



Kuwaiti Social Reality in the Drama Series *As-Safqah*: A Literature Sociological Analysis of Alan Swingewood's

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the representation of Kuwaiti social reality in the drama series *As-Safqah* (*The Exchange*) based on Alan Swingewood's sociological perspective on literature. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method using the "listen and take notes" technique to collect data in the form of dialogues that represent the social conditions of Kuwaiti society in the late 1980s. The data were analyzed through the stages of data condensation, data presentation, and the drawing and verification of conclusions. The results of the study indicate that the series *As-Safqah* represents three main aspects of the social reality of Kuwaiti society. First, social structure, which includes gender inequality, restrictions on women's autonomy, and the influence of global economic and geopolitical dynamics. Second, social stigma, which is reflected through the labeling and discrimination against divorced women and children from divorced families. Third, family relationships, which encompass the dynamics of post-divorce relationships, the division of parental responsibilities, changes in parenting patterns, and the psychosocial impact of divorce on women and children. These findings indicate that the series *As-Safqah* not only represents the social reality of Kuwaiti society but also serves as a social critique of patriarchal culture and gender inequality during Kuwait's modernization.

Keywords: social reality, drama series, sociological literature

Realitas Sosial Kuwait dalam Serial Drama *As-Safqah*: Analisis Sosiologi Sastra Alan Swingewood

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis representasi realitas sosial masyarakat Kuwait dalam serial drama *As-Safqah* (*The Exchange*) berdasarkan perspektif sosiologi sastra Alan Swingewood. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif kualitatif dengan teknik simak dan catat untuk mengumpulkan data berupa dialog-dialog yang merepresentasikan kondisi sosial masyarakat Kuwait pada akhir dekade 1980-an. Data dianalisis melalui tahapan kondensasi data, penyajian data, serta penarikan dan verifikasi kesimpulan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa serial *As-Safqah* merepresentasikan tiga aspek utama realitas sosial masyarakat Kuwait. Pertama, struktur sosial, yang meliputi ketimpangan gender, pembatasan terhadap otonomi perempuan, serta pengaruh dinamika ekonomi global dan geopolitik. Kedua, stigma sosial, yang tercermin melalui pelabelan dan diskriminasi terhadap perempuan pascacerai serta anak dari keluarga bercerai. Ketiga, hubungan keluarga, yang mencakup dinamika relasi pascaperceraian, pembagian tanggung jawab orang tua, perubahan pola pengasuhan, serta dampak psikososial perceraian terhadap perempuan dan anak. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa serial *As-Safqah* tidak hanya merepresentasikan realitas sosial masyarakat Kuwait, tetapi juga berfungsi sebagai kritik sosial terhadap budaya patriarki dan ketimpangan gender pada masa modernisasi Kuwait.

Keywords: realitas sosial, serial drama, sosiologi sastra

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INTRODUCTION

Literary works cannot be separated from the social context of the society in which they originated. As Wellek and Warren (2014) argue, literature is a reflection of social life, encompassing various aspects such as economics, politics, culture, and social issues. As it develops, literary works are no longer limited to written forms such as novels, short stories, or poetry, but also extend to audiovisual forms such as films and drama series, which have a broader reach (Ratna, 2015). According to Damono (2020), literary works function not only as entertainment but also as a medium for understanding social conditions, values, and the dynamics of social life during a particular period. This aligns with the sociology of literature, which views literary works as a reflection of social structures and the collective experiences of society (Faruk, 2012). Social reality is not directly present but is re-presented through artistic constructions within literary works. In this context, literature is often viewed as a mirror of society, reflecting the values, conflicts, and dynamics that develop within it. Kuwait, as a country in the Middle East, has unique social dynamics, particularly in the context of modernization and globalization. Gender construction has significantly influenced women's status in Kuwaiti society. Women are marginalized, meaning they cannot participate outside their domestic roles. However, men are given the freedom to manage their lives as financial controllers and make major family decisions. As a result, Kuwaiti men occupy a patriarchal position in society, while women are confined to domestic roles with limited freedom and opportunities (Hidayati & Sihab, 2017).

Kuwait has undergone significant social transformation since the discovery of oil in the mid-20th century (Longva, 2006). This discovery is generally recognized as a factor influencing the dynamics of Middle Eastern countries, particularly in the Gulf states of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Qatar,

the United Arab Emirates, Iraq, and Bahrain. This includes social transformations regarding women's roles in Kuwait, influenced by the discovery of oil in 1938. This transformation introduced new concepts related to women's social activities, including participation in the workforce, the exercise of political rights, and encouraged Kuwaiti women to embrace modernization. The discovery of oil is one of the few indicators of social transformation in the role of Kuwaiti women. This transformation has gradually empowered Kuwaiti women to improve their social status in society (Hidayati & Sihab, 2017). Although the number of women working has increased, they still face challenges stemming from long-standing traditions that remain strong in Kuwait. Changing times have not immediately changed the way most people view women's independence and their new role in the workplace. For example, many men still practice polygamy, indicating the dominance of old values. Furthermore, women also face discrimination in legal matters, particularly regarding divorce laws and the implementation of court decisions that often do not favor them (Ghabra, 1997).

This study examines the drama series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange) with a focus on the social reality of Kuwaiti society. The analysis was conducted using Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature approach, which has three main orientations: literature as a reflection of the age, literature in relation to the author's production process, and literature in relation to the history of reader reception (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). The discussion focuses on the first concept, namely literature as a reflection of the condition of society in a certain period. This perspective views literary works as socio-cultural documents that represent social structures, power relations, social conflicts, and cultural changes that developed in society at that time. This study focuses on three dimensions of Kuwaiti social reality: social structure, social stigma, and family relationships. According to



Soekanto, social structure is a relatively fixed pattern of relationships that regulates the position and role of individuals in society (Soekanto & M.A, 2013). Social stigma is a negative attribute attached to certain individuals or groups, resulting in labeling, stereotyping, and social discrimination (Goffman, 2009). Family relationships are understood as a system of interactions between family members, encompassing the division of roles, responsibilities, parenting patterns, and emotional relationships between family members (Goode, 1991).

Based on this background description, this study aims to answer the question of how the social reality of Kuwaiti society is represented in the series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange). It focuses on three main issues: how are social structure, social stigma, and family relations in Kuwaiti society, particularly in the context of post-divorce and social change, represented in the series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange)? In line with this research problem formulation, this study aims to describe the representation of Kuwaiti social structure, the social stigma that develops within Kuwaiti society, and reveal the representation of family relations depicted in the series. The analysis is conducted using Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature perspective, which views literary works as reflections of social conditions in a particular historical period. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of sociological studies of literature, particularly regarding the application of Alan Swingewood's perspective to audiovisual literary works as representations of social realities. Furthermore, this research is expected to enrich studies of Middle Eastern literature and culture. Practically, the results of this study are expected to serve as a reference source for researchers and academics studying audiovisual works through a sociological approach to literature, while also providing a more comprehensive understanding of social structure, social stigma, and family relations in Kuwaiti society.

This research is based on the view that literary works are cultural products closely related to the social life of society. In the context of modern media development, drama serials, as a form of audiovisual literature, can also be understood as cultural texts that represent the values, ideologies, and social realities of a particular society (Endaswara, 2013). Stuart Hall explains that representation is the process of producing meaning through language, symbols, and signs used to represent social reality in a particular form (Hall, 1997). Social reality in literary works is not presented directly, but rather through a process of selection, construction, and interpretation by the creator. The concept of social reality refers to the living conditions of a society, encompassing social relations, value systems, power structures, and interaction patterns that develop within a society. In this study, the social reality of Kuwaiti society is understood through the representations presented in the series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange).

One such social reality emerges in the conversation between Farida and Omar, her ex-husband, discussing the education of their daughter, Jude.

Farida : Mrs. Badra said you refuse to give your daughter an education.

Omar : Private schools are only for arrogant people. My daughter is not arrogant. Besides, what's wrong with public schools? Look at my achievements.

Farida : You should have told me. Why did you surprise me like this?

Omar : If I had told you, I wouldn't have enjoyed this scene.

This dialogue represents the Kuwaiti social reality of power relations in post-divorce families, particularly regarding decision-making regarding children. The dialogue demonstrates how divorce does not necessarily end male dominance in family relationships. Omar unilaterally determines Jude's educational decisions without involving

Farida, while also using his authority as a father to shift financial responsibility and maintain control over his ex-wife. Farida is depicted as being in a vulnerable position due to her limited access to important decisions regarding her child and the lack of structural protections to negotiate her rights equally. Furthermore, the storyline, which highlights competition on the stock market following the collapse of Souk Al-Manakh, reveals the reality of social stratification and dependence on networks of relationships within the Kuwaiti economic system in the late 1980s.

Research on the series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange) has been conducted from various perspectives. The study, entitled "Gender Injustice in Dan Mazer's Film *The Exchange*," by Ade Inas Salsabillah, Yayan Rahtikawati, and Rohanda (2025), analyzes forms of gender injustice using a liberal feminist perspective and finds marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, and restrictions on women's freedom of movement. Another study entitled "Gender Discrimination in The Drama Series *The Exchange*: A Sara Mills Critical Discourse Analysis" by Wardah & Surur (2025) reveals various forms of gender discrimination through Sara Mills' critical discourse analysis such as marginalization, stereotyping, subordination, and double burdens experienced by female characters in male-dominated workplaces. Meanwhile, Herson Kadir et al.'s (2025) research using Alan Swingewood's sociological perspective in the novel *Seporsi Mie Ayam Sebelum Mati* shows that literary works can represent social realities in the form of poverty, social injustice, and crime as a reflection of societal conditions. However, these studies still focus on gender issues or on Indonesian literary works. There has been no research that examines this series using a literary sociology perspective to see the work as a representation of social reality in Arabic television series. This research presents novelty by analyzing the reflection of society using Alan Swingewood's

sociological perspective of literature through three aspects, namely social structure, social stigma, and family relationships, so that it not only explains the experiences of the female characters, but also represents the social conditions of Kuwaiti society in the late 1980s more comprehensively.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method, as it is based on data description (Ahmadi, 2019; Razak, 2017; Abubakar, 2023). Qualitative research, according to Sugiyono (2016) in Alaslan et al., (2023), is a type of research used to examine conditions in natural settings. This method was chosen because the focus of the research is on revealing the representation of the reality of Kuwaiti society as presented in the drama series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange). The study employed Alan Swingewood's sociological approach to literature, specifically one that views literary works as reflections of social reality. Swingewood asserted that literary works cannot be separated from the social conditions that give rise to them and can be used as a source for understanding social structures, values, and conflicts that develop within a given society (Laurenson & Swingewood, 1972). Using this approach, the drama series is analyzed as a literary work that represents the social reality of Kuwaiti society.

The data sources used in this research are dialogue and storylines taken directly from the drama series "*As-Safqah*" (The Exchange) by Nadia Ahmad, Anne Sobel, and Adam Sobel, released on Netflix on February 8, 2023. Set in Kuwait in 1987, the series follows two women struggling to build careers on the male-dominated Kuwaiti stock exchange. Season 1 of the series consists of six episodes with a total running time of 305 minutes, each episode lasting approximately 50 minutes. The data collection technique used listening and note-taking. Data collection was conducted by repeatedly watching the series to understand the so-



cial context, conflicts, and values ??presented. During this process, researchers transcribed dialogue and recorded scenes depicting the social realities of Kuwaiti society. This note-taking technique was used to organize the data for easy classification according to the research focus (Fiantika et al., 2022).

Data analysis was carried out through four stages. The first stage began with data reduction, which is the process of selecting and focusing the collected data in accordance with the objectives and formulation of the research problem. The next stage is the presentation of data in the form of descriptive and structured presentations. Data presentation is done by describing dialogues and scenes in the drama series that contain social aspects. Next, in the interpretation stage, the data were analyzed using Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature approach. In Swingewood's view, literary works are both social reflections and social documents that record social structures, values, and conflicts in a particular society (Wahyudi, 2013). The drama series was analyzed by placing it within the social context of Kuwaiti society, so that the representation of characters, conflicts, and storylines are understood as representations of the social conditions that underlie the birth of the work. The final stage of data analysis is drawing conclusions.

RESULTS

The As-Safqah series depicts several aspects of social reality in Kuwaiti society in the late 1980s. According to Alan Swingewood, literary sociologists, literary works function as social documents that depict society at a particular moment. Therefore, the various experiences of the characters in the series can be understood as depictions of changing social conditions in Kuwait. The analysis shows that social structure, social stigma, and family relationships are three main aspects of the social reality depicted. The experiences of the

female characters, particularly Farida and Munira, as they adapt to a social structure still dominated by patriarchal values, are influenced by these three interrelated factors. This classification, based on recurring patterns of representation in the story, demonstrates how the series portrays Kuwaiti society more holistically.

1. Social Structure

Social structure is the reciprocal relationship between social positions and the roles held by each individual or group within that structure (Erningsih et al., 2024). Social structure forms the basis for the formation of interaction patterns because it determines the rights, obligations, and position of each individual in society. Thus, social structure is not only related to social stratification but also encompasses the legal system, work organization, power relations, economic conditions, and the influence of the political environment that shapes social life (Darakay & Murwani, 2021). From the perspective of Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature, the social structure present in literary works represents the societal reality that underlies the creation of the work. Through characters, settings, dialogue, and plot, literary works can show how a society organizes power relations, the division of social roles, and prevailing value systems. Therefore, an analysis of the social structure in the As-Safqah series examines how the series represents the social conditions of Kuwaiti society in the late 1980s, particularly in relation to male dominance in the public sphere, the legal system, work culture, and the influence of economic and geopolitical conditions on people's lives. This representation is evident in the following data:

Data 1: Episode 1: 39:07-38:57

Male guest 1: Who is that?

Male guest 2: How can he drive?

Episode 1: 41:03-40:48

Dad: Roshen isn't here. She's on leave.

Farida: Can you drive me?

Data 2: Episode 2: 7:46-7:01 PM

Khalifa: The Clearinghouse key, huh?

Farida: Do you know where it is? What's going on?

Khalifa: The Clearinghouse is a department.

Farida: What?

Khalifa: I mean, it's not a real place with a door. It's a joke. It's okay. They do that to every new employee. It's a silly welcome. Don't be sad. You know? I've never seen a new employee try so hard to find it. That shows you're efficient.

Data 3: Episode 5: 31:52-31:36

Dad: You probably heard about the stock market crash on Wall Street in New York. It might be down 100 points. Investors are worried about America stepping in and launching a missile attack. If that happens, we'll have a crisis. Data 4: Episode 2: 9:36-9:07

Farida: I was just thinking maybe we could have a women's restroom here.

Amir: [laughs] Honestly, I just found out from you that there's no women's restroom here.

Amir: We don't have any authority over the exchange administration.

2. Social Stigma

Social stigma is a negative assessment or labeling that society assigns to individuals or groups deemed to deviate from prevailing social norms. Stigma is formed through prejudice that develops within society and can lead to stereotypes, exclusion, and discriminatory actions against individuals with certain identities. As a result, individuals experiencing stigma often receive differential treatment and experience obstacles in their social lives (Prastika, 2022). From the perspective of Alan Swingewood's sociology of literature, social stigma is part of social reality that can be represented through literary works. Through dialogue, conflict, and interactions between characters, the series demonstrates how society morally judges

women who are deemed deviant, such as those who divorce, work in a male-dominated environment, or choose a life that deviates from social expectations. This stigma is not only experienced by women as individuals; it also extends to their family members, especially children, demonstrating that stigma functions as a mechanism of social control that impacts both personal life and social relationships. Based on the analysis, social stigma in the series is represented through labeling of women after divorce, negative judgments of women working in the public sphere, the use of religious legitimacy as a basis for moral judgment, and the impact of stigma felt by children and families. Thus, the *As-Safqah* series not only depicts stigma as an individual experience, but also as a social reality that reinforces gender inequality in Kuwaiti society.

Data 1: Episode 1: 39:30-39:11

Guest 1: Divorced in the morning and partying at night.

Data 2: Episode 2: 38:03-37:40

Girl 1: Did you know her father divorced her mother?

Girl 2: Her father abandoned her. He doesn't even want to see her.

Girl 1: She's probably ashamed. Her daughter thinks she's better than everyone else because she goes to a British school.

Data 3: Episode 5: 11:17-10:53

Jude: They say mom is going to hell.

Farida: Why?

Jude: Because my mother doesn't wear the hijab, is divorced, and works with a man.

3. Family Relationships

Family relationships are a form of social interaction that occurs within the family institution through the division of roles, communication, re-



sponsibilities, and the process of socializing values to each family member. The family functions not only as a biological unit but also as the primary social institution that shapes an individual's character, identity, and understanding of the social reality around them. Relationships between family members are influenced by cultural values, social norms, and social changes developing within society (Ichsan, 2018). In the *As-Safqah* series, family relationships are presented as a space that demonstrates how social change, divorce, economic demands, and geopolitical conflict affect domestic life. Farida's character is not only depicted as a woman facing discrimination in the workplace, but also as a mother, daughter, and family member who must simultaneously fulfill various roles. Through the relationship between Farida and Jude and their family, the series demonstrates that the family is the primary space for the socialization of values, emotional support, and the emergence of various consequences of social change in Kuwaiti society.

Data 1: Episode 1: 40:45-40:09

Farida: Today in court, were Jude's expenses discussed?

Dad: May I know why?

Farida: He brought me the tuition bill earlier. The thing is, Omar knows school is important. And it's the only thing stable in his life right now.

Dad: But you can take care of yourself and your own expenses. You don't need to depend on anyone else.

Farida: What's the alternative?

Dad: You can get a job.

Farida: What should I mention on my resume? Divorced? Unemployed for 13 years?

Data 2: Episode 1: 24:24-23:35

Farida: Well, since Jude's father and I have, you know, separated, the tuition bills should go di-

rectly to him. I'm sure he'll pay the balance immediately.

Mrs. Badra: I see, but our bursar did reach out to Mr. Haswi last week, and he told us that Jude's mother would handle tuition. So, a misunderstanding indeed.

Data 3: Episode 3: 9:07-8:36

Farida: Come on, honey. Please. It's Grandma's 80th birthday. She's 80. This is important. We have to make her happy.

Jude: You only care about other people?

Farida: What?

Jude: I've given up everything. I gave up my house, my friends, my school. I even gave up the sheep.

Farida: What do you mean? You're the most important thing to me.

DISCUSSION

Social Structure

Data 1

These two dialogues represent the social structure of Kuwaiti society, which is still influenced by traditional gender roles regarding access to mobility in public spaces. The male guest's surprised reaction to Munira reflects a regional patriarchal culture that views women's independent mobility as a deviation from prevailing gender norms. In contrast to Munira, Farida is depicted as still dependent on her driver and father for mobility. This contrast demonstrates that women's access to autonomy is not solely determined by gender but also influenced by life experiences, social position, and the individual's ability to negotiate the patriarchal structures surrounding them. From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene demonstrates the function of literary works as reflections of the underlying social structures of society (Wahyudi, 2013). These reactions arise from the patriarchal culture of Gulf societies, which has historically restricted women's movement in the public sphere and positioned men as companions and controllers of women's mobility. During the same pe-

riod, Gulf countries exhibited similar tendencies in regulating women's mobility, one example of which was Saudi Arabia's policy of banning women from driving until 2018. This ban was based on a guardianship system and social constructs that viewed women's mobility without male supervision as a threat to the traditional social order (Lubis & Ependi, 2023).

Data 2

This data represents the social structure of Kuwaiti society through organizational culture in a male-dominated workplace. The dialogue between Farida and Khalifa demonstrates that in addition to formal rules, informal rules exist, such as the tradition of teasing new employees by searching for keys to a non-existent clearinghouse. Farida's position as a new woman in the stock market environment makes this experience more complex socially than just a joke between employees. As a woman entering a professional space traditionally dominated by men, Farida is required not only to master technical skills but also to understand the masculine cultural codes that have long governed interactions in that workplace. From Alan's perspective, literary works not only reflect the social structure of society but also record the daily practices that maintain the continuity of that structure (Wahyudi, 2013). This is relevant to the social conditions in Kuwait in the late 1980s when women's participation in the modern workforce began to increase in education, health, and administration, while the financial and capital markets sectors remained dominated by men. Employment data shows that Kuwaiti women still experience gender-based occupational segregation and are relatively underrepresented in managerial positions and in the business and financial sectors (Hosni & Al-Qudsi, 1988). Thus, this scene serves as a social critique of institutional structures that symbolically open up space for women, but at the same

time still maintain work norms and cultures built on the experiences of men as the dominant group.

Data 3

Adib's dialogue about the Wall Street stock market crash and the possibility of US military intervention represents Kuwait's position as a small country closely integrated into the global capitalist economic system and the geopolitical dynamics of the Gulf. Adib's concern that "we will experience a crisis" indicates that Kuwaiti society views international economic events not as distant phenomena, but as direct threats to the stability of everyday life. The series is set in 1987, which has strong historical relevance to Kuwait's conditions during the Tanker Wall era (1984-1988). As a country whose economy depends on oil exports, Kuwait experienced high economic vulnerability. Therefore, in 1987, Kuwait requested the United States for protection of its tankers after Iranian attacks on the Kuwaiti oil fleet increased (Freih & Ahmed, 2022). From April 1986 to 1987, damage reached approximately 48 Kuwaiti oil tankers. Thus, this series demonstrates that the vulnerability of Kuwaiti society is not solely due to regional conflict, but also to the country's structural position within the global political-economic system.

Data 4

This data represents the social structure of Kuwaiti society through women's unequal access to basic facilities in the workplace. The absence of women's restrooms at the stock exchange indicates that the institution was built from the outset with the assumption that ideal workers are men, thus excluding women from organizational planning. Amir's response, stating that he had just discovered the absence of women's restrooms, also demonstrates that women's needs have been neglected in the institution's management, with responsibility shifted to the exchange administration, citing limited authority. This



illustrates how structural barriers can be maintained through bureaucratic mechanisms that impede change. This representation is relevant to the social conditions in Kuwait during the transformation period, where Kuwaiti women were improving their social status in society. Previously, female workers had fewer rights than men. Through education, Kuwaiti women were empowered to work more equally (Hidayati & Sihab, 2017).

Social Stigma

Data 1

This data represents the social stigma against post-divorced women in Kuwaiti society through the moral labeling attached to Farida after her divorce. A guest's comment, "divorced in the morning and partying at night," indicates that divorce status is viewed as a social identity that determines how women are perceived in the public sphere. Farida's attendance at the auction party is perceived as inconsistent with societal expectations for post-divorced women, who are expected to show grief, maintain their self-image, and limit their social activities. From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene reflects the social reality of Kuwait in the late 1980s, which was still influenced by patriarchal values and concepts of family honor, where women's post-divorce behavior was under stricter social scrutiny than men's (Mughni, 2001). The stigma in this data is not present through formal rules, but rather through stares, whispers, and comments from society, which function as mechanisms of social control over women. Thus, the series also critiques the differing moral standards between men and women in interpreting divorce.

Data 2

This data represents the social stigma against children from divorced families in Kuwaiti society. Through conversations with Jude's friends, the

parents' divorce status is used as a basis for negative assessments of the child's social identity. The information that Jude's father divorced his mother and refused to see her is not conveyed as an expression of empathy, but rather as gossip that serves to undermine the family's honor. Children from broken homes often receive negative labels based on their family circumstances, making family identity the basis for social judgment (Azrie, 2025). From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene reflects how literary works document the reproduction of social values and norms through everyday interactions within the community. The stigma against post-divorce women does not stop with Farida, the direct victim of divorce, but extends to Jude as a child. The series demonstrates that children are often indirect victims of a social structure that positions divorce as a source of shame and a deviation from ideal family norms. This is related to the social conditions in Kuwait in the late 1980s, when family structures were still heavily influenced by patriarchal values and concepts of family honor.

Data 3

This data represents the social stigma against post-divorced women in Kuwaiti society, legitimized through religious norms and traditional gender role constructions. Jude's dialogue, in which her friends say Farida will go to hell for not wearing a hijab, being divorced, and working with men, demonstrates that women's identities are judged based on their conformity to prevailing social norms. Divorce status, clothing choices, and women's participation in the workplace are positioned as indicators of morality that determine social acceptance of women. From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene represents the function of literary works as socio-cultural documents that record how society uses religious values and social norms as instruments of control over certain groups (Wahyudi, 2013). The stigma

against Farida does not arise as a detrimental consequence of society, but rather from the social construction of the ideal woman who must marry, maintain religious symbols, and limit interactions with men in public spaces. The series critiques this situation by showing that post-divorced women not only face discrimination in their social lives but also suffer multiple impacts as this stigma affects the lives and social relationships of their children.

Family Relationships

Data 1

This data represents the social reality of families in Kuwait after divorce. The conversation, which begins with a discussion of Jude's education costs, demonstrates that divorce not only changes the marital relationship but also affects the division of economic responsibilities within the family. Farida's situation, questioning what to write in her resume after thirteen years as a housewife, reflects the reality of Kuwaiti women in the late 1980s, when gender roles still placed men as the primary breadwinners, making divorced women often difficult to re-enter the formal labor market (OECD, 2010). The father figure represents the family as a source of support for women after divorce. Advising Farida to find work demonstrates the family's encouragement to build economic independence, even though the process is not easy. From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene reflects the relationship between family structure and economic structure in Kuwaiti society. Farida's difficulty returning to work after thirteen years as a housewife demonstrates that women's economic vulnerability after divorce is a consequence of the division of gender roles that places men as the primary breadwinners during marriage. This situation aligns with the social reality of Kuwait, where post-divorce mothers generally receive custody of their children, while the responsibility for financial support remains with the father. However, the weak implementation of this obligation in practice means that women often

continue to bear the majority of the economic and childcare burden after divorce.

Data 2

The dialogue between Farida and the school principal reflects the social reality in Kuwaiti society regarding changing family responsibilities after divorce, particularly in meeting children's educational needs. Farida attempted to shift the school fees to Omar, Jude's father, but the school explained that Omar had stated that the education costs were Farida's responsibility. This situation demonstrates the shift in economic burdens to women after divorce, despite men's social and historical position as the primary breadwinners in Kuwaiti families. This representation is related to the social conditions in Kuwait in the 1980s, when family law still positioned men as heads of families and the dominant authority in family decision-making. Although Kuwaiti personal status law requires fathers to provide child support, in practice, post-divorce women often face difficulties in collecting child support and enforcing court decisions, resulting in the daily economic burden remaining with the mother, who retains custody of the children. This finding aligns with the impact of divorce, which does not eliminate fathers' obligations to provide child support, including educational costs. However, in practice, these obligations are often ineffective, leaving mothers with the majority of childcare costs (Sariati et al., 2022).

Data 3

This data represents family relationships through the psychosocial impact of divorce on children and changes in the dynamics of parent-child relationships following divorce. Through this conversation, the series demonstrates that divorce not only changes the family structure but also affects the emotional well-being of children who must adapt to the various losses in their lives. Jude's statement that he has lost his home, friends, and



school demonstrates that children share the social and emotional consequences of their parents' divorce. This sense of loss represents a disruption to the stability and sense of security previously enjoyed by children through an intact family environment. Farida is depicted as trying to reassure Jude that she remains his top priority. Farida's response demonstrates a mother's efforts to maintain emotional closeness with her child amidst the various changes that occur after divorce. Divorce affects how children view family relationships and their relationships with their parents (Alqashan, 1999). From Alan Swingewood's perspective, this scene reflects the social reality of Kuwaiti society regarding changes in family function and parent-child relationships as a result of the increasing phenomenon of divorce in modern society. The conflict Jude experiences is positioned as a consequence of changes in family structure that affect the child's socialization process and emotional development. Children whose parents experience divorce are vulnerable to feelings of loss, social rejection, anxiety, and behavioral changes due to disrupted emotional stability within the family (Meyrina et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis, the series *As-Safqah* (The Exchange) represents the social reality of Kuwaiti society in the late 1980s through three main aspects: social structure, social stigma, and family relationships. In terms of social structure, the series depicts gender inequality in public and professional spaces, the exclusion of women in the workplace, legal restrictions on women's autonomy, and the influence of global economic and geopolitical dynamics on Kuwaiti society. In terms of social stigma, the series depicts labeling, stereotyping, and discrimination against post-divorce women, women working in male-dominated environments, and the impact of stigma on children of divorced families. In terms of family relationships, the series depicts the dynamics of post-divorce relationships, the division of parental

responsibilities, changing parenting patterns, and the psychosocial consequences of divorce on women and children.

The findings of this study indicate that the series not only serves as a reflection of the social reality of Kuwaiti society but also as a social critique of patriarchal culture, gender inequality, and various forms of injustice still experienced by women in both domestic and public life. Through these representations, the series demonstrates how economic modernization in Kuwait has not always been accompanied by equal changes in social structures, cultural norms, or gender relations.

This research is limited to analyzing the representation of social reality based on Alan Swingewood's sociological perspective on literature. Therefore, future research is recommended to examine the *As-Safqah* series using other perspectives, such as feminism, gender studies, or media representation, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of women's positions and social change in Kuwaiti society.

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