



Al-Raida

Young Women of Lebanon
in the Post-War Era

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW)

was established in 1973 at the Beirut University college. The Institute started modestly with a grant from Ford Foundation with Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr as its Director. An Advisory Committee of seven social scientists assisted the Director. In 1977, the Institute began publishing its newsletter, Al-Raida.

Objectives of IWSAW

- To serve as a data bank and resource center to provide knowledge on subjects pertaining to Arab women and children.
- To assess the impact of change on the role of women.
- To develop awareness among women as to their potential and help them develop it.
- To improve the quality of life for women and children in Arab countries.
- To serve as a catalyst for policy makers.
- To promote better understanding of Arab women and children.
- To promote and facilitate communications among individuals, groups and institutions concerned with women and children in the Arab world.
- To enhance Beirut University College curriculum.

IWSAW Projects

Documentation: IWSAW's Documentation Center houses a unique collection of over 5000 books and 2000 periodicals, individual articles, bibliographies and unpublished papers in Arabic, French and English. The material relates to the various aspects of women in the Arab countries and in other parts of the world. The Documentation Center, located and incorporated with Stoltzfus Library of Beirut University College, is a pioneer in this respect.

Publications

On Women Several books about women in the Arab world have been published in English and Arabic. A series of Monographs discuss Arab women and education, work, industry, economic development, literature, art, image of women in textbooks, contemporary women's movement in the Arab world, women in religion, legal rights and others. Please note that these publications may be ordered from IWSAW.

On Children Seven children's books with illustrations and a guide for setting up children's libraries and writing and illustrating children's books have also been researched and published.

Teaching and Action Programs

Women's Studies In collaboration with the Humanities Division of Beirut University College a course on Arab women was instated. Presently, the Institute's proposal to offer additional courses in Women's Studies has been approved by the College.

Basic Living Skills Project (BLSP) To combat social literacy, a non-formal integrated educational program for semi-literate and illiterate women was devised. The content of the kit consists of eight units in health, environment, home management, sex education and family planning, nutrition, child care, civic education and legal rights of women. They are written in simple Arabic, accompanied by audio-visual material.

Income Generating Project In answer to the painful cry of needy and war-stricken families, a variety of Income Generating workshops are administered and implemented. The objective is to teach women a skill which would help them generate income for themselves. Training is complimented with instructions in the various issues from the BLSP. Thus far, 200 women have benefited from the project; some have become trainers and others are employed in leading establishments or are free-lancing.

Additional projects by IWSAW include a **Portable Library Project** for children's. **A Puppet Theater** travels presents puppet shows to children at local schools. **The Rehabilitation Program for Children's Mental Health** and **Teaching For Peace** are new IWSAW projects.

Conferences, Seminars and Lectures

Conferences have included a regional conference on Women and Economic Development, a national conference on Women and the Environment. Another regional conference on Arab Women and the Environment is under way. The Institute conducts an annual event on the occasion of International Women's Day. Furthermore, a number of informal lectures and seminars on women's issues are conducted in addition to Early Childhood and Special Education.

Al-Raida

Summer 1993, Vol X. #62

*Wasila Tamzali, Head of Women's Right at UNESCO
says there aren't enough debates and discourse
on women's issues in Lebanon*



POWER
قوة

"The young women of today are the ones who will keep the movement alive because they will ask for more than what we have achieved."

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Young Lebanese Women Have No Problems

I must admit that for some time now I have been quite frustrated by the fact that young women are not involved in the women's movements in Lebanon. Since I started working with *Al-Raida*, I am the youngest person attending local activities that address women's issues.

I wonder why the young are absent. Is it because of the mundane and conflict-free approach existing women's movements use to address controversial issues? or the ambiguity and relativity surrounding Lebanese women's status and freedom?

Or more yet, young women seem to feel they do not have a problem, so why create one for them!? Relatively speaking in comparison with many other Arab countries, young Lebanese women have more social freedom and more working opportunities than they have restrictions. Life styles are compatible with European and other western cultures, especially among the upper and middle class elite. Women from poorer classes are more marginal with respect to intellectual discourse and changing patriarchal attitudes because their worries are more situational in terms of securing a living and an identity for themselves, and their families. In these traditionalist backgrounds, discourse on feminist is forbidden. Consequently, those who need mobilization and liberation most cannot raise issues, while those who need it relatively less and have more freedom are the ones who entertain the idea.

Therefore, the situation is such that the question of dependency on a male

guardian and the "feminine" image of being sexually attractive but not sexually active is enough for self expression and for progress. Since childhood, young women are conditioned towards marriage, and from that perspective the end justifies the means.

This situation suits men quite well, and maybe it suits young women even more. They do not see why they must take the turbulent road of confronting society. For even marginalizing subtle rituals and highly patriarchal role-expectations do not, relatively speaking, restrict these women's desired "movements". The system and men confer on women to use their charm and domestic talents as the functional method for achieving status. In fact, rather than revolting against typification, younger generations are mastering the art.

These conditions represent the situation of most young women who have lived in Lebanon throughout the war. Some of the ones returning from Europe, the US, Australia and other developed countries, now that the war is over, seem to feel differently about it (see interview with young professional Lebanese women returning to Lebanon, pg.7-10). In fact they are at awe at the manipulative skills and tactics of their sisters here. They are constantly intimidated by the resistance they meet when they question the system and are therefore alienated. They are compelled to adapt rather than produce changes.

Ah! but change is not impossible. The people of Lebanon who emigrated

to escape the war are many. Their return entails new ideas and lifestyles, which can be enforced despite the resistance because the situation is ambiguous and open to questioning. Furthermore, the newcomers may contest the status quo and thus create a precedent for the other young women who are aware of their needs and unable to express them.

The change need not come from an external force only. The internal force itself has not surfaced, mainly because the movement has been so well sheltered by socially affluent women who are not always questioning their lives but prefer to offer their help to needy women.

Post war Lebanon is in a state of readjustment to peace and to creating law and order. Part of this order must be a revisit to traditional gender roles and relations in the context of structural and social changes. Young Lebanese women should be the vehicle for change. They should become aware of their alternatives and of their needs and should define their roles before heading towards becoming the age old Lebanese women. Maybe that age old woman is really more realistic and functional for them, but they should at least know why and how. Those for whom a different Lebanese woman is imperative should be given the chance to express themselves without being trivialized and alienated.

Randa Abul-Husn

No Point to Discretion

Ramez Maluf

It is difficult for anyone, and particularly for a man, to gauge the emotive consequence of the absence of a feminist movement helping women voice and define their concerns

Certainly, one of the most distressing things to anyone interested in the cause of women's liberation in Lebanon must be the general disarming popular apathy. To most Lebanese men, feminism is anathema or, at best, a subject of derision. For their part, the vast majority of Lebanese women are not interested in clearly defined feminist issues, and those few who are have not been able to vocalize their concerns so as to capture the public's imagination. Except in a few small circles, feminism as a social movement in Lebanon is as dead as a doornail.

It is difficult for anyone, and particularly for a man, to gauge the emotive consequence of the absence of a feminist movement helping women voice and define their concerns. While there are a number of people who have adopted the cause of feminism, the social discourse over the issues remains limited and uninspired. Newspapers allude to it only intermittently and the debate is obfuscated by religious and traditional discourse that, at best, suppresses real dialogue. The moment someone brings up feminism, a slew of

traditionalists or religious apologists jump to say that everything is honky-dory just as it is.

A major yardstick of the viability of any social movement is its ability to encourage discussion of relevant issues among those most affected by its concerns. The responsibility to arouse interest in the subject lies primarily with those directly concerned by the issues, who are able to present the case eloquently and encourage debate. In other words, the responsibility lies with liberated men and women -- and particularly with women.

It is their responsibility to raise the issues, galvanize public opinion and try to grip other men and women with their concerns. It is not uncommon for the early adepts of a movement to have, at first, to devote their time to trying to convince those close to them of the righteousness of their cause. Those who fought slavery had fellow slaves as their enemies, while, in many instances, those who opposed colonial powers had no easy task in convincing their own countrymen to rally to their side. Those interested in the cause of women in Lebanon must certainly

begin by convincing women close to them of the need for a social movement that addresses their concerns. Sadly, however, there are no signs that this is happening, and I can suggest five reasons why.

One to Five

First, there is no unified understanding among those interested in the cause of women of what feminism represents, or what its main concerns should be. Feminism is a Western tradition, and most of the men and women who have been touched by it were first introduced to this phenomenon during a stay abroad, or while operating in a Western-oriented environment. But their experiences, and interpretation of those experiences were unequal, depending on their backgrounds, and the extent and intensity of their exposure. The manner with which they have adapted that accumulated experience to the Lebanese reality also vary. The apparently clearly defined issues of feminism in France, England or the United States, become murky and difficult to interpret in a different and complex world.

Second, in the Arab World in general, and in Lebanon in particular, the large political questions have not been answered, as they have in the countries where feminist movements are more developed. What has given feminism tremendous impetus, and considerable sway over the social life of such countries as the United States and France, is the ability of competent, socially-aware women to devote their careers to that cause. In countries such as Lebanon, riddled with social and political strife, and still partly occupied, overt and strident concern with feminist issues can be made to appear callous or irresponsible.

Third, religious attitudes are a major obstacle to the development of a serious dialogue. As practiced and preached in Lebanon, religion is oppressive to women, although this is truer of some faiths than others. Sensitivities in Lebanon are such that nothing that may appear to aggress religious belief receives wide circulation in the press. Since religious beliefs are intrinsically entangled with the culture that oppresses women, any debate about feminism from which religion is absent is meaningless.

Historically, the more vocal secular organizations, from which women could have expected support, such as the Communist party or the Syrian Nationalist Social party, have subsumed or used the issue for what they saw as a broader political question. In addition, these organizations have distanced themselves from concerns seen as too Western oriented, among them the feminist movement.

Fourth, social movements have no real history in the Arab world or in Lebanon. Therefore, there are no standing institutions, nor a national collective memory, that come to the assistance of the feminist movement in its hours of need.

Fifth, patriarchal relations are very strong in Lebanon, and many feminists, overwhelmed by them, attempt to compartmentalize their concerns too narrowly. The most common, and the most successful examples, are women who chose to focus on legal issues alone, isolating them from their general context. This approach is too circumscribed.

Daunted by the system, some feminists are too quick to point out that they are not putting all existing patriarchal relations into question -- as if some of them are worth preserving! Many seem to fear that they may be perceived by the public at large to be advocating feminism in some extreme fashion, and questioning all values, including sexual relations.

Indeed, why not? Women's liberation necessarily means that traditional sexual behavioral patterns must be questioned. There is no easy, eternally applicable code of sexual behavior and a society must be allowed to debate its beliefs and mores, on the assumption that honest and responsible men and women can and must discuss issues and be allowed to behave in accordance with their convictions.

What Can Be Done

Those interested in the cause of feminism should begin a debate among themselves, through the press and small gatherings, to identify specific common concerns. Of course, some of this already happens. However, although many people have adopted the cause of feminism, few have sharpened their interest enough to the point where they have clearly identified their views. More debate would certainly help focus their concerns.

The idea that the cause of feminism should wait until the day the greater political issue is resolved is gobbledegook. The greater political

issues in Lebanon, not to speak of the Arab World, may take generations to resolve, and to be asked to postpone dealing with the oppression of women until that day when all is well is tantamount to shelving the matter indefinitely. Moreover, feminism should be part and parcel of the political struggle, not a sidebar to it. Feminists must interest themselves in the overall political questions and, in turn, insist that their concerns be made a part of the larger debate.

Finally, feminists in Lebanon should stop kowtowing to religious and patriarchal attitudes. Too much time and effort has been wasted portraying feminism as compatible with prevalent religious attitudes or beliefs. Feminist debate should be free and rational and not adaptable to preconceived notions. Those who prefer to define their beliefs through the prism of tradition or religion must be respected, but let be. There is no point in talking to them. Feminists should learn how to operate in a religious environment, but should not confuse this responsibility with acquiescence to religious attitudes.

The war that ravaged Lebanon for 16 years forced the Lebanese to re-question many of their traditional values, and the country today is in the midst of redefining its identity. Although there are many different cultural clusters in Lebanon, some more open to new ideas than others, a large number of the Lebanese are ready to accept, if not participate in, social debate. Now is the time for those with strong and righteous beliefs to speak their minds as clearly and as eloquently as possible. In an environment so overwhelmingly patriarchal, feminists cannot hope to make a dent by overzealous discretion.

Dr. Ramez Maluf is a visiting professor of Journalism at BUC. He is a member of the advisory board of Al-Raida.

Theorizing Bell-Bottoms Dominating Aesthetics

Stephen Sheeha

Bell-bottom pants invoke in me a memory of innumerable black and white newspaper photos of women marching behind banners in the student and youth demonstrations that marked the sixties and early seventies. But nostalgia is painfully ironic. Forgetting makes remembering a dangerous and tricky act.

The sixties have made a full comeback in the realm of popular fashion in Lebanon: bell-bottoms, straight-hair, John Lennon glasses, clogs, etc. In the United States, the sixties returned a few years ago with the revival of the Grateful Dead's popularity. Everything was tie-dyed, while reggae and other Black symbols of liberation were appropriated (a new form of colonialism). The sixties' fashion statement in Lebanon, unlike the U.S., is most explicitly expressed by young women.

What is disturbing about this revival, like that of Dead-headism in the States, is that it has returned without any of its explicit

social-political critic. That is to say, bell-bottom pants could initially be seen as a reaction against the dominant aesthetic of the time, as a move towards absurd or silly fashion. "Sixties" style was direct intervention into the dominant political-aesthetic realm. Flaring pant-legs signaled an independent self while a form fit expressed sexual awareness. Today, many Lebanese women will pay top-dollar to signal fashion-awareness and express prowess in fashion consumption. This is an act of objectification, not liberation.

Fashion is not a marginal issue, but a structural one. Aesthetics are a part of discourse. Discourse is social reality as we see and live it. Remember that aesthetics are about *seeing and desiring*. Aesthetics are a means of control, determining our aspirations and limitations. They are spread and reinforced by foreign and local television, films, music, art, politics and architecture. The hybridity of "taste" (dhauq) is as much Lebanese or Arab as it is American or Western.

An *intellectual*, according to feminist theorist, Bell Hooks, is someone who *critically* examines and questions one's position in her specific and general social reality, especially concerning gender, race, and class. Intellectuals involved in the current feminist movement recognize these three categories as essentially interrelated, and realize that women's oppression stems from more than simple chauvinism but from patriarchal global economy and accompanying discourses (aesthetics being a part of it).

It seems that university students, women and men, Lebanese and American, are finding it increasingly difficult to *intellectually* and radically critique social and aesthetic sensibilities. Effective and insightful feminist theories cannot but confront these sensibilities. This current "sixties" aesthetic is corporate and patriarchal. It is not only sixties-style but diversified into all realms of taste and all realms of consumption. These aesthetics are what we desire; i.e. what we want to have, become, and be. Women are an intricate part of this

Fashion is not a marginal issue,
but a structural one.....
Aesthetics are a part of discourse

aesthetic system as always. Women are objects to be seen with the clothes. Women consume fashion and are consumed by the male gaze.

Though a product of Western haute-couture fashion industry, Bell-bottoms in the sixties and seventies were worn globally as an expression of a newly liberated woman. The bell-bottom wearing youth, whether she was Lebanese, African, South American, or European were involved in progressive movements for the equality and liberation of fellow women, of workers, of homosexuals, and people of color. Bell-bottoms' pants were a banner of liberation as those held by the protesting women in the newspapers recalled by my memory.

The contemporary bell-bottoms have been remembered through a corporate memory; the same memory that these pants protested against. That very feminist protest the political gender critique against male corporate power is left-behind and locked-out; forgotten. The sixties have become for the women's youth an articulation of Madonna's "Express Yourself." Fashion is being seen; the voyeur consumes your self-expression.

When young women are asked "For whom do you dress?" They reply, more often than not, "I dress for myself." On the one hand, this response totally erases the politics of self-expression. On the other hand, it is the objectification of women's sexuality. Surpassing simple consumption, the

Lebanese young woman now identifies herself with the commodity itself (clothes). This self-objectification is patriarchal because it is organized around the male gaze which objectifies and consumes women's bodies, controlling their sexuality.

The dominant aesthetic of fashion as well as that of mass media, politics, or urban planning, must be critically addressed by Lebanese women, especially the youth. Only from this intellectual inquiry, may we start to remember a bell-bottom critique, and re-begin our struggle for liberation.

Stephen Sheeha is a graduate student of Arabic literature at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor.

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Traditions Limit Horizons

Young Professional Lebanese Women Return to Post-War Lebanon

Interview by Randa Abul-Husn



Dr. Hanine Abdallah

Dr. Hanine Abdallah (H.A.), 28, holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Virginia Tech, and Dr. Nadia El-Cheikh (N.C.), also 28, holds a Ph.D. in History from Harvard. They both left Beirut in 1985 and returned in 1991 and 1992 respectively. Both were faculty members at the American University of Beirut, when they agreed to sit for this interview to tell of their experience as young professionals returning to Lebanon after the war. Both have had to readjust to traditional expectations which created significant friction with their families and relevant social circles. Their feminism and social values made them feel alienated. "You eventually get to the point where they make you feel you are the only 'weird' one around," said one of them and the other readily agreed.

As we sat in the conference room of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Hanine jokingly said that *Al-Raida* got her in trouble at a business meeting. For as she was fetching something from her briefcase, she removed *Al-Raida* which immediately caught the attention of the men in the meeting (my impression was that she was the only woman there). They inquired

about it, looked at it and immediately labeled her "Oh! now we know what you are, we should be careful of what we say." Remarks of this nature continued at various 'comic' moments of the meeting. Nadia, on the other hand, having observed these offensive/defensive situations chose not to express her own feminism in public for the first six months of her return to Beirut. "I actually have chosen not to talk about it."

• **Why not?**

N.C. The reaction to our feminism is very negative from men as well as women. We get a scared and disgusted look. People don't know what it means, are not conscious of it, and their backlash is very instinctive. There is no awareness. They think it means we want to hit men over the head and be more like them. Basically, they are afraid of changing the roles they play.

H.A. They also think it is extremist.

N.C. When you come back and you think you have achieved so much they tell you "Is this what you learned?... You should have only learned from your book!"

Suddenly, it's like you might as well have married at eighteen

The resistance of the ones who seem more liberal is also quite surprising.

N.C. The liberals are liberal in this very unaware way. It is like 'If I am free, I can have a job, go out with my boyfriend and spend the night out, so what more do I want?' For them it is all about being able to express one's self a little bit sexually, and that is enough. I think this is why, in other Arab countries, liberated women's group are more radical than here. Here, feminism is wishy-washy and tampered down with the idea that we supposedly have more freedom. Therefore, the atmosphere is pretty much cooled down and the debates are seen as redundant and unnecessary.

• **Who can you talk to then?**

N.C. I talk to my students mostly. In the beginning they are amused but eventually they accept me and become more involved. It is much more difficult to talk to older people, because they trivialize it. To them feminism is out of fashion, 'Oh! you are still a feminist?!' it's like saying 'Oh! you are

so trivial.' This pettiness is what really puts me off, much more than the disgusted looks.

H.A. My initial reaction, when I first returned to Beirut, was to argue earnestly. Now I confine my arguments to people I can communicate with intellectually.

• **What problems do you face living with your parents again?**

N.C. I am not living with my parents. I live in an apartment building. If it had been a faculty apartment on campus the move would have been easier because it would be judged as a good business deal. As far as I am concerned, I just wanted my space, so I pushed and insisted on having my own place. Now that I have it, I find myself spending more time at my mother's place.

H.A. I still live with my parents, but I spend very little time at home, because I lack the space I have grown accustomed to. Instead, I spend a lot of time outside the house, and I go out more frequently than when I was on my own.

• **What other things disturb you?**

N.C. Subtle things that dictate a woman's behavior which, in general, emphasize not taking too much space, like 'don't speak too loud, be shy, don't argue too much,' and so on.

H.A. And women are not treated as individuals but are always associated with men. The silliest example is in going to a restaurant with a man a number of times and the waiter acknowledging that "Mr. comes here often," as if the woman with him does not count.

• **Didn't these conditions exist before you left for your studies? Why is it so difficult to readjust?**

N.C. Yes, and I didn't question them then. But living on your own and especially in the American society makes you question matters. The hit thing nowadays is to deconstruct and analyze.

H.A. I left Beirut because I wanted my space, even then. Being away did not change the way I feel on this issue, I have always felt very strongly about my independence and my equal place

in society.

• There are many young professionals like yourselves who are experiencing the same difficulties. You have knowledge, status and exposure, therefore, as you grow in number you can have power to influence changes and create more awareness.

N.C. Yes, I wish we had met earlier.

H.A. I think that if we meet we can start discussing these issues because at a certain point you start to think you are alone and not normal.

N.C. At that point I felt I was probably the only woman in the world. I felt I was the only weird one.

H.A. Especially if your parents, the ones who love you start looking at you thinking 'she is not normal'. These people who are very close have a strong effect on you. They look kind of disappointed.

• **Are they disappointed?**

N.C. They are disappointed. Disappointed is very important. When you come back and you think you have achieved so much and at great cost because it was not easy to go there in the first place and change all the perspectives, and learn all of these things and be happy to have learned all of these things. They tell you, 'God, is this what you learned? You should have only learned from your books. Don't learn anything else.' Suddenly, it's like you might as well have married at eighteen. This is the look you end up getting. My mother, however, has outgrown this situation.

H.A. The women, maybe because they are women like us, are more understanding and tolerant of our attitudes than the men. But then again their support is limited because they too are wives and must accommodate their husbands and all the social demands that come along with it.

H.A. We're fighting it. It is really a very complex thing, because one is fighting against one's self, against society and against one's parents.

At a certain point it's like a war, a war against everybody and it is exhausting. And it is a very long road and it's a very slow process.

N.C. They (our mothers) are checked by their female peers too, and must constantly worry about being embarrassed or losing face.

• **You'd be surprised to know that there are feminist men in this country. One of them feels that women's war is with men. Based on your experiences with men in Lebanon, is this true?**

H.A. What do you really mean by feminism? What does it really mean here? All we do is make a logical statement and we get labeled, while men are always acknowledged and heard! It is an entire system that ignores women. Therefore, the few men who do agree with our remarks prefer not to raise the issue publicly. They feel it unnecessary to confront society as long as our beliefs are respected in our private lives and by

our friends. N.C. For men, our feminism is on the level of getting equal salaries and therefore we have nothing more to complain about. I don't care about the salary as much as the very subtle and very small codes of behavior that women are supposed to follow, especially in terms of not taking too much space. These attitudes do not only affect our social relations but our career as well. For instance, in a meeting we have less chances to talk, and if a male colleague opposes us, his statement carries more weight.

• **How do you propose to change the system? Will debates and discourses serve the purpose?**

N.C. It is a combination of both. Living on my own is a statement that will help more women do the same. Publications like Al-Raida are also



Dr. Nadia El-Cheikh,

very important although I think it should reach more and more people.

• **They do not want to read it. They do not want to rock the boat!**

N.C. I know. I do not want to rock the boat for the sake of rocking the boat. I simply feel that my horizons are limited by these codes of behavior and our social ways. Have you ever observed how an Arab woman walks down the street? She looks in front of her and down on the ground because if she happens to look up and her gaze meets that of a man, he will immediately harass her. She can't look up at the buildings, the road, the trees or whatever. And we're supposed to have wider horizons, right?

A Jordanian friend of mine wrote an article about her experience with the Personal Status Code. In a legal court, she was called by her number whereas, men were called by their names. When she spoke with the Cheikh, the judge, her gaze could not go higher than his shoe strings. Now, how are women supposed to get the same education and awareness as men under these conditions?

H.A. It's because they criticize your weaknesses. After all we have been raised here. So it is not like we do not also have inherent in us some weaknesses.

N.C. Oh, very much so. We are completely brainwashed while

growing up and it has taken a lot of effort to try to erase it. This is why when we come back here we are completely at a loss since we don't want to hurt them because we actually care about their opinion of us.

• **Are we talking about people in general or about the parents?**

N.C. No, the parents we love. We are talking about the rest of the people. With your parents, even if they hate you, it is more covered up. With the others, we don't want to be seen as trivial. We care about their opinion. It is very internalized.

• **What do you do about it?**

H.A. We're fighting it. It is really a very complex thing, because one is fighting against one's self, against society and against one's parents. At a certain point it's like a war, a war against everybody and it is exhausting. And it is a very long road and it's a very slow process.

• **Do you think these limitations will eventually drive you to leave?**

H.A. Hum!

N.C. Yes, you have to eliminate one of the wars. Even if you are in a different traditional society, you eliminate one of the fights. Then you will have to fight two wars only, the society and yourself. You have to eliminate something. So either you

move completely to a different setting where you don't have to engage in any of these fights or you move to another Arab country and try to eliminate one of the fights, if you want to stay more in this environment.

• **Would you conform?**

N.C. No, oh! no, no.

H.A. It is not feasible.

N.C. Actually, on some levels you do conform because you are dragged into it without noticing it.

Nadia El-Cheikh has eliminated one of her wars by accepting a job with the Arab Women's Center in Tunisia. Hanine Abdallah is continuing her struggle and pushing through with her beliefs, although cautiously, while pursuing a career as an economics professor and consultant, a predominantly male profession.

Young men and women like Hanine Abdallah and Nadia El-Cheikh have yet to get together and create a force for change. Maybe they will begin by addressing the many blanks that Wasila Tamzali noticed in the Lebanese frame (see Not Enough Debates, pg.12-14), and were implied in the opinions of Hanine and Nadia.

Wasila Tamzali

Not Enough Debates

Interview by Randa Abul-Husn

Societies which develop and progress are those who can debate their issues

Wasila Tamzali is Head of Women's Rights at the UNESCO. She was in Beirut in the Spring to attend UNESCO's Conference "The Rights of Women in Lebanon: Situation and Perspectives in the Context of National Reconstruction." (See Al-Raida #61, pg.19). Leading members of the Lebanese Women's Council, its sister organizations and others working on Lebanese women's issues attended the Conference and gave their reports of the situation in Lebanon, and what needs to be accomplished.

Although Tamzali's dedication to the women's cause is exemplary through years of militance and activism with UNESCO and a very deep personal commitment to the cause, her bond with Arab Women is special because she is an Arab herself, an Algerian. It was in Algeria, in the sixties, that her work for equality began, and Lebanon, as early as then, seemed as the model for women rights in the Arab World.

After various visits to Lebanon during the past two decades, Wasila Tamzali got a closer look at this Lebanese model. She made the following analyses of the Lebanese situation based on observations from Lebanese women's discourses during the recent conference and throughout the years.

• What general impressions did you make of the Lebanese women's movements and the issues raised at the UNESCO's conference on women's rights?

What interested me most was the blank, or, in other words, what was not said, namely the religious-communal differences of Lebanese women. The papers presented ignored religious-communal characteristics of the Lebanese society and how they affect women, family and status. I can understand that the Lebanese people are coming out of the war and do not want to discuss them.

This aversion, however, hinders a comprehensive description and understanding of the situation because the confessions and their communities are basic units in this society. A society must continuously analyze itself, and in doing so, cannot address some parameters and neglect others. We must examine economic, educational, political, and other variables as well as the religious-confessional ones if we want to understand the differences between men and women in Lebanon.

For instance, I notice that the leaders of the Lebanese Council for Women did not question the Personal Status Code.

• They replied that there are no confessional differences within the Council and that their target was Lebanese women in general rather than particular groups.

I am not sure this strategy represents unity. Intellectual analyses and discourse are based on debates, and opposition is the basic component of any debate.

..... It (Lebanon) is a very difficult country to understand, and a fascinating one at the same time

• **Opposition in Lebanon lead to a 16 year old war. What are the possibilities that this debate will not led to more conflict?**

People must understand that questioning and debating are the only means for discussion and understanding. The process comprises an entire education. It is the lesson of modernity, i.e. a lesson in politics, and democracy.

Societies which develop and progress are those who can debate their issues. There are two kinds of discourses: the discourse of knowledge and the discourse of power. Intellectuals and researchers bear the responsibility of acquiring knowledge to help us understand the women's cause. Power, on the other hand, is the prerogative of politicians.

• **Did the papers presented at the conference -- about health, culture, law, labor, population and others -- constitute a discourse of knowledge?**

No. Like I said earlier, knowledge must be comprehensive, not selective. Such intellectual discourses should be more revealing and revolutionary. By virtue of their different ideas and ideals, intellectuals form the opposition

and must risk breaking away from their communities. If you cannot take that risk you are not an intellectual. In the women's movement the role of the intellectual is very important. Hence, the problems of women, of the family, and in many ways the gender relations must be explored, examined and understood in great depth.

• **Did the participation of UNESCO's and government officials in this conference imply a discourse of power?**

No. The discourse of power lies in the hands of the people who hold power.

• **Many changes in women's status occur as a consequence of structural modernity independent of intellectual inquiry and activism. Will structural modernity and new life styles produce the change in attitudes needed for women's liberation in Lebanon?**

I am not a specialist on Lebanon as such. But it is a very difficult country to understand, and a fascinating one at the same time.

Lebanon, throughout the history of

the two religious communities (Moslem and Christian), has devised for itself a democracy which protects the rights of the various communities. This is not democratic because democracy entails universality, meaning that we must have the same rights for all rather than different or separate ones for each. Rights for each community represents the Lebanese model of democracy. It is the most sophisticated organization of tribal respect.

I find the Lebanese model very interesting, because it contributes to our attempt to understand democracy. In Europe we are reviewing Comte's principle of equality and liberty: we are all equal and should have the freedom to be different. Equality and liberty should not be separate. But in Lebanon there was no attempt to assert both because equality was guaranteed by different rights.

The women's situation is very similar. Women want to be equal and different. In other words, they want to be equal in the world of men and they want to remain women. We will not do women justice if we do not learn to understand the relationships between these two concepts.

In Europe we are examining the principle of equality and liberty: We are all equal but should have the freedom to be different

Marriage is as much an obligation for young men as it is for young women. The problem is that women evolve much faster. Therefore, despite certain gains, the young woman loses a lot in marriage. Whereas, men, by virtue of the privileges guaranteed in society do not lose as much. The debate can take an interdisciplinary approach. There are political, economical and gender-relational perspectives. Nonetheless and irrespective of the nature of the conjugal relationship, systems and laws place women in an inferior position. A woman has to take all of these conditions into consideration.

What I want is a law that guarantees equality between husband and wife. There can be no negotiations on the issue of equality. I will go on doing the dishes and the cleaning but it will have to be my choice.

Thus, Tamzali's observations on the women's issue in Lebanon, Tamzali focused on the urgent need for change through research and discourse, and consequently, a deeper understanding of role, status and the family. Hence, in addition to discourse and debates could we infer the need for explicit policies for women in society, for many of the behavioral debates that have taken place have gone on endlessly rather than effectively. What policies are there for women and how representative and reliable are they in terms of protecting women's rights? Could the examination of public policies and policy-making be the first chapter of effective discourse and analysis for a better understanding of women's status and role in society?

• Much of the resistance to feminism in this part of the world is due to the fear from a haphazard imitation of the western model and consequent conflicts with traditions. Is this fear justified?

I think this is an imaginary problem, and these are arguments used by people who think they can control change. Culture is never fixed and it is never a voluntary condition. It is always changing. It is evolutionary.

• How do you explain the fact that young women in Lebanon are not active in the women's movement?

It is the same in France. Each generation benefits from progress made by the previous one. When these changes become insufficient, new demands will be raised. It is normal for a period of activism to be

followed by a descent like the one taking place now. Some say that the Feminist movement is like a snake, it keeps coming in and out all the time, but it is continuous and never stops.

We are the generation who voiced the first demands and consequently gender relations have changed significantly from what they were forty years ago. But to what extent are they different? The young women of today are the ones who will keep the movement alive and growing because they will ask for more than what we have achieved.

• It would seem that younger generations are confused between experiencing a modern, independent lifestyle and marriage expectations. How can this conflict be resolved in predominantly traditional and highly patriarchal societies?

Vulnerability of Women in the Lebanese Wars

Elie G. Karam, M.D., Sabah Saliba, M.A., Rima Al Atrash, M.A.

For a man going to war, home, land and honor all become deposited in the last glimpse of the faces he left behind, among them, women's faces. Cloaked with courage and patience, these women draw upon their reservoir of nurture and sacrifice and turn the back lines into living veins. They protect their homes and children and secure food and shelter. Some leave the domestic sphere to participate in organized support groups that satisfy community needs such as first aid, distribution of food and supplies, securing communication between different regions, providing warning signals against the enemy, etc. Others may enlist themselves in the military service as nurses in field hospitals, drivers, cable and telephone operators ... But never, except for a few exceptions, if any, was a woman serving in the army given a gun and a post next to a soldier on the front. The general notion is that women are too vulnerable to withstand the pressure of real combat.

In the Lebanon wars, women did not engage in actual combat. However, they did not have a choice, because, war invaded their homes and transformed their yards, balconies and roofs into battle field frontiers. The streets, which were once imaginary battle fields on which kids fought their fictitious wars, became danger zones where death awaited every living soul. Heavy artillery was used within the residential areas. Random shelling and bombardment erupted unexpectedly and indiscriminately. There was no

water, no electricity, and no fuel. The closest to engaging in actual combat was women's struggle to survive behind barricades of destructible walls and with hands bare from any arms. How resilient are women in the face of these extremely stressful conditions?

Research has shown over and over again that there is a relationship between mental disorders and environmental and psycho-social stressors. Women are reported to develop depression 1.5 to 2 times more than men. (1) Typically, women at risk for depression were, more often than not married, working and had three or more children. (2) Meeting the role demands of a career-woman, a wife and a mother at a time when a woman is torn between the two needs of actualizing herself and fulfilling society's expectations could be quite stressful for many especially underprivileged socio-economic groups. Were men to be exposed to the same stressors as women the ratio would have possibly been different. Would this ratio also differ in times of war?

Wars as they struck Lebanon were, among other things, a phenomenon worthy of scientific investigation regarding their impact on the lives of the Lebanese. Since its creation in 1980, the Psychiatry, Psychology and Research Service in St. George Hospital, Beirut has actively studied the effects of war on mental health. In an attempt to probe the relationship between war events and mental

disorders a sample of subjects from several Lebanese communities (differentially exposed to the wars) was randomly selected. (3) The subjects interviewed ranged in age between 18 and 65 and lived in Lebanon throughout the wars. House damage, physical injuries and kidnapping were the specific war events which were identified as war scores for each individual by means of the War Event Questionnaire specifically designed for this purpose. (4) Subjects were also asked if a close person had been exposed to any of these events and/or whether they witnessed it themselves or experienced it through someone else. The identification of war events for each individual was followed by a diagnostic Interview Schedule (5) which screened the psychological symptoms developed by the individual.

The investigators were clinical psychologists with at least a Master's degree especially trained to use the instruments. The analysis of the collected data was carried out in the most difficult circumstances. Though frustrating, power failures, concern over the safety of meeting places, securing gas for generators and working in inconvenient shelters did not deter the research team from meeting its objectives.

At least 35% of the population surveyed have developed depression experiencing some of the following symptoms: depressed mood, insomnia (or hypersomnia), decrease (or

increase) in appetite, fatigue or loss of energy), inability to concentrate, feelings of worthlessness and guilt, diminished interest or pleasure) in almost all activities most of the time and recurrent thoughts of death and suicidal ideation.

In this population, females report depression 1.5 times more frequently than men. However, this difference did not hold when war scores were taken into consideration. In other words, males and females who were equally exposed to war events reported depression equally. Thus, there were no gender differences in depression when war events were equally experienced by males and females.⁽⁶⁾

The data also revealed that 10.3% of the population had Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁽³⁾ In PTSD, a traumatic event or catastrophe such as natural disasters, combat, seeing a loved one hurt or observing another person killed may cause recurrent recollection and dreaming of the event, a tendency to be easily startled, intense psychological distress at exposure to

events that symbolize or resemble the original traumatic ones, inability to think about or recall an important aspect of the trauma, diminished interest in significant activities, feelings of detachment and estrangement from others, difficulty falling or staying asleep, irritability, difficulty in concentrating, restricted range of feelings and a sense of a foreshortened future. Most of these subjects (85%) had this PTSD secondary to exposure to war events rather than any other trauma. Again both men and women were equally affected by PTSD.⁽⁷⁾

The studies indicate that both sexes are equally affected by the consequences of the war. Men do not seem to be more tolerant of the stressors of war and they break down as frequently as women do. This finding is not representative of Lebanese men and women in general, and further research is being undertaken. However, we can conclude that the Lebanese woman is not as vulnerable as expected. Facing threats to survival, witnessing killing

and bloodshed, bearing human and physical losses make her no susceptible to mental disorders than the Lebanese male.

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Dr. Elie Karam is the Head of Psychiatry & Psychology Clinical & Research Service at St. George Hospital, Beirut. Did his medical studies at the American University of Beirut and got his American Board of Psychiatry in the United States of America in 1979. Has been in practice since 1980 at St. George Hospital and the American University Hospital. He is on the Faculty of Medicine at the American University of Beirut, of St. Joseph University and the Lebanese University. Additionally, he is on the Faculty of Psychology at St. Joseph University. Conducted several research projects since 1980 on the Lebanese Population on various subjects including the effect of war on mental health, depression, phobia, anxiety, substance abuse ..., post-traumatic stress disorder and panic disorder .The Psychiatry and Psychology research staff

at St. George Hospital Beirut consists at present of:

- Sabah Saliba: M.A., Psychologist. Has been involved in several research projects with the St. Georges Psychiatry, Psychology and Research Service since 1991.
- Chantal mansour: M.A., Psychologist. Joined the center in July 1992 and is currently working on research.
- Gina Njeim: M.A., Psychologist. Has been involved in research in research with the center since 1991.
- Rima Al Atrash: M.A., Psychologist. Has been training in research in the center since February 1993.
- Adel Chami: M.A., Biostatistician. Has been involved in research data analysis since 1992.

SMOKING and HEALTH

Young Lebanese University Women (*)

Taline Papazian, M.P.H.

Success in the prevention of diseases caused by smoking can be achieved, but only if the attack is effectively organized and made on many fronts. The goal is the preservation of the lives and health of thousands of smokers who would otherwise continue year after year to become ill and die before time.
(Pitman, 1971)

According to a study by the American Cancer Society, more than one-third of all regular smokers will be killed by the habit; about half of those killed will be middle-aged, each of these people losing around 24 years of life.⁽¹⁾ The present cost of smoking is as significant as the "opportunity cost" of the years wasted. Heart attacks, hypertension, strokes, bronchitis, cancers of the mouth, esophagus, larynx, and others are potentially fatal draw backs of tobacco.

Despite societies' growing awareness of the consequences of cigarette use, adolescents continue to pick up smoking while many adults have difficulties giving it up. This behavior costs society financial and physical strain on public health care, sick leave, disability benefits and lost productivity.

Daily contacts with women's social, health, and cultural issues and observations of the effect smoking on human beings and especially on young people have inspired me to conduct this pilot study on smoking patterns among young Lebanese university women, to assess their degree of awareness towards the health hazards of smoking, the underlying motivation of the smokers, the family



interrelationships, the attitude of parents towards this "habit", etc.

The Study

The study population consists of university students. Questionnaires were distributed to 200 young women currently enrolled in four institutions of higher learning in Lebanon. (The American University of Beirut, The Beirut University College, The Haigazian College, The Saint-Joseph University).

The hypothesis of this study is that smoking patterns among young Lebanese university women are influenced by the degree of awareness in the community about smoking hazards. The broader the knowledge about health hazards in general and smoking in particular, the greater the number of nonsmokers or the better the health condition of the people.

With Smoking as the dependent variable, the independent variables are: age, parents' marital status, parents' smoking behavior, attitude of parents towards this habit, social level, the degree of awareness, type of relationships in the family, age at which they started to smoke, number of cigarettes smoked per day and possibility of women to smoke.

Description of the Sample

The sample consists of single women. The majority belong to the age group 18-20.

Out of 200 women, 45 (22.5%) are smokers. Out of the 45, 43 are conscious of the dangerous consequences of smoking while only 2 women lack this awareness.

Some of these women are heavy smokers (20-40 cig./day), others are

average smokers (10-20 cig./day) and some light smokers (less than 10 cig./day). The light smokers form 2% of the total number of smokers.

The age at which these women picked up smoking varies between 12 and 21. However, the majority (12%) started between 18 and 20 which may warrant the impact university life and peer pressure have on an individual's behavior. The second highest majority (7.5%) shows that a considerable number of them started to smoke between the ages of 15-17, i.e. when they were still minors and attending highschool. It seems that not only do variables related to peer pressure interfere but familial and societal factors as well, such as the influence of parents, their smoking behavior, public awareness towards the health hazards smoking entails, etc.

Another interesting finding is the parents' smoking status. Out of 200 women, 107 (53.5%) have parents (one or both) who smoke. The attitude of the parents towards their daughters' smoking habit varies between anger (6.5%), indifference (5.5%) or feeling

sorry for them (8%). With respect to the type of relationships in the family, 90.5% of the families have very warm or warm relationships compared to 9.5% who either do not have any or have distant ones only.

The data indicate that 60% of the women belong to the upper middle class while 22.5% consider themselves as part of the lower middle class. However, only one person classified herself as belonging to the lower class. The findings also show that the majority of the sample (142) belongs to the upper and upper middle classes.

Finally when asked whether they had stopped smoking and started again, 30 women acknowledged the fact that they had but succumbed to the need and therefore restarted.

Analysis of Results

One of the variables studied was *Reasons for Smoking*. As shown in table 1, 22 out of 45 smoke for pleasure whereas 18 feel that smoking helps relieve their frustrations and nervousness. Another interesting

Table 1.
Reasons for Smoking.

Reasons	Rank	No. of Students
Just for pleasure	1	22
Frustration/Nervousness	2	18
Boredom	3	10
Tried once & became dependent	4	9
Dieting	5	7
Other	6	6
Peer pressure	7	5
Anxiety/Lack of self-confidence	8	3
To feel more important	9	2
Influence of parents	10	1

The total exceed the sample of smokers of 45 because respondents were asked to check more than one reason if applicable.

finding is that 9 women *have tried it once and became dependent* on nicotine. There seems to be a link between dependency and pleasure and dependency and frustration. The motive that one gives, i.e. *smoking for pleasure* or to *relieve pressure* could be the result of the association made by the "dependency degree" and the person's state of mind.

Another variable was the *possibility of women to smoke*. 128 (64%) students felt that women should not smoke because of the harmful effects of tobacco on health. The awareness of most of the women about the drawbacks of tobacco supports, including the smokers, the hypothesis of this study.

Seventy nine (39.5%) believe that women and men have equal rights to smoke, as opposed to some traditional contentions that women should not smoke because it is unfitting and/or unfeminine. Eleven (5.5%) students believe that *women are not equal to men but they can smoke if they want to*. This finding implies that there are young women who do not believe in the equality of sexes, even among the new generation. On the one hand, this is understandable due to the social and

cultural values existing in the country whereby women are forbidden and/or discouraged to smoke because of its unfeminine image. On the other hand, it leads you to question the reliability of the students' answers and the degree to which they are influenced by the norms.

The chi-square test implies a high significance level ($0.0000 < 0.005$). Seventy one percent, 71.2% (32 x 100/45) of the smokers are aware of the health hazards and yet they continue to smoke. This implies that smokers's dependency on nicotine is stronger than their will power and dedication towards health awareness.

It does not contradict the hypothesis because 155 women out of 200 do not smoke including 98 who refrain because of their conviction in the harm caused by tobacco.

The test shows that the women smokers are affected by their parents' attitude towards their smoking behavior and that the age at which they picked up the habit is related to that attitude. Hence, almost half of the smokers (24) started to smoke between the ages of 18 and 20. Among them, 8 women had parents who *felt sorry for*

them, 7 had *indifferent* parents and 6 had to face *angry* and worried parents, however, none of them stopped smoking.

The findings are satisfying because they indicate a high rate of awareness among the young women about the health hazards of smoking. The hypothesis is accepted. However, based on these findings, the rate of 22.5% of smokers among young women university students is small and, therefore, does not justify conducting another study with a larger sample.

To determine the extent of the *epidemic* and to develop action plans against the consumption of tobacco by women, not only standardized epidemiological data are necessary but also behavioral studies to increase understanding of the factors that influence smoking and smoking behavior in different populations.

An analysis of the factors encouraging or preventing women from smoking in different economic and sociocultural settings is important for health programs and socioeconomic research at national and regional levels and universities should be encouraged to undertake such research. (2)

Table 2.
Smoking and awareness

Awareness of consequences by smokers

Smoking	Inapplicable	Yes	I do not care	I am not aware of	Other	Total
Yes	-	32 100%	11 100%	1 100%	1 100%	45 22.5%
No	155 100%	-	-	-	-	155 77.5%
Total	155 77.5%	32 16%	1 5.5%	1 0.5%	1 0.5%	200 100%

Table 3.
Age at which they started to smoke and Family Attitude.

Age started smoking	Family Attitude					Total
	Inapplicable	Indifference	Anger	Feel sorry	Other	
Inapplicable	155 77.5%	-	-	-	-	155 77.5%
12 - 14	-	-	1 7.7%	-	-	1 0.5%
15 - 17	-	4 36.4%	3 21.43%	7 43.8%	1 25%	15 7.5%
18 - 20	-	7 63.6%	6 42.85%	8 50%	3 75%	24 12%
21 and above	-	-	4 28.58%	1 6.39%	-	5 2.5%
Total	155 77.5%	11 5.5%	14 7%	16 8%	4 2%	200 100%

"Prevention is better than cure"

can be a motto for the awareness campaigns and health education in general. However, much remains to be done to ensure that preventive measures like school health education, public information through the media, promotion of a tobacco-free image, restrictions on the availability of

tobacco and other means are used effectively.

Human behavior and life-styles are the essence of a healthier life. It is imperative to use the knowledge we possess about prevention of diseases, because if we wait for proofs and become more permissive the consequences can be grave and we

would have passed the preventive stage.

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- (*) Further details are found in the original study which is at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, BUC.
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 (2) Ibid

Tips to help women give up smoking

(taken from the WHO manual on Women and Smoking).

* If you smoke to distance yourself from others who depend on you (children, elderly relatives, partners, friends,etc.), try to find another way of doing this.

* If you smoke to control your emotions, experiment with other methods of releasing your feelings; e.g. writing down your thoughts, discussing issues with the people in your life, meditation or exercise.

* Try to enlist support for quitting smoking from your partner, family and friends, particularly during the first few weeks as you break your dependence on nicotine.

* Get someone to look after your children, or to relieve you of other responsibilities, even for a few hours, as you begin to learn to live without tobacco.

* Plan what you will eat and drink when you decide to quit, as opposed to concentrating on what

you cannot eat. This way, you can control your food intake, and control your weight.

* Consider giving up alcohol and coffee for the first month or so, as these often serve as "triggers" for social smoking.

* Change your daily routine for a while to avoid the situations where you would normally smoke, and incorporate exercise into your life instead of smoking. This will not only make you feel better, but will prevent some weight gain as well.

* Make your immediate environment smoke-free, and remove all cigarettes and other tobacco products from your home. Ask others not to smoke in your presence during the first few weeks of quitting.

* If you relapse, and have a cigarette, do not lose confidence in your ability to quit. Consider it a learning experience, and remain committed to stopping smoking.

The Narrow Window

Rose Ghurayyib

This morning, the church bell rang for quite a long while, announcing the death of a notable from our village. It is the traditional call still used in many villages, although in many others it has been replaced by hanging obituary notes on walls.

Nelly, an old friend of mine, who spent most of her life away from Lebanon, inquired about the meaning of the bell strokes. I had invited her to spend a few weeks in my village home. As a sociology teacher, she was interested in rural customs and traditions. So she said:

- I know that a bell toll announces something. Tell me about the different kinds of tolls used in this village.

- Slow, measured strokes, I said, announce death. A hundred strokes designate people with high social ranks, while less represent people of the lower status. Merry, rapid, high-sounding strokes announce happy, exciting events such as feasts, weddings, victories, and sometime a call to assemble for an important matter.

- I counted one hundred strokes, said Nelly. The deceased must be a prominent person. Did you know him?

- Yes, of course. Nadim El-Safi. He is a distant relative of mine and one of my childhood playmates. He had a special and unforgettable character.

- Tell me more about him.

It was a foggy morning, so we sat on a large sheepskin, near the fireplace reviving the atmosphere of a family gathering around a story-teller.

- He was one of my neighbors, I began. We played together with other children of the neighborhood. As we grew up into adolescence, we hardly had the chance to meet again. Traditions forbade contact between teen-agers of different sexes. The last time I saw him was when the inhabitants of the village were alerted of an attack by a group of enemy militias against the village. The inhabitants hurried to seek shelter in the large house of Nadim's father who had been the 'Mukhtar', i.e. the mayor. The house stood like a fortress and sheltered the clan, its servants and the inhabitants of the village in times of calamity. I saw him then, wearing the large mantle woven with camel's hair, while his head was covered with a dainty black velvet cap embroidered with multicolored silk threads. He still had a pinkish finely chiseled face, and the blue eyes with dark eyeglasses, the stately straight figure, the majestic walk and the reserved appearance. My memory jumped over fifty or fifty-five years gone by. We were part of a group of boys and girls whose families spent summer on the sea-shore. My parents occupied a large cottage while his family stayed in a large summer house of their own. I remember his mother, a tall, fat round-faced woman

with blond hair. She was a mother of ten children. She often handled a rosary with her fingers. When one of the boys rode the horse of the family, she stood next to the gate of the house, making the sign of the cross and muttering a short prayer to protect the rider.

Of the five boys and five girls, Nadim was considered 'the shining star of the family', a perfect personification of male beauty. He could read signs of admiration in people's eyes. He smiled and answered salutations without expressing any sign of superiority and arrogance, and would therefore, win their hearts. Like his brothers and sisters, he was talented for singing and excelled in playing the 'Oud' or lute, and joined the festivities at public gatherings and wedding celebrations.

Nadim and his brothers had no other interests besides singing, playing the lute and horseback riding. They relied heavily on their father's wealth instead of learning a profession. They took advantage of that wealth for personal pleasures, and frequented cafés associating with dissolute women.

Nadim was no exception, but he scorned easy preys and sought the conquest of middle class women, thinking that no woman could resist his charm. In fact, he managed to attract a pretty young married woman



from a good family who was childless and had a henpecked husband. She felt it was an honor to have a liaison with such a distinguished and attractive young man. The affair created friction between Nadim and her brother who felt it his duty to defend his sister's honor. He started decrying and irritating the lover. At the café, they exchanged harsh and menacing words. Like most young men of his class, Nadim carried a pistol in his pocket. In a moment of elated drunkenness, he started playing with the loaded firearm, which finally went off, killing the brother instantly.

Nadim felt thunderstruck. The blow was too much for him. He spent two years in prison, followed by a period of terrible isolation. His father had to pay a huge sum of money for his ransom. The event caused a radical change in the young man. He avoided the company of his former associates and started seeking that of intellectuals.

At the time, my brother, Said and I were college students in Beirut. When we come home for vacation, Nadim and his relatives came to visit us. He told me that he had heard of my

success at college and congratulated me earnestly. I could sense the regret he felt for missing the opportunity of getting higher education, which would have made his life different. One of his sisters once told me that he was fond of me, and wanted to propose but was afraid of marrying a woman who was intellectually superior to him.

Nelly interrupted me saying:

- Would you have accepted to marry him?

- I cannot tell, I said. Though we were neighbors and belonging to the same family, his background was different from mine. Physical attraction is not enough and mutual understanding would have been difficult.

Anyway, he never asked. I think he must have realized the difficulty of finding in me a congenial soul. After a while, he married a young girl, like him, who had no intellectual ambitions or background. Yet, it was not a happy marriage.

- Why

- The dramatic experience he had, affected him strongly. He was anxious to have a child to give a different upbringing; a boy he would send to college, train to be a man of correct behavior and high aims. The son would be a source of pride and compensation for the wayward conduct which brought him his misfortune. Unfortunately, he bore no children.

I felt sorry for them because they both believed that childlessness was a curse, an irretrievable disaster.

- This is what happens when people lack the right kind of education, commented Nelly. It is like looking out of a narrow window, with a bleak space ahead.

- That is true, I agreed, but I can also tell you of people who, in spite of education, could not resolve their problems in a rational manner. The profound change that occurred in Nadim El-Safi shows that he had a good disposition. Do you know that, although, he lost part of his properties during the war, he legated a good sum of money to a foundation which takes care of sending needy students to college?

Journal of Maghrebi Women

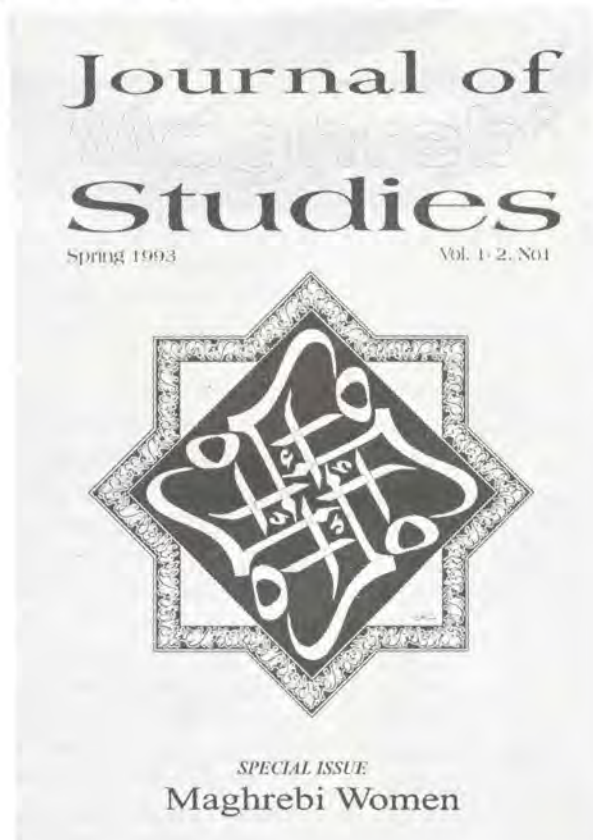
Review by Evelyne Accad

This first issue of *Journal of Maghrebi Studies* fills a gap in studies on the Maghreb which, outside of CELFAN (ed. Eric Sellin, devoted mainly to literature) have had to be included in *Journals on Africa* or have seen themselves relegated to special issues in other *Journals* covering various disciplines.

The journal will be bilingual (English and French) and will cover a wide range of various fields: Art, literature, history, and politics. Each annual volume will be devoted to a specific theme.

It is not by chance that this first issue was devoted to women in the Maghreb. The Editor, Rachid Hassani, who has devoted much of his research on women, is conscious of the importance of this topic and of the roles women are playing and will continue to play over the years. He states that: "The 90's have already seen an increase in the number of studies and works of literature by and about women. More and more, women are forming an integral part of the socio-political landscape of their various countries." (p. 2) Rachid Hassani's aim in founding the journal was first and foremost to support the cultural diversity of the Maghreb. By starting with women, he is able to present this diversity in its most immediate and vivid form.

The topics covered in the he *Journal* include the defense of cultural diversity



in the Maghreb; the Algerian theater of Fatima Gallaire; feminine associations in Algeria; women, nationalism, and decolonization; a visit to a Tunisian harem; Algerian woman-writing 1990-1992; and birth of Nissa' (unpublished excerpt from *Blessures des mots: Journal de Tunisie* by Evelyne Accad).

The interest of this first issue is its diversity, its wealth in points of view, approaches, and contributions by authors from a variety of countries like the Maghreb, France, Canada and the US. The use of both French and English is also an important

dimension. The book reviews add an informative element. It is an invaluable tool for anyone interested in North African issues, and specifically for anyone interested in women's issues in that part of the world. Editor Rachid Ameziane-Hassani ought to be praised for this initiative.

Journal of Maghrebi Studies.
Special issue on Maghrebi Women.
Founder/Editor Rachid
Ameziane-Hassani, Editorial
Assistants Dan Cianfarini and
Mériem Chemai. Vol. 1 No 1/2,
Spring/Fall 1993, 104 pages.

The Word of a Woman Feminist Dispatches 1968-1992 by Robin Morgan

Review by Evelyne Accad

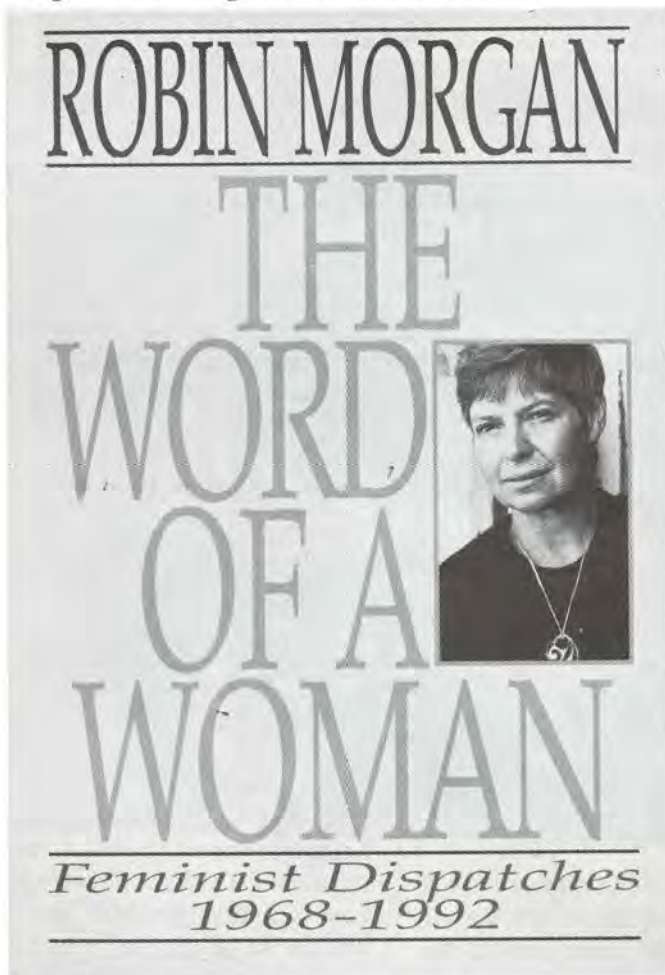
Robin Morgan who, for more than twenty years has been at the forefront of the Women's Movement, award-winning poet, political theorist, activist, founder of the Sisterhood is Global Institute, the first international feminist policy group, currently editor in chief of Ms. magazine, writer of some of the most important works in the field--Sisterhood is Powerful, Sisterhood is Global, The Demon Lover: On the Sexuality of Terrorism to name a few-- has, once more struck a cord in this compilation of two decades of essays of "personal windows into the births, truths and changes of the Women's Movement."

Her essays cover the first Miss America Pageant protest in 1968 to the "divorce" from the New Left, from the first fights for abortion rights and against pornography and rape, to global feminist consciousness and actions around issues of racism, colonialism, neocolonialism, war and peace, the environment, etc. Among the essays that moved me most, and are most likely to touch readers in this part of the world, are: "The World Without Simone de Beauvoir," (1986) "Women in the Intifada," (1992). The book is full of powerful analysis and recordings of important events from "A Massacre in Montreal," (1990) to "The International Crime of Genital Mutilation," (1979).

Like Robin Morgan herself, so full of life, enthusiasm and projects, working till exhaustion, always ready to listen, give advice and help, always in tune with the downtrodden, her voice is intense, personal, joyful, sad, humorous, witty, meditative, theoretical, analytical, critical, praiseworthy, and passionate throughout. It comes out in strength and tenderness, making us laugh and cry,

making us conscious yet giving us hope in the future and providing us with a model to admire and follow.

Robin Morgan. The Word of a Woman: Feminist Dipatches 1968-1992. New York/London. Norton & Company. 1992. ISBN 0-393-03427-5



For Your Library

• Accad, Evelyne: *Des Femmes, Des Hommes et la Guerre: Fiction et Réalité au Moyen-Orient (Women, Men and War: Fiction and Reality in the Middle East)* Paris: Côté-Femmes Editions. 1993. ISBN 2-907883-55-0

Evelyne Accad gives priority to the link between sexuality and war.

By examining how the Middle East expresses itself in its fiction, we learn — Kathleen Barry notes in her preface — how men and women view the war, perceive its effects, experience its ravages and reinforce hope for the future.

Evelyne Accad knows how to guide us into the lives of women in the Lebanese war. She strikes the core of the problem by focusing her analysis on sexuality. As poet, novelist, literary critic and analyst of society, her work presents a kind of mosaic that links these different forms of knowledge to take us into the subjective reality of women in the Arab world.

Renown scholar, prominent writer, poet and musician, Evelyne Accad — Andrée Chedid remarks — expands the analysis on the relationship between war and sexuality in order to echo a reawakening of conscience everywhere.

• Accad, Evelyne: *Blessures des Mots: Journal de Tunisie (The Wounds of Words: Tunisian Diary)* Paris: Indigo/Côté-Femmes. 1993. ISBN 2-907883-67-4.

Tunis, Salammbô, Cartage, La Medina, Le Club Taher Haddad. The women's movement, meetings, birth of the women's publication, Nissa' ; meetings and quarrels, affections/intimacies, difficulties of the domestic world, loneliness, mother/daughter relationships

She speaks of the images and the wounds she witnessed during the year she spent in Tunis. She speaks about the women's movement and the importance of breaking silence.

• *In Problems of the Modern Middle East in Historical Perspective: Essays in honour of Albert Hourani.* Edited by John P. Spangnolo. St. Anthony's College, Ithaca Press Reading, 1992.

Badran, Margot. "From Consciousness to Activism: Feminist Politics in Early Twentieth Century Egypt," pp. 27-49.

A review of the emergence of a feminist vision in Egypt and how it moved into public space paving the way for other women, by focusing on three pioneering middle and upper class feminists.

The three women are: Huda Sha'arawi, Nabawiyya Musa, and Malak Hifni Nasif better known by her pseudonym, Bahithat al-Badiyya [Searcher in the Desert]. Badran gives a biography of each and compares the circumstances, achievements and their statements they made with their actions.

- Fawaz, Leila. "Women and Conflict in Lebanon." pp. 63-77.

A bold and profound review of Lebanese women's political role(s) in the wars of Lebanon. Fawaz speaks of how the few powerful and feudal women influenced the events of the war in the middle of the nineteenth century, and examines the general absence of women from the political arena throughout the modern wars of Lebanon. It is an in-depth analysis of changes in the status of women produced by wars and the development of society. She critically notes that changes in women's status were rather minimal and that their domestic role and image continues to prevail.

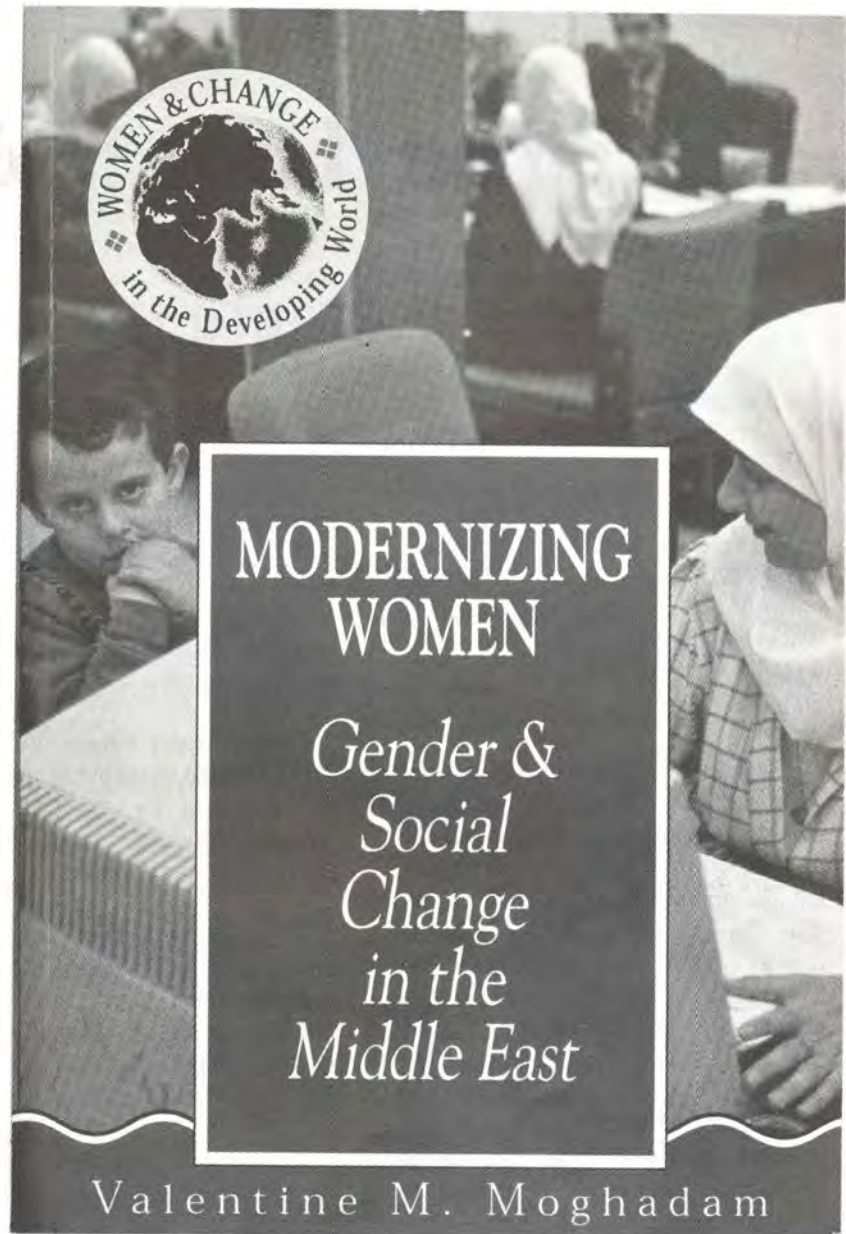
- Marsot, Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid. "Revolutionaries, Fundamentalists and Women: Alternative Groups in the Arab World." pp. 169-188.

An analysis of social groups that are not characterized with clear lines of demarcation, but emerge in response to other stimuli. Marsot examines what they are, why they exist, and what their nature is. Women are analyzed as a main alternative group in the Arab world, emerging as a reaction to social, political and religious movements, and whose roles, functions and impact are strong behind the scene since like other alternative groups, they are not institutional and do not have a governmental nature.

• Moghadam, Valentine M.
Modernizing Women: Gender and
Social Change in the Middle East.
Colorado: Lynne Rienner
Publishers. 1993. ISBN
1-55587-346-4 cl., 1-55587-354-5
paper.

Exploring the impact of social change in the Middle East on women's status and roles, as well as women's varied responses, this book focuses on the gender dynamics of some of the major social processes in the region: economic development and women's employment, reforms and revolutions, the changing family, and Islamic movements. In doing so it reveals that middle-class women are at the center of change and discourses about change in the region.

Moghadam crafts a conceptual framework based on the role of the state, development strategies, class, and culture in the shaping of women's lives. Data from a number of countries are presented, including in-depth case studies of Afghanistan and Iran.



correction

In the review of volume 1 of *Tunisiennes en Devenir*, *The becoming of Tunisian Women* entitled *Comment Vivent Les Femmes*, i.e. *How Women Live* (*Al-Raida*,

Why Feminism, Winter 1993, Vol. X, No. 60, pg. 25) mention was made to female circumcision in Tunisia. The relevant story reviewed spoke of a midwife who

witnessed a ritualistic rite whereby women are marked on the knee and not circumcision. Please take note that female circumcision is NOT practiced in Tunisia.

The Lost Flour Mill

Emily Nasrallah

I recall the road well. Its paths and lanes, fenced by pomegranate and quince trees and bushes of wild berries, are etched in my memory. It swerves towards the mountain slope, slanting downward into the valley, where the waters from the river gush, fast and high.

The river runs between the forests of cane and reed, bypassing the proud polars, the haughty sycamores and the reticent willows, until it reaches a tree unique among those of the valley. This tree sprawls, spreading its shade like a mother eager to embrace the universe. It spreads its fragrance over the area and from its bosom hang the fruits of its bounty - green in the early summer, ripening in September, tempting the children to pick them and pelt each other with them. The walnut tree! It shaded the old flour mill as though protecting a timid virgin from curious eyes.

As time went by, the old mill became more retiring and the walnut tree more protective; its roots digging tenaciously into the earth, its tops waving resolutely at the open spaces.

It was at a young age, now deeply rooted in the past, when my father decided to lease the flour mill and manage it himself, providing a service to the farmers and producing unadulterated flour and seed and grain whose very names stirred the appetite.

I still do not know why my father gave up tilling his land for that year, why he no longer planted and tended his crop of olive and grape and took on the flour mill instead. But I do know the seeds planted in my memory that year will last me a lifetime.

I moved from village life, sharply defined by the changing of the seasons and propelled by the pace of the farmers; footfalls, to a land of wonderment and revelation.

Each person coming to the mill carried a story. No sooner would they begin the first words than we, the children, would sit obediently on the narrow threshold, forgetting our mischief and playfulness to listen.

We were told long stories, in time to the strains of the millstone and the gurgle of the water as it rushed out through the opening in the mill, announcing unequivocally that it had finished its work and was returning to the river.

The good farmers' stories were flavoured with their lives and that of their villages - stories that started out true but strayed, in the telling, into the world of fantasy.

What more of life could a child of seven ask for, than to grow up with nature as her school? Once the pouch full of stories was depleted, we moved

on, my siblings and I, riding the saddle of adventure. We climbed the trees at the edge of the precipice, where the slightest wrong move would have thrown us into the valley. We chased insects and reptiles, not differentiating between friend and foe. And once we were through exploring the outer layers of the soil, we dug deep into the belly of mother earth to discover what seeds and roots lay within its folds.

That was the world of my daytime. A world of continuous movement and surprise. As night fell, spreading darkness over the river banks and blanketing the trees, as the leaves whispered gently to the night and closed their sleepy lids, I moved into the exalted world of imagination. Every echo became the door to an unknown world I was eager to open. Each ray of light sparkling into the darkness, carried with it the promise of a distant planet. Every flutter of a night bird's wings opened a vein of ecstasy to my heart.

How I loved the night! I waited for it, preparing myself for its arrival in the hut my father had built for me on the roof of the flour mill. It was made of wooden planks and tree boughs, with straw mats for a floor, and peepholes in the corners for eyes that cannot wait to watch the dawn break. Huddled in my hut, I felt as though I were sitting on a top of a throne prepared for me by

angels that sat around me, protecting me, providing for my happiness and comfort.

The year passed, the days falling off like pages from a calendar. One year followed another and the child became a woman, her land of dreams no more than a distant memory.

On an autumn day held captive by a bored sun, she would accompany her daughter to that distant valley. She had promised her daughter she would leave the city. They would leave behind the strangled, broken communication lines, the roads that were no longer roads, the homes haunted by echoes of days gone by, their small alcoves left standing to register their censure.

She had promised to take a day away from the life that had her turning in place like a beast of burden tied to a water wheel. Except that she wasn't really turning. It was her world that turned while she submitted to the will of others.

Those others who had imposed war on her country, who had levelled her home and displaced her children, who had stolen the sleep from her eyes and stripped her of dreams and worldly pleasures.

She also submitted to the will of every workman and labourer, who carried his tools and trampled through her house, (after it had lost the protective-ness of windows and doors), to bang a nail into a wall and promise the house would look like new.

She would take a vacation from work and weariness and the endless wait; from the monotony, the fear and the anxiety . . . from tomorrows and yesterdays; from the news and newspapers, the radio and the television;

from foreign correspondents and politicians and special envoys; and from all those concerned parties who had dug the graves of their people.

"Yes," she had said. "Today I'll take a day off with my daughter. One day will neither advance nor hinder the course of my life."

In the car she took her place in the passenger seat next to her daughter. She surrendered to her musings, lost in thoughts that confused past, present and future in her mind.

She knew that this day would create changes. It would awaken memories covered by the ashes of years, distorted by the fires of war.

"If it weren't for you, no one would have been able to forcibly remove me from my home and take me there again," she said to her daughter.

"Why are you so apprehensive about this trip?" the young woman asked. "The roads leading there are safe."

"I am afraid, child, of the sharp daggers of my memory." But she knew she would not be able to explain to her daughter what her words meant. It was a "business" trip, besides. Her daughter was preparing a study on ancient mills and factories (the old flour mill was one of them) and had decided to take advantage of her mother's association with the old world.

"Yes, dear," she had told her daughter, "the old mill is still there, standing at the neck of the river, the water gurgling past it to rapidly reach the end of its journey."

Now she said, "Stop the car here, where the paved road surrenders to the country lane. Let us continue on foot."

She did not wait for an answer. The minute her feet touched the red earth of the valley of bounty, she did not look back. She nearly forgot her daughter and the purpose of the trip.

She was a child of six or seven once more. The orchards stretched out in front of her, the trees tempted her with their honeyed fruit. Bunches of gold and ruby grapes dangled from the vines like healthy pink cheeks and open smiling faces. The leaves on the trees flapped like birds' wings, inviting her, whispering words of welcome to her. She heard voices rising from the depth of the valley - the voices of happy children with no restrictions and no curfews. She could almost see them, running barefoot, their tiny feet blistered and red droplets of blood. Ah, but what mattered was the rosininess of their cheeks.

Those were her childhood friends. With them she ran those orchards tens of times. She knew every corner and every pathway. She knew where the branches were thickest, where they intermingled and huddled as though in secret conference, where they bent towards the river, imparting their secret to the waters.

She knew the forests and the streams, the bird nests and the havens where the cattle lay to rest. Today her daughter had given her the opportunity to recall all that.

She ran as though a thousand hands were pushing her, carrying her, oblivious of the thorns and the pebbles in her path. She ran, never once looking back. She could see the past in front of her, opening a path to the future.

The road guided and she did not slow down. She knew it would lead her to the old mill, and the walnut tree

where she would finally come to rest.

"I think we're lost."

It was her daughter's voice that brought her back to the present. It was discordant somehow, unrelated to what she saw around her and what she felt. Instinctively she needed to defend herself, defend her place and her past, "I am sure the old mill is over there, behind that orchard."

"You mean it used to be there."

The young woman laughed.

"An what used to be still is."

"This will always be a point of contention between us, dear Mother. You will not admit that a place may change. Sometimes even cease to exist totally."

"But the mill . . . the river . . ."

"Only in memory, Mother, within the depths of your roots that hold tenaciously to this land."

"let me just walk a few more steps." She pleaded with her daughter, but she had lost all confidence and her words lacked certainty.

Suddenly she realized that the road she had chosen was no longer a road. It had become part of the orchard trees, which hugged and huddled like the members of a close family.

She turned around, looking for the walnut tree, to use it as a landmark, a sign. And she was shocked to find dozens of trees strewn all around the field. Not one of them bent lovingly over an old flour mill.

She walked away with her daughter, her head bent, dragging her feet, tripping over her desolation. She only saw the jagged-edged stone as she stumbled on it. A strangled cry escaped her and she would have fallen had her daughter not supported her.

It was the millstone.

She was standing atop the ruins of her cherished flour mill - and here it was buried, under the layers of earth and years.

Re-printed by permission from the author, Emily Nasrallah. *A House Not Her Own, Stories from Beirut.* Translated by Thuraya Khalil-Khouri. Gynergy books. Canada: Ragweed Press. 1992. ISBN 0-9213881-19-3.

*The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World,
Beirut University College
has published*

Rose Ghurayyib.
Adwa' ala al-Harakah al-Nisai'yah al-Muaasirah,

Price: \$4.00

This book includes 415 pages of intensive research and analysis of the women's movement in the Arab world with comparative international literature. It reviews the theories of giants like Simone de Beauvoir and others. In Part one, Rose Ghurayyib examines the history of the women's movement in the world and in the Arab world; reviews international perspectives of the movement and its literature as well as the various issues raised in local and international conferences. Reviews of important research studies, include issues like the role of universities in the movement, the image of women in textbooks, the image of women in the Lebanese Press, and others. In Part II, the author examines specific disciplines related to women such as the purpose of social and civic education in Lebanon (1943-1980); women between learning and teaching (1948-1980); the family and the Nation (1947-1986), and others.

Jamal Karam Harfouche.
Fi Tariq al-Hayat

Price: \$3.00

An inspiring piece of literature that analyzes the life journey of working women in public life. In Part I, Jamal Harfouche presents poetry and personal essays about social images and social systems from her personal experiences. She examines their influence on her life and consequently how they affect the lives of women. In Part II, the author presents a more systematic analysis of women in public life touching on an archive of relevant lectures, speeches and interviews she conducted in her own journey. She studies issues like the influence immigrant women had on social values in Lebanon; Christianity and women's rights; women's rights and election laws; woman as a social and health worker; and the role of women in the making of future generations.

Adwa' ala al-Harakah al-Nisai'yah al-Muaasirah
- and - **Fi Tariq al-Hayat** are available at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut

These books are highly recommended to readers who want to learn and acquire objective information and research material about Arab women's issues. They are highly recommended for scholars, students and others who are interested in the Arab women's movement.

Women's Studies Courses at BUC

Five courses in Women's Studies have been established at Beirut University College by the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World and the BUC board.

They are the first to be offered in Universities in Lebanon and the Arab world.

Our purpose is to create awareness among students about women's conditions, their issues and achievements in the Arab World in particular and the world in general. Furthermore, they will hopefully motivate further research and action for women.

The five courses include: Sociology of Women in the Arab world, Theories in Women's Studies, Arab Women and the Arts, Arab Women in Literature, Arab Women and Economics.

REGIONAL

Arab Women &

Exactly one year after the National-Lebanese Conference "Women and the Environment" the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, within its goal to improve women's conditions and address relevant worldwide issues, is holding a regional conference entitled "Arab Women and the Environment" on November 26-29, 1993.

Arab and international researchers, scholars and established personalities will attend this three day conference to examine the situation in the Arab world, and suggest strategies and policies for creating awareness and producing change.

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IWSAW also announces that the proceedings of its National 'Women and Environment' Conference which took place in October 1992, will come out shortly and can be ordered directly from the Institute.

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Production - Al-Raida is a quarterly newsletter of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College. It focuses on Lebanese and Arab Women's issues. It is written based on local interviews, field-work, research studies and information gathered through various sources, notably, exchange publications and women's communiques from all over the world. Al-Raida also conducts its own book reviews of books purchased or offered to the Women's Documentation Center of The Institute for Women's Studies in the Scholtzfuz Library of Beirut University College.

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