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## Literary Feminism in Sudan

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**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, the researcher discusses Literary feminism in Sudan. The historical method is used to investigate the features and characteristics of literary feminism. The topic of feminism in general and feminist literary theory in particular with its features and characteristics are discussed. The paper ends with the important feature and characteristics of modern literary feminism in Sudan one of which is that writing about very personal relations is clear in this period, on which the female writer bases her creativity to express her own experience, her knowledge of being different and free, and her fighting against the various injustice machines that try to control her body and mind.

**KEYWORDS:** Feminism, Sudanese feminism, literary feminism, literary movements

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism is a theory that discusses women's rights to have equality with men in politics, economic and social fields. It is a dialogue that includes several philosophies theories, and movements that are involved in the subject of gender variation to encourage equal opportunity for women and fight for women's claims and concerns (en.wikipedia.org). The history of feminism is divided into three movements. The 1<sup>st</sup> movement was in the 90<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the 2<sup>nd</sup> movement was in the 1960s and 1970s and the 3<sup>rd</sup> movement continues from the 1990s to the present-day (Krokke & Sorensen, 2005: 24). Feminist theory emerged from these feminist movements (Chdorow, 1989 & Gilligan, 1977 cited in en.wikipedia.org). It is apparent in a diversity of fields like feminism in geography, literary criticism, and history.

Feminism has transformed leading viewpoints in a broad selection of areas within society in the Western, extending from law to culture. Throughout much of the feminist movement's theories and history, it had leaders who were primarily white women of middle-class from North America and Western Europe (Walker, 1983; Collins; & Narayan, 1997 cited in en.wikipedia.org). But, from the time of Sojourner Truth's (1851) address to feminists of America, women of other nations have suggested other feminisms (Collins, 2000 cited in en.wikipedia.org). This tendency speeded up with the Civil Rights movement in the 1960s in the USA and the downfall of European colonization in parts of Southeast Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa. Ever since women in old colonies of European and the 3<sup>rd</sup> World have planned their versions which are known as "post-colonial" and "3<sup>rd</sup> World" feminisms (Narayan, 1997).

Ever since the 1980s, perspective activists have claimed that the women's movement should explore how females' feeling of unfairness correlates to that of classism, homophobia, colonization, and racism (Collins, 2000 & Harding, 2004 cited in en.wikipedia.org). In the 1980s and 1990s postmodern feminists claimed that gender roles are socially constructed and that it is not possible to oversimplify women's experiences across histories and cultures (en.wikipedia.org).

### II. SUDANESE FEMINIST SCHOOLS

The feminist movement of the world as we know it, in theory, began in the West. It reflected the reality and problems of women in the West. The first schools in the literature of feminism are liberal feminism, Marxism, and socialism. We have found in Sudan some shadows of these kinds of ideas and not all of them. (Mahmoud, 2008: 104.) Mahmoud (2008:105) claims that the women's movement in Sudan passes through various phases, within each stage, there were several directions, and this is what distinguishes the feminist movement performance. She classified women's movements in Sudan into several schools and proposed additional schools from a Sudanese perspective, as follows:

- National Liberation Feminism.
- The Post-colonial Feminism.

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- Globalization and Post-globalization Feminism.

### III. FEMINIST LITERARY THEORY:

This theory is a complicated, active area of study that derives from a large range of significant theories, like anthropology, structuralism, psychoanalysis, cultural materialism, and Marxism.

Even though feminist literary philosophy is regularly described merely as the use of feminist techniques and beliefs to examine the textual structures of general meaning, feminists' explanations of gender and feminism have experienced several significant changes since the early 1970s. By implementing the existing feminist visions and using them in new practices, literary theorists convert them, thus creating an ever more varied field of study.

#### A. The Beliefs of Feminist Literary Theory

Even though the variety, many feminists literary theories share numerous hypotheses. Firstly, they commonly think that hierarchically ordered male-female gender relationships affect all parts of human social life, including obviously un-gendered types of thought, by creating a chain of binaries ... like presence/absence, active/passive, and universal/particular. In which "feminized" terms have a devalued place.

Since symbols of literature have real effects on the lives of people, these non-symmetrical male-female binaries both clarify and strengthen the repression of actual-live females.

This theory requires a double movement including both the critique of sociolinguistic forms and the creation of alternate types of writing and reading.

In its initial stages, this two-fold movement concentrated entirely on the gendered concerns of females; nevertheless, the enhanced involvement of color, connected with the growth in gender studies throughout the early 1980s, has increased feminism's subject of study significantly.

#### B. Phases of Feminist Literary Theory

In general, this theory can be divided into four phases that focus differently on gender-based literary concerns:

- i. An evaluation of depictions of females in the text that are written by males.
- ii. "Gyno-criticism," a phrase invented by Elaine Showalter (1979) that describes the growth of a distinctively female aesthetic and an alternate, women's literary tradition.
- iii. The analysis of the approach of all writings, together with those written by men, are marked by gender, which can be called 'gender studies,'.
- iv. Investigations of how class, racial, and sexual variations between women develop earlier types of gendered writing and reading. It is essential to realize that these phases are overlapping and connected; they represent trends often happening concurrently rather than in isolated sequential stages. Therefore, the rise up in the studies of gender throughout the early 1980s developed simultaneously with the respect and evaluation of the various class, ethnic, and sexual differences among women ([www.glbtc.com](http://www.glbtc.com), 2010:1).

### IV. SUDANESE LITERARY FEMINISM

It is clear that the huge development in the social and political history of Sudan affects the situation of women and gives her room to study the social, economic, and political features of this situation, besides it offers the possibility of studying women's creativity development (Bushra, 2004: 76).

The participation of a woman in the literary world and the defense of her freedom is a step in the way of her liberation, that is to say, the way of development in a masculine society, governed by paternalistic values (ibid: 76).

The first steps in the Sudanese female writings were mere romantic ideas, like those of Asma bint al-Shimalia, Safia al-Shiekh al-Ameen, Zainab al-Fatih al-Badawi ... etc. during this journey appeared a novelist star – that was- Malkat al-Dar Mohammed to whom the superiority of Sudanese women breaking – fearlessly- in the field of literature, she is one of the pioneer writer in literary feminism, who imposes her imprint in the literary works, on whose work the first features of literary feminism appears. This school was continued by Zeinab Belail and many others till we reach Buthaina Khidir Mekki about whose writings a deep disagreement and argument have been raised. To her and Melkat al-Dar before the support of a new line of literary feminism in the Sudanese narration goes back, in which they try to show women's anxiety, and reveal man's partiality and domination of women (Sawi, 2010: 37).

Among the different types of creativity, Sudanese woman has many contributions which need to be studied for many reasons and which make the female writer, sometimes, superior to her male counterpart (Al-Balal, 2002: 5-6).

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One of the things that are related to the female's writing is the restricting of her writing to her world as a female- with exceptional signs in some of the writings- like the writing on arresting and political struggle in Selma Salama's writings; except these signs, there is no trail to write out her world with all its special issues.

Women's creativity ... is at its end a self-uncovering, that is to say, the female is always imposed by her problems and frustrations in a patriarchal society. She does not go beyond her internal world, the female world; she does not manage to write- except rarely- about society or to go beyond her internal world (Bushra, 2004:94).

Fadl justified this because the internal world is more attractive to the female writers' attention, it is a reformation of her world, and an extension of her portrayal from outside which is still against her and which is difficult for her to accept (cited in Bushra, 2004: 94). In this type of feminist writing the concentration is on the femininity as an ideology which opposes the ideologies that belittle the position of woman and devalues her (Sawi, 2010: 37).

### A. The Features and Characteristics of Sudanese Traditional Literary Feminism During the 50s

The forties and fifties witnessed the rise of social and national consciousness, the aims of which are summed up in the necessity of freedom ... accompanied by this movement, women started to contribute through their private communities, like the 'Women Union', which contributed in the social knowledge of the Sudanese women and prepared them to participate in the cultural, political, intellectual, and public fields.

This movement started with Fatima Abd al-Rahman, who published her intellectual and literary works in the mid-thirties, followed by Amaal Abbas by wrote a collection of short stories that deal with several social, emotional, and existential issues ... like her story " Masraa Galbein" which was published in " Sawt al-Maria- 1955". During the fifties appeared Amna Younis, and Bakhita Amin Medani whose stories are significant by discussing social problems and family relations ...we find, also, Salma Ahmed al- Basheer who published her works in "al-Manar magazine- in 1957" the important one of which is " Yatiman". Balal (2002: 14) thinks that the previous examples can give a general picture of the narrative writing scene from the mid of fifties to the mid of seventies ... which at the same time has similar features and characteristics of the Sudanese story writing that time.

The feminine writing at that time shows its relation to social issues and the legal wishes for liberation and removing ignorance and underdevelopment. Besides, it is noticed that the main characters in the female writings are the oppressed, weak, and destructed female characters; so the female writes about her suffering in her terrible reality in a very special way (Balal, 2002: 14). The female writer is usually concerned with her world problems and difficulties, so, she is contrary to the male writer who usually tries to discuss human problems in general, being male or female (Bushra, 2004: 103).

### B. The Important Features of Sudanese Modern Literary Feminism

It is known that the seventies were a highly arousing period of a liberal discourse in all directions, inside this liberal and modernization discourse begins the narrative of feminism appears as an indication of this general discourse. This modern literary feminism is distinguished by many features which are summarized by Balal (2002: 20) in the following points:

- Firstly: literary feminism, in this stage, benefits from modern literary writing techniques, like, parallelism, faltering, synchronization (coincident), monologue, remembering, recalling ... etc.
- Secondly: The language of this period's stories is closer to that of poetry, which is full of denseness, suggestions, and various indications. What makes it more limpid is its connection with the first person pronoun and consequently enabling the author to write, freely, about his personal feeling.
- Thirdly: In addition to the above, we find that writing about very personal relations is clear in this period, on which the female writer bases her creativity to express her own experience, her knowledge of being different and free, and her fighting against the various injustice machines that try to control her body and mind.
- Fourthly: in this stage, the differences between the female and male writings can be noticed, besides, the variation in style among the female writers themselves.

## V. CONCLUSION

This paper discussed Sudanese literary feminism from a historical point of view in addition to writing about feminism in Sudan in general; then the paper ends with the important features of modern literary feminism.

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