

Adab-ul-Mar 'a fil-Jazirah wal Khaleej il-Arabi ⁽¹⁾ (Women's Literary Output in Arabia and the Arab Gulf)

The Kuwaiti author of this book, Layla Muhammad Salih, started writing at an early age. She has contributed to Kuwaiti newspapers, magazines and radio and television programs. In 1978, she published her first book on women writers in Kuwait. That same year, she obtained a "licence" in literature from the Arab University of Beirut, and expects to do further study.

Her work on women's literary production in Arabia and the Arab Gulf consists of short biographies of about 40 women poets, short-story writers, journalists and contributors to radio and

television programs, followed by excerpts from their writings. She includes writers from Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

In her introduction, the author points out the importance of the recent literary revival in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries, particularly among women. Her book, which gives glimpses of these works, reflects common characteristics and aspirations among the women of that area. She conducts personal interviews with the authors, gaining first-hand information about their experience and ac-

tivities. She admits that, in her compilation, she did not follow any selective pattern, but joined together those who achieved some distinction in their writings and those who are still at the experimental stage, provided that some of their output has been published in papers or magazines.

As a matter of fact, it is possible for those who have been following the recent literary movement in the Arab world, to detect the multiple influences exerted on these women by the modern literature of other Arab countries, like Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, literature which, in turn, has been influenced profoundly by Western literature. The published excerpts include poems, short stories and articles. Most of the poetic specimens take the form of prose poems or free verse. They contain local color, internal dialogues and other devices of modern expression. The short stories follow the emotional, jerky style of the prose poems, reflecting an intensity of feeling, a sense of alienation and an attitude of rebellion against tradi-

tional concepts, as well as against traditional literary forms.

Most of the writings revolve around women's personal problems, complaints and protests. In a few cases, they describe the misery of unprivileged classes. The limited area in which they move leads these women to seek variety in expression. There is an emphasis on form and a real effort toward innovation in style. Some of them, especially those who came in direct contact with Western literature in foreign universities, reveal the impact of contemporary English and other Western literary models.

To this group of educated women, who live in a state of relative seclusion, and have little opportunity for recreation and self-expression, writing constitutes an escape and a form of relaxation. It also reveals daring and sincerity among many of them; talent and ambition among others.

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