

# Narratives Of Disappointment In Contemporary Women's Writing The Syrian Autobiographical Discourse - A Thematic Approach

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## Abstract:

The Arab Spring erupted in Arab countries, especially in Syria, where a significant number of citizens, especially women, expressed their support. Following their experiences with the Arab Spring, their narratives shifted from stories of hope to stories of disappointment, articulated within the framework of autobiography. This raises the question: What are the manifestations of narratives of disappointment in contemporary Syrian women's autobiographical discourse? This paper aims to explore this question through research findings.

**Keywords:** Arab Spring, autobiography, Syria, contemporary, feminism, narratives of disappointment.

## first. Introduction

### 1. The conundrum of the Arab Spring

At the beginning of the new millennium, the winds of change swept across the Arab world from east to west. The driving force behind the flames of this revolution was the people's hope to change the conditions of the Arab nations on several fronts. In the skies above these countries, the cry "the people want..." echoed loudly. The people followed the verb "want" with a series of demands, including "the overthrow of the regime", especially as some of the rulers had remained on the throne for a long time and rumours circulated that some were preparing to take over. In addition, the people demanded democracy, freedom of expression, dignity and pride for the Arab individual, transparency in the distribution of the state's wealth, especially oil, to ensure that the people receive their share, among other demands.

"All the songs of the homeland were beautiful... [in] the Kasbah Square in Tunisia, ... or ... Tahrir Square in Egypt", or<sup>2</sup> ... any other square in Libya, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Jordan, Sudan, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait<sup>3</sup>, etc.

The Arab Spring has been referred to by various names, including "the Arab revolutions", a term coined by Fakhri Saleh, while Youssef Zidan called it "the million-man march"<sup>4</sup>. Faisal Abdul Ghafar opted for the term "Arab Spring"<sup>5</sup>, which is the one most commonly used by most Arab researchers and scholars.

Regarding the reference of the term "Arab Spring", some studies suggest that it comes from the West, specifically from the revolutions of 1848, which were called the "Spring of Nations". This was followed by the "Prague Spring" in 1968<sup>6</sup>. When the revolutions in the Arab world began to overthrow regimes, the first to use the term "Arab Spring" was reportedly "The Christian Science Monitor", which used the term in a commentary on the flight of Zine El Abidine Ben Ali on 15 January 2011. Others attribute the term to French journalist Dominique Moïsi and Mohamed El Baradei, both on 26 January 2011<sup>7</sup>.

The Arab Spring has been discussed by journalists, politicians, thinkers and philosophers from the Arab world. The aim of these discussions is "to understand the nature of what happened in Egypt and in the Arab countries that revolted against their rulers, whether they were military leaders or their heirs: Hosni Mubarak, Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, Ali Abdullah Saleh, Muammar Gaddafi, Bashar al-Assad"<sup>8</sup>. Writing about the Arab Spring may also serve other purposes, such as documenting the events, analysing them or expressing the disappointment that emerged as a result of the Arab Spring.

From this point of view, there is an important issue in the context of the Arab Spring that has become a focal point in the academic arena, prompting further study and research. For this reason, we turn our attention to it as a major problem for these papers, framing it in the form of questions such as

- What is the position of the Arabic literature on the Arab Spring?

- To what extent has this literature been able to grasp the revolution that has raised so many hopes for the Arab peoples?

Arab writers have addressed the Arab Spring, including the contemporary Algerian short story writer Bachir Khalef and his model *The Vikings*<sup>9</sup>. In the realm of novels, we have "Wounded of the Sky" by Um al-Zeen Bencheikha al-Miskini<sup>10</sup>. The genre of autobiography<sup>11</sup> has also dealt with the theme of the Arab Spring. In particular, we focus on the works of a group of contemporary Syrian women writers, especially as their contributions to autobiography on the Arab Spring were collected in a special section of the third issue<sup>11</sup>, part two of *\*Riwaq\** magazine, entitled "Fourth: A Special File: Women's Experiences during the Arab Spring"<sup>12</sup>.

We celebrate women's autobiographical writing about the Arab Spring because "a revolution cannot succeed without significant female participation ... [and] if the revolution is not feminised, it cannot be relied upon"<sup>13</sup>. Here we define female participation concretely, firstly through women's involvement in the events of the Arab Spring inside and outside Syria, and

secondly through the representation of the Arab Spring through literary forms specific to autobiography. Thus, we have outlined the main themes of our research papers under the title:

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In our project we will explore details that can only be addressed through the hypotheses of this research, which we will formulate as questions centred around:

- Who are the prominent Syrian women writers who have addressed the Arab Spring through the genre of autobiography?
- What issues have they discussed in relation to the Arab Spring?
- In other words, if we relate our discussion of the Arab Spring to the stages it has gone through, noting that these stages are specific to all Arab revolutions - according to Youssef Zidan - who divided them into categories, we are particularly interested in the phase following "the declaration". This phase includes: "repression / tension / protest / explosion / change"<sup>14</sup>. With the last phase, called "change", we ask the lingering question: Has the desired change for women in Syria occurred in the name of the Arab Spring?
- If change has occurred, has it been beneficial to the people?
- Was the Arab Spring truly representative of its name in the eyes of Syrian women writers?<sup>14</sup>
- As a form of truth-seeking, was it a vibrant and flourishing spring that fulfilled the aspirations of Arab and Muslim women, as well as non-Muslims, in the east and west of Syria? Or was it merely a source of disappointment at all levels?
- Building on the hypothesis of the second part of the last question, how are narratives of disappointment represented in contemporary Arab women's creative discourses, especially in autobiography?

After researching previous studies related to the Arab Spring, we found that they were mostly related to political, historical and philosophical analyses<sup>15</sup>. These studies were characterised by their abundance and diversity, to the extent that some even dealt with documentaries related to the Arab Spring. We found the following:

- Documentaries and the Arab Spring, by Jilali Fatima and other. *Aesthetics: An International Peer-Reviewed Journal*, University of Abdelhamid Ben Badis Mostaganem, Algeria, Volume 06, Issue 01, pages 274 to 304.

As for the field of literary studies - our focus - we have identified:

- Study: Deconstructing Authoritarian Centralities and Critiquing the Discourse of Arab Revolutions in Yasmina Khadra's Novel "The Last Night of the President", *Contemporary Studies Journal*, an International Peer-Reviewed Journal, University of Tissemsilt, Algeria, Volume 04, Issue 03, December 2020, pages 131 to 145.
- Study by Abd el Rahman Tamara, "The Narrative of Destruction: The Arab Spring in Arabic Novels", "Ribat Al-Kotoub", an electronic journal specialised in books and their issues, 1 September 2021, Rabat, Morocco, website: <https://ribatalkoutoub.com/?p=3907>

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There are other studies; however, a previous study focusing on autobiographical narratives written by Syrian women, published in the journal "Riwaq", approached the topic with a different methodology. We did not find a similar study on this topic, which allows us to claim that our research is the first to fill a research gap in this area.

The aim of this study is to uncover the truths that have occurred in Syria in particular, and in the Arab nations in general, in the name of the Arab Spring. It seeks to remove the mask from these revolutions and to rename things appropriately, especially after the cycles of the Arab Spring in the Arab nations have been completed and its results have been revealed. All the phenomena associated with the Arab Spring reveal the secrets and mysteries of these revolutions, including the exposure of the initial illusion that captivated observers and writers about the Arab Spring before its cycles were completed and its results became public. This illusion is rooted in the failure of Arab states "to listen to the voice of their people when they spoke the language of public silence charged with sad anger"<sup>16</sup>.

Women filled the streets of Syrian cities, working to create the glow of the Arab Spring through profound and heartfelt slogans, as the meaning of their words suggests. The Arab Spring seemed to be a significant achievement that, through its future results, would serve as a lifeline for the suffering Syrians and a key to salvation from the dark tunnel that every individual in this Syrian nation was experiencing. However, no one realised that the Arab Spring would lead to dark paths that would lead to countless disappointments.

Therefore, it is time to expose the flaws of the Arab Spring and give it a proper name; instead of calling it the Arab Spring, we should call it the Arab Destruction. This is evidenced by the multitude of disappointments that Syrian feminism has recorded in order to document the truths so that we do not forget, and to alert others to the illusion that has been presented as truth. In this way, we aim to tie the research thematically to the narratives of disappointment, distancing ourselves from literary studies or aesthetic questioning due to the importance of the issue for the Arab nation in general and Syria in particular.

## **2. The conundrum of the Narratives of Disappointment**

The Narratives of Disappointment is an anthology of first-hand testimonies from women who lived through the events both inside and outside Syria. These narratives were written by women, including poets, journalists, writers, short story writers and novelists, who are also activists in various movements defending women's rights. It is recorded in the pages of history that they have helped to shape what was once called the "Arab Spring", and they have helped to fan its flames, each according to her abilities and in every part of her homeland.

One of the truths we must mention is that the voices of women during the Arab Spring echoed phrases far from pragmatism, selfishness, violence and the use of force. When we read about them, we see that they came from a heart full of purity, a spirit of integrity and a sincere intention. They deeply loved their homeland, Syria, and wanted the Spring to be a

positive movement that would bring happiness to the nation and its people. However, the Spring ultimately betrayed them when women discovered - albeit late - the pitfalls of the Arab Spring, a turning point that diluted the power of the movement. As a result, their voices shifted from narratives of hope to narratives of disappointment.

Moreover, it was not of value for the writers to exhaust themselves in the search for basic premises for the narratives of disappointment, whether aesthetic or literary. The main concern of the Syrian writers was to convey their experience of the Arab Spring in a spontaneous and fluid way, to capture a living experience that would be a specific outcome of the Arab Spring, and to allow the narrative<sup>17</sup> to draw lessons from what happened. In addition, we note that the narratives of disenchantment were not monochromatic, but took different forms without a fixed manifestation, encompassing numerous contemporary creative discourses. These narratives inhabited the spirit of women's autobiographical achievements, revealing a paradoxical narrative where the aim of writing them was to confront the reader with the narratives of disappointment as an unavoidable truth, with its own merits and drawbacks.

## **Second - representations of disappointment narratives in Syrian feminist autobiographical writings:**

This research is nourished by the narration of events that autobiographical writers experienced on a daily basis during the period of the Arab Spring. This has resulted in a paradoxical narrative that we have termed "narratives of disappointment", which we can elucidate through:

### **1. Narratives of Disappointment and the Self D.S.T.R.U.C.T.O.N:**

Regarding the representation of narratives of disappointment, we refer here to the narrative of depression, a psychological state experienced by some writers at the height of the Spring crisis. This state reflects the bankruptcy of the self in terms of the inability of Arab Spring participants to continue facing challenges. Fawzat Suhair was one of them, for whom depression became the only remaining solution. After what she went through during the Spring, she was left with a lot of questions. The hardest thing for Fawzat Suhair was that her questions remained unanswered, the most important one being: "I don't know: Is a homeland ruled by waiting better than a homeland ruled by death and destruction?"<sup>18</sup>

Fawzat's questions proliferate to the point where he does not know when to stop, and with an extraordinary passion, Suhair insists on asking another question: "I want to know the meaning of home."<sup>19</sup> The journey of questioning with Suhair Fawzat in search of the truth continues. All of this is an attempt to escape the "what" and move on to the "why". This is a safe zone for the writer. However, Fawzat could not make this transition and remained in a state of confusion, unsure of the answers to her questions. As a result, her vision of certain situations during the Arab Spring became unclear.

In a moment of self-reflection during the experience of the Arab Spring, and in the absence of answers to her questions, Suhair Fawzat discovered that she had lived through the Spring aimlessly, without a convincing reason to continue living. This led to a greater psychological impact on her, as the principle states, "He who has a reason to live can often endure anything in any situation"<sup>20</sup>. However, in Fawzat's experience, reason and purpose are unclear, especially as she sees the Arab Spring leading to outcomes that do not satisfy her and that her logic rejects. Among these outcomes is the notion of a "homeland for sale", a discovery she stumbled upon by chance.

More importantly, after some introspection, Fawzat realised that she was part of this bitter reality. This led her to grasp the concept of "homeland in danger". The pain inside her deepened when she could not bring things back to the way they used to be. How could Fawzat maintain hope, small or great, as she continued her journey?

This realisation came as a shock to the writer and led to a loss of faith in the future. Those who "lose confidence in their future and in the future in general have condemned themselves to extinction. With the loss of confidence in the future, they lose their moral cohesion, allow themselves to deteriorate and become susceptible to mental and physical collapse"<sup>21</sup>.

Fawzat could not resist, endure, stand firm or continue the struggle. Exhausted to the point of incapacity, she declared: "I fell into a deep depression and I stopped everything except waiting"<sup>22</sup>, where there was no outside, no communication with others and no Arab Spring. She discovered that she was in the heart of disappointment, which she immortalised in her autobiographical narrative.

Among the narratives of disappointment is the emergence of a list of accusations against some of the Spring participants by certain voices, despite the sincerity of the struggles of those condemned. Furthermore, despite their different approaches to activism compared to others, the only aim of these condemned individuals was the happiness of the homeland. The condemnation is articulated in the autobiographical text with the discourse that states: "Anyone who talks about the mistakes of the revolutionaries is a traitor to the revolution, and anyone who remains silent is indifferent and grey, while anyone who writes about the pain of the bombed without being under fire is a liar and a hypocrite"<sup>23</sup>.

One of the results of the narratives of disappointment is amnesia. We see this in the autobiographical work of the writer and journalist Maysoun Shagrir, who turned to self-narration after her experience during the Arab Spring, from which she emerged with significant defeats, including the death of her brother and the loss of her memory. She reached a point where she felt alienated from her own self, confused between her true self and the person called Maysoun, who did not resemble her. She perceived another self; she became disoriented and disturbed. This is what she expresses in her narrative, creating the narratives of disappointment, in which the accompanying pain does not disappear.

Maysoun Shagrir made great efforts to recover the details of her memory, relying on paper and pen, but she failed at every attempt. She recounts the pain of this loss, saying: "Eight years ago, a woman who resembled me hurriedly packed her many bags, clutching her pillow filled with her wounded dreams, and left her home to take her first step into the void that had erased her features and clothed them in others that had changed so much, taking the shape of my face and soul today.

I no longer know myself; I have become a woman with a fragmented memory. Whenever I try to retrieve my image before crossing the borders, my memories shatter like glass that has fallen to the ground, its shards piling up on top of each other.

Each attempt to rearrange them only results in a new wound on the fingers of my mind, staining me and my ruins with blood”<sup>24</sup>.

Maysoun's feelings are divided between brokenness, alienation from the self, loss of memory and an inability to recognise herself, which ultimately leads to the suffering of this self, which does not resemble the writer Maysoun Shagir. This gives rise to the signs of a disappointing narrative that depicts the disintegration of the self, with the Arab Spring as both the primary cause and the ultimate reason.

On the other side of existence, alienation remains a series of alienations, as revealed in the narratives of disappointment. This bitter truth is evident to Alia Ahmed as she watches her children grow up outside the borders of their homeland and feels sad. In her autobiographical narrative she states: “We see our children growing up with identities that do not resemble ours”<sup>25</sup>, which is one of the greatest disappointments.

## **2. Narratives of Disappointment and the Discourse of Sliding Towards “The E.V.I.L.”:**

Among the narratives of disappointment is the story of trafficking with the homeland, which continues to live through the spaces of these research papers. These disappointing narratives are placed under the title “The Phase of Discovering the Voice”, where the material of this title is only recounted with bitterness. However, the truth must come out in order to avoid a permanent blindness of vision. It is noted in autobiographical accounts: “Once a young woman who had been with us disappeared. A young man told me that her last conversation with him had upset her because he had told her: ‘As the majority, we have the right to rule...’. He said this simply and confidently, as if it were a given. I stood there for a moment, not understanding what he meant by ‘we’ and ‘they’. It seemed naive that I had never asked about the sect of the demonstrators. I later learned that the girl was Alawite and the young man was Sunni”<sup>26</sup>.

At the same time, the Arab Spring led Angel to relive this disappointing experience, but in a different way. Angel, who took time out of her life to “sit at her machine, her companion on the journey, to sew copies of another flag”, explained: “I did not realise the significance of having two flags in one country that day, and then the flags multiplied”<sup>27</sup>.

Each feminist autobiographical segment reveals an important truth: the celebration of the Arab Spring and the protests against it did not come from a single source. The participants in the Spring did not share the same goals, nor did they have the same reasons or objectives. Each individual involved in the Spring had a particular cause in his or her heart. This is where the danger lies, because “a revolutionary driven by personal conditions cannot be relied upon... To sum up, a true revolutionary is not motivated by personal inclinations or individual demands; otherwise they are merely ‘noisy’ to relieve a crisis or ‘demanding’ personal interests, and they will soon settle down if their demands are met. Such individuals are not to be relied upon”<sup>28</sup>.

However, the participants in the field, both inside and outside Syria, proved that the issue was linked to personal interests that needed to be met. As a result, the outcome in the feminist autobiographical narrative became Sunni and Shia, turning the homeland into a mere collection of homelands, with the Sunni homeland and the Alawite homeland, among others, at the centre... and the rest will follow...

On the one hand, when we revisit the notion of “Sunni/Shia”, the discourse reveals early on another layer of disappointment to be added to the existing disappointments of the Arab Spring. This manifests itself in the impossibility of coexisting in the midst of identity differences between Sunni and Shia. The Syrian revolution was supposed to be “a realisation of identity in diversity”<sup>29</sup>. However, the Arab Spring has turned Syria into a focal point of competition over who can claim it as the prize of a torn and failed revolution, opening the doors to individual, sectarian and ethnic tensions, among others. At a time when the Syrian Spring should have been an experience of unity and integration, like a single hand for one homeland, it instead became a source of disappointment, divided along Sunni and Shia lines, followed by the proliferation of flags representing different factions. It is well known that a homeland has only one flag. So is the homeland for sale? Is it permissible to divide the homeland into separate nations?

This is what the narratives of disappointment, under the general title of “trafficking in the homeland”, have established. It has become clear to those who genuinely love their country that the traffickers have sold it according to their capacity for betrayal, secretly striving fiercely and without hesitation to ignite sectarian tensions and conspire to divide the homeland into sects and flags. This has revealed the true nature of the Spring to both Angel and Fawzat, leading to their disappointment with some of the participants who shared their experience. As they say, “The revolutionary is noble, not a prophet: [because] revolutionary action is only valid if it is imbued with dignity and nobility. The revolutionary seeks nothing for himself, but is a ‘dreamer’ of a promising future, and is ‘saddened’ by the condition of the people in his homeland”<sup>30</sup>.

What has happened, above all, is that the homeland has become a collection of nations with a proliferation of flags reflecting the different shades of disappointment narratives. However, on the other side of existence, some of the women of the spring have begun to develop an awareness of things and to perceive their realities, albeit accompanied by many fears and anxieties. The key is to get out of the bottleneck, out of a world of deep noise, into clarity of vision. According to George Bataille's principle in his book “Literature and Evil”, “while noise is something radical... the time has come for clarity of consciousness”<sup>31</sup>. This awareness aims to dispel the foggy vision and replace it with a clear sight that understands the essence of things and the true nature of phenomena, thus halting the machinations against the homeland from near and far. The ultimate goal is to play a single hymn entitled: “The motherland is one and belongs to all”.

Among the narratives of disappointment are those related to the story of the exploitation of genuine feelings of nationalism and citizenship. The situation for the homeland continues to deteriorate, and this time the story involves the coordinator of a fundraising event for the Syrian people. The writer recounted: “My husband, a visual artist and oud player, was invited to perform at a fundraising event for the Syrian people in one of the most luxurious restaurants in Laval. The coordinator of the event announced that she had raised ten thousand Canadian dollars. When I asked her later how she had managed to transfer the money despite the Canadian government's restrictions on sending money to Syria, she replied that she had given



it to someone here who had connections to her family there. As I waited for her to elaborate on how the money would reach the Syrian people, she smiled confidently and said, "Those closest to you are the most deserving of kindness"<sup>32</sup>.

A thoughtful pause on the phrase "those closest are most deserving of kindness" reveals the clear danger that threatens the Syrian revolution and, by extension, the Arab Spring as a model. It refers to the threat to the noble principles on which the Syrian revolution was founded and the essential goals that are intertwined with the interests of the citizen and the homeland, replacing them with a collection of scattered individual desires characterised by disagreement and division.

### 3. Tales of disappointment: "W.A.R" instead of LOVE:

The Arab self imagined the Arab Spring as a rosy dream that would surely be positive, as it would liberate every Arab individual from the dark tunnels of the present, along with the deep turmoil it had created. Some people, driven by their pure morals and noble spirits, supported the Arab Spring by applauding and expressing hope, among other things. However, the "Arab Spring" "did not blossom as many expected; instead it turned into an 'Arab Winter'"<sup>33</sup>. This is the basis of the arguments presented in the narratives of disenchantment, starting with the writer Angel Al-Shaair. She had grown accustomed to spending her time at home between sewing, cooking and writing, until one day she decided to write a novel about her daughter, who had been arrested during the spring protests. But the writer stopped halfway and, ironically, Angel was unable to complete her novel and tore up all her unfinished writings. The reason for this action is the narrative of disappointment that emerged from the Arab Spring, which Angel Al-Shaair addressed in detail in her autobiographical work entitled "Love in the Time of War".

Among the narratives of disappointment is the account of bodies scattered, dispersed or piled up, whether on the streets or in coffins, here or there. In the streets there was "... drowning in a sea of ... piled bodies ... across the map of the homeland"<sup>34</sup>.

The stories of disappointment continue, including the story of death, particularly the death of Maysoun Shagir's brother. She states: "The foolish bullets that pierced my brother's body, the most peaceful man in the world, and his pale face in the coffin, I don't remember the colour of his eyes since he closed them then, but I vividly remember the colour of his white heart and the brilliance of his laughter that hangs in the air I breathe wherever I am"<sup>35</sup>.

As for Alia Ahmed, this time she focused her autobiographical text on the smell of death in every corner of the homeland, telling us: "The milk in my breasts dried up with grief and pain after seeing scenes of children in the massacre of the village... They were burned in front of the 'civilised world'. That little child, burnt under the tree, felt like my child, whom I hold in my arms. My soul can no longer bear the massacres that have become daily news"<sup>36</sup>.

Among the stories of disappointment is Alia Ahmed's account of blood, which we will explore in an autobiographical section entitled "Blood": "The nights were heavy; I found myself in blood-stained streets, running while holding my child. The sounds of gunfire and the cries of the tortured followed me, and terror woke me from one nightmare only to throw me into another. Every day, the smell of blood and the news confirmed that this was not a nightmare, but a reality documented by the rising number of martyrs and prisoners of the revolution, which increased every day"<sup>37</sup>.

This and more is what Tamara Shagir affirmed in her autobiographical text when she repeated: "Tomorrow will be better, but this beautiful tomorrow has not come. Every day there are new victims and every evening brings a bloody daily toll"<sup>38</sup>. The end result is that the Syrian revolution, which was carried out in the name of the Arab Spring, has "turned into a regression accompanied by the wailing of mothers... and the days passed with bitter repetition and exhaustion"<sup>39</sup>, leading to an electrified internal atmosphere that generated a system of hatred, with numerous consequences ranging from the spread of corpses and bloodshed to the spread of death here and there in all the wounded lands of Syria.

The narratives of disappointment herald only one thing: the narrative of "entanglement in violence"<sup>40</sup>, where the question will remain suspended on the pages of human history: "Why do cities consume their inhabitants?"<sup>41</sup>.

The narrative of bodies piled up day after day, along with blood and death, from the sea to the Gulf in general and Syria in particular, represents a high price that Angel Al-Shaair could no longer bear. It delineated the false boundaries of things and presented a deceptive essence that deviated from the truth and blinded each individual to reality. The ego has had a profound experience with the idea of the Arab Spring, perceiving it as absolute good through a one-sided vision, neglecting even for a moment the dark side of the Arab Spring. This, in our view, reflects the perspective of the Arab self during the Spring, based on its complicity with the idea of not accepting the full truth of things. Awakening from this state can only come after a powerful shock that restores consciousness to its primary function, prompting a renewed search for the truth of things and a thorough examination from all angles.

While Angel Al-Shaair initially saw Spring as the embodiment of Light, her perspective shifted before she wrote her autobiography. The fog of vision lifted and the story of love replaced the story of disappointment. Thus, her autobiography, "Love in the Time of War", became the magic remedy for healing the wounds of the "Arab Spring". The writer explains: "I started looking for a new beginning... I turned to writing in a different direction than war. I decided to write about love... which stopped the war between men and women, humanised the savage and redefined the borders of Damascus, Beirut and Sweida, redesigned humanity and humanised sexuality and its environment"<sup>42</sup>.

### Third: Beyond the conundrum of the Spring

Based on the partial results we have achieved in each narrative of the feminist autobiographies on the Arab Spring, we can say that the Spring is nothing but a collective effort to create a system of disappointment through a deception called the Arab Spring - a name that is misleading. It is enough for the Spring to be a fatal disappointment for all Arab aspirations and hopes at the beginning of the new millennium. This is confirmed by the thematic analysis of the autobiographical texts. We should remember that the Arab Spring, for which Syrian women took to the streets to demand change in the hope of a

beautiful tomorrow, even more beautiful than today, has produced alternatives that are unbelievable, contrary to all the aspirations or hopes that women had from the Arab Spring. This is clear from the autobiographers' accounts, where life has been replaced by death, blood and scattered limbs here and there. There is nothing in the Syrian scene but the "establishment of a culture of hatred between individuals and peoples". Everything that is rejected becomes a heavy burden on the soul, and as the space of rejection widens, so do the tongues of hatred within a given identity... Therefore, hatred is different from mere dislike or intolerance; it is a cold and deliberate emotion aimed at erasing the existence of an enemy, be it a person, a people, a culture, a religion or a language..."<sup>43</sup>. Thus the manifestations of negation multiply among death, corpses and bloodshed...

Instead of stability, there was chaos and turmoil; instead of happiness, there was grief, pain, loss and alienation. Instead of security, citizens lived in insecurity and danger, alongside overwhelming feelings of fear and dread about what has happened, what is happening and what will happen - everything and nothing. This is just one of a series of disappointments revealed to us by the Syrian feminist autobiography, in which the spring serves as a path of decline, leading violently to a "terrible collapse of the security situation... shocking setbacks and deviations in the course of the revolution, which saw its waters disperse and turn into a tumult"<sup>44</sup>. In the midst of all this, in Syria and in all the Arab countries that have experienced the events of the Arab Spring, the only thing that has been confirmed by the Syrian self is the insistence on "aborting the revolution and perpetuating the turmoil"<sup>45</sup>.

Many negative results, in conclusion, outline the disappointment of women in the Arab Spring. To confirm our assertions regarding the reality of this disappointment experienced by Syrian women during the Spring, we recall a text written by Saleh Fakhri in his book on the Arab revolutions, published under the title: "The First Arabs Now: After the Revolutions". His remarks emphasise a single conclusion: that the Arab Spring was merely a movement that created a system of disappointment at the beginning of the new millennium. From his testimony, he states: "Ongoing events do not suggest that the Arab revolutions and uprisings have achieved the desired results for which they were initiated. What is clear is that the Arab world has entered a state of instability, a struggle for legitimacy and uncertainty about the future"<sup>46</sup>.

John R. echoes this earlier statement when he discusses what might come after the Arab Spring and whether intellectual vigour can offer insights into what will happen after the recorded disappointments of the Arab revolutions. From John R's alarming comments, he states: "The Arab Spring has been a tragic, colossal failure. All the indicators suggest that what follows will be far worse than what preceded it... The painful events that have taken place so far have indeed caused an enormous amount of chaos and violence, making the lives of ordinary, innocent people more miserable and wretched than before"<sup>47</sup>.

Thus, the Arab Spring in general and the Syrian Spring in particular are only the beginning of a series of countless disappointments that have damaged nations, identities and emotions, of which Syria is a prime example.

### Conclusion:

After the gathering has dispersed and the storyteller has left, and the spectacle has ended with the curtain falling on the Spring performances, all that remains to be seen and heard by the people are the narratives of disappointment that serve as a testament to the failures left behind by the Spring. These experiences were lived by women, including writers, storytellers, novelists, poets and activists involved in well-known Arab and global movements for the cause of Arab women. They have woven these experiences into their narratives - novels, stories, plays and autobiographies - creating creative texts that immortalise disappointment through a poignant portrayal of its negatives and tragedies. They outline the main lines of an unwanted and alien identity, where war replaces love and one homeland becomes many, involving the trafficking of homeland and the exploitation of genuine feelings of nationalism and citizenship.

The women of the spring resorted to storytelling in the hope that narrative could heal them, while at the same time they persistently sought to avoid conflict with others, for they paid a high price for the spring - an exorbitant one for many of them. Suhair Fawzat's journey culminated in a policy of running away from everyone, choosing melancholy as a new home for her true self, while Maysoun Shagir lost her brother and her memory. Alia Ahmed chose to flee beyond the borders of her homeland, and Angel Al-Shaair remained alone in line, repeating the anthem of love as a substitute for war, urging everyone to adopt it as a healing antidote to the wounds and suffering inflicted by the Arab Spring. The only remaining merit of these research papers is to embody the role of the narrator, confirming and substantiating the account of disappointment in all its aspects, as we narrate to contribute to the awareness of the collective conscience after reaching a stage of narrative aging.

### Research footnotes:

1. Fathi Al-Miskini, and other. *The Arab Revolutions. A Non-Autobiographical Narrative*, Jadawel for Publishing, Translation and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2013, p. 24.
2. Fathi Al-Miskini, *The Arab Revolutions. A Non-Autobiographical Narrative*, p. 11.
3. According to Faisal Abdul Ghafar, the Arab Spring revolutions fall into two categories: the first includes those in which the people succeeded in overthrowing the regime, such as in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. The second category consists of the protests and internal unrest that took place in the remaining countries mentioned in the text, which failed to overthrow the ruling regime. See: Faisal Muhammad Abdul Ghafar, *The Arab Spring\**, Al-Janadriyah for Publishing and Distribution, Amman, Jordan, 1st edition, 2016, p. 10.
4. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2013, p. 15.
5. Definitions of the term Arab Spring include this text, which states: "It is the widespread peaceful protests, demonstrations and popular uprisings that began in Tunisia in 2010, specifically in the city of Sidi Bouzid, after the

- Tunisian youth Muhammad Bouazizi set himself on fire in protest against the prevailing situation. This spark quickly spread to many Arab countries. Faisal Mohammad Abdul Ghafar, *The Arab Spring*, p. 9.
6. Al-Hawari Belhaj, *The Arab Spring Revolutions: Causes and Results*, Journal of Legal Studies, an international peer-reviewed journal, Saida University, Algeria, vol. 9, no. 2, December 2022, p. 477.
  7. Al-Hawari Belhaj, *The Arab Spring Revolutions: Causes and Results*, p. 478.
  8. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, p. 10.
  9. Bachir Khalef, *Hymns in the Presence of Ugliness - Flash Fiction*, Dar Al-Kalima, Adrar, Algeria, 1st edition, 2017, p. 49.
  10. Um Al-Zeen Bensheikha Al-Miskini, *Wounded by the Sky*, Jadawel for Publishing, Translation and Distribution, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2012.
  11. One definition of autobiography is: "All aspects of the author's or creator's personal history in the light of his or her personal and non-personal memories, as well as his or her literary or artistic production, highlighting the problems of childhood and the emotional shocks and influences that compelled him or her to write, as well as the circumstances of the environment in which he or she grew up, his or her level of private and public culture, the historical period in which he or she lived, as well as historical documents not written by him or her." Samir Sa'id Hijazi, *Dictionary of Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Dar Al-Afaq Al-Arabiya, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2001, p. 24.
  12. Riwaq Maysalon - Political and Cultural Studies, *The Arab Spring After Ten Years - Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal published by the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, pp. 203-236.
  13. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, p. 12.
  14. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, p. 11.
  15. According to the references used in our research, we find the article by Al-Hawari Belhaj, *The Arab Spring Revolutions: Causes and Results*, as well as the books by Fathi Al-Miskini and Youssef Zidan, which deal with the Arab Spring in the philosophical literature. For political analysis, we have Hassan Mohammad Al-Zain's book *The Arab Spring: The Last Operations of the Greater Middle East*, Dar Al-Qalam Al-Jadid, Beirut, Lebanon, 1st edition, 2013. All these studies are mentioned in detail in our research; see: the list of sources and references for these academic works.
  16. Fathi Al-Miskini, *The Arab Revolutions. A Non-Autobiographical Narrative*, p. 25.
  17. In contemporary literary writing, the genre of the novel has become intertwined with autobiographical literature, leading to an overlap in some terms among scholars, to the extent that we find them in both novels and autobiographies. This is evidenced by the fact that the latter often "mixes with the art of the novel in many writers' works". See: Rabia Muftah, *The Age of Arab Narrative: Readings in Short Stories and Novels*, General Authority for Cultural Palaces, no date, 2014, p. 7.
  18. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", *Riwaq Maysalon, The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 213.
  19. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", vol. 2, p. 208.
  20. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, translated by Talat Mansour, Dar Al-Qalam, Kuwait, 1st edition, 1982, p. 107.
  21. Viktor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, p. 105.
  22. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", vol. 2, p. 216.
  23. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", vol. 2, p. 216.
  24. Maysaa Shagir, "Flickers of a Dim Memory," *Riwaq Maysalon, The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 224.
  25. Alia Ahmed, "The Revolution Between the Pain of Memory and the Birth Pangs of the Future", *Riwaq Maysalon, The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 220.
  26. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", vol. 2, pp. 214-215.
  27. Angel Al-Shahaair, *Love in the Time of War*, *Riwaq Maysalon, The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 203.
  28. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, pp. 12-13.
  29. Ahmed Abdul Halim Atiyah, *Living Together: Readings in the Thought of Fathi Al-Treki*, Dar Al-Thaqafa Al-Arabiya, Cairo, Egypt, no date, 2008, dedication page.
  30. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, p. 14.
  31. George Bataille, *Literature and Evil*, translated by Hussein Ajja, Dar Suttur for Publishing and Distribution, 1st edition, 2018, p. 5.
  32. Suhair Fawzat, "The Revolution Was Not a Choice but a Deferred Natural Result", vol. 2, p. 216.
  33. Riwaq Maysalon, *The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons*, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 146.
  34. Angel Al-Shahaair, *Love in the Time of War*, vol. 2, p. 205.
  35. Maysaa Shagir, "Flickers of a Dim Memory", vol. 2, p. 226.

36. Alia Ahmed, "The Revolution Between the Pain of Memory and the Birth Pangs of the Future," vol. 2, p. 219.
37. Alia Ahmed, "The Revolution Between the Pain of Memory and the Birth Pangs of the Future," vol. 2, p. 218.
38. Tamara Shagir, "We dared to dream", Riwaq Maysalon, The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Pathways, Outcomes, and Horizons, quarterly journal of the Maysalon Foundation for Culture, Translation, and Publishing, issue three, July 2021, vol. 2, p. 211.
39. Youssef Zidan, *Labyrinths of Illusion*, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2013, p. 9.
40. Riwaq Maysalon, *The Arab Spring After Ten Years: Paths, Outcomes and Horizons*, vol. 2, p. 184.
41. Angel Al-Shahaair, *Love in the Time of War*, vol. 2, p. 205.
42. Angel Al-Shahaair, *Love in the Time of War*, vol. 2, p. 205.
43. Fathi Al-Miskini, *Migration to Humanity*, Al-Ikhtilaf Publications, Algeria, 1st edition, 2016, p. 33.
44. Youssef Zidan, *Labyrinths of Illusion*, p. 9.
45. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, p. 157.
46. Fakhri Saleh, *The Arab Revolutions: Intellectuals, Authority and Peoples*, Dar Al-Ain for Publishing, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2013, p. 11.
47. John R. Bradley, *After the Arab Spring: How Islamists Hijacked the Middle Eastern Revolutions*, translated by Shaimaa Abd Al-Hakim Taha, Hindawi Foundation, United Kingdom, 2013, p. 150.

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3. Bachir Khalef, *Hymns in the Presence of Ugliness: Flash Fiction*, Dar Al-Kalima, Adrar, Algeria, 1st edition, 2017.
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14. Youssef Zidan, *The Jurisprudence of the Revolution*, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2013.
15. Youssef Zidan, *Labyrinths of Illusion*, Dar Al-Shorouk, Cairo, Egypt, 1st edition, 2013.

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1. Al-Hawari Belhaj, *The Arab Spring Revolutions: Causes and Results*, Journal of Legal Studies, an international peer-reviewed journal, Saida University, Algeria, vol. 9, no. 2, December 2022, pp. 438-469.
2. Asmaa Al-Ayeb, *Deconstructing Authoritarian Centralities and Critiquing the Discourse of the Arab Revolutions in Yasmina Khadra's Novel The Last Night of the President*, Contemporary Studies Journal, an international peer-reviewed journal, Tissemsilt University, Algeria, vol. 4, no. 3, December 2020, pp. 131-145.
3. Fatima Djilali et al., *Documentary Films and the Arab Spring*, Aesthetics Journal, an international peer-reviewed journal, Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University, Mostaganem, Algeria, vol. 6, no. 1.



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