The History of Short Story in Modern Libyan Literature: (Analytic study)

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المستخلص:

تعتبر هذه الدراسة هي عبارة عن محاولة لمعرفة تاريخ كتابة القصة القصيرة في ليبيا في السنوات الأخيرة من خلال الجهود المتواصلة التي يبذلها الكتاب ، والتي تطورت بشكل مطرد خلال العقود على الرغم من وجود العديد من العوائق السياسية و الاجتماعية. ولذلك كان من الضروري في التعامل مع إنجازات هؤلاء الكتاب ، ومن هذه الصعوبات على سبيل و التي قد تواجه بعض النقاد و المحللين عند محاولة مراجعة الأدب الليبي الحديث ككل هي أن ليبيا بلد ضخم من حيث المساحة ولديها ثلاث مناطق رئيسية هي الشرق والغرب والجنوب. وهذا يعني أن مركز ثقل هذه الحركة قد تتغير من منطقة إلى أخرى. وقد ساهمت الاختلافات الإقليمية في الخلفية الثقافية والتقليدية المزاجية بشكل كبير في ثراء وتنوع تجارب الكتابة القصيرة المختلفة ، و كانت مسئولة أيضًا عن تطوير و تنوع عناصر كتابة القصة القصيرة من حيث المحتوى و الشخصيات، و ذلك بان كثير من هذه القصص القصيرة تحمل الطابع الإقليمي .

من الملاحظ انه خلال فترة قصيرة نسبيا منذ إحياء الكتابة الأدبية الليبية في العصر الحديث ، شهد الكتاب الليبيون تغيرات جذرية و كانت هذه التغييرات مصحوبة بمثل هذه التغييرات في الشعوب العربية نفسها في جميع المجالات ؛ سياسية واجتماعية واقتصادية وثقافية ونفسية. لذا ، فإن تاريخ محتوى القصة القصيرة المكتوبة باللغة الكلاسيكية يتعامل مع مساهمة هؤلاء الكتاب الذين ينتمون إلى مجموعة مثقفة من الرجال والنساء في ليبيا.

رأيت أنه من المهم أيضا تزويد القراء ببعض المعلومات حول حركة الأدب الليبي خلال الفترة من أربعينيات القرن العشرين حتى أواخر التسعينيات. لان في هذه الفترة ، شهدت الكتابة القصيرة في ليبيا تحولات جوهرية كشكل أدبي في مسارها الخاص ، وليس شكلاً مستمداً من مقالات الصحف.

Introduction

The propose of this study is intended to give the reader a map of themes and styles of the contents of short story writing in Modern Libyan Literature in English language, which is young and still tender literature. Mentioned that most of short stories authors represented here are widely known throughout the Arab world and some of European literary scholar.

This study therefore, is to tell the history of short story writing in Libyan in the recent years through the sustained effort of the writers, whose has developed steadily through the decades despite the many hindrances put in its way by traditional elements. It has therefore been necessary in dealing with the achievements of these writers, also to pause in order to look at the activity and the work of those whose influence has hindered or bought to hinder its development.

One of the greatest difficulties, which we may face when trying to review modern Libyan literature as a whole, is that, Libya is a huge country and it had three main regions, the east, west and the south. That means, the center of gravity of this movement has tended to shift from one area to another. Regional differences in temperament cultural background and tradition have contributed greatly to the richness and variety of the various short story writing experiments, but have also been responsible for development of some negative streaks, although these were mostly of a regional character.

1- During the relatively short period since the Libyan literary writing revival in modern times, Libyan writers have undergone drastic changes(B. Al. Hashmi, ' 1984. P. 127). Such changes were accompanied by similar ones in the Arab people themselves in all spheres; political, social, economical, cultural and psychological. So, the content history of short story written in Classical language deals with the contribution of those writers who belong to the more cultured group of men and women in Libya.

Definitions of the short story

What is a short story? Well, it seems it is an easy question at the first glance, but when we look at very carefully, we may find out it is not that easy as we thought. One of the most definitions of the short story meanings was written by the English writer (M. Stapleton) who says as the follows:

"The short story is a tale which contains the reality and fiction and the reader could finish reading it from fifteen to forty five minutes. It could be very interesting and it does not important if it is indicate a human real story or not, even it may contain a lot of ideas and opinions that make us think and deeply after reading it. Or it could be the other way round and it contains. Nothing important at all and we forget what had read in a few minutes after reading it…. The most important thing in reading short story is that we feel satisfaction and amusement in few minutes time. (M. Stapleton. 1983. P.37)

Some literary critics have a different point of view about this definition. Some see the story as only a public tale written by a talented author. Others see it as an image of human life and it may talk about an event which may happened in our daily life. Whatever the opinions are, the one thing that we should remember is that, there is a huge different between the short story and the story as novel. Anyone thinks that the short story is a summary of a novel or a chapter of it surely he is mistaken, because they have different style and structures.

The short story terms in modern Libyan literature

Today, we see three terms of "story" in modern Libyan literature; *al-qissah* " القصة " (Story), *al-qissah al-qasirah.* " القصة القصيرة " (short Story) and *al-uqsusah* " الاقصوصة ". Some men of letters preferred to name the story as *al-hikayah* " الحيكاية " *or al- uqsusah*, whereas some others preferred to use the term *al-qissah* only. The word *al-qissah* that is used for the story is in between *al-qissah al-qasirah* (short story) and *al-riwayah* " الرواية " (novel).

The volume in *al-qissah* is wider than al-qissah *al-qassirah*, the time is longer and the events are more diversified. In *al-qissah*, the life as a whole is examined. However, in *al-uqsusah* (sketch, short short story). " القصة القصيرة جداً " "a part of life is examined around a single subject. *al-qissah al-qassirah* is the shortest form of narration after *al-uqsusah*, which contains a few pages only. It should also be emphasized that *al-riwayah* (novel) is sometimes used both as a novel and as a story. Likewise, *Ahmed Ibrahim al Faqih* used the word *al-riwayah* (novel) when he was introducing his stories collection "Three Groups of Stories"; however, that was not used for a long time. Meanwhile, we should also emphasize that the word *al-qissah* in the modern sense should not be confused with the word *al-hikayah* in the classical sense. On the other hand, it should be stated that today the word *al-qissah* is sometimes used as the novel and sometimes as the story. Besides literary genre, namely *Qusaysah*, which means story but it was not widely popular in Libyan literature.

There also another term called *Qissah qasirah jidan* [short short story]. The tem of short story usually refers to the modern ones, which evolved out of earlier types of fiction in prose and verse. *Ali Mustafa Al-Misrati* is the most known Libyan writer who uses this term in his most of his productions, the most famous collection is (The Wounded Bird), and the book contains 150 short short stories. Additionally, the earliest ancestors of Arab short stories are ancient tales, simple stories that date back to Egyptian writ-

ings that are 6,000 years old. Another early form was the fable, such as those of the *Arabian Nights* - The Thousand and One Nights - a famous collection of stories from Persia, Arabia, India, and Egypt, was compiled over hundreds of years. In it, the beautiful queen *Scheherazade* entrances her husband, the sultan, with a new tale every evening, leaving the suspenseful ending for the next day so he will not carry out his vow to kill her.

Therefore, we may say that, the short story is an illustration of one facet of human nature. Often a character undergoes some event and experiences something, which offers him change. This is why it is said that short stories usually "say something", often a narrow or small something that can be read in an hour and remembered for a lifetime. *Ahmed Ibrahim Al- Faqih, احمد ابراهيم الفقيه* a Libyan short story writer, a novelist and a play writer, says the follows about the short story:

1- *"The perfect short story is written with a poet's feel for language, with a poet's precision, and that the shape and sounds and rhythms of the words are more commonly part of the work's effect than is usually seen in the novel. In a poem, the bare words are virtually never the complete meaning. They interact, their sounds do things, and how they are placed on the page matters. The poem tries to create a nugget of truth, an insight into being human and the form is so tight, so sparse that we can argue over exact meanings long into the smoke-laden night"(* A. Al. Faqih.1986. p.76

Another literature wrote about the same subject, *Mahmoud Zahi, محمود زاهى* in his excellent book "*The Taste of Literature*", *تذوق الادب* refuses to define the short story, but he is prepared to talk about its nature and said:

"First, he says, a short story tells of something that happened to someone, and second, a short story (he means serious fiction, by the way) will demonstrate a more harmonious relationship between all its aspects than will any other art form, with the possible exception of lyric poetry"(M. Zahi. p. 128)

After having been told these definitions by those literary writers, it is needed to realize that a short story has the same elements as those of a novel but with a few thousand words less. These elements are plot, characterization, point of view, and dialogue. Unlike a novel, there is usually only one main storyline. Also, because of the brevity of the story, word usage must be economical; each word should advance the story in some way. In establishing a plotline, starting with the

basics: exposition, conflict, climax, and resolution. The exposition is the back-ground story - where it was explained how the conflict came to be-. The conflict is the hook, the pull of the story and should present the theme, for example, mankind against nature, man vs. woman, woman vs. herself, etc...

The conflict should build to a final battle or confrontation; this will be the climax. And then comes the resolution, where the conflict is resolved or at least, lessened in some way.

Short story writers employ a wide range of rhetorical devices for contrast and emphasis, including paradox, metaphor, patterns of imagery, repeated motifs, symbolism, and irony. The power of use of expositive writing of *Dawod Mousa Halag, "داوود موسى حلاق"*, in his short story, (The Cave),(*"الكهف"* ج (D. Halag. 1973. .p33) he derives a part from his overt use of symbolism. Irony provides the reader with a contrast between reality and the fallibility of human perception, which is at the heart of most modern fiction. The story, talks about a lonely old thin woman who lives in a huge cave after the death of her lovely husband. The only thing that she inherit after his death is his horse. The writer went on describing her hard life in one of those cold nights in winter with the ironic style. **Types of short stories in Libyan Literature:**

Among the ways of looking at the subject, and the art of short story is to review the astonishing range and varieties of types of stories. These include fairy tales, fantasies, humor and satire, character studies, history, religion, and folk story.

The ancient form of the Libyan story such as fairy tales and folk stories can retain their power when used for the modern short story, even they are full of myths and legends. Some of the most famous stories in this type, that intended to surprise, delight and entertain were written by *Ibrahim Al-Quni "ابراهيم الكوني"* – some of his stories will be discussed later on. Another short story type is the *humor* story, that entertain the reader, a related type of story, the *satire*, is designed to attack the ills of society. *Ahmed Ibrahim Al-Faqih* " *احمد ابراهيم الفقيه* " had published a number of collections of short stories written in this type, such as (the man who never saw a river in his life), " *الرجل الذي لم يرى في نهرا في حياته* " "Al Rajul Alathi lam ushahed Naher fi Hayatih" and (love me tonight), *"حبني هذه الليلية"* " "A hebini Hathihi A LyalaH". Still other stories fall under *biography* or *history* types, in which a life story or historical event is used for a

work of fiction. *Khalifa Mohamed Al-Telisy, خليفة محمد التليسى*, a short stories writer, critic, translator, a historian and a poet,(A Melytan. 2001 .p. 55). Wrote different kinds of short stories in this type such as (Italian stories), *" قصص ايطالية* " a collection of some stories translated from Italian literature. (K. Al. Telisy. 1967. p.77). Another story entitled

(A tale of a City) *" قصة مدينة "* 1985

On the other hand, many types of short stories examine the mores and customs of rural and small-town life, sometimes sentimentally, as with the stories of *Lutfiyah Basher Al-Gayadi، " لطفيه بشير القيادي "*-, such as in (The Pride), *" كبرياء* " Kebriya"[1] also will be analyzed later on. Such stories aim at the society and focus on some social issues, in each story, certain aspects of social life, whether in a village or in a city or even far away in some tribal societies and writers try to tackle these problems and try to find the solutions to them. Fable is a kind of story based on inhuman characters like birds, fish and animals, were made to talk, feel and act like humankinds. As Sadiq Al- Nyahum, is one of those writers who published two fables stories, *" The Monkeys", " القرود " " Al-guroud" 1975, and in 1984 he wrote another one entitled,* The Animals, *"الحويانات " Al- Hayawanat",[2] in* which criticized the political situation in the Arab World of those days. Religious stories from the Holy Quran, play an important role in persuading the readers to accept the preaching of the Islamic religion. These kind of stories urge and amuse the reader even they are without pretending to be an artistic masterpiece in the modern standards. Historical stories are another type of stories that include lots of amusing and realistic one that talk about a historical events or figures. A story of this kind should contain informative material, historical or literary.

Among the ways of understanding the art of the short story is to review the astonishing range of types of stories. The ancient form of the tale can retain its power when used for the modern short story. Another short story type is the humor story, intended to delight and entertain. Humor gave birth to a related type of story, the satire, is designed to attack the ills of society, as in *Ali Al-Misrati's* stories which deal with the hardships of failing love affairs and reality.

[1]- L. Al Gayadi.1977. p.52

[2] - As. Alnayhum. 1991.p.56.

So, the short story is a tale that inspire us with its creative muse and the language which is used, I mean, is it written in *al-ammiyah* "العامية " *or al-fussha* "الفصحى ". Few writers would bother to write works in *al-ammiyah* or common language and it was felt that literature had to be improving, educational and with purpose rather the just entertainment. Inspiration need not be inhibited by technique, but should be enhanced by its content. Such stories were **written by *Ali Mustafa Al-Misrati*** in his collection that entitled (The wounded bird),(A. al.-Misrati. . 1994.p.62) from this collection, we find some short stories were written in Al-ammiyah such as [The inspector and the donkey], [The job choice], [Do you remember] and others.

Such short stories tend to be less complex than novels. Usually, focus on only one incident, has a single plot, a single setting, a limited number of characters, and covers a short period of time. A good story can be told about a great many words in every language. This especially true of those words that become part of day-to-day speech. Above and beyond its formal literature, a people's speech – its idioms, vernacular phrases and special expressions that reflect the whole range of that people's culture and experience.

Out of the Arabic experience, Libya has carved a large body of expression that continues to grow. It would be surprising if it didn't, considering the vast changes that have taken place in the Arab world just in the last 50 years. Space exploration alone has given the Arabic language a sizable new vocabulary. However, our concern here is not with etymology or linguistics in any formal sense. This is simply a study of the content of some short stories that are being written and read over the second half of the last century.

Nevertheless, as can be seen in lots of the short stories - that will be analyzed later on -, a great number of old expressions clings mores and customs of the Arabic culture to present-day speech.

The evolution of the Libyan short story

Above all this work is concerned with the evolution of modern short story writing as an art, important changes have taken place in it over the 60s of 20th century, and observation of these changes remains, when all has been said and done about external causes and influences, an activity within the subtle, intricate, yet exciting domain of art. Short stories writing, while yielding in varying degrees of strength to the effects of external forces and acquired experience of a non-artistic nature, has an artistic life of its own and an internal process of change and de-

velopment. Thus according to R. WelleK theory,(R. Wellek, 1983. p. 185) 'which says, *"Stories are written to unite a society and explain the social order to members of the community"*

> We use stories to convey our values, morality, and social structure to the young, new members, and to reinforce the existing membership. Consider all stories "propaganda" may one say, that is the extreme view of the theory. A theme of any short story serves as away to carry the message while the event depicts the message. 'Art has its own internal laws of growth and development'(A. Roger.1987.p.85). This means, introducing a new theme of a short story will only be successful if the events happened at the specific time and place where the innovation is introduced. This also means, there are some cultural and social issues could stand in the way of introducing new changes because of the plots of some stories might not be flexible enough to go on with these changes or still need further strengthening in a certain direction.

The beginning of modern literary writing renaissance in Libya seems to have been first prompted by local cultural developments. However, the isolated efforts of the Libyans, however significant, were not enough to achieve a true renaissance and the Libyans were finally obliged to lean greatly on the literary achievements in the Arab East. Short story had succumbed right from the beginning of the renaissance, **"***more readily than other genres to the appeal of the past*.(A. al.-Misrati. . 1994.p.87) This movement aspired to bring Libyan short story writing to a level with the Arabic literary writing, and not merely to suit the contemporary Libyan framework of life and thoughts.

However**,** the Libyan short story writing, because some social and political circumstances of its development, it furnishes a most interesting field of study. It is the story of a resurrection and a thorough re-vitalization, of a gradual forging of links and of a steady evolution towards contemporaneousness within a comparatively short period.

In this light, the Libyan short story of that period appears to be exclusively centered on the intellectual self. The inevitability of using a contemporaneous outlook towards a work of art is two-fold. Firstly, a contemporary writers benefits greatly from the longer perspective available to him by which to sieve the various literary experiments of the past and to decide their actual service to later periods. In this he must be able to point out the writer's real contribution; whether

he introduced new trends, strongly confirmed one already begun, experimented in a virgin field, made new links with foreign fields, or naturally and spontaneously wrote a better kind of short story in an already established style. Secondly, a judgment of values will have to stem from our own concept of artistic values at the present time, for;

"Efficacy, contemporaneous success [of a past literary contribution] can not be a sufficient criterion of what is historically important".(B. Al. Hashmi, 1984. p.174)

However, this should not mean that we apply what is commonly called "absolutism" in our judgment of past work of literature. It simply means, there are some social values that should be taken into account while producing any new literary writing. B. Al-Hashmi adds:

We see them in perspective, in a chain of evolution, and in the case of modern Libyan literature, we see them grow steadily from a point of weakness to a point of Strength. Absolutism drives the critic to a hard judgment of past achievements as he applies a strictly contemporary criterion to his evaluation of past literary writing. An opposing method to this is that of relativism, when the writer tries merely to enter the mind of the period studied. This is insufficient, for past literary contribution would then be judged merely from its contemporaneous point of view, which ignores the immense value of knowing it now, in perspective. There is no doubt that the two points of view must be combined so that we can refer the past contribution to a scheme of values which is forever renewing itself, and to admit to ourselves the fact of its existence. We must refer past literature, not to our set of values, but to the values of its own time and all subsequent times' (Ibid. p.157)

By doing so, we can discover the writer's achievement in his own time, its importance to his own cotemporaries as well as its influence on the following generations. The division of this work into periods turned out to be of major difficulty. Looking at contemporary Libyan literature in its last period, which began at the end of the fifties, B. Al-Hashmi adds; *'We are able for the first time in the history of modern Libyan literature to recognize a harmony in the literary situation all over the Arab world. Moreover, we may find some Arab writers who may share more or less the same views on literary writing, especially, short stories writers.*(B. Al. Hashmi, 1984. P.137).

New themes started to emerge in the Libyan short story and reader can now notice new trends in it such as romance and personal emotions beside the realities of current life. Libyan

short story writers were aware of their social and political problems and tried to find the right solution when they felt the danger coming from a continued existence of these problems. Fortunately, they were even indirectly encouraged by readers to go ahead with their attempt to tackle those problems even they sometime were criticized by the influential personalities in the regime and the policies they followed. On the other hand, they were supported by the regime if they wrote positively about their policy. Thus, we may say that the short story was meant to serve a certain aim, to pay attention to the social problems and to help to find remedies to those issues.

The greatest difficulty furnished here is the diversity of the short story writing experiments in Libya, which participated in the evolution of modern Libyan literature. Before the revival of first half of twentieth century, the picture was as uniform as it became in the beginning, literature all over the Arab world was benighted. This is of course a rough, highly generalized picture, but it serves the purpose at the moment. Between these two points, the evolution of literature in every Arab country has its own peaks of development. Literature is not a passive reflection or copy of the cultural, social, political or even intellectual development. Therefore, the periods of modern Libyan literature could not be divided to fit political or to reflect social changes. This does not mean that Libyan literature was not influenced, often profoundly, by some social or political changes, but its own autonomous development imposes a different kind of judgment. Being a study of the evolution of an art, the guiding criterion in this work was the literary situation, which qualified the periods.

Conclusion

To conclude this paper about the art of short story writing in Libya, I find that it is important to provide to the readers some information about the movement of Libyan literature during the period from 1940s until the late 1990s. In this period, the Libyan short story writing had undergone fundamental transformations as a literary form in its own path, rather than a form derived from the newspapers articles. This work represents the contents of some short stories through an analytical study that comprises of the habits and popular traditions prevailing in the Libyan society as well as some norms of human conduct and social conflicts met with in daily life. It concludes also a study of some values and concepts of some social situations embodied in some of the heroes traits of some short stories. It also deals with a study of the Libyan short story technical structure and theme.

The aims of this study are:

- It is an attempt to show the literary standing of the Libyan short story writing and its content by analyzing the characterization and its themes.
- To talk about the contribution of some Libyan short story writers in the Libyan modern literature through the analysis of individual contribution that the various changes in the elements of a short story can be seen.
- To describe the short story writing trends and movements, its basic changes and achievement in the period between 1940s to 1990s.

The study of the Libyan short story allows the attentive scholars who are interested in the study of the literature and culture of other societies, to analyze, evaluate, and interpret short stories and to gain a sense of the development of the genre in Libya. They will recognize the contributions of some Libyan writers and their reflections on society. However, I hope this work will serve as a useful pointer to more careful planning study that may occur in the future in this field and to open up another channel of communication and a closer rapport between people. Above all, I hope that some of the readers may perhaps find this work not only informative, but interesting and useful as well.

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