a palace of an old man who grabbed her from her home with her memory to become 'an object' that he owns and enjoys. It looks as if he sentenced her for four years in prison with torture, alienation, exclusion, and marginalization, exactly like a prisoner in a real prison. All the terms of the world of prisons are available here: The jailor, the tool of torture, loneliness, horror, isolation, exclusion, prevention of visits and observation, including her feeling that she was in a cage like a bird whose movements are always observed, and her feeling that she was in a 'grave' and needed someone to take her out of it.

However, the irony is that we are talking about a palace and not a prison, and a prisoner who, when he gets out of the prison, he will try to shake off the memories of the prison, and get rid of a defeated memory.

The Rebellious Revolutionary Woman

No doubt that the woman's yearning for freedom is no more in the frame of 'yearning' only, but it went beyond that to the rebellious and revolutionary action against all the shackles and walls in a lot of issues. Despite all that was said above about repressive obstacles that suppress the woman's attempts in her search of freedom and victory on male taboos, we noticed that she rebelled against her jailor, the man, refusing her subordination and dependence on him, and seeking to achieve her desires as evidence to her female identity, and she succeeds in a lot of these attempts. The reader finds himself in front of women that cannot be described at all as submissive, weak, and scared ones, but they are bold daring women who defy men in order to assert themselves and regain their robbed freedom, despite the red lines that they face and their occasional failure.

⁶⁹ al -'Uthmān, 2008, p. 66.

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 27-28.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 51.

⁷² Ibid., p. 27-28.

One of the most prominent features that strengthens the female's rebellion and helps her to achieve her identity is the characters of women who enjoy high education. The character of the woman is likely to have opinions and thoughts, whose consciousness identifies with the consciousness of the imagined character and her education⁷³.

For example, Ghada's character in the novel of *Lam 'A'ud 'Abkī* appears as an academic educated woman, and an avid reader who is obsessed with reading since her adolescence. She has read a great deal of Arabic and international literature, which strengthens her consciousness and education and openness of her thoughts and recognition of her rights. The features of 'rebellion' started to appear in her childhood through a lot of questions and wonderings that she posed. When she grew up, she refused to be dependent on the man at the expense of her education and dreams and refused to get married. Whenever she refused a groom, her mother would talk to her individually in her room and cry, while her father would shout and threaten that he would force her to get married ultimately".⁷⁴ Ghada believed that one of the human rights, especially for the woman, was her freedom to 'love'. She was not afraid that the passage of years would rob her of her age, though she was already thirty years old. Her main interest was 'looking for love' and then getting married out of 'love'. She was a woman who was aware of the rights of the woman.

Ghada criticized the violation of the relationships between the woman and the man in the Arab societies, who deny the woman's rights and strengthen the wrong education that the male receives at home since his childhood. That home education magnifies the Ego (I) in him, raises his selfishness in his depths, and urges the female to give up her rights in order to please him, even if that is done through injustice to her natural right in life. This situation contributed to the corruption of the man's beliefs through pushing the woman to deny herself as if she is not a human creature who has feelings and limited energy to bear. Consequently, her rights were robbed in her presence and she kept silent because of her fear to be accused of rebellion and mutiny".⁷⁵ Some of the evidence to the source of Ghada's feminist and rebellious education is what she mentions about her readings of feminist writers, who left their influence on her like the British writer Virginia Wolf".⁷⁶

Ghada's features started to appear in her childhood when she was leaving at midnight to meet Zayd and pour out her suppressed yearnings. When she discovered that she is no more a virgin at the age of fourteen, she did not feel any fear or guilt⁷⁷. Her rebellion was also revealed when she refused to submit to her father's desire for the second time when she insisted on working in journalism, to which she was motivated by her own desire only. When her friend warned her of the masculinity of the Saudi society, and its unacceptance to have a female journalist, Ghada emphasized to her that "it is time to destroy these shackles and not to submit to them; it is true that the woman is tamed in the Saudi society as a result of the traditions and customs that people inherited but the woman should not

⁷³ Saffouri, Moḥammad (2017). *Scheherazade Regains her Voice*. Nazareth: The Arabic Language Academy, p. 148-14

⁷⁴ Ḥifnī ,2016, p. 43.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 59-60.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 58-59.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 27.

surrender to them, as it is time to rebel against them". Then she emphasizes: "I am able to face the whole world in order to achieve my dream. I will prove that the woman is able to take a foothold in this wild road, as long as she possesses administration, resolution and determination".⁷⁸ In this way, Ghada progresses in her yearning for freedom from speech to actual performance. She enters the world of journalism and asserts herself and her success in it despite the frustrating obstacles.

Ghada represents the open-minded independent woman who believes in herself and refuses to surrender to any authority, even if it is her father's authority. She is the educated woman, who believes in the pen as a weapon, and she seeks through her journalistic work to reveal corruption and face the burning issues that beset her homeland. When she sometimes thought about resignation, "as a result of the pressures that she was exposed to, she withdrew believing that the human being has to fight in order to preserve the things that he likes, the principles that he believes in, and ambitions that he wants to achieve, and thus, she becomes stiffer and harder in defying her reality despite the cracks that occurred to its walls".⁷⁹

Resistance of Oppression and Refusal of Silence

In *Šamt al-Farāshāt*, Nadia resisted the Old Man in every night he took over her body: "I have never given him my body except like a piece of ice and stone".⁸⁰ She intended to choose this weapon hoping she can probably regain some of her humiliated dignity. She was taking revenge for her dignity each time he ordered her condescendingly to look at the jewels in order to make her feel that he was giving her charity, but she never cared, which made him angry and made her happy at his anger: "I insult him and take revenge for my dignity when I make him feel that all the money of the world does not excite me or enters any joy into my life"⁸¹.

Probably, the most prominent example of rebellion that she conducted was her escape from the palace after four years of imprisonment, and then her confrontation with her father when he forced her to return to him. She shouted: "I will not keep silent anymore... the silence that I kept is enough",⁸² and thus she regained her freedom. After his sudden death, she decided with determination: "Now it is my turn to raise my dreams in the form I want; the time of silence and submission has gone".⁸³ Nadia realizes that 'silence' is death for the woman in the man's cemetery. Therefore, she prepares herself by refusing silence after today. She wanted to liberate herself from the rottenness of the palace, and society's bars. Therefore, she decided to continue her academic studies, from which her father deprived her, and also for her financial independence and work. When her mother rejects the idea of going to work because she has a lot of money, Nadia replies: "The money that humiliated me will not make me happy; I want to get it from my effort and my hard-earned work"⁸⁴ She won a great victory over her parents: "The loud voice with which I faced my

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 44-45.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

⁸⁰ al-'Uthman ,2008, p. 58.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 61.

⁸² Ibid., p. 77.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 96.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 101-102.

mother and father made them yield to my decision; at that moment, I felt as if I pushed all the closed doors, and two strong wings grew and started inciting me to fly towards a new life"⁸⁵

Nadia's parents gave in to her desire to continue her studies and go to work, but they refuse categorically that she lives alone in an apartment. They refused for fear of their society's rules, and people's gossip because she is a woman and a young widow, too. Nadia tries to face them, and by the money that she inherited, she felt that she was stronger. It is true that the result was not as insisting as her words implied, and she had to give up the idea of living alone because she realized the wisdom of her parents' suggestion on the one hand, and her fear of this new step, on the other. However, we cannot ignore this revolution and audacity in confronting her parents in comparison with the stage that preceded her marriage. In my opinion, if she was more mature and more skilled in life, and was not hesitant and afraid, especially after four years of 'imprisonment' and exclusion from life, she would keep silent to the end because she had the power of money. In the end, she agreed to what her father suggested: to buy a house on the seashore. After she returned, she said: "I became sure how poor I was in my experience, and hasty in my decision"⁸⁶ Even in love and in her relationship with Jawad, Nadia is exposed to suffering which is not less than in her imprisonment in the palace, but she overcomes it. Nadia is burnt and suffers from her agony when she becomes sure that her relationship was only a transient tendency or a doll that Jawad wished to play with and soon to throw it, but she also appears as a strict wise woman who is aware of Jawad's selfishness. Despite her love anguish, she gives more weight to her mind, realizing that if she gives weight more to her heart, she will lose her pride and dignity, and thus Jawad overcomes. In the beginning, she refuses to go to the university so that she will not meet him, but she retreats and decides to continue her studies till she graduates, insisting not to surrender to the failure of love. That is how Nadia represents the character of the strong woman, who succeeds in passing the crisis. It seems that she sees in her graduation a proof to her femininity and a challenge to Jawad's selfish masculinity that deceived her: "to prove to him that I am brave, and love does not break me and a man's villainy does not destroy me. Little by little, I was exonerated from him. The day she graduated with distinction, she felt that she overcame him, and took revenge for her dignity. Nadia continued her career till she got a job"⁸⁷.

Refusal of Traditional Marriage and Resistance by Writing

Ghada also represents the woman writer who does not retreat and does not allow anyone to rob her ambitions from her despite the pain that she is exposed to. Therefore, she stops crying when her lover Talal al- Sa' di leaves her when he decides to emigrate, saying: "No more tears after today"⁸⁸. So, if Talal surrendered and escaped cowardly abandoning his sweetheart and his homeland, she would not cry over his ruins. There is no way to cry for someone who decided to emigrate and be inactive. She has her authority over her heart, and she will extinguish the fire of yearning. "She will not be a photocopy to Nashwa", "She will not surrender like her", and will not burn her heart for a man. His abandonment

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 102.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 107.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 161-162.

⁸⁸ Hifni ,2016, p. 157.

to her does not mean that her life is finished. She insisted on continuing her life as life for her does not depend on a man or marriage.

If the marriage institute in the Arab society grants the man 'guardianship' on the woman, and he can confiscate her freedom, she, too, by marginalizing the importance of the existence of the man in her life, declares her refusal to that guardianship, and emphasizes that her life is not dependent on him. The woman does not accept submission to the husband anymore because he is no more her only shelter in her work and her financial independence, which helped her to be independent of the man, psychologically and socially" .⁸⁹

In this way, the writer insists on the image of the strong and stricter undefeated woman versus the image of the defeated man, who escapes even from his responsibility in love and homeland. This emphasis is given in order to emphasize the feminist thought that makes the woman dominate the whole text and moves the man to the margin.

Ghada finds in her work an alternative to the man, emphasizing that there are lots of issues that are waiting for her: "In front of me, there are large human issues that need unyielding defense".⁹⁰ These human issues that she can take care of can contribute to the improvement of the world. This is more important than waiting for a man or waiting for a charity of emotion from him or crying over his ruins. In this way, writing and work in journalism become a form of freedom and self-fulfillment. They are the real alternative to the man, and by them, the real life is formulated. So, it is the 'pen' which is the source that gives the woman the feeling of pleasure and the feeling that she is living her life. It is the ink that returns her value in existence or existence itself to her. Writing makes yearning for freedom real, and thus, yearning stops to be merely a dream or an illusion. Yearning turns here into a reality, a truth and existence.

Through writing, Ghada returns to her existence to be a free human being and an active contributor to building her society. It also emphasizes her rebellion against the man and her marginalization to the social norms, as one of the most prominent features of feministic narration. Those norms see the man as a 'protector' and a 'muḥram' and see that the woman needs a man to be a guardian to her and see her as 'nothing'. However, she rebels against her jailor, no matter what his type is, seeking confrontation and challenge by the weapon of her pen and freedom of opinion and speech. The pen is the 'voice', and the 'voice' is opposite to 'silence'.

Nadia did not refuse the idea of marriage for itself; she admitted that she did not like it because of her fear and the dirt with which the Old Man shackled her. Besides, the suspicion that Jawad left in her made her uncomfortable about anyone who proposed to marry her. She realized that in her society, and because she is 'secondhand', no man will marry her except a widower or a divorced man or a married man who is looking for 'a marriage for pleasure'. All of them "come with a heavy past that connects them with

⁸⁹ al-Sa'dawi, Nawal, 2017, 118.

⁹⁰ Hifni ,2016, p. 157.

children whose hearts are not empty of hatred to the stepmother"⁹¹. "Therefore, I did not like to get married or thinking about what people call 'a conjugal nest' and describe as 'a happy nest', while it is a nest that is built on 'a demon's palm'. However, after she lived the experience of love with Atiya, she started refusing marriage without love: "I want to love and marry the person I love"⁹². It is clear from what Nadia said before that she rejects the traditional love, which is called 'the conjugal nest', considering 'love' as one of her rights. By refusing the traditional marriage, Nadia's feminist thought and her rebellion against social norms are emphasized. She also refuses such norms as 'concealment' and 'protection' that claim that the woman is born to be 'concealed' under the 'guardianship' of a male authority.

Gaining Freedom by Financial Independence

In return, *Samt al-Farāshāt* ascertains the power that the woman gains her freedom by gaining her financial independence, and when she gets money: "The money is your money, and you are free with it". This is what her father always said to her. Would her father give her this freedom if she did not own this money? It seems that he felt her power versus his weakness, and that she outstrips him because he was poor and does not possess anything, and therefore, he started repeating: "She is free".⁹³ This is what her mother also said to her when Nadia told her that she would be given an apartment on the first floor in Atiya's building, and thus the mother surrendered: "Do what you want!". It is clear that the money that she inherited from the Old Man in return for her family's poverty gave her power to face them; without this inheritance, she would not succeed in withstanding the attempts to suppress her, especially because she is a young widow. When she realizes the source of this power, she insists on taking a lot of her decisions. Besides, her education and academic studies and her job increased her expertise and self-confidence, which increased her consciousness daring, which moved her tendency of challenge. She reminds her brother that the money is 'her' money and she is the master of her operations, and her decisions have to be performed whether he liked it or not. She charges all her insistence with her voice – her voice which her parents and brothers had robbed on several occasions – when she informed her father about her decision that she gave Atiya a private office and an apartment on the building after she sent him to learn at the campaign of eradication of illiteracy, where he got an elementary school certificate. The main thing that she was concerned about was to organize Atiya's circumstances in order to make him feel his human entity, and that he is no more that slave whom the Old Man forced to serve him; he is no more that employer; he became a member of the family. She wanted him to rise in his dresses, his work, his housing, his education, and in his full freedom and virility while he is accompanying her dreams⁹⁴.

Her love to Atiya and attachment to him was motivated by her rebellion and revolution against reality. They can also be a kind of revenge on her parents, who forced her to marry the Old Man. He is her tool to break the standards of her society, through her revolution against its norms and taboos, which discriminate between people and distribute them

⁹¹ al-'Uthman ,2008, p. 242.

⁹² Ibid., p. 242

⁹³ Ibid., p. 229.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 228.

according to class differences, and emphasize that love does not distinguish between a rich man and a poor man, or between a lord and a slave, and love is a right for everyone.

The Right to Love and Breakage of the Sex Taboo

Sexual rebellion constitutes another feature of the female's rebellion. Through it, she declares her riddance of the complex of the 'body and haram' that the man and his society coined. If the man is the protector of the dominating sex taboo, and if the jailor is a man, the female will inevitably rebel against this taboo, resembles Ghada's loss of her virginity when she was fourteen years old, without feeling guilty, and then her relationship with Talal al-Sa'di and resembles Nadia's rebellion and her relationship with Atiya and then her request from him to sow his seed in her womb, in order to put her parents under the *de facto*, and force them to accept it. This implies that the female no more fears having a sexual relationship outside the marriage frame, as the body is hers, and she has more right over it and has freedom to deal with it as she likes, which reflects her victory on her jailor, her parents, her society and its norms.

On the other hand, this novel is not void of employment of 'sex' and its description. In the sexual description, we notice the writer's rebellion against herself and the male literary norms. Nadia says, for example, when she stands nude opposite her mirror looking at her body: "Ah for this body that is made of silver and light. Its skin has not wrinkled or grown saggy; its white color has not lost its smoothness and radiance; it beats like a heart, it is delicious like summer's fruit; I looked at my two patient lips that have not been touched even by Jawad whom I loved; no one has tasted them except that Old Man who does not deserve them, and who has not succeeded in coaxing them so that they surrender to the attack of his loose lips. I looked at my rising chest, which was first picked by his dry palms that did not move anything in it. I descended towards my lower half which was flowing towards the entrance gate into which Atiya's burning snake infiltrated, and then the Old Man's snake, which is more like a withered cucumber. I knew happily that I had a body that is still tender and needs and rages and has the right to look for a means to water it with salt and dew"⁹⁵ al-'Uthman did not hesitate to celebrate sex that constituted in her writings a revolutionary motif despite the sufferings that she has been exposed to when she was accused that she is a type of lecher writer who calls for indecency and vice in the nineties of the 20th century, namely, before the publication of this novel. She nearly entered the prison for that⁹⁶.

It is clear that in these two novels, the woman looks for 'love', which is forbidden according to the social norms, and which was stolen from her in the past as her voice was stolen and silence was imposed on her. Therefore, the woman sees that love is her basic right that she looked for and rebelled for. She sees it as an important pillar that grants her feeling that she is a 'self and a human being that has feelings, and it is the thing that gives her a value, an identity and existence. It is a kind of regaining existence, as long as her society had robbed her of her right to exist. It is her hope in the continuity of life. When

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 210.

⁹⁶ About this issue, see her biography in: al-'Uthmān, Laylā (2000). *al-Muhakama – Maqta' min Sirat al-Waqi'*. Damascus: Dar al-Mada li al-Thaqafa wa al-Nashr; 'Assfour, Jaber (2001). *Dhid al-Ta'assub. Al-Dar al-Baydha'*. al-Markaz al-Thaqafai, p. 280.

the woman falls in love, love turns into her homeland. Love, then, is the objective correlative for freedom and life. Sex among the women writers is connected to life. The woman did not look here for a physical relationship that is deprived of emotions for a temporary relationship, but she connects sex with love.

This is what we noticed in Nadia's behavior, who did not offer anything to Jawad, the opportunist selfish man, but gave her body to the loyal and faithful Atiya, as Ghada offered it innocently to Zayd, and consciously and passionately to Talal al- Sa'di, hoping to marry him. Nadia and Ghada are aware that love is one of the rights of the female, and through it she fulfils herself and proves her freedom. Ghada says: Love "makes us feel our existence and grants us the power to fight in the arenas of life"⁹⁷. Nadia, however, sees that "the beauty of freedom and life is not completed except by this bright light that removes rust from the soul and sterilizes it"⁹⁸. "Love that liberates the soul from its slavery liberates the bodies from their colors"⁹⁹. It is a right that the man stole a very long time ago, when he confiscated the woman herself and confiscated her voice by the culture of silence.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The two novels reflected the image of the woman 'prisoner' in the characters of "Nadia" in *Šamt al-Farāshāt* and "Ghada" in *Lam 'A'ud 'Abkī* and their yearning for freedom. Both of them were prisoners between the man's restrictions, the bars of legacies, and the walls of society, which seek to push her to the margin of life just as the man sought with his domination and selfishness to rob her of her rights and impose the culture of silence on her so that she remains submissive captive to him. Marriage was the most oppressive and robbing systems to the woman's entity and identity.

The two novels also highlight the family oppression, the social observer, and the woman's humiliation by the taboos of norms and legacies. In contrast, the two novels observed Nadia's and Ghada's revolutionary features and their rebellion against these figurative "prisons" such as: refusal of silence and traditional marriage versus insistence on marriage that is based on love, and breakage of the sex taboo when its motivation is 'love', besides the woman's right to choose her job and achieve her self-fulfillment and creative freedom. Ghada's and Nadia's yearning for freedom were not always crowned with victories. They failed to achieve some of their goals, and their jailors, the man and male society, were able to subjugate them. However, they managed to achieve a lot of their other desires. To progress more freely, the woman has to go beyond the obstacle of the man and his masculinity, and challenge him by arming herself with a strong educated, aware and free character. Hence, Nadia looked for her rights and freedom, and rebelled against the patriarchal authority and institution of marriage, in which she was exposed to all kinds of physical and psychological torture as if she were in a real prison. Nadia succeeded in escaping from a tyrannical husband, rebelling against her family's authority and the norms

⁹⁷ Hifnī, 2016, p. 123.

⁹⁸ al-'Uthman, 2008, p. 119.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 256.

of society, and started her journey towards achievement of her goals in a good job, in getting an academic degree, education, and financial independence.

On the other hand, Zaynab Ḥifnī emphasizes in *Lam 'A 'ud 'Abkī* that the woman, even if she failed to find a man who loves her faithfully, she insists on continuing her life without a man, putting him on the margin of her life, believing that the man does not deserve her tears, especially if he is a man who abandoned her. Writing and work become the real alternative to the man, and by them, the woman's real life is formulated, and she can yearn for real freedom and real existence

In view of the above, writing for the Gulf woman, more than other women writers, is a real objective correlative to self-fulfillment. By writing, she refers to her female wound, and reveals her yearning, and liberates herself from her chains. Writing for her is one of the forms of freedom. That is what Laylā al-'Uthmān and Zaynab Ḥifnī did in their two novels. They revealed their special yearning, and the yearning of the Gulf woman, and the Arab woman in general.

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