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## Mayy Ziadeh (1886-1941)(1)

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Born in Palestine, of a Lebanese father and a Palestinian mother, Mayy Ziadeh received her secondary education from the French Sisters of Visitation at a boarding school at Aintoura, in Lebanon. It was here that she began to write under the influence of Western Romantic authors, both French and British, as an entry from her school diary suggests: "I am alone in the woods since two hours. Alone with Byron, poet of violence and sweetness... While I write, his Childe Harold lies at my feet. Did Byron ever dream that a Lebanese girl would spend with him or with some of his works, long, lonely hours in the woods of Lebanon?" After 1908, when she settled in Cairo with her parents, Mayy Ziadeh published a collection of French poems, "Fleurs du rêve" (Flowers of dream), under the pseudonym "Isis Copia." They aroused the interest of Egyptian and Lebanese journalists and writers. Like her father, who was a journalist, she published Arabic and French articles in leading Egyptian magazines. Between 1920 and 1925 she published her articles and essays in four volumes. In addition to the short stories and plays which appeared in her numerous books, she wrote "A Discourse on Equality," which surveyed various political systems and theories, pointed out the virtues and defects of each, and recommended social and humanitarian reforms which would contribute to social welfare under any system. Author, journalist, and public speaker, Mayy Ziadeh also founded in 1912 and animated successfully for about twenty years a salon modeled on those which Western women had created in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Taha Hussein, the blind Egyptian scholar who faithfully attended the weekly meetings, has described the ambiance in the salon: "Mayy's salon was democratic; in the sense that it was open to various classes of intellectuals and to literary men and women of different nationalities: Egyptians, Lebanese, Syrians, Europeans and others. They discussed all sorts of topics, local and international.... Unique in character, this salon had a decided influence on its habitués, who spoke highly of it in their memoirs and their reminiscences."<sup>1</sup>

Mayy Ziadeh was a strong advocate of the emancipation of women, which had been a topic of considerable discussion in Egypt from 1900 on. In 1904, for example, Quasim Ameen, an Egyptian writer and lawyer, had published a book called *The Emancipation of Women* in which he tried to prove by careful study of the Koran that Islam did not institute the veil. Another reformer was the woman teacher and writer Malak Hafni Nassif, Mayy's friend and contemporary, who died at the age of thirty-two and was commemorated by Mayy in a famous biography entitled *Bahithat-ul-Badia*. Malak introduced several reforms in girls' education, founded a feminist club, and at a public meeting in 1917 drew a list

of demands that included compulsory education for women at the elementary level and freedom to seek higher education, training a sufficient number of women doctors to fill the needs of Egyptian women, and gradual abolition of the veil. But Mayy's contribution to the women's cause was of a different nature. Because she was a Christian who lived in a conservative Moslem environment, she did not feel free to speak in the name of Moslem feminists who attacked specific traditions like polygamy and the veil. She did attack the tradition which required women to wear black and practice seclusion and mortification as a sign of mourning. In another essay, she voiced the complaint of a young girl whose parents opened letters addressed to her. "It pains me to think that I am subjected to a system of police service, which means a total lack of confidence and understanding between us." And in one of her short stories, she pointed out the evils of frequent divorce and remarriage for which men were responsible.

Like nineteenth-century Romantic writers, Mayy considered love the precondition of marriage and asserted woman's freedom to choose her mate. Although she declared that women should have the same right to education as men, she believed that woman's primary duty was to her home, her husband, and children. And in a letter addressed to Kahlil Gibran, she disagreed with his view, expounded in "Broken Wings," that a woman should be able to leave a husband whom she had been forced to marry and to meet a former lover secretly, even if that love remained platonic. At the same time, Mayy collaborated with Huda Shirawi, the Egyptian feminist leader and president of the women's union, who was the first Egyptian woman to tear off her veil before a large public and throw it into the sea. Mayy Ziadeh's contribution to the feminist cause in the Arab world was more an indirect result of her contribution to Arabic literature than a direct result of her speeches and writings on woman's freedom, the biographies she published of feminist leaders of her time, or her critical studies of three pioneering women writers. She is still considered an unusually gifted stylist, essayist, and public speaker. Many critics believe that modern Arabic literature has not produced a woman writer of her caliber.

*Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World  
Beirut University College*

(1) *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1979, vol. 5, No.2.

1. M.A. Hassan, *May Adeeabat-ush-Sharg wal Urubat* (Cairo: Dar-Alam-ul-Kutub, 1963), p. 187.

## Women and the Media in the Arab World

The term, "media", plural of "medium", is used to indicate publications or broadcasts used for communication, information and publicity. They may include a large number of literary forms such as poetry, drama, fiction, essays, research and the like, but, strictly speaking, when we discuss the media nowadays we particularly mean three powerful, modern, representative arts: journalism, radio, cinema of television.

To what extent have women in the Arab countries and elsewhere utilized these powerful tools as a means of self-expression and of publicity for their cause?

Journalism, the oldest of the three, was practiced by Western women in the 19th century. The first women's magazine, "Women's Voice" was founded in France in 1849. Since that time, women's journalistic activity has progressed in Europe and America. It produced, during the thirties and forties, outstanding figures like Genevieve Tabouis, who was distinguished as foreign correspondent and political journalist.

In the Arab countries, women journalists appeared in the Period of Awakening, in the late 19th and the early twentieth century. The earliest pioneer was Zainab Fawwaz (born 1845), a Lebanese from South Lebanon, who emigrated to Egypt where she acquired a self-taught culture, was able to correspond with papers and magazines and published poems, stories, articles and an anthology containing biographies of famous women from East and West. Marianna Marrash from Aleppo, Syria, was another pioneer who created a literary salon for intellectuals: men and women, corresponded with papers and published a collection of poems. In the early 19th century, the first well-known Arabic magazine for women was founded in 1903. It was called "Majallat-us-Sayyidat Wal-Banat" (The Magazine for Ladies and Young Girls). The founder was a Lebanese, Rose Antoun, but the magazine was published in Alexandria, Egypt, where it was supported by the emigrant Lebanese intellectuals and their Egyptian, friends and colleagues. Other women's magazines which obtained recognition were: "Fatat-e-sh-Sharq" (The Oriental Girl), founded by Labeebah Hashem, 1906, in Lebanon; "Al-Aroos" (The Bride), in Damascus by Marie Ajami; "Al-Khidr" (The Purdah), by Afeefa Saab, in Lebanon, 1919, "Al-Mara'atu-l-Jadeedah" (The New Woman), by Julia Tomeh Dimashquyyeh, in Beirut, 1921; "Minerva", by Marie Yanni, Beirut 1923.

Between 1892 and 1955, there appeared in the Arab World about 40 women's magazines, scattered in Cairo, Alexandria, Beirut, Damascus, Baghdad and other cities. Most of them were suspended during the first or the second World War, probably for financial reasons.

Now their number is highly limited, but they have expanded into new areas in the Gulf countries and Al-Maghreb (North Africa). Some of these magazines are published in Western cities containing a large number of Arab emigrants, such as London, where one can read the Arabic magazine "Sayyidati" (My Lady). Another magazine published abroad for women, by an Arab woman, is "Ash-Sharqiyyah-Elle" (The Oriental Woman-twinning Elle).

Compared to radio and television as a means of communication, journalism seems to be the most accessible art to women, probably because it is the oldest of the three and the one in which they have had more experience. This profession has produced women veterans like Aminah Es-Said, who has practiced it for 43 years. She was the first woman to be elected member of the Egyptian Press Syndicate's Executive Board. In the early stage of her career, she was member of the staff of Dar-el-Hilal, a publishing house created by the Lebanese scholar Jirji Zaidan; now she is president of its executive board and editor-in-chief of "Hawwa" (Eve), the most widely read women's magazine in Egypt and though she has reached the age of retirement, she has not given up her work but keeps writing and publishing at the same time. Women journalists in Egypt form 25 % of the members of the Press Syndicate in which they dominate the elections every year.

We have sporadic information about women journalists in other Arab countries. At the seminar of Arab women journalists held in Beirut, February 1981, it was possible to meet Rashida Nifer, the Tunisian delegate who, in view of her seven years of successful journalism, had been elected president of the Journalists' Syndicate in her country. In that seminar, the UNESCO delegate, Margaret Cababan, declared that "Women's concerns were poorly covered in all information media. In Lebanon for example, information on women during the last 40 years did not exceed 4% of the total".

Another seminar organized in Tunis, November 1983, by the Union of Tunisian Women, in conjunction with the UNESCO, and attended by delegates from various Arab countries, Ms. Dardana Masmoudi, an executive committee member of the Union of Tunisian Women gave the following information about Arab women's participation in the media: "They participate as journalists, producers in radio and television, authors of children's books and school books. In Lebanon and Egypt, they form 20% of media workers; in Tunis, 10%. As to women's image in the media, it is still traditional." The same idea is presented by Dr. Ilham Kallab Bsati in her book about the image of the Lebanese women in school books, published by IWSAW, Monograph 3, 1983.

In Lebanon, women represent 25% of the whole body of journalists, according to a 1980 census. They generally belong to the highly educated class, participate in the production of French, Arabic and English papers and magazines, but they rarely occupy leading positions in the field. Occasionally their mastery of foreign languages allows them to correspond with foreign papers as, for example, Nora Boustany, correspondent of the Washington Post and of the Financial Times. Another distinguished journalist is Sorayya Antonius, daughter of the author of "The Arab Awakening". She is a Palestinian of Lebanese origin, who took charge of the American University of Beirut magazine, "The Middle East Forum" in the sixties, and now occupies a leading position in the field of European journalism. The reasons that prevent women's promotion may be their small number in the profession, their lack of persistence and the traditionalism of employers; yet the improved status of working women seems to evolve in their favor. Denise Ammoun, executive secretary at l'Orient-le-Jour daily paper, declares that: "Women who have taken journalism as a career include the married and the unmarried. All of them have proved to be so competent that we may assert it won't be long before they reach the upper echelons in the profession." Then she adds: "Our demands are the same as those stated by the journalists' syndicate: first, requiring every candidate to have the necessary qualifications; second, giving employees the right to social security which would encourage their persistence in, and adherence to their work."

In radio and television, a large number of women are employed as broadcasters and interviewers. The news broadcasts are usually prepared by men while women are usually in charge of the regular "Women's Program" which has given three outstanding figures: Edvick Shayboub who carried out her work for 30 years, Raymonde Angelopoulo who for several years has presented interesting weekly programs about women, social problems, etc. and Charlotte Wazen el-Khoury who has worked as broadcaster for the last 15 years. By a consensus organized at Télé-Liban, she was proclaimed the best broadcaster. Charlotte is distinguished by her reserve, her natural gracefulness, her microphonic voice and her tasteful attire.

In the cinematographic field, women have produced a number of star actors like Faten Hamama of Egypt, Nidal Ashkar, Hind Abillama and Elsie Fernaineh of Lebanon and other successful actors from other Arab countries, but in screen play writing, film direction and production, there are only a few women pioneers like Jacelyne Saad of Lebanon, Laila Abu Saif, Egyptian

writer and film producer (Al-Raida 12, 1980 and 38, 1986); Nadia Hamza, first film director in Egypt (Al-Raida, 29, 1986). In Kuwait, we may mention Fatima Hussein, an active feminist, pioneer writer and prominent figure in the media, a member of the Consultative Council for the media since 1977. In 1985, she published a book called "Nuqta" (a point), which presents her ideas regarding the liberation of women, the roles played by the media, by education, legislation, traditions and norms, in guiding and in effecting or preventing change in women's status (Al-Raida 36, 1986).

In Saudi Arabia, a country where women are not allowed to appear in public without the veil, Salwa Shaker breaks with tradition to become the first female public figure on Saudi television. A multi-talented woman who sings, writes for children, acts in radio and television serials, she also presents a family program on TV with special emphasis on health question. Together with her husband, a radio announcer himself, she presents a popular, varied radio program. (Al-Raida 27-28, 1984).

Finally, the meager information we have been able to have about this wide topic requires us to give it more concern in our future issues. An important medium which should attract our attention is that of women's studies or research activities regarding women in the Arab World. We know of the existence of centers or institutes for these studies in Beirut, Lebanon (IWSAW), in Al-Azhar University, Egypt; in the Arab League, "Arab Women's Committee, Department of Social Development, for the Eradication of Illiteracy". We also know of the existence of women's unions in all Arab countries and that many of these unions give a share of their efforts to publication. The numerous Arab or local universities in the Arab World have lately been encouraging research on women's status and problems as a requirement for the preparation of university degrees. To the already mentioned media, we may add Arab women's international conferences and their recently created associations for the promotion of the social sciences in the Middle East. But the treatment of all these topics would lead us to deviate from the main one which requires us to concentrate on the three important media: journalism, radio and television.

Rose Ghurayyib

## Women and the Media in Developed Countries

In the developed countries of America and Europe, women's involvement in the Media constitute a wide topic. Information about it is widely disseminated within Western countries and abroad; in this capacity it becomes accessible to women of developing countries.

In this article, I shall deal with four aspects of this involvement which seem to be of particular interest and significance: 1st, Research work; 2nd, Rehabilitation of women's achievements in fields which have been neglected by men historians; 3rd, Women's theater as a means of publicity; 4th, Women's international magazines.

1) Research work on women is particularly active in the United States. The **Women's Studies Quarterly**, published by the Feminist Press at the City University of New York, Nos.3 & 4, 1986, presents detailed information about the National Council of Research on women as a "Consortium of centers and organizations which provide institutional resources for feminist research, policy, analysis and educational programs through its 50 member centers established in U.S. universities." "It links over 2000 women and men scholars and practitioners." "The Council works also to strengthen ties with centers of scholarship abroad and to join with national and international groups in pursuit of humanistic goals, free from biases of race, class and gender." The publication which is in our possession gives the names and the addresses of the 50 or more research centers, followed by detailed information about the function, scope and activities of each, for example, in presenting the South Institute for Research on Women, (SIROW), University of Arizona, it gives the address, the name of the director and that of the executive director, defines the institute as "a research and resource center serving scholars primarily in Arizona, Colorado, New Mexico and Utah... promotes collaborative, interdisciplinary research focused on South Western problems or populations... identifies and disseminates research on women in the southwest, maintains a clearing house detailing the work of over 500 scholars... publishes a newsletter that features columns on funding and deadlines for grants, current research, conferences, publications, awards and fellowships, etc."

Besides information about the research centers, which covers 16 large pages, the double number in question devotes five pages for "Opportunities for Research and Study", including lists of fellowships, affiliated scholar programs, grants and internships sponsored by member centers of the National Council for Research on Women.

2) Rehabilitating women's achievements in neglected

fields. *Signs*, the journal of women in culture and society, published in Vol.12, No.3, Spring 1987, a long article about the recent development of women's history and the resurgence of intellectual history. It is a review essay by Elizabeth Fox - Genovese, entitled "Culture and Consciousness in the Intellectual History of European Women" pp.529-547 of the number.

Most significant in the field of women's intellectual history has been the recent publication of the translation into English of Christine de Pisan's "The Book of the City of Ladies" and of Caroline Bynum's "Jesus as Mother." Also, Marina Warner's book on Jean of Arc, seen in a new perspective and "The Essays of Joan Kelly", reprinted from Joan Kelly, *Early Feminist Theory and the "Querelle des Femmes" 1400-1789*. While Joan Kelly in her feminist theory claims for modern feminist thought "a rich, coherent and continuous tradition that began 400 years before the French Revolution, Bynum claims that a special tradition of female mystical authorization provided women with an alternative to clerical power in a period characterized by both greater ecclesiastical institutionalization and a growing sense of man's likeness to God."

In the field of music, women succeeded and still succeed as singers and performers; the same is true of their role in theater and drama. Women have also produced a number of composers who were ignored by men historians, until the appearance of a book by Elizabeth Wood, (*Sings Vol. 13, No.2, Winter 1988*), entitled: "Women Making Music: The Western Art Tradition 1150-1950," ed. by Jane Bowers and Judith Tick (Urbana University of Illinois Press, (1986).

We still need a book on women in the field of painting and other graphic arts, a topic which has been neglected by historians for patriarchal or misogynic reasons, the same which made them overlook women's output in many other fields.

3) Women's Theater as a means of publicity. In the same magazine (*Signs*, Vol.12, No.3, Spring 1987, pp.548-567), an article by Jane Mass introduces a new development in feminist activity under the title: "Women's Theater in France."

Started in 1970 by a group of women, headed by Catherine de Seynes, this theater organized a company mainly formed of women, which explored women's lives in several productions: *Femme, la Ballade de Maman Jones, Couples*. Another group called "La Carmagnole", was created in Canada, England and the States, dramatizing the oppression of women and the ridicule of feminist ideas (1975).

Two major productions brought "Theatre au Feminin" to the attention of critics and public in 1978. First, the production of "La Soeur de Shakespeare" (Shakespeare's sister) and Michele Foucher's spectacle, "La Table" (The Table). The first work takes its title from a passage in Virginia Wolf's "A Room of One's Owns", in which the author theorizes that, if Shakespeare had a talented sister, she would never have been an author. The text was improvised by a group of women and men who presented the familiar tyrannies still suffered by women in a world indifferent to their aspirations and desires and the enormous courage needed to break the wife-mother-servant-goddess created by patriarchal society. "The Table" was staged by Theatre Gerard Philippe de Saint Denis. It toured all over France in 1979. It speaks of traditions associated with eating and the table, traditions and practices that define woman's place in society as well as female culture.

The so-called "La Teatre de la Carriera" formed in 1978, dramatized women's revolt against "the conventional virgin-mother-whore roles assigned to women in traditional theater." "Saison de femme" depicts six stages in the life of a typical Occitan (from Southern France) girl named Aurette. The authors do not blame men alone for turning Aurette into an unhappy housewife, they also blame the mother and grandmother who incubated in the girl's mind notions of woman's inferiority. Some plays were drawn from mythology, reinterpreting mythic figures like Helena, Jocasta, Penelope, or legendary ones like Tristan and Iseult, Indian Sakundeva. The story of Joan of Arc was dramatized from a feminist point of view; also the lives of women writers and artists, of heroines like Camille Claudel, an artistic genius who was persecuted by her family and ended her life in a psychiatric hospital.

The lives of Arab women were dramatized through the novel of Nawal Saadawi, the well known Egyptian feminist, "Firdaous, une voix en enfer" (Firdaous a Voice in Hell), follows the painful life of Firdaous from genital excision, through an arranged marriage with a brutal old man, to prostitution.

4) Women's International Magazines. The best known of these magazines are the following:

1- WIN, Women's International Network News, published in U.S.A., "An open participatory quarterly by, for and about women, reports on women's rights around the Globe, 187 Grant St. Lexington, Mass. U.S.A.

2- **ISIS International**, published in Italy and Chile. A woman's information and communication service, promoting communication channels among women all over the world, publishing:

a) **ISIS International book series**, providing a channel for women to contact each other and build up networks; 2 books each year, produced jointly with one or more women's groups in the Third World.

b) **Women in Action**, produced by the staff of ISIS International, 4 times a year, in Rome (English edition) and in Santiago (Spanish edition). It "gives news and information about groups, conferences, events and resources — What is happening in the women's movement World Wide."

3- **On the Issues** "a feminist, humanist publication dedicated to promoting political action through awareness and education, working toward a global political consciousness, fostering a spirit of collective responsibility for positive social change, eradicating racism, sexism, speciesism, and supporting the struggle of historically disenfranchised groups powerless to protect and defend themselves." Published in Forest Hills, New York.

4- **Outwrite**, Women's Newspaper. Published by Feminist Newspaper Ltd. Printed by East End Offset Ltd. London. Deals with women's problems, demands and needs all over the world. "A montly newspaper which campaigns against women's oppression in all its forms, covers news and features on women's struggles and achievements internationally."

## Women's Image in Arabic Fiction(1)

In a study of 80 middle sized pages, Dr. Latifeh ez-Zayyat, Head of the English Department at Ain-Shams University, Egypt, presents the image of woman in the Arabic novels and short stories which appeared during the second half of the 20th century, particularly between 1960 and 1980, i.e. the period which was marked by important political and social changes in the Arab East.

In her analysis, the author makes use of a few current theories of psychoanalysis, such as that of the oedipus complex (the libidinal feeling that a child develops toward the parent of the opposite sex). Another sexual deviation, to which she refers, is the dual image that a man usually develops regarding woman: that of the ideal, forbidden woman, represented by the mother, and that of the ordinary woman who belongs to another man and whom he considers as easily conquerable. In selecting the stories, Dr. ez-Zayyat points out those that show the unjust treatment inflicted on women by society, the wrong attitude adopted by males toward females, in accordance with the traditions of the 8000 year-old patriarchal system.

All the works mentioned in the study were written by men and represent men's point of view. Those written by women receive no attention except occasionally, as for example, in a brief comparison between a novel by Sharif Hattata, "Al-Ain that-ul-Jafn' il-Ma'adaniya". (The Eye with the Metal Eyelid), and that of Nawal Saadawi, "Al-Bahitha an'il-Hubb" (The Seeker of Love).

Latifeh ez-Zayyat tries to analyze, briefly or in detail, twenty-five selected stories and novels, some of which belong to well-known fiction writers, such as Toufiq al-Hakim, Najib Mahfouz, Hanna Meena, Zakariyya Tamer, Yusif Idris. The perspective widens, however, to include the younger generation of authors who represent a spirit of rebellion against tradition, such as Fat'hi Ghanem (Egypt), Muhammed Abdullah, Muhammed abdul-Malik (Bahrain), Khaleefa Husein Mustapha, Abdullah Toukhi (Lybia), Abdul-Hamid ben Haduqa, At-Taher Wattar (Algeria), Abddul Rahman Munif (Syria) and At-Tayyeb Saleh (Sudan).

In discussing the topic of marriage, ez-Zayyat emphasizes the political and social implications of this

institution which is completely free from anything that we may call "romantic love" or "spiritual understanding" between the betrothed. Its unique function seems to be the support of the system of private property which started 5000 years B.C. and, since that time, has consecrated woman's enslavement to the tribe or clan. This practice has reduced her into a tool for the procreation of males who perpetuate the name of the husband and enhance the prestige of the family or tribe by increasing its number, extending its possessions, guarding its honor and watching over the legitimacy of its children. This last activity requires the chastity of the wife who becomes menaced with divorce if she fails to bear male children, and threatened with death if she is adulterous, i.e. capable of giving birth to illegitimate children, outside the marriage bond. Social traditions, on the other hand, do not require chastity from the husband who enjoys the privilege of sexual freedom, as declared by Toufiq el-Hakim in his novel, "Al-Ribat-ul-Muqaddas" (The Sacred Tie): "A woman's adultery differs from that of man. A man toils in order to obtain and take care of offspring which is legally his own. A woman does not enjoy the same privilege unless her financial contribution is equal to that of her husband." May we infer from this statement that, if a wife's financial contribution equals that of her husband, she should be allowed to betray him and commit adultery? What about her biological function and her social contribution as housekeeper, nurse and guide of the children? According to Toufiq el-Hakim, marriage is a contract which imposes the production of a male heir on a woman. It is a means of enforcing the age-old law of inheritance.

Since the existence of a woman depends on procreation, sterility legitimates her divorce. An unmarried woman becomes a problem, an object of scorn, because she has failed her vocation. Latifeh ez-Zayyat mentions the stories dealing with the problem of "old maids", like "Nahnu Nuhibb ush Shams" (We Like the Sun) by the Bahraini writer, Muhammed Abdul-Malik, and "Al-Abnusa-l-Baida" (The White Ebony) by Hanna Meena, and comments on them by saying: "The status of the unmarried woman has been changing in our society. She is no more the rejected black sheep. Every woman, married or single, possesses large reserves of love and talent which she may exploit for her own benefit and that of others, whether they be her kin or outsiders and yet," the author adds, "the image of the unmarried woman in fiction has not changed. It has failed to conform to reality. It is a tragic image, leading its subject to insanity, suicide or to slow agony and death. It often takes a dramatic form, which is contrary to fact."

(1) Condensed from Arabic, translated into English. The original was published by ECWA (Economic and Social Committee for Western Asia). Series of studies on the Arab woman in development, No.7 UNO-ECWA Press, Baghdad.

In the short story, "Al-Aib" (Shame), the author Yusuf Idris upholds a theory asserting that woman is unidimensional in nature, which means that her existence is concentrated in her femininity and her sexual life. As a result, her fall, which means the loss of her chastity, is equivalent to death. Man, on the other hand, is just the opposite. He is multidimensional! ez-Zayyat shows the fallacy of this theory which, if it carries any truth, is only a product of traditional upbringing which restricts a woman's interests to the needs of her body and totally neglects her spiritual and intellectual growth. While many of Idris' works revolve around the theme of sexual liberation, this story upholds the slavery of women.

In her analysis of some stories, the author shows a deep understanding of the writers' aims, as for example, her analysis of the novel, "Mawsim ul-Hijra el-sh-shimal" (The Period of Emigration to the North), a best-seller by the Sudanese At-Tayyeb Saleh, published in the early seventies. The novel presents three original and interesting characters. The first is Hassana, widow of Mustapha Said, who rebels against a polygamous husband who had forced her to marry him. She succeeds in pushing him by thrusting into his chest a knife which she afterwards plunges into her own breast. The second character is the talented and highly educated Mustapha Said, whose wide culture did not prevent him from believing that raping a foreign woman in bed compensates him for retaliation against foreign invaders whom he has been unable to expel from his country.

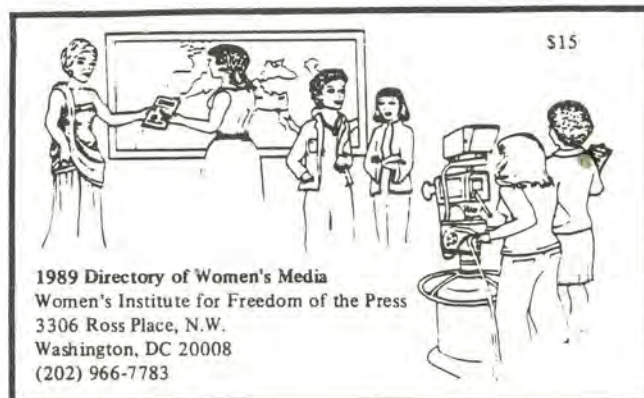
In psychoanalysis, this primitive idea represents an attitude adopted by a weak man who, unable to stand against a strong male enemy, seeks compensation by attacking his weak counterpart, his daughter or his wife. This phenomenon is exemplified by the Arabic proverb: "Jeha is strong only against his aunt." The quixotic adventures of this complexed man finally lead him to suicide.

Totally opposed to Said's views was his pupil, the narrator of the story, who succeeds in evading the tragic end of his teacher and remaining immune from the malady of violence which Said had supposedly caught from his Northern friends, the Europeans. His optimism regarding the future of his countrymen makes of him a symbol of the man of to-morrow, while Mustapha Said's suicide announces the end of complexed individuals like him. As to Hassana his widow, she is a totally unreal character in her community, probably an invention of the author. Yet she stands as a symbol of the woman of the future, who defends her freedom at the risk of losing her life.

The story of At-Tayyeb Saleh reflects originality and optimism which wipe out the image of the negative submissive woman with which we are familiar in most Arabic novels and stories. The image, however, becomes more radiant and nearer to reality in the final story analyzed by ez-Zayyat. It is the story entitled "Az-Zinjiyya wad-dhabit" (The Negro Woman and the Captain) by the Algerian At-Tahir Wattar. The heroine of the story is a pretty, educated and modern young woman who occupies a responsible position in a political organization. The Captain sitting next to her in the car thinks she must be an easy prey because education, in his opinion, has made of her a licentious woman or because all liberated women are prostitutes. The Captain awaits an opportunity for taking hold of her and when, in the evening, he goes into her room, he is surprised to see the young woman sitting on a sofa, singing a patriotic hymn of her own making, while the journalist who accompanied them in the car was kneeling on the floor, writing what the girl sang.

This story, Latifeh ez-Zayyat concludes, proves that woman is not unidimensional as Yusuf Idris pretends. Her potentials and ambitions may transcend sex and go beyond the cage to which she is confined. The heroine of the story is the modern-minded woman who has been utilizing her freedom and her capacity for the liberation of her sisters and all her country-people as well. She is the woman who has imposed her respect on her community and on all those whom she contacts.

Rose Ghurayyib



1989 Directory of Women's Media  
 Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press  
 3306 Ross Place, N.W.  
 Washington, DC 20008  
 (202) 966-7783



## Lana Kocharian Adrouni - Film Director

Azadouhi Simonian (Kaladjian)



Lana Kocharian Adrouni is a professional in the theatre who has rendered invaluable service to the Lebanese Armenian Youth and public over the past ten years. We admire her dedication to the theatre through which she has made a remarkable contribution towards the enrichment of the cultural life of our community. We appreciate the professionalism in her work and the high standards she tries to maintain in her production for children as well as adults. It is unusual for a woman to pursue one of the least feminine careers in the world and she does it with ability, seriousness of purpose and a solid conviction. She has paved the way for other women who are willing to pay the high price of the hard but enriching life of a woman director.



Lana Kocharian Adrouni is a well-know director and professional actress in the Beirut Community. Lana made her home in Lebanon in 1978 when she married Vatché Adrouni, a director and playwright from Lebanon who had studied at the Fine Arts and Theatre Institute of Erevan, Armenia.

She was born in a family of artists in Moscow, from an Armenian, father — a film director and a Russian mother — a pianist. The family atmosphere was conducive for Lana to pursue her interests in art, music, the cinema and the theatre. However, her main desire was to go into film directing but soon realized the enormous pressures that the profession would place upon her. She had to deal with a huge number of casts and physically it was hard for a woman to cope with such a profession. Therefore, she decided to go into the field of theatre production. She traveled to Erevan to study in the Theatre Institute where she had also trained in acting under the late Vartan Ajemian, a prominent director in Armenia. After graduating from the Institute as a director, she went to Moscow and worked with the famous Yuri Zavatzki. Upon her return to Erevan, where she worked in the theatre for a while, she met her husband, got married and came to Lebanon.

October 1978 was a most terrible time in East Beirut. Lana stayed in the shelter with her husband in Bourj Hammoud for a whole week and had her first baptism of shelling. She saw the misery of the Lebanese children and decided to do something to help them. Coming from Armenia where children are the most privileged citizens and enjoy all the advantages that children normally enjoy in civilized countries, Lana was dismayed at the situation in which she found the youngsters in Lebanon. Together with her husband she founded the Keghart Fine Arts Theatre in 1981 and along with plays for the public she initiated the children's theatre. She began to produce such plays as "The Little Boy and Carlson who Lives on the Roof", "Cinderella", "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs", "Once Upon a time" and others. These plays are accompanied with questionnaires to check the children's comprehension, thus an additional instructional and motivational factor reinforced the concepts communicated through the production.

These were like children's festivals that created much enthusiasm and interest, the best experience that any artist could provide the war-ridden children of Lebanon.

Speaking about the importance of plays for children, Lana says that the future playgoer is prepared during childhood years. We cannot delay a child's aesthetic development until he is older. To become fully developed and accomplished individuals, children need not only physical and mental stimulation but also artistic training and encouragement. She feels sorry for the Lebanese children who are deprived of their normal childhood experiences.

Commenting on the demanding nature of the children's theatre, Lana mentions the fact that it is a very expensive venture. Props, scenery, costumes, etc., have to be worked out in great precision and luxury to recreate a world of fantasy and fairy tales. The beautifully decorated stage, the colorful costumes communicate to the children the concepts that the play is trying to pass on to them. Only through such a rich experience can the child develop his powers of intellect and imagination and find a solution to his psychological problems. Lana considers it the responsibility of the community — parents, teachers, youth leaders — to see that every child has the opportunity to see these plays. Unfortunately some parents cannot afford to pay for the price of the tickets, others are indifferent, some schools do not make the effort to bring their pupils to these plays. She believes there is a lot of work to be done in this field if we want our future generations to become bright, imaginative and creative individuals.

Speaking about her career as a director, Lana says that few are the women directors all over the world. It really is a pioneering profession for women and involves all of a woman's time, energy, effort and her whole-hearted and complete devotion to it. It is an extremely demanding profession for a woman who may not be able to carry the responsibilities of a family besides her professional activities. Lana could do it only through the full cooperation of her husband, who being in the same field has helped a great deal. Commenting on the difficulties of working with actors and actresses, Lana says that young men are subjected to the ups and downs of the Lebanese economic and financial situation and often desert the theatre because of it. The young women they work with and spend so much time on, leave when they get engaged or married. Marriage puts an end to the career of most young women unlike the situation in Western countries or in the Soviet Union. The director has also to put up with the caprices and difficult characters of some of the actors. It is her responsibility to create an atmosphere of mutual love and respect among the members of the cast. The director also can and should help the actors and actresses to overcome weaknesses in their personality. The theatre helps these young people to develop the power of self-discipline.

Besides, there is a sense of responsibility towards the audience that each actor should have. No matter what their feelings are on a certain day: sad, happy, dejected, upset — they ought to face the audience with complete control and act as though nothing has happened. This is considered to be the best test for any actor who pursues his career with seriousness and professionalism. Sometimes there are surprises that are most disturbing when one of the leading actors or actresses is sick or has an accident just a few hours before the performance. Other actors need to improvise on the spot and do an honorable job. At other times heavy shelling spoils a gala or a regular performance and all the cast is frustrated. At such times, strength of character is needed by everybody concerned but the director has to be the first one to demonstrate courage in the face of such crises.

Lana regards her career as a director very rewarding in spite of these hardships. The audiences appreciate the director's efforts and admit that they have learnt a lot. The seven year old children who attended their plays in 1981 are regular playgoers — now at the age of fourteen. This she considers the crown of all her achievements in Lebanon. She has not regretted at all coming to Lebanon in the midst of war and destruction. She will have become stronger and determination firmer to contribute to her community through her profession. She feels we are all responsible to do something constructive for the younger people of the country. Children and youth in Lebanon have only experienced violence and destruction of all moral values. They need to be given the opportunity to come into contact with beautiful, noble and refined ways of existence through the arts, music, literature and the theatre.

A rewarding experience was the unprecedented success the group had at Erevan, Armenia after the performance of the play called "The Tree" written and produced by Vatché Adrouni. The play depicts the life experiences of stranded Armenians who have made their home in Aleppo, Syria. The audience was dead silent for quite a while after the curtain went down. The actors thought the Erevan public did not appreciate their performance. Great was the suspense behind stage when all of a sudden the audience gave a standing ovation for a long time. Tears of joy and exclamations of admiration were intermingled when flowers turned the stage into a colorful garden. Lana regards this experience the highlight in the life of their theatre group.

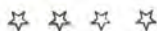
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## “Women in Advertisement” Pennie Azarcon

Excerpts from an article on “Women in Advertisement” by Pennie Azarcon. *Essays on Women*, Edited by St. Mary John Manenzan, OSB Women’s Studies Series. St. School Astica’s College Manila 1987. Abridged by Leila Fawaz.

In a **Mediawatch** project sponsored by the Pacific Asia Women’s Forum and Pilipina, this writer and some Maryknoll students monitored the top dailies, magazines, “comics,” radio shows and TV programs and selected films to find out the image of women as reflected in these media. Print advertisements and radio/TV commercials were likewise monitored from July to November 1985.

The results may be predictable, but nonetheless provocative.



Catching a man is a cinch. All it takes is the right deodorant, a strong gargle, and soft lustrous hair. A smooth creamy complexion also helps. If you want him for keeps, throw in some whiter wash, a perfectly turned fillet, and a well-buffed floor. A super cockroach spray also works wonders.

Take it from the ads and commercials we watch and see all the time; they make happy endings seem just a shampoo away.

Reality, alas, is more complicated. It would certainly take more time than just another brand of toilet paper to drive women into ecstasy or a pile of clean shirts to move them into song. One suspects that on the contrary, most women would be moved into uncontrollable rage once they realize the unmitigated guilts and cavernous insecurities foisted on them by the same ads all these years.

### RADIO ADS

Ads often aim at woman’s most vulnerable features which are easiest to exploit.

Who can resist the prospect of eternal youth, beauty and desirability straight out of a jar of cream?

By defining womanhood as based solely on sex appeal, cosmetic ads can drive plain Janes into scaling the walls or perhaps hiding their heads in shame and desperation. The ordinary housewife or mother is just as persecuted. Who can ever hope to compete with the gourmet meals prepared from instant mixes, the sink scrubbed into gleaming white in a snap.

The woman who fails to measure up might as well flog herself in guilt for flunking her one true vocation in life: mastering home and hearth. For isn’t that what the ads on food, household products and kitchen aids tell us when they repeatedly portray women in her kitchen cooking, in the bathroom scrubbing, or in the table serving? And don’t forget to smile, ladies!

The expectations are particularly unfair to working or career women who are suspiciously absent or conveniently ignored in most radio ads monitored for the project. Instead, women as mothers abound in 57% of the ads, followed closely by the wife in 21 percent of the ads, and the woman as domestic or househelp in 16%.

Between the vain creature endlessly buffing her nails or giggling to show off her pearly whites and the neurotic laundry woman singing praises to her spotless wash, the ordinary woman working for her keep out of grim necessity and the harried housewife battling boredom, fatigue and budget constraints sound like a pathetic and alien character. Whatever happened to the real woman like you and me?

Because it’s bad enough that there are limited roles given to women in the ads; what’s worse is that there are prescribed qualities attached to each role, as a study of the ad characters’ perceived desirable traits reveals.

The mother should always be concerned and preoccupied with the pursuit of the right brand of vitamins, breakfast cereals, coffee and margarine for her family. As homemaker, she must be budget-conscious, choosing cough syrup, detergents and toilet soaps based on weight grams, time elapsed before dissolving and number of bed-sheets washed per laundry bar. Being up to date with the latest products in the market is likewise a must, as the ads stress. “You should be modern.”

Alright, but what's wrong with all these qualities that every doting mom look for in their prospective daughters-in-law?

Why burden the already overworked housewife with the entire responsibility of keeping the home fires burning and looking after her family's welfare and health? With the economic crunch, more and more women are joining the labor force, often finding themselves pinching in their toes to fit into the shoes of Superwoman. After punching in an eight-hour day at the office, she rushes home to her next work shift, preparing dinner, washing up and looking after the kids while the husband relaxes nearby, watching television. For most working wives schooled in traditional ideas, the option of shared housework is just about as improbable as a radio ad on baby food using a male model as caregiver. Sexist ads reinforce this unfair arrangement and doom a lot of women to the rigors of a double day.

Admittedly, some women do enjoy the comforting predictability of house chores. But to turn exceptions into the rule as manifested by radio ads is to deny that the lowest pay scale in the country today goes to househelps — whose main qualification is their close affinity to domestic chores. If housewifery is so noble and fulfilling as the ads say, how come it merits no recognition as legitimate work — either in the paycheck or even in the labor statistics where hardly any mention is made of the back-breaking yet invisible tasks, the all-around skills needed, and the no-day-off clause?

Or is the glorification in radio ads the psychic reward itself, the 60-second tribute to the tired wife's unpaid 60-hour work week? The tribute, sad to say, is just about as empty as those hours in the future when the same mother/wife discovers that she has about 20 more years to look forward to — and nothing else. With kids all married and settled down, and husband either dead or retired and certainly not enough distraction for a 24-hour day, what is the fulltime housewife who has poured all her energy, creative thoughts and feelings into home chores and mothering left to do? The radio ads glorifying all those gleaming kitchen appliances that barricade women more firmly and subtly in her busy world of pots and pans are not about to tell us?

Another critical issue in radio ads is how males seem to have the last say in consumer choices made by women. About 80 percent of product advertisements have male voice-overs, for anything from milk, toothpaste, and soap.

Why should women listen to this absolute "voice of authority" as voice-overs are termed in advertising jargon? Because as some experts (probably male) ex-

pound, the act of buying is menial, hence a woman's job; whereas the act of deciding the better buy based on ingredients, formulation, etc. is scientific and technical, therefore a man's job. Now you know where all those stereotypical assumptions begin.

Some of the more offensive we've heard: a medicated plaster commercial with a little girl wailing. "It is very painful, Doctor." Before one can even rejoice at finding a female doctor at last in the thicket of secondary roles given her, the next line chokes out the smile: the little girl confesses that she got her nasty cut while dicing vegetables. Already, the lines have been drawn at such an early age: little girls, like their mom, belong in the kitchen. Another version of the same ad has a little boy bruised after a game of basketball.

The stereotypes extend to the mellifluous, high-pitched and flirty voices used by women in commercials for soap, shampoo and toothpaste. One immediately and automatically conjures up images of bubble-headed females giggling their afternoons away while discussing boyfriends and crushes.

Based on the roles and characterizations given women in radio ads, women are either vamps or virgins. The vamps or sex objects tease and flirt their way to a man's heart in cosmetic or toiletry ads using variations of a soap message. "Touch me." The virgins or madonnas are the chaste mothers and wives whose only excess, it would seem, is their overwhelming concern for their families.

## TELEVISION ADS

Television ads are no less insidious. With the screen flashing so many images per second there is the added advantage of visual recall. Television ads' use of the medium has in fact been cited by Glenn Doman in his book, *Teach Your Baby To Read* as effective teaching techniques: the audible repetition, the bold distinctive letters against a clear background, the short brisk sessions not lasting more than two minutes at a time, the product logo flashed for a final wrap-up.

Unfortunately, the medium's attraction to kids has made them the most vulnerable victims to the distorted images reflected by television ads.

A story is told of a three-year old girl who refused to touch her chocolate milk drink. No amount of coaxing, wheeling and threatening from her mother could persuade her to drink even a drop of the concoction. Persistent questioning however brought out the main reason for her repugnance: "Because according to the TV, that is only for boys."

The three-year old was obviously more observant than most of us. Indeed a close monitoring of advertisements reveal some disturbing images of women filtered through our living rooms. Some of these are:

1) Women in TV ads play significantly more roles inside the domestic unit than men. Their most dominant role, however, is being a mother, followed by the wife, the homemaker or the laundry woman, the daughter seeking advice or receiving attention, and the bride.

In contrast, male roles are limited to being father, husband, son, or a sick man. There are less ads using men in the home setting as if this area is exclusively women's domain. It has likewise been observed that even as husbands and fathers, the male's roles have something to do with giving approval to the wife's choice of product brand, or enjoying her ministrations where they are shown being served dinner by their solicitous wives.

2) Outside the home, male characters enjoy more roles — from executives to doctors to rodeo men. Women, surprisingly, enjoy just as many varied roles outside the domestic setting (25 in all, equal to the male's), but the most dominant, judging from the most number of ads using the role, remains that of a giggly teener, date, student or part of a group having a good time.

The next most dominant roles for women outside the home would be that of anonymous employees, usually indicated by a typewriter before them, their boarding an elevator with coat-and-tie attired men, or their being dressed up in the regulation blazer suit. That the ads using female characters in these roles are mainly confined to toiletries and cosmetics probably say more about tokenism from ad agencies than any treatise on the subject. Again, a contemporary image has been expropriated, but the needs portrayed and means to attain them, remain traditional and sexist.

3) The concept of male reward or male approval is alive and well and sickening. The most guilty culprit are toiletries and cosmetic ads, as if to sell the idea that the end-all be-all of a woman's ablutions is the attentive male. It's not comforting to note that even when using the successful woman image, the prized catch remains a man. It's alright to go out and conquer the world, the ads seem to say, as long as one defers to a man at the end of a regular office day. It is disgusting that the so-called accomplished women portrayed by the ads would have to rely on their boyfriend's or husband say-so to validate their most routine purchases.

Again, the use of such techniques to sell products also foster unhealthy competition and jealousy among

women who all aspire, it seems, for that elusive male glance. His approval seems to make all those pains to get a whiter wash over another woman's laundry worth it. For the unfortunate lady with the dandruff however, the man turns unchivalrous and openly throws snide remarks about her. Why anybody (especially an otherwise pretty or unsuccessful woman) would bother to get into such guy's good graces is beyond us. Only the male copywriters of such demeaning ads can make the logic stick.

4) Among the most desirable qualities being foisted on women by ads are: being budget-conscious, economical and smart regarding household chores and implements, having good looks, a pleasant smell, whiter teeth, soft hands, flawless skin, shiny hair, dependability as a mother, love and concern as a wife and docility to husband. For men, the ads stress the need to have discriminating tastes to be able to savor the good things in life to be game and sportsmanlike, and enjoy night-outs with the boys.

5) As in radio ads, majority of the ads are voiced over by males, 97 percent or 92 out of 96 ads. Only four products have female voice-overs. Would a woman endorsing athletic supporters be as credible?

6) The most frequently-aired ads are those of personal products (toiletries and cosmetics), and food and beverages. Again, the subtle message is that women have to be beautiful and desirable at all times, and must also be nurturing and concerned about family needs. It doesn't help any that most female characters used in the ads are pretty.

Beauty, docility and super household efficiency: what a tough act to follow!

## MAGAZINE ADS

Close scrutiny of print ads in several magazines reveals that certain myths and unchallenged notions are being perpetuated against women.

By sheer number of exposure, ads for food, beauty aids and medicines easily identify women as mainly mothers, wives, homemakers, and keepers of the family's health and well-being, at the same time, sex objects who must please lovers and husbands with eternal youth, good looks and impeccable grooming.

The endless ads for cosmetics, food and kitchen aids can make women feel insecure and unfeminine if they're not pretty or shapely enough, and guilty if their toilets aren't as sparkling as the next woman's. The mother's

image as know-it-all even in medical problems can easily make every cough and cold a personal affront to her capability to fill in that role.

Some of the more common notions reinforced by magazine ads are:

1) A woman's ultimate worth is gauged by her ability to attract and catch a man. This is obvious in all those ads where the woman's judicious choice of eye shadow, softdrink or deodorant lands her a man.

2) A woman's place is in the home, taking care of her family, serving her husband and dressing the wounds of little boys. Print ads feature women standing beside refrigerators, cradling infants, being asked to tie her kids' shoelaces for toddlers, holding a clean rag and buffing a table.

3) Women are a part of a man's conquest and enhance their manhood. They are there for the gratification of men. This is most evident in ads for tight-fitting jeanswear where women's buttocks in these second-skin jeans are provocatively posed.

4) Boys will be boys, the shapers of the world's future, the progenitor of the world's races, so he needs more care and better food than little girls. The question needs repeating: why is it that most ads for food, tonic drinks and medicine feature the mother feeding the male child? Are female children not entitled to as much care?

5) Women have to be soft, beautiful and loving. The dumb blonde is one interpretation that comes to mind, and indeed in cosmetic, ads, women do nothing else but flutter mascara'ed lashes. Particularly atrocious is that ad for a department store where the copy reads in part: "Little girls in ruffles and frills. Little boys in stripes and checks". Starting girls young in this vain pursuit of femininity is hardly heartening for mothers who'd like their daughters to develop something else beyond good looks.

The use of pretty models all the time also impose impossible standards of youth, beauty and figure on women who dissipate their energy trying to measure up.

6) Success, leisure and the good life are male prerogatives. Even in their underwear, men are shown in opulent surroundings or doing active and interesting pursuits like a game of tennis.

In the same vein, when ads show women endorsing the products, they're usually housewives or celebrities who also happen to be pretty and wholesome in her screen roles. When males endorse products, they're

usually billed as experts in the field: a dentist, a doctor, an expert in something.

7) Women are silly, stupid, dumb or superstitious, prone to old wives' tales and other traditional beliefs that go against scientific claims and discoveries.

Television ads indeed give new meaning to a constitutional aggragation known as "women, children and idiots."

Some media observers note that ads do not create the realities; they only reflect them. And yet, by presenting only the more extreme stereotypes, they exacerbate the already negative feelings some women have about themselves, thanks to our male-centered society. Further exaggerations only add to the guilt, confusion and shame these women might be trying to overcome. Also, by institutionalizing one-dimensional images of women through the media, ads make it harder for women to break out of the sexist molds that cage them. In fact, women models in advertisements may not be aware of it, but they themselves are the seller and the sold. By pitching in for a particular product that exploit mainly their being pretty and attractive docile, women may be selling their own goods and services that in turn perpetuate an image or lifestyle that is oppressive to other women. Another possibility is that she could be selling a culture which, in its glossy perfection, could be unattainable and thus, frustrating to this already disadvantaged sector. Again, pitting women against her sisters has been effectively used by the system.

Our only comfort at this point is the hope that all these insults, all the horrid stereotypes thrown our way and the useless products that worm their way into our needs would build up enough rage in us to make us take up matters into our hands — finally and irrevocably. No longer the meek, pretty and male-craving female, we would use this tool of oppression to liberate ourselves and to create our own image, at last!

## A Brief Look at the Lebanese Family Planning Association (LEPA)<sup>(1)</sup>

The IPPF, International Planned Parenthood Federation, founded in 1952, has developed branches all over the world. Its programs are adopted by associations spreading over more than a hundred states. Yet few people are aware of the activities that it has been carrying out. The LFPA which was founded in 1969, affiliated in the same year with the IPPF from which it receives its impetus and the large part of its funds. Since then it has been steadily expanding its activities.

Some people think that the aim of this Association is limited to the implementation of the principle of birth control through the use of contraceptive measures. In fact, its activities go far beyond this aim. Broadly speaking, we may say that the LFPA tries to create in the family, a rational attitude toward pregnancy and child birth, by realizing an equilibrium between its economic status, including health and lodging conditions, and the number of children it plans to have. The age of the couple, and the type of work they do, have also to be considered in the planning process.

This multiple goal requires a preliminary study of the educational, economic and social status of the families that the Association has to deal with. While it fully respects the freedom of each couple to plan the number of their children and to space them, the Association tries to make them aware of this responsibility and of the necessity of fulfilling the duties which the U.N. Charter of Human Rights requires of parents toward their children.

The LFPA has followed since its start a well-defined program of action inspired by the general need and the ready response of the public to its program. In 1974 it effected a field-study, published in two volumes, about the Lebanese Family. The following are the main results, briefly stated:

1. The concept of birth control is not new to Lebanese families, particularly to urban and semi-urban communities, who practiced it in their own way before being acquainted with modern Western methods.

2. The spouses, on the whole, show readiness to practice family planning through the use of contraceptives. A study made in 1971 showed that the husbands, agreement reached 65%, that of the wives 74%. In 1984, the percentage rose to 87% for husbands, and 94% for wives.

3. The attitude of the spouses is basically dependent on their age, their educational, social and economic status, plus their environment and the facilities it offers for child birth and child care.

guidance, and general service. Experience has confirmed the tight relationship existing between family planning on one hand and demographic, economic and lodging conditions on the other.

The demographic question holds a primary importance in developed countries which mobilize all their efforts to prevent overpopulation and keep a birth rate that fits their economic and geographic capacities.

Encouraged by this example, the LFPA has kept contact with the ministries concerned with family planning and the social organization of Lebanon, calling their attention to the necessity of amending old laws and establishing new ones, for the purpose of meeting the needs of the Lebanese Family and improving its status. Its activities covered the following fields:

1. Preparation of field studies about (a) family status, (b) causes of sterility and high birth rate, (c) treatment of problems derived from these conditions.
2. Creating Guidance or consultation clinics for parents in cooperation with the local administration.
3. Creating family planning centres outside the regular clinics, wherever the need is felt and the opportunity avails itself.
4. Training a sufficient number of social workers specialized in family planning.
5. Organization of family planning conferences and panel discussions on family and child welfare.
6. Using information media including television programs, radio broadcasts, newspaper publicity, publication of a monthly periodical and yearly reports.
7. Publishing the recommendations of family planning conferences regarding amendments in the personal status laws, such as fixing the minimum age for marriage, requiring a health certificate from candidates for marriage.

More recent activities:

1. Organizing a workshop on breastfeeding, in 1979, with the aim of recommending this natural function as more beneficial, more convenient and more hygienic than bottle feeding. Besides, it helps in spacing childbirth.
2. Setting-up summer camps for children, an activity which has proved exceedingly useful as it allows them to use their energy in disciplined group

<sup>(1)</sup> Yearly report of the Lebanese Family-Planning Association 1986 (in Arabic) Triennial Plan of the LFPA 1988-1990. "Al-Usra" Magazine, (Arabic). September 1988 and December 1988.

Following this field study, the Association, in spite of the obstacles created by the Lebanese war, has carried on its activity in the fields of consciousness raising,

work, such as games, handicraft, social gatherings, entertainment programs, serious discussions and other educational activities. The success of these camps depends on the availability of trained leaders and necessary equipment. Last summer, 1988, 1500 children, distributed over 9 villages, spent 13 days away from their parents, enjoying open air activities in the districts of Bekaa, Iqlim-el-Kharroub and South Lebanon.

3. Holding a yearly family-planning week. This activity was started 10 years ago. Its aim is to show the importance of women's role in family planning, hence the necessity of liberating women from ignorance, blind obedience to tradition and to tyrannical parents and husbands. Panel discussions were held, meetings between LFPA members and secondary school students took place in various parts of the country. The topics discussed included demographic planning, family relations, the modern concept of woman's liberation, religious law and contraception, sex education, child development, etc.
4. Drawing up a three-year plan, 1988-1990 with a well defined program of work including the following strategies:

a. Increasing the interest and participation of political leaders, parliament members and academies in demographic questions, with the aim of creating a demographic policy which joins together family education and family planning.

b. Assigning to young men and women a more important role in the handling of social and development problems.

c. Keeping on the family planning services offered by clinics and community centers until the government is able to take charge of those services.

d. Continuous efforts for the increased integration of women, particularly rural women, in general development, including that of family economy and the handling of social problems.

f. To eliminate all influences which in the name of religion or tradition, try to hamper or disparage family planning activities.

Rose Ghurayyib

Unsigned articles were prepared  
by Rose Ghurayyib

**AL-RAIDA, IWSAW QUARTERLY  
LEBANON**

P.O. Box 13-5053  
Beirut University College  
Beirut, Lebanon  
Cable Address: BECOGE  
Tlx: BUC 23389 LE

**U.S.A.**

Beirut University College  
475 Riverside Drive,  
Room 1846  
New York, NY 10115

Director: **Julinda Abu Nasr**  
Consultant: **Rose Ghurayyib**  
Guest Editor: **Rose Ghurayyib**  
Coordinator: **Lella Fawaz**

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