

ABSTRACT

This study belongs to the field of “the sociology of the novel,” a field that integrates sociological analysis into artistic analysis as applied to novels. The study examines the transformations in the status of women in Palestinian novels, comparing two pre-Oslo stages (the rise of the Palestinian Resistance Movement, and the popular *intifada* of 1987) with the new political stage inaugurated by the Oslo agreement between the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli government.

This study relies methodologically on the aforementioned three periods of Palestinian history. The primary samples of study, like the secondary samples, are novels covering these periods. The samples involve two inputs: male and female novelists, and novelists from various Palestinian intellectual and political watering holes.

In analyzing the pertinent novels, the study relies on generative structuralism, the features of which were shaped by Lucien Goldmann in the 1960s. This methodology integrates the structural analysis of the famous linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, with Marxist sociological analysis, particularly with Georgy Luckas’s contributions to the theory of the novel.

The study employs the following tools of measurement through which one may examine the relevant transformations: the relationship between the national and the social in the Palestinian women’s movement, the status of women between the public and private spheres, the Palestinian woman’s role in the national struggle, and finally, the stance of “the other” as it relates to the Palestinian women’s struggle (and here, “other” refers to any of the following: the prevailing culture, men, the family, and political parties. As for the novelistic tools of measurement, these vary according to the different structures of the novels, but they include principally: dialogue (internal or external), linguistic forms, the development of the woman characters, the development of the drama and the woman’s position within it, and the technique of narrative recitation.

After analyzing the principal and secondary samples, and after tying this artistic analysis to the larger socio-political structure, this study shows that the Palestinian novel presented the image and status of women – as well as the transformations that occurred to this status – as being strongly tied (artistically and in reality) to each historical stage, whether this stage included roles for social power, or whether it dealt with different political and social visions. This presentation was influenced by several changes: the universal vision of the novelist (for example, his or her ideology, political outlook, or party membership), the nature of his or her direct political work, and his or her sex.

The principal conclusion of this paper is that changes in the Palestinian novel accompanied the changes in the status of women on the ground after Oslo (as compared to their status in the stages preceding Oslo). The study shows the manner in which the novel proceeded along the path paved by these transformations and analyzes all of the artistic and novelistic factors that underscore this manner of development.