

Suad as-Sabbah - Kuwait



Poet and economist, Suad as-Sabbah is one of the most promising figures of contemporary feminine literature in Kuwait. Author of four books of poetry and a number of literary, sociological and economic articles, Suad as-Sabbah still considers herself an amateur poet.

Her collections of poems include «Lahathatun min Omri» (Moments of my Life), «Wamadatun Bakira» (Early Gleams), «Amina» (A book named after her daughter) and «Ilayka ya Waladi» (To you my child) - written after the death of her son.

On March 7, 1985 she was a distinguished participant in the festival of Young Arab Poets held in Baghdad, to celebrate the 16th anniversary of the General Federation of Iraqi Women.

There she read a poem entitled «My Body is a Palm Tree,» from which we translated the following excerpt:

My body is a palm tree that drinks from the Arab Gulf

I am the daughter of Kuwait

**The daughter of this sleepy coast over the sand,
like a beautiful gazelle**

In my eyes the stars of the night and the palm trees meet

From here all my ancestors sailed

Then came back carrying the impossible

I am the daughter of Kuwait

With the pearls of the sea I was raised... And I gather oysters and stars

Oh... how tender and generous was the sea

Then the petrol came like a devil

We sprawled under his feet men and women

And we worshipped him morning and night

And we forgot the desert, the haughtiness, the coffee and the classical poetry

And we drowned in details, we destroyed

Everything that was shining...and pure... and great

In an interview with an Al-Raida coeditor, Suad as-Sabbah said that the Arab woman - with a few exceptions - is still exiled from the world of men. She cannot rule, nor decree laws nor participate in decision making. In order to win this battle, the Arab man himself must become liberated from his feudal and sexist mentality, for she considers him primarily responsible for the present situation of Arab women.

What saddens Suad as-Sabbah is to see the Arab woman's mind living in exile, and like any exile forbidden from having any choice or liberty of action or speech.

She therefore, calls for utilizing women's education to «break the doors of the prison», so that this acquired knowledge will not be merely an indicator of prestige, but become truly functional.

When asked about the state of poetry in general in the Arab World and the problems facing women poets in particular, Suad as-Sabbah answers:

«The Arab poet writes in a general atmosphere of malaise and political instability. No poet in the world suffers as much as the Arab poet. The French poet sits on the banks of the Seine to write, the German on the bank of the Rhine, whereas the Arab sits on the edge of his wounds.»

As for the woman poet in the Arab world she is twice bound, first by her society, second by herself.

An Arab woman poet is constantly exposed, every word she writes is subject to scrutiny and criticism. She is not allowed to shout, for shouting is the privilege of men. She is not allowed to wander alone on paper unless accompanied by a male member of her family.

An Arab woman poet does not have an easy life, she is constantly writing against the law of gravity of her society and of history.»

Wafa' Stephan