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THE BEGINNINGS OF THE LITERARY MOVEMENT AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SHORT STORY IN BAHRAIN

After the second world war we observe a higher standard of living, better education and enriched the cultural development of Bahrain. Literary clubs and publishing houses were set up. Their first fruits materialized in the form of the first newspapers: Al-Watan, Saut al-Bahrain, as well as the literary journal Al-'Adwa'. These served as a medium for the first literary efforts of Bahraini writers, such as Ahmad Kamal and 'Ali Sayyar.

The 1960s' had a significant impact on the further development of the short story in Bahrain. More mature writers appeared on the literary scene among them Chalaf Ahmad Chalaf, Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik, Muhammad al-Majid. It was they, who in 1969 set up the Association of Authors – Usra al-'Udaba' wa al-Kuttab. In 1971 they produced a joint publication of short stories entitled *Sira al-ju'a wa as-samt* (A History of Hunger and Silence).

Chalaf Ahmad Chalaf is one of the principal creator of the short story in Bahrain. His first work, a long piece entitled *Qulub* (Hearts) appeared in 1965, in an October edition of the journal "Al-'Adwa'". His short story collection has appeared in both form in two volumes: *Al-hilm wujuh uchra* (Various Faces of Dreams) 1975, and *Fizanar* 1985. He further distinguished himself as a writer of children's stories: *Misbah 'Ali ad-Din* (Alladins' Lamp) and *An-nahla wa al-asad* (The Lion and the Bumblebee).

Muhammad 'Abd al-Malik seems to be one of the most popular read Bahraini writer. The first work, entitled *Rihla as-suqur* (Flight of the Falcons), the subsequently published a considerable amount in local papers. Up to the present moment of writing he has published the following works: *Maut sahib al-'araba* 1972 (Death of the carriage owner), *Nahnu nuhibbu ash-shams* 1975 (Beloved Sunshine), *Thuqub fi ri'a al-madina* 1979 (Holes in the city's lungs), *As-siyaj* 1982 (Enclosure), *An-nahr yajri* 1984 (The River flows) and *Ra's al-'arusa* 1988 (Head of the bride). The above collections testify to the fact that he is an unusually prolific writer. His authenticity regarding the art of writing mark him out.

Muhammad al-Majid is the author of three collections of short stories, all of which present his personal views. The first collection, undated, was published in Kuwait under the title *Maqati'a min simfuniya hazina* (Fragments

* Soweit noch nicht erklärt.

of a Sad Symphony). The second was *Ar-rahil ila mudun al-farah* 1977 (Escape to happier towns), and the last was *Ar-raqs 'ala ajfan az-zalam* 1984 (Dance at the edge of gloom). Through his stories Muhammad al-Majid signals his inner restlessness and questions the meaning of existence. None the less romantic sentiments are always present in his stories. He died in 1986. All of the aforementioned authors became the precursors to the short story in Bahrain. They expressed the sentiments of their contemporary Bahraini generation. They wrote about local problems, a frequent leitmotif being tradition and the past. They became as though a film tape, exposing the audience to the customs, work and social conventions inherent in Bahrain at that time. The individual was represented as a small cog in a great wheel, and suffering as a result of the past experiences of the father and the grandfather.

Many works were devoted to the subject of paternal authority, which was absolute. Next in authority ranked the oldest son, and finally the mother. The latter always created the greatest family chaos, arguments and caused personal problems, especially for the daughters and daughters-in-law. This scenario appears, and unravels in 'Ali Sayyars' story *Shams la tushriq kullu yaum* (The Sun doesn't always rise). Here the author calls for a lessening of traditional authoritarian roles for the greater good of the entire family. He also demands greater freedom for individual family members to make their own life-decisions.

Much literature was also devoted to dilemmas facing Arab woman, social discrimination relating to this was a frequent theme. In *Jarima fi hay majhul* (Murder in an unknown Nighbourhood) Muhammad al-Majid portrays the powerful will and revolt of an Arab woman against her fate.

New names appearing in the 1970s' further enriched Bahraini Literature. Worthly of note is Amin Salih, author of the following stories: *Al-farashat* (The Butterflies) 1977, *As-sayyid al-malaki* (The Royal Hunts) 1982, *At-tara'id* (Booty) 1983. His stories break free from the traditional subject matter in Arab stories. They are devoted to the new experiences in Arab life, and the search of a new picture of its difficult reality. They often tend towards the abstract. The experiences of Amin Salih are similar to those of 'Ali 'Abd Allah Chalifa. His stories relate to specific realities and were highly criticed in nature. He wrote under the pseudonym "Al-Hulm". He is the author of the collections: *Lahn ash-shitta'* (Winter Melody) 1975, *Ar-raml wa al-yasmin* (Sand and Jasmine) 1982, *Youm qa'iz* (The heat of the day) 1984, *Fi wida' as-sayyara al-hadra'* (Say goodbye to the green house) 1992.

Representative of the sentiments of contemporary Bahraini generations is 'Abd al-Qadir 'Aqil. His first work *Isighathat fi al-'alam al-wahshi* (Call for Help in a savage world) appeared in 1979. But it was his second collection of 1985 entitled *Ma' al-billaurat* (Crystal Water), that earned him his current popularity.

Two female authors who new impetus to Bahraini literature are worthy of note Fawziya Rashid and Munira al-Fadil. The former published two collections in 1983: *Miraya az-zalam wa al-farah* (Reflections of Sadness and Happiness) and *Al-Hisar* (Encirclement). Munira al-Fadil, in the same year has published the collection *Ar-Rimura*. As women they present the dilemmas of Arab women, always subservient to the will of the family and condemned to the will of their husbands. Heroines also appear in their stories, women of strong character, fighting for their rights, their dignity and their independence.

Bahraini short stories present truth and the realities of life without embellishment or exaggeration. They are devised from all of the writers' experiences which incited their consciences and the sense of humanity to rebel. They represent a worthy place in the Arab World's universal literary inheritance.