



WOMEN OF EGYPT AND ALGERIA

(Drawing in ink from painting on glass by Algerian artist Fatiha Rahou)

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Egyptian and Algerian Women, the Delicate Balance Between Tradition and Modernity

Sixty years have passed since the first Egyptian woman dared to defy tradition by removing her veil and casting it into the sea. This woman who shocked public opinion then was Huda Sha'rawi, one of the early leaders of the Women's Movement in Egypt, who formed the Union of Egyptian Women (Al Ittihad Al Nisa'i) in 1922.

The newly formed union wanted to secure equal political, civil and educational rights for women, to abolish licensed prostitution, to raise marriage age to 16 for females and 18 for males, and to reform certain aspects of Family Law.

In 1984, most of these objectives have been achieved, except for those pertaining to Women's Legal Status. Marriage, divorce and inheritance laws still give advantage to men; sons still inherit twice as much as daughters, and husbands can forbid their wives from working outside the home, unless the woman includes a clause in the marriage contract that specifies her desire to work after her marriage. This is why present day Egyptian feminists will tell you that there is still a long way to go to change the traditions that impede their advancement.

Another Arab nation which fought hard, and is still fighting for the improvement of women's status is Algeria, where a seven-year struggle against colonialism left deep marks on the social structures of the country, especially on the family.

After the war of liberation was won, a new type of Algerian woman was born typified by the legendary resistance fighter Jamilah Buhayed, who said, "All of us, all of us Jamilats, were parts in the whole. Individuals don't make a cause. It's the principle that you believe in." These Algerian women who proved themselves in the fight against colonialism are finding it much harder to fight against everyday discrimination, be it at work, in legal or political rights.

In fact, what's happening to Algerian women now, is what is happening to many women living in the Arab World. In theory, the improvement of the legal and social status of women is regarded as a desirable goal by most governments (however widely their policies may vary). In practice, however, decision making is still in the hands of men and the participation of women in the political and economic life of their country is still minimal.

One of the reasons for this discrepancy between theory and reality was best put by Mrs. Amina Sa'id, who said:

We have yet to achieve a balance between the development of the form of our new societies, and the development of the content, personal and general

We cannot simply design a new person, a new society, by building an outer model. What we must do is change the person, the society, from the inside.

This indeed is a great task to be achieved not only by women, but also by men in the Arab World. This is so because we are all caught between two opposing and powerful forces: that of tradition and modernity.

The way out of this impasse, I believe, does not lie in choosing one at the expense of the other, for both are necessary and both have advantages and disadvantages. What we should do is to try and harmonize the past and the future in ways that would preserve our national and cultural identities, while liberating us from unnecessary shackles. This is how, I think, we'll be able to make the necessary strides that will take us towards the end of this century.

Wafa' Stephan

Amina Sa'id, the First Professional Woman Journalist in Egypt

Born in Cairo in 1914, Amina Sa'id has been a champion of women's rights since her school days. Chosen by the famous Egyptian feminist Huda Sha'rawi to give a speech in classical Arabic at a charity ball, Amina Sa'id became her assistant and read all her speeches until her death in 1947.

In 1954 Amina Sa'id was appointed editor of *Hawwa* (Eve) the most widely read women's magazine in Egypt. Active in journalism, radio and the women's movement, Amina Sa'id is also author of six books and has translated into Arabic some American novels such as "Little Women."

The wife of Dr. Abdullah Zein el Abideen and a mother of three (one girl and two boys), she was the first woman to be elected to the Egyptian Press Syndicate's Executive Board. She is now president of the Executive Board of Dar al Hillal, one of the oldest publishing houses in the Arab World. She is also a member of the Supreme Board for Journalism and has represented her country at many regional and international conferences.

Last November, our co-editor was able to meet this "Dean of Egyptian Journalists" in her office and to record with her the following conversation:

Q: Madame Sa'id, why did you choose journalism as a career?

A: It is difficult to tell you why; it rather happened to me due to my personal predispositions. I was drawn to journalism without realizing it since the beginning of my life. I think I couldn't have succeeded in anything else. When I was in school, for example, I was always a protestor. When I entered college my participation in political life increased, and there was no other way to express my opinions except through the media.

Q: How could you describe the beginning of your career?

A: I entered journalism braving all the traditions of my country which, 40 years ago, considered a journalist to be a kind of entertainer. How could the daughter of a well-known medical doctor become a journalist in those days? I still chose journalism as my career and became the first Egyptian woman to make it my profession. Before me, women who worked in the media were amateurs or rich and idle who worked for the fun of it.



Q: Where did you start working at first?

A: I started with Moustafa Amin (a famous Egyptian Journalist founder of "Al-Akbar newspaper) when I was still at university. I used to sign my articles "Misriyyah," which means Egyptian Woman in Arabic. I was afraid that if they found out I was only a student, they wouldn't take my writing into consideration and wouldn't publish my articles. I used to earn 3 Egyptian pounds a month, which was nothing compared to male colleagues who earned 20 or 30 pounds. But I was very happy with what I earned.

From working with Mustafa Amin, I gradually shifted to Dar al Hillal ⁽¹⁾ and it is there that I spent most of my professional life.

Q: How was work at Dar al Hillal?

A: I started at the bottom of the ladder and ascended it step by step without depending on anyone. I was the only woman working among hundreds of male colleagues. The owner of Dar al Hillal, Emile Zeidan, was a great man; he had an eye for journalistic talent. He gave me a chance to prove myself and treated me exactly like he would have treated a man. He was very

severe when I made mistakes. Zeidan definitely helped me build a strong journalistic base and I still remember him with great respect.

Q: What did journalism teach you after 43 years?

A: It is a difficult field to work in and I tried my hardest to convince my children not to follow my footsteps, because I suffered a lot.

Journalism taught me perseverance and the courage of fighters; Huda Sha'rawi taught me a lot, too. She taught me never to be afraid of the truth. She encouraged me and advised me, since my school days. I believe that no one should work in journalism unless one has real love and real faith in it.

Q: What's your opinion about the new generation of journalists?

A: I am sorry to say that many of the new generation of journalists are only after quick fame. Many — especially women — expect to be famous only after having worked few months. I gave layers of my life and my happiness in order to be a good journalist. I have missed many holidays and social outings.

Journalism is a dangerous profession because if the pen is put in the hands of dishonest people it becomes a disaster. A good journalist should be ready to pay a lot of him/herself before he/she reaps a reward.

Q: In what direction did you want to see Hawwa growing when you became its editor?

A: When I was asked to become editor-in-chief of Hawwa during the early 1950's, my aim was to make it a magazine with a message and not a magazine for entertainment only. I wanted it to be read by men as well as women, so I chose every employee, even the proofreader, with the utmost care.

That's how I started Hawwa, and I fought a lot for it. Years later, a study done by the Social Sciences Department of the American University of Cairo revealed that as many men read Hawwa as women.

A: Was Hawwa ever a vehicle for the emancipation of women in Egypt?

Q: Through Hawwa many campaigns in favor of Women's Liberation were waged. For example, Hawwa campaigned to allow women into Parliament (The People's Assembly) and campaigned against the compulsory wearing of the veil. It campaigned for free education for all and for improving the Family Law in Egypt.⁽²⁾

Q: How did the general public react to these campaigns?

A: Demonstrations were waged against my ideas. They threatened to kill me. I was cursed in the Friday sermons in a thousand mosques in Cairo. The most fierce reaction happened when I wrote articles against imposing on women the wearing of what is called the "Islamic dress" (a long sleeved type of coat worn winter and summer).

My house was guarded by police night and day for four consecutive years.

No woman journalist stood beside me in this particular battle when my life was at stake; I stood alone, I was ready to die for a cause I strongly believed in rather than to give up my beliefs. Thank God that most of what I fought for became a reality.

Q: What gave you this self-confidence, this inner strength to stand by your beliefs?

A: My father, Dr. Kamel al-Sa'id, who was a great man, a battler and a physician. He was one of the leaders of the (old) National Party of Egypt during the days of Saad Zaghloul. In 1919, he was arrested for his political activities and remained under detention until the end of the revolution. We remained alone with my mother.

My father was also a great orator, he used to cause uproars among the people when he spoke for the Revolution.

My mother by contrast was a very traditional beautiful and sensitive woman whose life was the home and the children. She was removed from the world of politics all too busy giving birth to eight daughters, only four of whom lived. My only brother was born four of five before my father died.

Q: How were you brought up?

A: My mother had a heart problem and was an

(1) Dar al Hillal (House of the Crescent) is an Egyptian company that publishes a large number of books and periodicals in the Arab World. It has grown out of one of the first Egyptian newspapers, Al Hillal (The Crescent) which appeared in 1892.

(2) In 1956, President Nasser granted political equality to women in the New Constitution only after women started a hunger strike in the offices of the Egyptian Journalists' Syndicate. They were given the vote, and in the following elections two women were elected to the People's Assembly. In 1962, the National Charter summed up the position of women as follows: "Woman must be regarded as equal to man and must shed the remaining shackles that impede her from taking a constructive part in national life."

invalid in bed most of the time. My father who wanted very much to have sons put all his hopes in us four.

Even now, years after his death, I still believe that he wanted to see in us "the men."

As children, we lived in the province of Asyut (250 km south of Cairo). My father used to have a well established clientele. But as soon as he heard that the first government secondary school for girls was opening in Cairo, he left everything and moved us to the capital in order to give us a proper education. He gave us all the chances that were given to men in those days and always instilled in us the spirit of the revolution. I think I was the one who was influenced most by it.

In the early 1920's my father sent my two elder sisters, Karima and Aziza, to school at Cheltenham Ladies' College in England where they graduated with honors. The eldest, Karima, went to Westfield College to study education. Back home she worked for many years as a teacher and a principal. In 1965 she was appointed Under Secretary to the Ministry of Education and was the first Egyptian woman to hold that position.

She arrived to this post through sheer talent and in a quiet manner. I, on the contrary, have a certain aggressiveness in me, I can become very angry and answer back.

My younger sister, Amina, and I stayed in Cairo. In summer, my father used to send us alone as paid guests to live with a family in Alexandria. Imagine in those days sending two school girls, alone on holidays, to look after themselves! This taught us independence at a very early age so, when my father died, we were able to depend on ourselves and manage the affairs of our estate.

Q: Did you work in any other paper than Hawwa?

A: I first worked for the political magazine Al Moussswar (The Photographer) in 1946 and continued to do so for the next 27 years. I used to write for a special section entitled "Is' alouni" (Ask Me) and wrote articles that had impact. In addition to working for the written media, I worked for radio, preparing programmes entitled: "Masterpieces of English Literature."

In those days the majority of people spoke French and very few were English educated. I

wanted the general public to have a taste of English Literature, so I became the first one to introduce English Literature to an Egyptian audience.

Q: Weren't you also one of the first women to enter the English Literature Department of Cairo University?

A: In fact, I was the first woman to do so. Other women before me were in the Departments of History, Arabic Literature, etc. The English Department was one the student feared because it was a demanding one. The professors came from the most prestigious universities, such as Oxford and Cambridge.

When I enrolled in it, there were seven male students and myself. They used to call us "the class of seven and a half," because a woman was considered half as capable as a man.

Q: Did your knowledge of English help you as a journalist?

A: It gave me a different outlook on the world. I also read and speak French. A foreign culture gets inside you and gives you strength.

Q: Were you influenced by the Women's Movement in England?

A: I was influenced by Huda Sha'rawi in a way that cannot be measured. I first met her when I was a school girl. In those days wealthy people did not like to speak or read Arabic; they preferred French. But my father brought us up differently. He insisted that we learn Arabic and raised us up to be Egyptian in heart and mind. Huda Sha'rawi was looking for a young student to read a speech in Arabic. She went to our headmistress at school who gave her the names of three students. I was one of them. From that time on, she adopted me and introduced me to the Egyptian Union of Women, which included many eminent men like Lutfi Bacha el Sayyed.

I used to attend the meetings of the Executive Committee, sitting on a chair beside her and listening to all that was said. I learned a lot just by observing and listening to how matters were discussed. Until I was old enough, I joined the Union as a full member.

Q: You have been involved in the Women's Liberation Movement in Egypt almost since it began. Do you see any changes in that movement? Has there been much improvement in women's status since then?

A: There is no way to compare then and now. In the early 1930's I was the only woman to be enrolled in the English Department of Cairo University. There were only 15 women attending the university then. Today, 50% of the university students are females, studying exactly like males in all departments.

Forty years ago almost no women worked in journalism; today women form 25% of the members of the Press Syndicate (600 in total). Women dominate the elections every year and when we, women journalists, agree on a matter, it passes through.

There is no newspaper in Egypt that does not have women on its staff. Every profession, every ministry in the country employs women. They have become ambassadors, ministers and so forth ⁽³⁾. It is a whole new life for women now.

However, I am afraid that today's women do not appreciate enough the work we've achieved

Q: Why do you say so?

A: I am afraid that today's women are born with a golden spoon in their mouth. Jobs and universities are open to them, so they seem to take everything for granted. I feel they have lost this sense of mission, this battling spirit that characterized the early Egyptian feminists. Nowadays, women care more for their jobs than for the overall movement, and this is a loss because we women have achieved what we have now by participating in political life and making sacrifices exactly like men. We marched in demonstrations, braving the bullets ⁽⁴⁾.

Q: What's in your opinion the biggest problem facing Egyptian women today?

A: Due to the difficult political circumstances Egypt has passed through in the last two decades, many laws in favor of women have not been applied properly. Take rural women for example. Due to lack of funds, the government has not been able to apply in practice the laws of compulsory education

There are also many die-hard traditions. Parents, especially in rural areas, prefer to send their son to school rather than their daughter. They believe that the son has to work and support the family while the daughter will get married and be supported by her husband. That's why in rural areas there is a higher percentage of female illiteracy than in urban ones.

Q: You've been working for 43 years now. Did you think of stopping work and retiring?

A: Never. Work is all my life. This office has become part of my constitution; it's in my blood. If I ever stopped work, I am sure I will fall ill and die. This is my life, I have failed many times at the beginning of my career but I never gave up. Thank God, I think that he wrote success for me.

(3) In 1962, Dr. Hikmat Abu Zeid was appointed minister for Social Affairs. Dr. Aishah Ratib, professor of International Law at Cairo University, replaced her afterwards. In 1977, it was Dr. Amal Uthman who was given this position. The present Egyptian Cabinet formed in July 1984 has kept Dr. Uthman as Minister of Social Affairs. Also the present Egyptian Ambassador in Bonn is a woman.

(4) Here Madame Sa'id is referring to the demonstrations of March 16 and April 10, 1919, when hundreds of veiled women led by Huda Sha'rawi marched through the streets of Cairo to protest against the arrest of four leaders of the Egyptian revolt against English colonialism. Madame Sha'rawi's husband was among those arrested and later exiled.

(5) Since 1924, the Egyptian Constitution gave an equal chance of education to girls and boys. In 1925, the first Government Secondary School for girls was established, and in 1929 the first girls in this school qualified for entrance to Cairo University. After the Egyptian revolution of 1952, university education was made free for all. Secondary education had already become so in 1950.

OPEN FORUM

Le Sceau Du Scarabée

Il y a des souvenirs qui deviennent partie de nous-mêmes, comme si leurs fragments étaient tissés dans nos cellules. Quand je ferme les yeux et je pense à mon enfance c'est la brise salée d'Agami que je sens sur mon visage, c'est la pelouse des jardins de Nouzha que je crois fouler sous mes pas, c'est Alexandrie qui revient vers moi dans un bruit de chants et de ferraille...

Je suis née et j'ai grandi dans cette ville. Ma famille, des deux côtés, s'y trouvait enracinée depuis des longues, très longues années. L'avenir, ces temps là semblait tracé d'avance et le monde n'avait d'autres limites pour la petite fille que j'étais que la Corniche qui enlacait la mer, la maison de ma grand-mère de l'autre côté de la ville

et les écoles de Chatby qui se profilaient au loin face à la fenêtre de ma chambre.

La seconde guerre mondiale s'était terminée laissant derrière elle un vague pressentiment, un malaise diffus que le rythme effréné de la vie camouflait au regard pressé des témoins.

Il y a dans les époques qui meurent la même exaltation de la matière, ce même éblouissement qu'on retrouve dans le corps du soleil avant qu'il ne soit avalé par le métal de la mer à la tombée du jour.

Une activité fébrile, un raffinement poussé à l'extrême, une présence à la vie que seule une fin très proche sait installer sur une scène. Voilà dans quel climat mes yeux se sont petit à petit ouverts à l'âge adulte.

Le monde arabe soudain cherchait à mettre à jour une identité emmêlée comme une poignée de laine.

Le drame de la Palestine; la greffe sanglante de l'état d'Israël; le réveil d'une population dolante et fataliste; le grondement de l'orage déjà en marche. Alexandrie lovée dans le sable de ses criques s'enivrait de fêtes et de plaisirs.

Toute une classe cosmopolite, cultivée et futile, semait sans remords les dents du dragon. Bientôt la lave brûlante allait emporter cette Pompeï avide de florilèges mais les protagonistes voguaient, aveugles et sourds, à bord de leurs chimères...

Des bals, des conférences, des concerts, des pièces de théâtre. La culture devenait une denrée essentielle, le seul passeport valide avec l'amour du superflu et la pratique de luxe, donnant droit accès dans ce Versailles branlant face à la foule hargneuse.

A quoi servirait de raconter ici les épisodes qui ont suivis? Ceux qui viendront bien après nous exploreront les choses avec un oeil plus neutre et plus distant que ceux qui ont vécu toutes les séquences à vif.

Qu'ai-je, donc, gardé de ces temps là, enfoui au fond du coeur? Le souvenir dans doute, mêlé à la saveur de mes premières lectures, des découvertes vivantes, de la douceur d'un petit matin au seuil de l'existence. Mais là, ce n'est que le bilan d'une inspection hâtive.

De l'Égypte j'ai gardé la hantise du temps, l'obsession de cet élément indéfini où tout reprend

une proportion si frêle, si dérisoire...

Serait-ce durant cette nuit de grand gala aux pieds des Pyramides où les orbites du Sphinx fixaient un point perdu au dessus de cette terre que s'est gravée en moi la peur de sa fuite? Ou bien ce chat nourri de restes et de reptiles, léchant son maigre pelage au seuil monumental du Temple de Karnak qui n'ont fait prendre conscience de la faim de durer, de l'angoisse de ce passage si bref?

Où, donc, mieux qu'en Égypte peut-on percevoir la précarité de nos pas sur cette terre, l'incessant duel entre l'être si friable et le temps implacable qui nivelle tout de son sable fin?

Mais dans la complexe alchimie de l'écriture peut-on jamais savoir ce qu'on doit aux influences? Vivant ici et complètement amalgamée à la terre libanaise je me trouve avalée par ce qui la ravage. Dans une maison qui brûle il est difficile de parler des jardins de son enfance.

Cependant ces jardins là, parés de mille lumières, sont présents au coeur et à l'esprit. On les retrouve, à notre insu, dans le regard qu'on jette sur les choses, dans la manière de manier les mots dans les choix qu'on opère.

Point n'est besoin d'asseoir un personnage aux berges du Nil ou de citer l'Égypte à chaque tournant de phrase pour reconnaître l'impact du coin de sa naissance. Il fait partie de l'âme et cette dame invisible est faite de tant de minéraux, tant d'odeurs impalpables.

Il m'arrive parfois quand on parle de canaux, qu'il soit de Suez ou de Venise, de revoir dans un éclair les eux boueuses et lentes fendues par une Falouqa, la roue qui arrose ses champs au bord de la Mahmoudieh. Les vers d'Ahmad Chawki, tels un chant très lointain remontent à ma mémoire et les "Ayam" de Taha Hussein se fondent dans mes propres jours.

En écrivant ces lignes je réalise moi-même combien peut-être profond le sceau du scarabée. Farfouillant hâtivement dans mon avoir moral je découvre comme dans une tombe, le squelette sur lequel se sont articulés gestes et écrits d'une vie faite de plusieurs décades. Et ce n'est plus d'influence qu'il convient de parler mais de matière première.

Claire Gebeyli

Poet and journalist of renown Claire Gebeyli has accepted to share with us the memories of her childhood in Alexandria, Egypt.

Amina Shafiq: Women and Labor Unions in Egypt

Amina Shafiq is currently the only female board member of the Egyptian Press Syndicate, and the only journalist who has been elected for four consecutive times – since 1971 – to this post.

Shafiq, who started her career when still a first-year student at the American University of Cairo (1953), works now as a reporter at the Labor Unions Section at "Al Ahram" newspaper, the most prestigious Egyptian daily.

During the last round of elections, she competed against 18 men for the Press Syndicate's Board, whose membership includes 12 journalists. In winning she gathered 87 more votes than the next selected member.

Writing about "Women and Labor Unions" in her country, Shafiq says: "In Egypt there are two kinds of union organizations. The first is the workers' unions. These unions include all those working for salaries and wages in the private, public and government sectors including industry, agriculture, services and government The second kind of union organization, called professional syndicates, organizes professionals (doctors, journalists, teachers, accountants, engineers, lawyers etc.) on the basis of their particular profession."

"Women workers, white or blue collar, have complete liberty in affiliating or disaffiliating with workers unions," adds Shafiq. "They are equal to men in this respect. However, in professional syndicates, although they are equal to men, women are obliged by law to join and never quit or they will lose their jobs. In addition, female professionals are comparatively active in their syndicates, but very few women have ever been elected to the governmental bodies of their unions."

"In agriculture, the picture is even worse," declares Shafiq. "In this field women are still typically employed as unpaid family workers. They are treated with children as a single category. Moreover, affiliation with agricultural unions is nonexistent."

Why do working women, whether professional or manual workers, not participate in trade union life and activities with more energy and



enthusiasm? The answer, Shafiq says, lies in two factors, subjective and objective.

The first is the general political atmosphere of the country which does not encourage public activities. The second has to do with:

- The high rate of illiteracy among women (30.4%),
- The lack of better services (housing accommodations, transportation) which prevents women from giving up time and effort to trade union activities,
- The lack of child care facilities (despite the fact that by law, every plant employing more than 100 women is required to provide child care),
- The high nursery school or kindergarten fees,
- The short working life of the majority of working women.

This dilemma can be resolved, says Shafiq, "by restoring a better political atmosphere so that trade unions would start playing a more active role in collective bargaining, and by recognizing the importance of a political and economic policy that is directed toward building a modern economic sector (especially in agriculture), that would provide jobs for all unemployed people (men and women) and restore their labor rights (wages, housing, services)."

* This information is based on the following sources:
 - An interview of Amina Shafiq in *Sayidaty* (Arabic Women's Weekly), 8-14 August 1983, p. 23-25.
 And a paper presented by Amina Shafiq entitled "Women and Labor Unions in Egypt", at the two conferences held May 6-7, 1982 and April 14-15, 1983, at the University of California, Berkeley.

Sister Emmanuelle : A View from the Slums of Cairo

In Cairo, in a place called Matareya, live 4000 'zabbalins' or garbage collectors in sub-human conditions – in environments similar to those of the 'villas miserias' of Buenos Aires, the 'favelas' of Mexico, the 'barradas' of Lima and the slums of Bombay and Calcutta. Among them lives a 76-year-old nun, Sister Emmanuelle, who chose to spend the rest of her life with the disfavored of the earth, to share their suffering and joys, their misery and their faith.

Who is this remarkable woman and why did she choose this kind of life:

Sister Emmanuelle, whose real name is Madelaine Cinquin, was born in Brussels November 16, 1908, of French parents. A difficult child in a well-to-do middle-class family, she was sent to England after high school to perfect her English at a 'Sisters of Zion' establishment in the London suburb of Holloway.

It is there where she decided to become a nun and "give herself to God in order to serve her brothers, "for it was for her the only way, she said, to fulfill herself completely. Religious life seemed to answer her two most important principles in life: union with God and the service of others.

Right after she said her vows, she decided to work with needy children. In 1931 she was sent to Turkey, then Tunisia, then Alexandria (in Egypt), where she taught French in private schools.

One day, she said, a little girl told her, "yesterday we had nothing to eat at home." The following day the little girl also said, "last night we ate at the neighbors' because there still was nothing to eat at home."

This incident was to change the life of Sister Emmanuelle, who decided to work only for the poor and live among them.

She was 62 years old when she decided to ask to be transferred to work with lepers. Her request was granted. But because the lepers quarters were in a military zone she was transferred after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war to Matareya to work with the garbage collectors, the 'zabbalin' of Cairo. She decided to live with them in a little hut resembling their own.

Dawn, starts the zabbalins' day. Men and children come out of their little huts, take their donkeys and go towards the big city that's starting to wake up. They go from house to house collecting garbage.

As soon as they are 4 or 5 years old children accompany their father and while the latter goes from house to house, flat to flat, to pick up the garbage bins, the children guard the donkey.

Between noon and 1p.m., under a burning sun, the garbage collectors go back to their quarters with their heavy loads. The women and their toddlers, covered with flies, await for them, for all have to work if they want to survive. The garbage is unloaded with naked hands and sorted out into piles. A large part is made of unwanted kitchen left-overs which are given to the pigs. There is also a big quantity of unwanted clothes, old rags, etc., which are made into a first pile. A second pile is made of empty tin cans, a third of bottles and plastic boxes. Thus, in the apparent disorder of this slum exists a certain order.

The children search for broken toys, a bicycle wheel to play with ... There is even a 'cafe' in this place with three shaky tables and some old straw chairs. One can drink tea, coffee and even alcohol, which is very often made with household 900 alcohol. It is slightly diluted, colored red, and sold very cheaply.

Sister Emmanuelle starts her day very early going first to mass at the Carmelite Convent in Matareya, then back to the slum where she visits some families. She is never in a hurry. She is always ready to listen to everyone, to talk, comfort encourage and explain. She speaks in a rather heavy Arabic accent.

All her activities are guided by one main belief: to be always at the service of others. All her life is centered around a unique principle, the necessity to love.

When the sun sets, it gets cooler in the slum, so she goes to pray with one of the families. She knows she cannot change their miserable life, but this does not discourage her. **The essential things she believes, is to love them like they are, handsome or ugly, honest or thief, good or bad.**

Matareya is not the only slum in Cairo: there is a bigger one situated in the cemetery where at least 30,000 people live due to lack of housing. She goes to visit this other slum regularly, too.

"The expansion of slums in most developing cities is one of the major problems of our world," says Sister Emmanuelle. Trying to solve this problem, she adds, should be one of the main preoccupations of governments.



Moreover, according to her, there are six very important tasks awaiting the leaders of nations. These are: 1) To preserve peace in the world. 2) To provide each individual with the right for good health. 3) To provide him/her with sufficient clean water. 4) To make sure that no one dies hungry. 5) To allow each couple to decide on the number of children it wants to have. 6) To control the anarchistic growth of big urban agglomerations.

At the beginning of her stay at Matareya, the Sister felt a certain tension between the 3000 Christian Copts and the 1000 Moslems living there. She tried hard to create a harmonious atmosphere, especially among children. She taught them that Jesus loves all people whatever their religion is.

"As for Muslims," she declares, "they are persuaded that God is just and forgiving, and that everything that happens on earth has a positive and good aspect to it. They have a profound belief in 'quadar' or fate.

The situation of women in present-day Egypt believes the Sister, has not improved much. "Jihan Sadat, the wife of late President Anwar Sadat, has made a sincere and real effort towards the improvement of women's status in Egypt. One of Mrs. Sadat's major achievements has been to push her husband to promulgate a law on repudiation of marriage without having to pass it through parliament."

Before this law came into effect, a husband

could say "I divorce thee" three times for the wife to find herself out in the street. With the new law, when a woman is repudiated, she has the right to stay at home with all that's in it and it's the husband that gets out.

In the Matareya slum, as in all slums, the situation of the woman is very bad. Married very young, she has a child almost every year. She gives birth in very unhygienic conditions. There are no midwives nor doctors, only an old woman with "experience" who uses any sharp object at her disposition to cut the umbilical cord!

This is why Sister Emmanuelle finds that one of the most urgent matters is to create a health care centre in the slum, where women could give birth in hygienic conditions, and men and children could get proper medical treatment. The other major problem facing the slum dwellers is the problem of family planning.

"Muslim women, says the Sister "are devout believers and think that babies come from God". By comparison, she adds, the Coptic Orthodox Church has a very realistic attitude towards contraception. It tries to explain to young mothers the inconveniences of a large family and the advantages of a reduced one.

Moreover, one of the "calamities" of Matareya is alcohol. "When the men have a bit of extra money," says the nun, "they go to the cafes and drink. Sometimes they beat each other."

One day, a tragic incident made her decide to implement a new project she had never thought about. A bunch of young men were playing cards and drinking alcohol at the slum's cafe. The winning boy asked insistently for his money. His friends who didn't have any to give, and who were all drunk, beat him up and killed him.

The Sister believes that the true culprits for this murder are not the young men who are brought up to resort to violence anytime they feel threatened, but society who allows so much poverty and misery to exist. This is why she decided to set up a recreation club where young men at the slum could gather in a healthy atmosphere. She also wanted to establish a kindergarten, an illiteracy centre and to build a swimming pool.

The "Salam Centre," as it is now known, was built 500 meters from the Matareya slum. It has four main aims; social, cultural, educational and medical. It was inaugurated in 1980 by Jihane Sadat, then the First Lady of Egypt.

The center includes:

1. A dispensary with a general practitioner, a gynecologist and a dentist (both women).
2. A sewing center that is also used for alphabetization.
3. A kindergarten.
4. A workshop that teaches the following skills: carpentry, plumbing, welding, motor mechanics and electrical repairs.
5. A social club especially for cultural activities with a library, cinema and theatre, and a sports center.
6. A kitchen equipped for home economics lessons
7. An old people's home.
8. A nun's home where Sisters and counselors are trained to run and take care of the Salam Center.

For Sister Emmanuelle, life is beautiful: 'Life is made for living.' For her to live means to have a dual relationship: A vertical one with God and a horizontal one with people. "Living," She says, "is not living alone but with others."

But all these projects cost a lot of money, at least \$30,000. So she decided to go to Europe and ask for it. She wrote to her friends and got a letter of recommendation from the archbishop and went on her trip.

Her first stop was Italy where she went to the Vatican, explained her project and got \$1000. Then it was Switzerland, London, Oxford, Brussels, Luxemburg, Aix la Chapelle and other cities in France.

She visited different organizations and made many rewarding encounters and came back to Egypt with the required amount. It was only one year later that she could start building the Kindergarten the illiteracy center, a sewing center and a health dispensary.

But due to inflation, the money she had was not enough, and she went on a second and a third tour of Europe.

This time she wanted to set up a project that she was planning for a long time: the recycling of garbage into compost that would be used to fertilize the land. Unfortunately, this project never saw the light because the slum of Matareya was situated next to an important archeological site.

In 1978, Sister Emmanuelle went on a fourth overseas trip, this time to Canada and the United States, in order to gather some funds for a very important project: the creation of a medical social center.

Life for her is a continual coming and going of hands that stretch out, hold on to each other, touch each other. It is an exchange of eyes, words, smiles, calls All this creates among humans bonds of incomparable solidarity, a sort of collective breathing.

Happiness for her is to love and to share in joy and in suffering.

For this remarkable woman everything stems from one essential belief which is that **human beings are made to love and this love is most perfectly expressed in brotherhood and sisterhood.**

"The world is a mirror," says she, **"when you give love to someone, he/she gives it back to you."**

Sister Emmanuelle loves young people. She admires their insistence to know the truth, their authenticity and their concern for sharing what they have with others. She likes to listen to them and discuss with them. She finds that they have a sense of solidarity. The hope for the future, she places it in young people.

She also believes in Providence, but not one that would solve all problems. For her, human beings are free and God is always present to show the right path. He is patient and comforting.

The terrible years Sister Emmanuelle spent in Tunisia were the most fruitful of her life, she says. "They modeled my soul and softened it. They made me understand and love better and share the life of the poor. For me, suffering was purification, redemption, resurrection and benediction"

The Salam Center is now under the supervision of Sister Sara, a Coptic nun, who has worked a lot with Sister Emmanuelle. The latter has decided to spend the rest of her life with another community of zabbalins in the Mokattam area, a huge slum area situated on a hill overlooking Cairo.

Sister Emmanuelle has many projects in mind. Among them includes building solid houses, not just huts, where all the zabbalins of Egypt could live in the hope of seeing their situation improve.

It would be a place where they could be one day respected and loved for themselves, as Sister Emmanuelle believes they should.

(1) This account of the life and work of Sister Emmanuelle is taken from a book by Paul Dreyfus entitled: "Soeur Emmanuelle," *Le Centurion, Paris, 1983*. The author, a journalist went especially to Cairo to interview her. The text of this summary was originally written in French by N. Machnouk and translated into English by our co-editor.

Nawal El Saadawi: Woman and Psychological Struggle

"Al Mar'a Wal Sira' Al Nafsi" (Woman and Psychological Struggle) by Dr. Nawal El Saadawi is an analysis of the problem of neuroses among Egyptian women.*

From her long experience with women patients Dr. El-Saadawi had observed that a large number of them exhibited neurotic symptoms. This caused her to find out more about the problem.

She first conducted intensive investigations at the psychiatric clinic of Ain Shams University. The results were astounding: 9.1% of all female students were diagnosed as neurotic compared to 6.2% of the male students. To control the factor of education, she then examined records of one of the governmental clinics in Cairo serving employees and workers, most of whom did not have more than elementary school education. The records revealed that 7.17% of all female workers had been diagnosed as neurotic compared to 5.02% of the male workers. Thus two things seemed clear: First, that Egyptian women exhibit a higher rate of neuroses than Egyptian men and, second, that educated women exhibit a higher rate of neuroses than uneducated ones. Why is this so? What are the main reasons behind neuroses among Egyptian women? These are the question which the book tries to answer.

Before starting to search for the causes of neuroses, Dr. El-Saadawi raises the problem of defining the term. There has been a lot of controversy among medical doctors and psychologists over the meaning of neuroses. This, she argues, is due to the misunderstanding of the causes and the nature of the problem. One thing is clear: it's a psychological, not a mental, problem.

In general terms, neuroses can be defined as certain patterns of behavior which result when a person has difficulties in adjusting with internal and external pressures. These patterns often appear in the forms of depression, unhappiness, headaches, laziness, lack of initiative, insomnia, nightmares, loss of appetite, loss of sexual desire and others.

To study the problem, Dr. El-Saadawi interviewed a purposive sample of 160 Egyptian women divided into four categories: educated neurotic, educated "normal", uneducated neurotic, and uneducated "normal." Her interviews with



these women were indepth, unstructured, and informal. They were meant to break all barriers between her and her interviewees and, hence, to help them talk freely about their feelings and pasts.

The factors she thought could be most relevant, and therefore conducive, to neuroses were the woman's childhood, teenage years, work, marital status, and psychological conditions such as dreams, fears, attitudes, memories, etc.

Results showed that the main reasons behind neuroses among Egyptian women were:

1. Male domination in the family (found in 29% of the neurotic cases).
2. Failure to fulfill one's self or ambitions (28%).
3. Failure in emotional and marital relationships (22%).
4. Failure in sexual satisfaction (13%).
5. Other reasons (8%)

These factors slightly varied between educated and uneducated women. Among the uneducated neurotic women, the male domination factor is the most important (36% of all the cases). Among the educated neurotic women, failure to fulfill one's self or ambitions had more importance (30%).

When comparing neurotic women to "normal" ones, the study reveals that neurotic women in general are more ambitious and more rebellious against their social environment. The educated neurotic woman faces conflicts when she has to choose between her ambitions, education and career on the one hand, and her duties as a housewife on the other.

At the same time, neuroses appear in the uneducated woman when she feels that she has lost her opportunities for an education or a career. Hence, she becomes reduced into a baby-making machine without any chances to develop herself outside her house and family.

The "normal" Egyptian woman, however, is the one who accepts her fate and her conditions without questioning them.

As Dr. El-Saadawi puts it, one of the most important results of the study was that intellectual and social problems play a much more important role in neuroses than sexual and emotional problems.

The study reveals that the suppression of sexual desires is closely related to the suppression of intellectual satisfaction. When a woman loses her opportunity to become aware of her conditions

and to think freely, she loses her opportunity to act freely.

Another misunderstanding of neuroses which the study refutes is that it is hereditary or a physical problem which allows doctors to cure their patients by giving them tranquilizers, pills and shots. These kinds of treatments, Dr. El-Saadawi argues, are useless and will not cure the patient.

Doctors must understand, she says, that the causes of neuroses lie not in a woman's head or body, but in her social conditions: in her school, family, and street.

In conclusion, Dr. El-Saadawi states that the problem of neuroses is a political problem as much as it is a medical one. One of the most serious drawbacks of the medical profession in our age is that it separates the human body from the social factors surrounding it. Curing women's problems is closely related to women's liberation, and in turn women's liberation is closely related to social liberation — the liberation of the human being from all forms of discrimination and exploitation.

Nada Khuri

* Publisher: Madbouli, Egypt, 1983

Nadia Hamza: The First Woman Film Director in Egypt

Nadia Hamza's love for the cinema goes back to her childhood days when she used to live in the city of Port Said, on the Mediterranean Sea, North of Cairo.

"I don't know why I loved the cinema so much she said in an interview. * All I remember is that I used to go very often to movies. Then, immediately after watching a film, rush and write a film critique on a small piece of paper. I used to wait impatiently for the specialized movie magazines to come out in order to read what the film critics wrote so I would compare my comments with theirs. My joy was great when I didn't find much difference between their opinion and mine.

When my family moved to Cairo, I worked as a journalist in the labor section of an evening paper, then in the arts section of "Al Goumhouriah" newspaper. After that, I managed to find a job in "Al Kawakeb," one of the most popular entertainment magazines in Egypt.

It is there where I really started making contacts with artists, actors, producers and film directors. At the same time, I learnt that the Cinema Institute was giving a course in script writing as part of its extension program, so I took it.

After completing the course, I submitted my resignation to "Al Kawakeb" and contacted my teacher, film director, Niazi Mustafa reminding him of a promise he had made to let me be his assistant once I had finished studying.

As promised, Mustafa took me as a trainee film director for the film "Fares Bani Hamdan" (The Knight of Hamdan).

The first film for which I earned a wage as assistant film director was "Saghira Ala Al Hobb" (Too Young to Love). After that, I graduated from second assistant, to first assistant, to ... film director."

Nadia recalls her first two hours as film director and said she felt nervous and lost her



voice. But now, having, completed her second film, "An Nissa' " (Women), she has definite opinions about the role and responsibilities of a film director.

She believes that a woman film director will differ from her male counterpart, not only in her choice of a film subject but also in the way she will handle and use the camera.

"I for instance, declares Nadia, tend to favor strong female characters in my movies. I prefer to depict them as winners rather than losers and like to concentrate on issues and problems related to women-especially the working ones. This trend is very clear in my second film."

When asked whether women make good film directors, Nadia is positive, on the condition, she adds, that they dedicate themselves completely to their profession. She remembers her teacher Niazi Mustafa asking her to wear trousers when she started working with him because it is more practical on a plateau. Since that day, she declares, she's never worn a dress.

* (Al Sharkiah —Elle, N. 121, Aug. 1984, p. 95)

Myriam Ben, « Echo Multiple des Labours de l'Âme Humaine »

J'ai rencontré Myriam Ben au cours de mon récent voyage de recherche en Afrique du Nord. Je m'étais arrêtée chez des amis à Boumerdès, une ville côtière près d'Alger. C'est là que j'ai découvert cette femme exceptionnelle qui devait rendre mon séjour en Algérie tellement plus fascinant et intense.

Dans sa maison aux murs couverts de ses peintures aux formes allongées et mouvantes, aux couleurs sombres et lumineuses comme des vitraux de cathédrales, un piano soutenant des photos aux visages intelligents, et ouverts, Myriam Ben est apparue impressionnante par sa carrure, ses épaules rondes couvertes d'un châle, la douceur de son regard et de son sourire, la sensibilité de sa voix, la forte présence de sa conversation.

Tout en nous servant une galette, recette de sa grand-mère et du café turque, elle a parlé, parlé de sa vie, de ses expériences, de l'essentiel, allant très vite au noyau des problèmes, discours qui remontait le temps, "arrachant à elle-même la substance profonde de l'inexprimable." Je voulais savoir comment une femme de sa génération, ayant vécu et participé à la révolution, avait réussi à s'affirmer en tant que femme à part entière dans un pays n'encourageant guère cette forme d'éclosion de la part de ses femmes.

Et Myriam Ben a raconté sa vie, son enfance née dans une famille juive algérienne, sa participation à la guerre de Libération Nationale de 1955 à 1962 qui lui avait valu d'être condamnée à vingt ans de travaux forcés par le Tribunal permanent des Forces Armées d'Alger. Puis en 1962, tout de suite après l'Indépendance, elle s'était occupée de la formation de futurs enseignants algériens. Ensuite très éprouvée physiquement, elle avait dû interrompre ses fonctions et en avait profité pour préparer une thèse d'histoire. Elle était actuellement chargée de l'enseignement des langues et des Sciences Humaines dans un important Institut National. Elle y occupait aussi un poste administratif, étant Chef de ce département.

En l'écoutant, en l'observant, puis plus tard en la lisant, je remarquai combien elle était douée ayant pu combiner non seulement une vie académique, très chargée,, mais aussi l'écriture et la peinture. Ses écrits sont aussi variés comprenant un roman intitulé "La Memoire en Exil", des "Nouvelles" parues dans la revue El Djézairia en 1977 et dans les Temps Modernes en 1974 et 1977, des pièces de théâtre, l'une ayant pour titre "Leila" donnée en lecture publique par des comédiens algériens au Petit TNP à Paris, et une autre, "Karim, ou jusqu'à la fin de notre vie", en 1968, et des "Poèmes" très

émouvants à paraître aux éditions L'Harmattan cette année.

Le livre qu'elle me dédicace "Ainsi Naquit Un Homme" est un recueil de nouvelles publié par la Maison des Livres à Alger en 1982, il est dédié à sa grand-mère "gardienne jalouse de sa mémoire, fleuve où elle navigue", à sa mère "qui lui a chanté et appris les chants de son grand-père ... qui lui a révélé l'INTACT du DIAMANT ... quand les voleurs d'amour ont mutilé son âme"; à son père "qui lui a enseigné qu'il faut mériter sa Patrie et qu'il ne lui est Patrie que sa terre natale EL DJEZAIR, et finalement à "ses compagnons de lutte morts sans sépulture quand mûrissaient les blés".

La première nouvelle intitulée "Mahfoud, l'Enfant à La Flûte" raconte l'histoire d'un héros de notre temps, enfant des caravanes, descendants des grandes tentes nomades, chassées vers le nord par les grands vents affamés du désert Musique méconnaissable, toujours réinventée, jamais retrouvée, toujours reconnue ... Et beaucoup et combien encore pour qu'un jour les enfants de ce pays apprennent la musique humaine." (p. 35).

La deuxième nouvelle intitulée "Ainsi Naquit Un Homme" pose la question de Madjnoun: "Chacun doit-il mourir chaque fois qu'il doit naître? Tant d'autres doivent-ils mourir pour qu'un seul homme naisse?" (p. 96)

La quatrième. "La Grève" se demande si l'événement a vraiment existé: "Qui écrira l'histoire des grèves avant l'histoire, la préhistoire de la Revolution, la Révolution de notre HISTOIRE Là, il faut des majuscules. L'HISTOIRE majuscule que nous avons écrite Là, il faudrait écrire avec notre sang. L'HISTOIRE du sang sur les guillotines ... Non, personne ne l'oublie." (p. 112)

"L'Emigré" de la cinquième nouvelle a "vu le fleuve coupé, a vu les eaux violentes rebelles domptées, a vu naître la mer, une mer artificielle déferler et couvrir de ses eaux une gigantesque plaie, qui efface pour toujours de la mémoire des peuples des centaines d'Algériens, dont la femme, la mère, les petits qui ont faim, attendront le retour en vain en vain. En vain toujours."

La dernière nouvelle "Nora" est un petit chef d'oeuvre primé dans le cadre du concours organisé par le Musée National du Moudjahed, à l'occasion de 25e anniversaire du déclenchement de la Guerre de Libération Nationale. Elle est dédiée "à TOI dont je n'ai connu en sept années de guerre qu'un prénom: NORA. Et qui chantais: j'ai le nom de notre Révolution: N comme Nuit, Or comme de l'OR, A comme Algérie." Pour nous qui vivons la guerre du Liban, cette nouvelle est



particulièrement émouvante car elle soulève les problèmes graves que nous affrontons: "Comment savoir alors? Du corps ou du coeur, lequel serait le plus difficile à guérir? Un pays entier, grand convalescent, relevant d'une grande maladie, se tenait là devant moi, en elle." (p. 160)

"Nous étions aux premières lignes de l'histoire. Notre terre saignait d'une brèche à combler, un précipice vertigineux à franchir. Nous étions les points sanglants dont le précipice formait le lieu géométrique. L'avant-garde ne marque jamais le pas. Nous étions l'avant-garde. Nous avons avancé. Nous sommes les premiers tombés dans le précipice. Le précipice se comblait sur nos corps. Sur nos vies ... Le précipice sera comblé. Le pays entier pourra passer du côté du soleil, qui ne se lèvera plus dans le bain de sang. Alors la lumière sera. La lumière Nora. La lumière dans le précipice c'était toi ... Nora c'est un peu l'Algérie mais c'est aussi le Liban avec son cortège de deuils. "Les roses de la mère, les roses de la guerre. La fleur couleur du grand carnage. Magnificence démultipliée de la sève de vie, qui force les bourgeons, rougit la floraison de roses exubérantes à l'angle d'une maison où veille la solitude d'une mère qui attend. Et qui ne recoit plus chaque soir que la visite du silence à l'heure où rentrent des champs les fils des autres. Non, je n'ai pas planté ce jasmin, Nora, jusqu'ou, maintenant que tu as pris ma main, jusqu'ou vas-tu m'entraîner avant de m'achever." (p. 189)

Myriam Ben, écrivain, peintre, professeur, poète, femme de talent extraordinaire qui a su combiner poésie et prose pour raconter l'histoire, la géographie et l'élan de tout un peuple pris dans sa marche vers la liberté et la dignité. Par une vision peu commune elle a su transcender les origines de son passé pour rejoindre l'universel et pour parler de demains plus humains et éclairés.

Evelyne Accad

Inventory in Black and Grey

THERE ARE WOMEN OF WHOM PEOPLE TALK

They are placarded on walls of gloomy towns
 Those who are flashed, dressed or undressed,
 Those who are sold under a coat,
 Those who are not advertised on cinema window panes,
 And those pinned on the walls of solitude.

THERE ARE WOMEN OF WHOM NOBODY TALKS EXCEPT IN HUSHED TONES

Who are made marginal, masked, or mask themselves,
 Out of shame or despise
 There are those who paint their eyes with black butter,
 Those who laugh too loud, or those who cry silently,
 Those who think of something else at this time,
 Those of whom is said: "Women of no importance,"
 Sold at a trifling price.

THERE ARE THOSE WHO GIVE THEMSELVES WITHOUT A GAIN

Who have love to spare,
 They are loved the time of a spasm,
 There are those who wish to die
 Yet keep on living, not knowing why!

THERE ARE THOSE WHO RECEIVE MUCH

Who offer little black eggs, on buttered canapes,
 Who chatter, dressed in negligees,
 They take an aeroplane on Wednesday,
 To go to the hair dresser
 There are those who serve as mere ornaments,
 Who ask: "Is Pam here?"
 In grand tralala
 Et caetera ...

THERE ARE WOMEN WHO SWELL AND BURST OUT

Producing a kid every good or bad year,
 They count their kids like nails,
 And the husband is a man for that !
 There are women who bewitch, laugh and shout,
 And those who go to the Marabout.

THERE ARE WOMEN WHO ARE SICK OF IT? WHO'VE HAD ENOUGH

Taboos, taboos!
 There are those who know "someone"
 And those who know nothing about it!
 Those who live in hell, hiding their fruit,
 Who strangle their baby
 With the umbilical cord
 Others who throw into water their remorse.
 There are those who die of it,

Those who kill themselves unknown, unseen,
Those who are killed, to keep the family honor clean!

THERE ARE WOMEN WHO DON'T EXIST

Who only show their busy hands,
Their tearful eyes,
Those whose bodies are hermetically locked
and accept beating without a shock ,
Who do what they are told to do,
Who prepare shorba (soup) and till the parterre,
Instead of flying up in the air.
There are those who live without knowing why,
Whose life vanishes like a hushed sigh,

THERE ARE THOSE WHO FIGHT WITHOUT TEARS

Their naked hands serving as arms,
Their eyes sparkling with evidence,
Their heads full of ideas for burning,
They have mouths but not to talk,
And voices that are quick to choke,
There are those who want to live,
Who say a loud No!
Who decipher the code, and rightly evaluate,
They refuse for their daughters their own fate.
Clasping each other, without a whine,
For all communication, they interline.

Now at the astonishment of those
Who have pinned them there,

We, in our own way, we show our care,
For those who dare not and those who dare,
Together we invent **A BRIGHT COLOR INVENTORY!**

an inventory IN COLORS GAY

Under whose sway,
Fellows will not fail to crack.

LAPIDAIRE

(Translated from French by Rose Ghurayyib)

* This poem was published by the G.R.F. A. (Groupe de Recherches sur les Femmes Algeriennes - see Al- Raida Nos 27-28, p. 9 - in their revue **VOIES - LA, No. 2**. This magazine, according to its editors, was created in order "to gather women's words under diverse forms: poetry, prose, theatre ... and reveal the multiple paths that feminine inspiration can take."

Algerian Women in Industry

Fatiha Talahite *

This paper was presented at the Women in industry Workshop, Aiya Napa Conference Center, Aiya Napa, Cyprus, May 21-23, sponsored by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World.

Introducing her Study Fatiha Talahite said:

In this paper I will be dealing with Algerian women's employment in industry from 1966 to 1979. My purpose is to analyze why women enter the industrial sector and why they are excluded from it.

In addition, observations on women in the labor force should take into consideration:

The specificity of industrial development in Algeria.

The existence of a vast unacknowledged "informal sector" where women are employed."

But first I will report on some results of statistical investigation (official statistics):

On the average, the proportion of female labor with the total work force remains very small (6%). It increases or decreases irregularly by years.

Of course, the number of women in industry increased from 1966 to 1979 (from 4500 to 28,500), but this growth is still very weak compared to men, except in textile industries, and perhaps in some other industries where the number of skilled women workers increased (hydrocarbons, iron and steel, electric and mechanic industries),

What is striking is that the number of female workers increases the slowest in industries that traditionally employ a great proportion of women, such as leather and shoes, tobacco and matches industries.

Moreover, part of industrial female labor absorbed by the leather and shoe industries fell from 42% in 1966 to 2% in 1979; in the food industry it fell from 23% to 14%. In the textile industry it increased from 21% to 40%.

Thus we can say that Algerian women tend to be concentrated in a few industries, such as the textile one, and we can infer that the textile industry is going to absorb the largest number of industrial female labor.

Besides, textiles is the only industry where the

percentage of women in the labor force remains above the industry average. In 1968 it even exceeded it by 50%. In other industries, it is generally less than 10%, so women are always a minority compared to men.

The gap between female and male average wages per industry also indicates sexual differentiation that could, in a Marxist analysis, be interpreted as sex segregation in the cost of workforce.

But the study of wage gaps is not relevant unless we investigate the distribution of manpower according to skill levels, so that we can examine in depth sex differentiation mechanisms within the labor process.

For instance, in the textile industry, the most important gaps between male and female wages are noticed in the last two skill levels. And these two skill-levels which concern the semi-skilled or unskilled labor force) are the ones that include the greatest proportion of women.

However, in the whole industrial area at the same skill level, differences between male and female wages remain and even widen. For example, the proportion of the most qualified women (level 1) tends to increase, from 1967 to 1979, from 1% to 10%.

The same tendency is observed in the middle skill levels. According to another source of information, employed women are relatively more qualified than men.

These observations emphasize the hypothesis that the gaps between male and female wages are the manifestation of job segregation by sex.

The proportion of qualified women being greater than that of men means, most of the time, that women are employed only if they are qualified.

But workers may become skilled either through educational programs or by on-the-job training. Only the first are considered qualified because of their diplomas. If we evaluate the proportion by sex of skilled workers and then of qualified workers, the figures that are obtained in both cases are highest for women than for men.

Yet the difference is sharper as far as qualified workers are concerned. This is due to the fact that

more women have been able to acquire their training from experience. This does not mean that women do not have any professional experience. In my opinion, it means that the economic system recognizes and values men's experiences, while it underrates those of women.

Women are promoted much less frequently than men. In most cases they remain at the same skill level at which they have been taken on. As an example, I quote a factory manager (electronic industry). He said:

The male labor force is more unsteady than female labor force, but for different reasons. Men do not bear the constraints of manual labor and as they start working they generally ask for promotion. If this promotion is refused, most of the time it ends with a dismissal or a resignation; if it is accepted for the sake of peace and quiet, the worker will probably be incompetent.

On the contrary, women can remain at the same job without causing problems. When they leave, it is always for some extra-professional reasons, such as marriage or family obligations.

Most importantly, the relative over qualification of women vis-a-vis men concerns the whole industrial sector where women remain a small minority. Yet, if we now focus our analysis on the industries where female employment is either high or growing a reverse tendency is noticed: the proportion of skilled women among female workers is now smaller than the same proportion calculated for men.

Of course, this result that might seem misleading at first is specific to a few companies. But it could be significant over the long term to reveal the tendencies that would develop in the future if a pronounced expansion in industrial employment of women occurs.

Conclusion:

The data upon which my work is based concern a period of time that ends in 1982. Unfortunately, it was impossible for me to update them for this paper, since almost no study revealing new information has been published until now, except maybe a few monographs on some particular firms. This leads me to mention some of the problems facing researchers who investigate women's labor in Algeria:

1. Deficiency of institutions supposed to regularly publish global statistics on employment, and wages skills. The lack of available statistics is manifest for the whole

but is more striking as far as female employment is concerned. (They consider that it may be neglected).

2. This weakness is not exclusively linked to a problem of incompetence from the statisticians. They are themselves faced by the difficulty of collecting systematic and reliable information from the firms. The point that arises from this problem is the inefficiency of state control over industry. Of course, a bureaucratic and repressive control exists. But it is far from being scientific and rational. This situation exists even in the state-controlled sector of economy (for example, some managers do not even know the exact number of their workers) and more so in private and informal sectors.
3. This leads me to mention a last problem: the question of the informal sector.

It seems to me that one of the characteristics of third world economics is the existence of a vast sector that escapes state control and that evolves in the gaps left by the official sectors. No study has been done in Algeria on women's labor within the informal sector. However, it is a branch to be investigated.

I will conclude this paper by saying that the research on the informal sector requires the elaboration of a new framework of analysis.

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Travail Domestique et Salarier Feminin: Essai sur les Femmes dans les Rapports Merchauds – Le Cas de L'Algerie. Mai 1983.

Rural Women in Egypt

This pocket size book gives in 164 pages a survey of the conditions of rural women in Egypt. The author, Atef Adli el-Abed, is a researcher who has to his credit a number of field studies on the topic. The results of his work are presented in an abridged form, depicting the social conditions of women in such fields as home up-bringing,

school-education, work, marriage, and political rights and problems they have to face. It also makes suggestions aiming at change and improvement.

The book contains a short introduction pointing out to the development of the women's liberation movement in the world and its beginnings in Egypt. According to a 1976 census, 2883 books and studies had already been published about rural women, who represent 27.7% of the Egyptian population. Yet there is still a large need for further study and despite the spreading consciousness regarding women's role in society, discrimination against women persists in every walk of life. As soon as she is born, a girl is made to feel that she is different. Her ears are pierced for earrings. She is oriented towards housework, while her brother is free to play outside. The family is ready to sacrifice money for the boy's education but not for the girl's.

The Egyptian State has been actively encouraging women's education by opening primary schools for girls. In 1978-79, the number of girls enrolled at this stage was 39.6% of the total number of primary students. In Khedive Ismail's time (1863-1879), higher education for women was introduced when a maternity school opened in 1832, preparing midwives and women physicians. Between 1929 and 1930, women were admitted as students at universities. In 1976-1977, higher education for women at all levels and in all fields attained 33.8% of the whole student body in liberal colleges, and 23.6% in professional ones. Government help came in the following ways: raising the minimum age for marriage, increasing the number of elementary and secondary schools, establishing free education at all levels, allowing college students to marry, ensuring a larger variety of professional and technical schools for women.

Women and Work:

In 1976, the proportion of women working outside their homes reached 9.6% instead of 4.8% in 1960. Agriculture is the chief outside occupation for women. It included 43% of all working women in 1961 and 25% in 1971. The difference represents a shift toward technical and industrial occupations whose percentage rose from

8% in 1961 to 19% in 1971. The number of women engaged in secretarial and journalistic work rose from 2.5% of the whole body of working women in 1961 to 10.7% in 1971.

Political Rights

In 1956, Egyptian women were granted equal political rights with men. In 1975, only 16% of them took advantage of their right to vote. The Women's Union was organized in 1975, with 242 committees and 249,862 members in 1976.

Since, 1965, Egyptian women have the right to be elected to People's Councils, but their number remained very low: 2% of the total number in 1971. President Sadat decreed in 1979 that women should have the right to 30 seats in 30 electoral districts. Since then, their number rose to 8.7%.

Factors Contributing to Women's Enslavement

Local traditions and stereotypes are considered by the author as the chief obstacle to women's emancipation. Rural districts, generally isolated and closed to outside influences, are the permanent homes of traditional thinking and behavior.

The principal signs of underdevelopment among rural women are: complete sexism in family upbringing and treatment sexism in society, family arranged marriages, divorce as the privilege of husbands, polygamy, illiteracy, approval of early marriage, inequality of the sexes in civil law and in the laws of personal status including those of inheritance, divorce, guardianship and so on and distorted image of women in fiction, mass media and school books.

The author emphasizes the harmful influence of the folkloric heritage, particularly common proverbs and adages, in shaping people's attitudes towards women. Proverbs stand as a source of sacred wisdom; they are regarded as the standard by which men support and justify their behavior.

Factors Contributing to Women's Emancipation

According to the author, there are two sets of factors that may contribute to the emancipation of rural women. The first set is general in nature. It includes the extension of education, the increase in the number of cooperatives of every kind, the disintegration of large properties. The spread of religious reform and the establishment of a democratic government.

Other factors are: the improvement and extension of mass media and form of communication with urban life and with developing countries, and the contribution of returning emigrants and government officials established in the village.

The second set of factors directly influencing women are:

The increase in the number of girls' schools and the improvement of their standards.

The development of women's work outside the home

The modernization of laws of personal status which give working women equal rights to men at the same time, allowing them certain rights and privileges which alleviate their double burden

The instauration of social projects contributing to the improvement of rural life (such as the projects of Rural Pioneers)

Economically productive families

Rural services

Village fairs and exhibits

Using radio and television as means of instruction and enlightenment regarding women's needs.

Field Studies Performed by the Author

The results obtained through the author's field studies and interviews (performed in 1978 – 1979 in a traditional Egyptian village) serve to show the importance of broadcasting programs and other mass media in changing the attitude of rural people regarding women. The respondents who listened to radio programs and read papers and

magazines were generally more disposed to adopt a positive attitude with regard to women's liberation. As an example, 87.5% of respondents who listened

to radio broadcasts were in favor of women's education, against 6.9% of those who did not.

Other factors affecting the respondents' approval or disapproval of girls' education were: the annual income-parent's level of education and contact with the outside world. A higher degree of approval existed when the family income was higher, the parents were literate, and had contact with the printed media and the outside world.

The same results were obtained regarding the questions dealing with women's work outside the home, their practice of political rights, their right to free choice in marriage and to respectful treatment within the family.

Conclusion

The value of this book rests on its comprehensive character, enhanced by the large

number of references as well as an abundance of statistics covering the period between 1956 and 1979. While it is true that most of the statistics revolve around Egyptian women in general and are not restricted to the conditions of rural women, the author devotes to the latter the chapters dealing with factors of women's enslavement and those leading to their liberation, besides the important section presenting the results of field studies and interviews he made in 1978-1979 (pp. 121-164).

The book is part of the series of monthly publication issued by Dar-el-Ma'aref under the general title: "Iqra" (Read), for the benefit of the large public which is in bad need of reliable information about women, particularly the neglected rural women of Egypt.

Readers who are familiar with the problems of Arab women will notice that most of the needs which the book attributes to the rural women of Egypt are shared by the rural women of other Arab countries.

Rose Ghurayyib

WORKSHOP

Continuing Education For Arab Women

The issue of Continuing Education for Arab Women was the theme of a workshop sponsored by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the Middle East Church Council and was held last May in an old monastery in Ayia Napa, Cyprus. A group of educators representing Egypt, Jordan, Tunis, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Cyprus and the West Bank attended the workshop. A working paper was presented by the Director of the Institute defining continuing education, emphasizing its importance for the Arab countries, and giving suggestions for possible programs.

What is a continuing education? Why is it important? Is continuing education an issue for the Arab woman? According to Eva Shipstone, continuing education is a human resources development which is not bound by time or age. It



From left to right: (standing) Mrs. Irene Lorfin (Lebanon), Miss Yvonne Angilious (Egypt), Mrs. Farquad Kazhem (Iraq), Mrs. Rebecca Salti (Jordan), Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr (Lebanon), Miss Juliette Haddad (Lebanon), Dr. Agnes Hanania (West Bank), Mrs. Elizabeth Areh (Sudan); (kneeling) Mrs. Monica Ioannou (Cyprus) and Miss Nibal Eskandar (Egypt).

may be pursued individually or institutionally, and it may go under any one of several names: adult education, extension program, lifelong learning, self-education, Continuing education is generally viewed as a means for personality development which helps the individual gain self-reliance, acquire new skills, up-grade one's present skills, gain insight into the meaning of life, promote personal fulfillment, and become a more active participant in the process of development.

Continuing education is provided to motivate adults with specific needs, and is most meaningful when adequate planning is applied, with such needs in mind. Arab women in general lack this motivation, hence, there is a need to arouse awareness among them to overcome their apathy and fatalistic acceptance of their lot.

The three-day discussions produced a list of suggestions for continuing education programs, strategies for their implementation, and an evaluation scheme.

The programs included are varied and among them are the following:

- Literacy programs
- Vocational training
- Extension education
- In-service training

- Informal education
- Re-entry into the formal education stream

Strategies for Promoting and Implementing Continuing Education includes:

1. Developing a philosophy of action.
2. Specifying objectives both general and specific.
3. Investigating the feasibility of action programs with respect to prevailing socio-cultural context.
4. Providing alternative strategies to meet unexpected circumstances.
5. Developing awareness among women of the importance of continuing their education and of their role in promoting this kind of education.
6. Raising men's awareness to the value of continuing education.
7. Motivating women to seek continuing education which would help their personality development, intellectual growth, liberation, personal fulfillment, social concern and a commitment to human rights and social justice.
8. Urging educators to review admission policies to the formal system of education which would pave the way for women to continue their formal education.
9. Encouraging educated men and women to initiate and /or participate in continuing education programs for other women and help recipients realize their potentials.
10. Identifying leaders among participants in continuing education programs who may help in promoting such programs.
11. Emphasizing the importance of contacting women's organizations and other organizations in the Arab world involved in continuing education to share programs and experiences (such as making use of the Iraqi literacy campaign).
12. Making use of local resources within the ecological and cultural context of the community.
13. Emphasizing to educators the importance of planning continuing education programs which respond to individual and community needs.
14. Investigating and encouraging the use of a variety of means and media to introduce continuing education programs such as: field visits, seminars, mobile libraries, clubs, audi-visual materials, free university, correspondence, etc.

15. Making known and encouraging the use of materials prepared for an integrated program, called the Basic Living Skills Projects (BLSF) which includes management, general education health, nutrition, childcare, consumer education, family planning, laws and civic education. This program is now under preparation by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World at Beirut University College.
16. Encouraging the use of formal government and private facilities already available (schools, churches, mosques, clubs, etc.) to conduct continuing education programs.
17. Benefiting from and coordinating with the

Arab Board Literacy Adult Education of the Arab League.

The enthusiasm of the participants was inspiring indeed. It is hoped that the interest that was apparent in the workshop will motivate the delegates to implement continuing education programs, in their respective countries to help Arab Women fulfill their role as active partners in the process of development.

Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr

* For more information on program suggestions, write to
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BOOK REVIEW

Aicha Lemsine, Ordalie des Voix, les Femmes Arabes Parlent

Aicha Lemsine is an Algerian author who writes in French. Her book relates a series of interviews she made between 1980 and 1983 with women (and some men) in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Kuwait, the Arabian Gulf, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, Egypt and Palestine. She introduced each country with a quick glimpse of its historic and geographic setting.

Using alternatively a lively narrative and an emotional poetic prose, the author then gives us a social picture of the countries she visited: the characteristics of their people, their customs, traditions, moral values, and mentality. She does not refrain from severely criticizing whatever she finds displeasing, be it social, moral or political. Much of her criticism is either veiled by subtle irony, or mixed with a lively touch of humor.

But Lemsine's main concern is women in the Arab world. Therefore the primary theme of the interviews and descriptions in the book is the lives of these women, the problems, difficulties and injustice, they have to face in society, at home, school or work. These problems range from illiteracy, the veil, divorce and polygamy, to the oppression and cruelty resulting from laws and customs such as excision and "beit etta'a" (the



husband's right to force his wife back home if she has left him because of his cruelty).

The book shows the various degrees of progress women have achieved in some Arab countries, as well as the different mentalities of the women interviewed. Some of them accept their plight passively, whereas others denounce and struggle against the injustice, oppression and cruelty their sex suffers at the hands of man, be he legislator, father or husband. Almost all of them firmly believe that Islam is not the cause of their misery, as the West assumes, and that a correct application of the Kor'anie law (Shari'a) is enough to ensure them freedom, justice and equality.

The book also stresses the rapid development of education, technology and social services in several Arab countries, and gives the reader some very interesting information.

However, since the conditions of women do not vary a lot in countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, for example, the book tends to be repetitive. The reader also feels a lack of objectivity in the author's desire to defend the Arabs, for she sometimes stresses certain facts and avoids others, or makes statements that are contradictory to what we know about the Arab countries from people living there I'm referring to parts of her chapters on Saudi Arabia and Jordan, for example.

Moreover, many of the topics are dealt with superficially, e.g., her conversations with as controversial a person as Nawal el Saadawi, the well-known Egyptian feminist, or her chapter on women in Saudi Arabia based solely on interviews with Saudi women bank or company directors, doctors, professors, ministers, lawyers, writers and business women, as if they were the real and only representatives of all the women in their country.

Nazik Yared

* Dr. Nazik Yared lectures in Arabic at Beirut University College. She is the author of several books of literary criticism and of one novel "Nouktat ad Daira".

Leila Sebbar Parle Mon Fils, Parle à ta Mère

Leila Sebbar, born in Algeria of a French mother and an Algerian father, resides in France. She has done sociological research on North African immigrants and has published essays, short stories and novels. She is a contributor to *La Quinzaine Littéraire* and *Sans Frontiere* and has also written for *les Temps Modernes* and *Sorcières*.

Among her noteworthy novels are: *Little Girls are killed*, *Fatima or the Algerian Women of the Square*, *Sherazade*, *The Green Chinese of Africa*, all published by Stock. Most of her works are written in a direct realist style. They explore with psychological and sociological knowledge and sensitivity the details of the lives of North African immigrants, particularly women, in France.

Speak my Son, Speak to your Mother is a love story between a mother and her eldest son who do not speak the same language. The son has returned to his native home in one of the French suburbs without warning. The mother is alone in the kitchen. She carries the narrative while preparing coffee and mint tea. She also serves him honey and almond cookies.

The book is in French, but the mother, we are told, speaks in her native Arabic mixing French words here and there. She speaks incessantly of the house, of the father who we are eventually told is in "the asylum," of the daughters, of the son, of his faraway trips, his life, French women, the woman who would make a good wife for him, religion, Islam. She speaks of radio, television, of the Beurs' walk for equality ... of his cousin who would make a good match, the beautiful cousin with eyes "like the sea." She asks him to remember that he has a soul.

The novel, written in the style of an interviewed monologue, is interesting from a sociological and anthropological point of view. From a literary one, however, it lacks the dimensions of creative imagination.

Evelyne Accad

* Beurs is the slang name given to the children of North African immigrants in France.

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