



A Critical Reading to a Short Story by Ramzia Al-Eryani

Dr. Yahya Hassan Al-Wadhaf

Amran University

Corresponding author: alwadhaf@yahoo.com

Abstract:

Much has been written about the theme of encounter between Arabs and the West in Arabic narrative fiction. However, most if not all of the previous studies have a masculine stamp in that they speak about the experience of many Arab males and their encounters with Western females. Many attendant thematic issues have been dealt with in such representations as culture shock, cultural values, personal attitudes and religious distinctions between involved characters. Ramzia Al-Eryani, a prominent Yemeni female writer and an active feminist, however, provides a totally different thematic treatment of this encounter. In fact, she has participated in and contributed to the dialect between Arabs and the West from a feminist perspective. She has reversed the norm by characterizing a Yemeni girl who was desired by an American man to be his wife, not his girlfriend.

In her short story entitled *Algaribah*, "The stranger", published in her third collection of short stories entitled *Assama tomter qutnan* translated as "The sky is raining cotton" (1999), Al-Eryani provides a novel treatment to such theme. Furthermore, her representation has a local flavor since she attempts to deal with an enduring problem for the Yemeni female whose rights to marry and select her partner has been hijacked by her male guardians. She has tackled the issue from a feminist perspective that is quite distinctive from other treatments by Arab male writers. Building on an eclectic theoretical framework, this paper attempts to analyze one of Ramzia Al-Eryani's short stories that are still imprisoned within the local Yemeni linguistic and cultural barricades.





Keywords: *Ramzia Al-Eryani; patriarchy; resistance; feminism.*

Introduction:

Yemen or the Republic of Yemen as it is officially known is a third world- country that is located in the utmost southwest Asia, south to Saudi Arabia. The country covers about 550,000 square km, and it has a population of approximately 23 million people. It is relatively unknown to the average Western people; however, the country enjoys a central position in the attention of the international community when it comes to discussing issues of terrorism and its attendant issues. Up to May22, 1990, the country used to exist as two states: the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in the North, and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) in the South. "This is one of the oldest inhabited places on Earth," says Chris Menist, an American writer and musician working for the CNN "Culturally it's so rich, but has been left behind economically in places touched by the oil boom like Saudi and the UAE. In a positive Sense that has meant it's retained its originality". (<http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/music/one-mans-research-uncovers-gems-in-yemens-music-history/>).

Recently, the country becomes known internationally since a Yemeni woman, Tawakul Abdusalam Karman has been awarded the Nobel prize for peace for 2011. This particular incident inspired me to examine the role of the Yemeni women in the literary context. This paper attempts to introduce the contribution of the Yemeni women writers to the world literature in general and to the Arabic short narrative fiction in particular. This task is achieved through reading a short story by a Yemeni woman writer. This sister of Shah-razad, if I am to borrow Al-Musawi's phrase, has dedicated her life to narrate the story of her fellow Yemeni women who remained silent and unseen in a society where males enjoy much privilege and pres-





tige. The overall aim is to situate the contribution of the Yemeni women writers in the main stream of world literature in general and in that of Arabic short narrative fiction in particular.

Fuad Al-Hemiary, a leading Yemeni poet, asks rhetorically in a poem lamenting the death of a notable Yemeni national personality in 2008: "If heroes are buried in their homelands; then our hero is a homeland himself; so where could he be buried?" (<http://alm-unierah.yemenforums.net/t173-topic>). I would like to borrow our poet's expression and displace it on a Yemeni woman who has just passed away recently. This woman is Ramzia Abass Al-Eryani an important national personality and literary celebrity. In a kind of literary displacement, I want to ask 'if [heroines] are buried in their homelands; then our [heroine] is a homeland herself; so where could she be buried?'

The selection of both the genre (short story) and the writer whose text is selected for analysis is not arbitrary, but it serves a multiple of purposes. First, the art of the short story in Yemen is still unknown to literary critics outside Yemen; much less works by Yemeni women writers. Poetry is/was still the dominant literary form up to the late 70s of the 20th century. Narrative forms such as the novel, novella and short story in their western forms are infant genres in the contemporary Yemeni literature. These modern literary forms arrived to the country with the waves of modernity that swept the country in the aftermath of World War II.

Then, the writer herself, Ramzia Al-Eryani whose very recent and sudden death on the 14th of November 2013 impels me to fulfil a promise I gave to her sometimes early this year. I met her for the first time in the Movenpick hotel in Sana'a in March where she was chairing an international conference about Yemeni women. I told her that I have a collection of her short stories, which I found to be very appealing and representative about the situation of women in Yemen.





Perhaps, an autobiographical note seems necessary so that one knows who was Ramzia Al-Eryani? Ramzia Abbas Al-Eryani was born in 1954 in the village of Iryan, Ibb governorate, Yemen. She received her elementary education in the village school, and her secondary education in the city of Taiz, graduating in 1973. She took a degree in philosophy from Cairo University in 1977, and then pursued a career in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Yemen. In 1979, she became the first female diplomat in the Yemeni Foreign service. Her first work of fiction, a novel, appeared in 1969. Since then she has published four volumes of short stories, a historical novel, and several books for children.

Apart from her diplomatic career, little has been said so far about Ramzia Al-Eryani, the writer, in critical studies about fiction written in Yemen or outside. She is the head of the Yemeni Women Union. She has received many international awards for her achievements and concerns about women in Yemen. The last official position she assumed was a member of the inclusive national dialogue conference that is supposed to put an end to the ensuing political problems that placed the country on the brink of a civil war. Not only was she a short story writer, but she was a leading feminist and a political activist who dedicates her life to give a voice for the voiceless women in her society.

There is no doubt that readers in the West have no access to read fictional works by Yemeni women writers. This is simply because fiction written by such writers is still underrepresented in the literary anthologies of contemporary Arabic literature in translation. Except for two short stories selected for translation and published in an anthology on Arab Women writers of short stories, edited and translated by Dalya Cohen-Mor; fiction by Yemeni writers is still an alien literary genre for non-Arab readers. These two short stories are "Heir Apparent" and "Misfortune in the Alley". Surprising-





ly, Ramzia Al-Eryani wrote both stories.

Yemeni women, like their other Arab counterparts, have been producing significant fiction, both short stories and novels, for the past forty years but such fiction is still searching for a status not only in its national and regional literary contexts, but also in world literature. The first short story by a Yemeni female writer, According to Hatem Al-Sager, an Iraqi literary critic, dated back to the late sixties of the past century in what was known then as the southern Yemen, a British colony at that time. "*Zalim ya mujtama*" (Cruel You Are, Society), by a writer who signed her name "F. Ahmad," was the first of these realistic stories to be published" (Ashur et. al, 2008, p. 292).

In fact, to write about literature written by women in such a country as Yemen is not an easy task as Al-Sager has pointed out in his contribution to the critical reference guide of Arab women writers. In a chapter entitled "Yemen", this leading critic addresses many socio-cultural issues that help to give an informative background about the status of the Yemeni women writers and the factors affecting them in their society.

It seems significant to give a brief idea about the theoretical framework on which the analysis will be based. The term feminist/feminism will form the backdrop of this paper therefore it is important to explain them and their usage as far as this study is concerned.

Ishaq Tijani has defined feminism in his critical study *Male Domination, Female Revolt: Race, Class, and Gender in Kuwaiti Women's Fiction* stating that " 'Feminist/m' is generally used to refer to an organized movement to attain women's rights, or fight against gender inequality and women's oppression in society" (Tijani, 2009, p.3). This definition is relevant to the story at hand for the main women characters will be examined through similar lens. Tijani elaborates his definition of a feminist to mean that "A feminist is a woman who





does not allow anyone to think in her place "(3). This meaning will be used to define the character/s of the narrative. A key concept that is of paramount importance to understanding the thematic structure of this story is the family honor. According to Berko et.al., this theme is tied to constructions of masculinity and femininity in the Arabic context. Defending the family honor is viewed as males' responsibility. As noticed by Michelle Peteet, Arab masculinity defined by 'constant vigilance and willingness to defend honor, kin and community from external aggression and to uphold and protect cultural definitions of gender-specific propriety'".(Peteet, 2000, p. 107)

On the other hand, modesty, maintenance of chastity until marriage are the two major defining characteristics of femininity in the Arab society. (Berko et. al 3). Women in Arab society are seen as weak and amenable to be victimized, thus to threaten the so called family honor. They are considered as integral part of this honor code and in order to preserve it, they should not deviate from their males' expectations. In other words, females must entirely be obedient to their male guardians, if they fail to do so, then they challenge male hegemony and in effect expose this family honor to serious threats.

Other key words that we need to be clear about are "domination" and "resistance". *The Oxford Online Dictionary* defines 'domination' as "the exercise of power or influence over someone or something, or the state of being so controlled", its verbal form, to 'dominate' is defined as to "have power and influence," or to "have a commanding position over" something or someone. In a Patriarchal family, usually males dominate females, i.e., they have the power, influence and the commanding position over females, be they daughters, sisters, wives or whatever. Any reaction taken by these females against such influences can be regarded as resistance and revolt.

This resistance takes many forms: social, political, literary



and the like. Writing about women issues is considered as a kind of resistance where the writer, a man or a woman' assumes a collective action against the authority that denies women their own rights. Representation is a characteristic of this act of resistance for the writer takes upon him/herself the responsibility of exposing many cruelties and injustices imposed over women. The characterization of the female character in this story and her reaction against the authority of her male guardian on the one hand and against the traditional social order behind him is regarded as an act of resistance.

Understanding the family structure in the Yemeni society is important for understanding the social order and thereby understanding the social hierarchy that lead to women entrapment as will be clarified in the story at hand. Yemen is an Arabic-Islamic country where patriarchy is the norm. A system of male-dominated social, cultural, economic and political authority, patriarchy constitutes the main source of women's oppression in Yemen and many other neighboring countries. The operation of the patriarchal norms and codes in the structure of the Yemeni society in general and the family in particular is the main concern of analysis. The status of women as marginalized and "subaltern" figures in the family is dictated by many patriarchal beliefs, values and practices, which principally affected women in many aspects with relation to their marriage, education and inheritance.

Father's domination, Daughter's resistance:

"Algaribah" translated as the stranger is neither the first fictional narrative by a Yemeni woman writer, nor is it the first Yemeni story with elements of feminist overtones. However, it is perhaps an exemplary narrative of resistance against the unjustifiable male authority and domination over women for no logical reason other than subjugating women and denying them their lawful rights. Among all





the stories compiled in one of the present writer's collection of short stories entitled *Assama tomter qutnan* translated as "The sky is raining cotton"(1999),this particular story has a significant appeal when it comes to discussing gender issues and the question of females rights in a male-dominated society.

In this sense, "Algaribah", to the best of my knowledge, is the only short story that can be said as a voice of rebellion against considering the female as inferior to male when it comes to education, worldly outlook and self-fulfillment. The problem of the heroine of this narrative is not that of forced marriage imposed by her father; rather it is a question of existence, of identity and above all of recognition as a central and nucleus formative component of the family and the society as a whole.

"Algaribah" is the story of Amirah, a girl who accompanies her father in his journey to pursue his postgraduate studies in an American university. Coming from a rural area, a mountainous village in Ibb governorate, the narrative traces the growth of Amirah in the United States from her childhood until the completion of her secondary school and the early stage of her university education. The third-person narrative point of view depicts to us the ordeal of this country girl who is victimized by her "educated" father who believes that once a girl reaches puberty, she is to be considered as a threat and danger to her family. Besides depicting the unnecessary suspicions of the always-angry father, the first pages of the narrative encapsulate some of the ways men dominate women in a late-twentieth century typical Yemeni rural family. In a way, the narrative provides a double-voiced critique against many traditional views regarding the female status in the family, the relationship between the father and his female offspring on the one hand and the father and his subordinate wife on the other. The writer also provides a social criticism against some traditional social codes of be-





havior and customs such as consanguineous marriages, forced and arranged marriages.

Amirah's serious dilemma occurs when one of her American colleagues, George, shows interest in her. At first, she does not pay attention to this matter thinking that it is just a passing issue. However, this interest is transformed into a serious love relationship between this western man and this feminine bird coming from the East if I am to borrow Tawfik Al-Hakim's phrase used as the title of his famous novel *Bird from the East*. The writer has manipulated this episode in an artistic way to show the difference between ways of thinking among Arabs and the Americans. Knowing that he could not marry Amirah because he is Christian and she is Muslim, he immediately converts to Islam and proposes to her father.

The catastrophe befallen on this female who has been regarded now as a serious and tangible threat to her father and the whole family's honor. The father immediately decides to send his daughter back to Yemen where she will be married to her cousin, Qassim. Amirah resists such decision consequently suffers from a nervous breakdown. The narrative ends with her in the intensive care room dying while surrounded by her parents.

The story is very significant and informative to the extent that it has a cultural cargo about many traditions and customs. The multiplicity of themes can qualify the text to be a feminist resistant representation of a female offspring in a typically traditional society as the one represented in the text. Being written by a leading feminist, the story along with many others may represent "a preliminary phase of feminist consciousness which, according to Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, is 'awareness': "an awareness by women that as women they are systematically placed in a disadvantaged position" (qtd in Tijani, 2009, p. 34).

Locating the narrative in America perhaps is significant for it





provides us with sufficient reasons to include this narrative among the portion of contemporary Arabic fiction that uses the encounter with the West as its trajectory towards self-knowledge" (Musawi, 2003, p. 165). In this story, Ramzia Al-Eryani has subscribed to this theme but with a different color and flavor. Her contribution is similar to those treatments by the pioneers of modern Arabic fiction of the 60s and 70s in many respects, yet it is different in many others.

Al-Eryani has employed the journey as an extended metaphor not to narrate the Western influences on the Arab expatriates coming from a traditional East. Conversely, she narrates untold stories of the Yemeni females who have been victimized by their own kins, though, their religion, Islam, grants them their full rights and elevates them to a highly better position comparable to the position of the Western women.

In fact, Amirah's journey to the U.S. and her subsequent education is more than a journey in its literal meaning. It is a quest for salvation from the restrictions of the tribe, tradition and unjustifiable oppression of her father. This journey embodies understanding and enlightenment on the part of the protagonist who absorbs the Western culture and decides to take what suits her, her religion and culture and rejects what is deemed "alien" and foreign. Unlike the Arab male protagonists of the fiction of expatriation written in the 60s and 70s of the past century, Amirah refuses to dissolve in the American culture. She reciprocates George's love only once she becomes certain that he is not a playful young man who wants just to amuse himself in a passing relationship. Many times, he tries to touch her hands, but he could not. She told him that this act is prohibited in her religion.

The story begins with a short conversation between the protagonist, Amirah, and her mother. "Their rains are heavy. Just like theirmanysins" (Al-Eryani,1999, p.6), themother, said. Amirah re-





sponds innocently, a child then of four years, saying "aren't you afraid that we catch their sins and be like them" (6). The idea of sin at the very beginning is very significant thematically especially if we analyze the story in terms of binary oppositions: tradition and modernity, or East and West or more importantly, feminine and masculine. First, such beginning anticipates that the idea of sin is typically feminine. Males are sin-free in male-dominated societies. Amirah's right to study and join the university is considered as a "sin" because women are referred to in her father's community as the "daughters of sin". This quality is given to all women, but in case of the educated women, the evil is even greater.

Amirah's predicament starts once she joined the school where she meets students from different nationalities. Before joining the school, her horizon of knowledge is very limited. It does not exceed the walls of her house. However, once she becomes in contact with her colleagues, her teachers, the books she reads, she realizes the difference between "us" and "Them". People live an easy and comfortable life where the "hegemony" of the traditional father who "swore by the *Quran* to his father (Amirah's grandfather) that he will close his eyes and those of his family about each sin and indecent act of the Americans" (p6).

Amirah's father is an educated man who lives in a modern world but is still governed by his inbuilt traditional customs and beliefs. In other words, this father has a modern western mind regarding pursuing his own education, but when it comes to running the issues of his own family, he does this with an old if not an ancient one. His daughter's right to study and achieve her dream may lead to damage the honor of the family. She has no right to marry whosoever she loves. She is not supposed to utter a word or object on her already selected husband. Her father is the sole authority on such issues. The so-called arranged marriage is the code she must abide





and uphold. Upon knowing that an American man is interested in his daughter, the father is furious and gives up his verdict "my father sold me to Qassim (her cousin) and in two weeks, I will be part of his belongings"(p30) Amirah states summarizing her malady:

Every week the family members gather and discuss only the same topic... the obsession with the country and its customs. This becomes monotonous and boring issue. The father concludes the session terrorizing and warning. The mother intervenes clarifying how a girl should be slaughtered if she attempts to betray the customs or the Islamic values".(Al-Eryani, 1999, p, 8 emphasis added)

This passage is very significant and informative. Amirah is the direct target of the family talk in this gathering. This weekly familial conference intends to deliver a message to the girl who is seen as the only potential threat that might ruin the so called family honor. The last phrase is meaningful particularly if we examined the order of the object of betrayal "*the customs or the Islamic values*". These are the motives for a girl murder; if she betrays the traditional customs or the Islamic values. The customs are given precedence over the religious values. The use of the coordinator "or" is not an arbitrary or a slip of the writer's pen. Rather it is intentional to suggest that customs are more important than values. They are the controllers that govern Amirah's father and the likes of him. A significant feature of the writer's style is her vivid depiction of how women's oppression in patriarchal society is often sustained throughrepressive means, both familial and ideological. Amirah's father sustains no efforts to keep her ignorant, unexposed and in effect passive and docile.

Amirah has a strong quest for personal identity. This quest is reflected in her determination to pursue her education to the furthest point she could reach. She believes that a girl has the potential to serve her society and nation just the same as men cando.





Male's domination of female and its attendant issues of subjugation is a striking theme of this story. As suggested by the title itself "Algaribah", Amirah is a stranger not in the foreign land, but among her own family members. There is a complete lack of communication between our protagonist and her father who assumes the role of a jailor rather than that of a father. She loves her father despite his apparent hostility towards her for no obvious reason other than that she is not a male. This lack of communication between the father and his daughter has been attributed by Mariam Cooke to the seclusion of women from men in the Yemeni patriarchal society. The mother functions like a messenger between him and her. In fact, the figure of the father is symbolic rather than literal for the narrative does not provide us any details about his characterization.

We are frequently reminded that he has an absolute authority over his women (his wife and his daughter). According to George Zaidan " Much of the hostility of Arab parents towards a female offspring was due to the Arab cultural obsession with the notion of honor... that is the family honor depended upon its women's' virginity before marriage and chastity after marriage(352). The writer perhaps intends to give a negative picture of this patriarchal figure that lives in the twentieth century, but thinks with the mentality of a man of the medieval ages. He is among the Americans and conducts his thesis in an American university that must serve as a source of enlightenment, but he insists on thinking backwardly when it comes to managing the issues of his household.

The characterization of George, on the other hand, is totally different from that of the nameless father. The narrative tells us that George is "the best among her colleagues. He is the most polite one...his morals are outstanding...serious in his study...She has never seen him with a girl-friend like others"(Al-Eryani, 1999, p. 14).





Unlike the rigid figure of the father, George is represented as an open-minded man who is ready to liberate himself from any shackles that may hinder his happiness and success in life. He is so faithful in his love to Amirah that he scarified his religion for the sake of his love. The most salient feature of this male figure is that he has selected his future life-partner regardless of her race, religion or any other kind of discriminatory factors. He believes in life as a cooperation between its parties: the wife and the husband. In this sense, in particular he is contrasted with Amirah's father who considers the relationship between the husband and his wife as that of a master-slave relationship. He is the only one that knows how to treat the protagonist as a woman and as a human being. He taught her how to use her mind and make her choice regardless how expensive is the price.

As stated above the issue of the family honor is another major theme of this narrative. Captured through Amirah's parents many references to honor and the possibility of damaging it incase Amirah is encouraged to pursue her education. Among all the family members, it is her duty to preserve it and defend it. What is strange enough is that mutilation of this honor is tolerated in case a male member of a family damages it? Unfortunately, if it happens that any female is suspected to harm this code of honor, death isthe immediate response.

In fact, Islam grants women equal rights to men in almost every aspect of life. However, males in a patriarchal society do not want women to be aware of such rights. Males prefer women to remain ignorant and have no access to their own rights. This attitude makes women easy to be led according to the traditional teaching. Amirah's father attitude towards his daughter might arguably dictated by this mode of thinking. In his analysis of a similar situation in a Kuwaiti fiction written by female Kuwaiti writers, Tijani comments





on a similar situation. Tijani states that "a patriarchal strategy of keeping them in perpetual "darkness": that the women should remain ignorant, unexposed, and, in effect, passive and docile" (Tijani, 2009, p. 46). Observing the heroin's behavior and conduct inside and outside the family lead us to admire this girl and her commitment to Islamic values both in theory and in practice. Certainly, she understands the Islamic codes of morals better than her father does, and applies them to her life without discarding some aspects and accepting some others as men do to meet their own interests for domination and subjugation. In a scorching conversation with her mother about the concerns of the so-called honor, the heroine tells her mother that "I am more concerned about my honor than you are...I will never commit any sin for my faith to preserve myself and keep my virginity parallels my faith in Allah" (Al-Eryani, 1999, p.29). Strangely enough, the rigid father instead being proud of having such a wonderful girl continues his nonsense suspicion. Through the subordinate figure of the mother, Amirah receives a verdict that she will be sent in a coffin to the village. Upon inquiring what is the cause of such action, the mother iterates the same answer "he will bury his honor". (31)

Amirah stands for the new generation of the Yemeni women who no longer are silent about their own rights. It is true that this female protagonist has been characterized as a woman whose life is completely dominated by her father. Yet, she does not succumb to this unnecessary and unjustifiable oppression. She has developed her own mechanisms of defense, not only for herself, but also for her own generation. By opposing her father's absolute authority, she has sacrificed herself in order to create awareness among her fellow sisters. This case becomes evident, when she is dying, she appeals to her parents to save her own sister from such end that she has undergone. She ends up saying" my sister is under your custody...Do





not murder her...take her back to our village" (41). These were Amirah's final words. In fact, Al-Eryani's construction of the protagonist's death is far from being innocent. It has a symbolic cargo for it carries many additional feminist undertones. Above all it signifies the female self-assertion and self-empowerment; it constitutes the final act of her rejection of male oppression and domination" (Tijani, 2009, p. 49).

The figure of her sister is also symbolic for it stands for all those women who are entitled to suffer. Amirah's feminist concerns should be taken as an illumination to all women to stand and resist such repressive practices being manipulated under many pretexts; familial, social and religious. It is certain that this protagonist has died towards the end, but her message will be eternalized. Her words will be inscribed in many of her fellow sisters who will uphold her struggle and embrace resistance as a mode of fighting back against male's domination and oppression. Tawakul Karman's words are very significant in this context when she states that: "Women should stop being or feeling that they are part of the problem and become part of the solution. We have been marginalized for a long time, and now is the time for women to stand up and become active without needing to ask for permission or acceptance". (<http://www.patheos.com/blogs/mmw/2011/12/women-in-the-2011-revolutions-tawakul-karman>).

Conclusion:

Writing about the Yemeni women issues and rights is not an easy task to be covered in this limited space. Perhaps to look for this topic in the literature written by women themselves to introduce and speak for these women by a Yemeni woman is meaningful and double fold.

The Yemeni women literary output is negligible if not forgot-



ten though it spanned for almost four decades. On the other hand, women issues in many conservative societies such as Yemen remained hidden till they were brought up from under the ashes by Ramzia Al-Eryani despite the fact that Yemen had/has bright score for the presence of women in the public life past and present. Certainly, the whole world knows about Queen Sheba and the many legends surrounding her personality. Tawakul Abdusalam Karman is another Yemen female celebrity who dominates the scene in the second half of 2011. As a Yemeni Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Mrs. Karman is an example of how a Muslim woman can achieve position and struggle for the betterment of her society.

As a feminist activist and short story writer, Al-Eryani touches upon many themes that are of direct concern to women. One major theme is female education and its subsequent issues. Amirah wants to study and get the highest degree possible. She wants to shape her identity as a woman and as a human in the light of Islam and Islamic instructions. However, her father, who has a blind faith that it is his sole and unquestionable responsibility to shape her life according to the dictates of his traditional upbringing, aborted her attempts.

Another theme, which recurs constantly in this story, is the family honor. Among all the family members, the preservation of the honor of the family is restricted to the female member, be it a daughter, a sister or whatever. It is her duty to preserve the so-called honor. Amirah resists her father's constant remarks that he will bury her and by doing so "he will bury his honor" Amirah's response is "My fear for my honor surpasses my fear from you (the family). I will not commit any sin because my faith in preserving my honor parallels my faith in God" (Al-Eryani, 1999, p.29). Amirah gives us an example of the good woman who is mistreated and misjudged by her male guardians. She gains our respect and admiration reminding us that women no longer will remain silent. They have the necessary





disposition and outlook to occupy central positions at national, regional and international levels. The recent decision of the Nobel committee is a concrete prove. The story selected for analysis in this study constitutes an example of the Yemeni women's 'literature of resistance' against domination and subjugation. The land that gave birth to the Queen of Sheba, Queen Arwa bint Ahmad Alsulihi and very recently to Tawakul Karmanis still fertile, productive and promising. The daughters of Sheba and Arwa and sisters of Karman have characterized the Arabic literary landscape with many contributions. Their fingerprints are to be found clearly, when it comes to talk about Arabic short stories written by women. Just like their Kuwaiti sisters, who according to Ishaq Tijani, raise their voices through every possible means including literature (particularly short fiction), these Yemeni women continue to fight for social and political recognition.

Miriam Cooke, an American professor of Arabic Literature, remarks on the rising trends of resistance among the Muslim women activists. She states in her article "Women, Religion, and the Post-colonial Arab World": "Some Arab women are inventing new ways of responding to age-old silencing strategies and are constructing from margins a discourse of power"(Cooke, 2000, p. 152).

The present writer and her protagonists are among those women who invent their own strategies of breaking the silence and this story is just one strategy of resistance. Her writings are revolutionary ones. She ignited a revolution in the minds of her women audience by drawing their attentions to their rights as women and above all as human beings just the same as men. While writing was considered as an exclusively male-profession, Al-Eryani has shattered such a belief and offered a daring voice that is worthy to be heard and acknowledged.

References:



A Critical Reading to a Short Story by Ramzia Al-Eryani

- Al-Eryani, Ramzia Abbas. (1999). *Assama tomter qutnan* "The Sky is raining cotton": Sana'a: Sana'a Modern Offset.
- Al-Hemiary, Fuad. (Online). A poem lamenting the Death of Shaikh Abdullah Al-Ahmar. Retrieved Oct 4, 2013 from <http://almunierah.yemenforums.net/t173-topic>.
- Al-Musawi, M., J. (2003). *The Postcolonial Arabic Novel: Debating Ambivalence*. Leiden: Brill.
- Al-Sager, Hatem. (2008). "Yemen" in *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873-1999*. Cairo & New York: The American University Press in Cairo Press, 283-298.
- Ashur, Radwa et al. (Ed). (2008). *Arab Women Writers: A Critical Reference Guide, 1873-1999*. Cairo & New York: The American University Press in Cairo Press.
- Badran, Margot and Cooke, Miriam, (eds.). (2004). *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Berko et al. (2010). "Gender, Cime and Terrorism: The Case of Arab/Palestinian Women in Israel" *British journal of criminology* Vol(50), 670-689.
- Cohene-Mor, Dalya. (Ed). (2005). *Arab Women Writers: An Anthology of Short Stories*. New York: paperback.
- Cooke, Miriam. (2000) "Women, Religion, and the Postcolonial Arab World", *Cultural Critique*, Vol. (45), 150-184.
- *Muslimah Media Watch* (Online) "Women in the 2011 Revolutions Tawakul Karman": <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/mmw/2011/12/women-in-the-2011-revolutions-tawakul-karman>.
- Menist, Chris. *The National*, Sunday, March 4, 2012 (Online). <http://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/music/one-mans-research-uncovers-gems-in-yemens-music-history/>.
- Peteet, J. M. (2000). 'Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence', in M. Ghousoub and E.





- Sinclair-Webb, eds, Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East. London: Saqi Books.
- Tijani, Ishaq. (2009). Male Domination, Female Revolt: Race, Class, and Gender in Kuwaiti Women's Fiction. Leiden: Brill.
 - Zaidan, Joseph. (1995). Arab Women Novelists: The Formative Years and Beyond. New York: State University of New York Press.

