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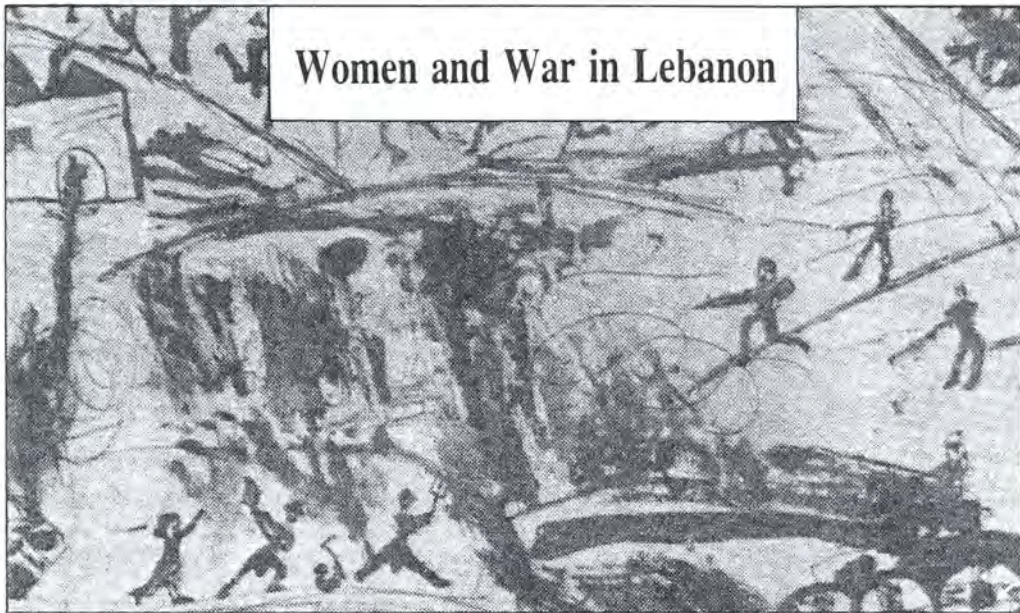
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Women and War in Lebanon

One of the characteristics of war is that it unbalances or destroys the social and mental structures of the people it affects. This imbalance can vary from a partial to a total change in norms, customs, and social roles. The ultimate impact depends on the intensity and duration of the war and on the nature of the social group it affects.

*War permits social actions that are usually considered immoral or are forbidden by law. In war the combatants kill, destroy, rob, and use many forms of violence; their justification is that they are directing these acts against an «enemy». Laws established to protect and preserve life are wiped out by «laws of destruction.» However, this situation is paradoxical because, along with these **laws of destruction**,» new pro-life «**laws of survival**» emerge, affirming the never-ending human ability to start life from scratch time after time all over again⁽¹⁾.*

But what interests us as feminists is the role women play in wars, and, in our case in particular, the role(s) Lebanese women have played in theirs.

Using the pronoun «theirs» is not really adequate because the war in Lebanon was neither initiated by women, nor encouraged by them. In fact it disregarded their existence altogether. Women had

no say when the war started, neither in its decision-making processes nor in efforts to achieve reconciliation. During the past ten years Lebanese men fought and used their guns and bombs against each other and «spoke a language from which they had eliminated women.»⁽²⁾

In general women have been victims, receiving blow after blow: their families scattered, their children made homeless, their sons, husbands, fathers or brothers killed. They have remained absent from the political scene and anguished spectators to the fighting. They have not questioned men's values nor their political ideas, nor their reasons for fighting the war, and, as in Northern Ireland, their only attempt to protest against violence and promote peace was nipped in the bud.

What women have achieved, however, is to hold together the collapsing structures of Lebanese society. They have patched up the lack of adequate social and medical services by volunteering to work in social welfare organizations both national and international, such as the Red Cross, the YWCA, the Child Welfare Association, The Child Care Association, Family Planning Association and various women's groups in the South, the

Mountains, the North and the Bekaa.⁽³⁾

They organized holiday camps for children in Lebanon and abroad, helped raise money for the handicapped and severely wounded and sent them for treatment abroad. They coordinated relief actions for refugees and displaced families by providing food rations, blankets, clothes, medical treatment and shelters. They also sponsored the revival of local arts and crafts such as lacework, embroidery, children's wear, flower making, pottery and local produces, such as jams, preserves, and orange blossom water, and organized impressive exhibits of these works.

Lebanese women have issued communiqués protesting against the violation of human rights.⁽⁴⁾ They have tried to appease the fighters by paying visits to refugee camps and military headquarters and putting flowers in the nozzles of guns. They attended international conferences where they presented Lebanon's problems.⁽⁵⁾

As in Argentina, Lebanese women have boldly organized demonstrations calling for an end to kidnappings.⁽⁶⁾ They blocked the passageways dividing the two sides of the capital, organized all night sit-ins and stormed into the local TV station to interrupt the news in order to have their demands broadcast.⁽⁷⁾ In the literary sphere the voices of Lebanese women writers, poets and journalists have not stopped. Some have gained international recognition and admiration;⁽⁸⁾ others are much admired, listened to and read locally, such as: Sonia Beyrouti - May Menassa - Marie-Therese Arbid - Irene Mosalli, Claire Gebeily.

Thus, Lebanese women have done their work diligently and courageously, daring the daily hazards of crossing points, sniper bullets, and militia checkpoints. They have nurtured men and children without having anyone to nurture them back. Many have suffered physical and mental strains, the long-term effects of which cannot be measured now, but can be guessed as serious.

These remarkable women have managed till now

to restore a semblance of peace amidst the chaos of war and to bring back warmth whenever they had the opportunity (**Nadia Tueni; Femmes de mon Pays, vous, qui dans le chaos retrouvez le durable**). But deep down in my heart when I look back at this decade of suffering and hardships a revolted voice springs up from within me asking: «What will the future generations think of us when we have robbed them of their childhood and adolescence? Will they blame us for not permitting a (Lebanese) Lysistrata to raise her voice and shout, «Stop the Killing now?» Will they understand our helplessness in front of this drama that has surpassed and yet engulfed us? Will they forgive us for still hoping that the war will end one day and that the men will give up the fight?

Wafa Stephan

References:

- (1) Gaston Bouthoul, **Mentalites**, Collection Que Sais-Je Paris. 1980.
- (2) Read Interview with Aziza el Hibri, p.(17).
- (3) Articles about Women's contribution during the war have appeared in the following issues of *Al - Raida*:
No. 13 (August 1980) Women as Peace Makers .
No. 15 (February 1981) Lyna Elias - Pioneer - p. 2.
No. 21 (August 1982) Stop the Arms Race P. 8.
No. 22 (November 1982) Peace Notes p. 2 - 3.
No. 25 (August 1983) National Conference of Lebanese Women's Council p. 9.
No. 26 (November 1983) a Silent Protest: Lebanese Women Sit-in p. 14.
- (4) On 8/12/83 a coalition of women's organizations in Lebanon called for a press conference, asking for the revival of the league for Human Rights in Lebanon and the coordination of its work with the International League of Human Rights.
- (5) See *Al - Raida*, No. 15 (February 81), pp. 8 - 9.
- (6) The President of the Lebanese Section of WILPE (Women's International League for Peace and Freedom) Anissa Najjar, has been named chair person of the committee of the detained and kidnapped people. (Peace and Freedom Newsletter, vol. 44, no. 8, August 84).
- (7) 7 - 10 July 1984.
- (8) **Andree Chedid** (*Al Raida* No. 27 - 28 p.24) - **Nadia Tueni** (*Al - Raida* No. 25 p.6) - **Etel Adnan** (This issue p.13).
Evelyn Accad (*Al - Raida* No. 27 - 29 and this issue p. 14).



Iman Khalifeh, initiator of the Peace Movement in Lebanon will be going to Stockholm on the 7th of December 1984 to receive, together with three other women from India, the Philippines and Kenya, the **Right to Livelihood Alternative Nobel Prize for Peace.**

Who is Iman Khalifeh?

A 29 year old kindergarten teacher and researcher on the effects of war on children at the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World - Beirut University College.

What is her religion?

In a country torn by civil strife with religious overtones Iman answers:

«I am a Lebanese».

How was the idea of the Peace Movement conceived?

On a day of terrible shelling, on the 10th of April, three days before the 9th anniversary of the civil war. Iman was at home evaluating children's books for the Library. She had a pad in her hand. She felt the urge to write something to represent the feelings of the silent majority of the people of Lebanon:

«Nine years have elapsed of this war

and we have been receiving all the solutions in vain, resigned in our shelters... eating... drinking... sleeping.

Hasn't the time come to ask ourselves where to?

Until when? Are we going to let the 10th year (of civil war) do us in?

Are we afraid? What is left to be afraid of?

Let us all go out and give our voices to the other silent voices so it becomes a resounding scream.

Let us walk out of our silence and scream in one voice...

No to the war... No to the 10th year».

Iman then called a few of her friends around Beirut and suggested the 6th of May for a Peace

NO TO THE WAR

NO TO THE 10TH YEAR

YES TO LIFE

THE 6TH OF MAY

PEACE MARCH

march to the Green Line dividing East and West Beirut.

The suggestion snowballed. Friends called their friends and their friends called more friends.

At 10 a.m. on the 6th of May people from East Beirut and West Beirut would march towards each other and meet in silent protest at the Museum crossing point - the Green Line.

The response was tremendous. Thousands of people on both sides of the city signed Iman's

petition to march for peace. The movement captured the attention of the local and foreign press and was internationally publicized - it took the world by surprise.

The world **was** surprised because after 9 years of war in Lebanon it took Iman Khalifeh to show the world that there is a people in Lebanon - the silent majority - an apolitical people, whose cry for peace she symbolized for them in her call for the 6th of May March for Peace, a march that never took place because of militia guns.

Open Forum

A World Movement For Peace?

By Rose Ghurayyib

In my school days, I was fond of reading historical narrative and enjoyed the history courses given at secondary or college level. But when I came across descriptions of wars and battles, I skipped over the pages because I had a spontaneous abhorrence of cruelty and bloodshed, particularly when this made me recall the First World War during which thousands of Lebanese perished from famine and misery. History showed me that the desire for peace is not a recent development. It has been the wish of philanthropists since very old days. In pre-Islamic days, more than 1500 years ago, an eminent Arab Poet, Zuhair Ibn Abi Sulma, depicted, in very impressive tones, the evils of war which he compared to a gigantic mill, grinding people within its frightful stones. He earnestly warned his people of the dangers of the infernal machine.

In our days, thinkers like Michael Nu'aemy* represent war as a «reversion to savagery», marked by the dictatorship of greed, mad ambition and wild passions. Even the so-called wars of liberation leave behind them so much destruction that their justification remains questionable. No period of history felt the need for a Universal Peace Movement as the age in which we live. Nowadays,

man's amazing power to make life happier is sadly outbalanced by his terrifying capacity to do wrong, to make life miserable and to produce wholesale destruction.

While most people recognize the folly of war, few organizations work seriously against it. The United Nations Organization has failed to prevent international wars. It has been helpless in the face of civil war. Who can tame war's fury in defenseless countries? Who can give a thorough description of war horrors and terrorism in tormented Lebanon? The women of this country have shown a heroic courage in facing the hardships imposed on them by war. Giving an accurate picture of their struggle requires a long and serious research which nobody has yet attempted. After ten years of suffering, they keep awaiting a rescuer. They hear that, in the West, people show a tendency to put more emphasis on universal values and to multiply prayers for peace. Our women think that if the Great Powers decide to reduce the production of arms, war fever would greatly diminish. A concerted action taking place on a world basis might prevent a world catastrophe.

Some regions of the world need food, but all countries are hungry for a spark of humanity animating hardened hearts and a sting of remorse haunting blood-thirsty humans.

* A Lebanese writer and contemporary of Gibran.

Ilham Kallab: Women and War in Lebanon Goethe Institute 10 - 5 - 84 Beirut

Early this year, Dr. Ilham Kallab Professor of Sociology at the Lebanese University and author of studies on women and children,⁽¹⁾ gave a conference (in French) on Women and War in Lebanon.

Although only an «introduction» to the subject, (to use the words of the author), this conference includes many interesting observations about the role Lebanese women played during the last 10 years of war.

What we present here is an abridged and translated version of a 12 page, unpublished text.

Many debates and disputes have taken place around the participation of the Lebanese woman in war. Her absence from the battle-field, as well as her lack of participation in the reconciliation processes, have been evoked as well as her timid attempts to be a pacifying factor. Some privileged women had the chance to publish, to speak and to be heard, but they remained a minority.

What interests us here is to answer a series of questions: Where was the Lebanese woman in this war? Did she have a proper typical behavior, a voice all for her own? What could she do amidst this violence that others had decided and created and that she had to submit to? Has there been a new definition of her insertion in national life and of her role as a citizen? Or has she only been a victim that lived through the war with sensations of the futility of life and death, of insecurity, fear and impotence?

One should consider these questions and many more when one looks at women and war in Lebanon. But first of all let's look briefly at Lebanese women before the war.

Before the war, many Lebanese women had produced good literary and artistic works. A rapid and steady evolution characterized the march of women towards controlling their own destiny and their right to speak for themselves. In almost every field a feminine voice arose, affirming itself as a human voice, one transcending the habitual masculine/feminine dichotomy. Testimonies of a new life to come appeared and women started to rid themselves of their historical hang ups. They began to find more realistic ways of dealing with their work, their lives and their creative talents.... All dreams were permitted.... Everything women produced in literature, art, science, education, economy etc..., heralded the coming of a real liberation and evolution..., until the war came.

With the war a kind of blockage happened paralysing the sensitivities of men and women alike. A fall in creativity started to be increasingly felt as each year passed. Patience, which is necessary for every creative work, started wearing thin. A certain «mental anemia» started characterizing everything that was written and produced.

Few people, I believe, are proud of their production during those years of war for we projected a certain perfection and we only got the average.

In sum, if the literary and artistic productions before the war were the result of a leap forward, those during the war were the fruit of a profound split between the creator's personal plight and his/her desire to be a good citizen. Before the war everything was promising and qualitative; during the war things arrived to a stalemate and lost their universality.

Moreover, women have suffered from the war by the mere fact of their gender and more specifically in their roles as wives, daughters, and mothers. As wives their fate was affected by that of their men,

as mothers their function as «givers of life» was deeply perturbed by being continuously subjected to death, to fanaticism and to insecurity.

Thus we can say that a new categorization of women emerged during the war. Women could no more be divided into professional women versus housewives, nor into rich versus poor (although being rich permitted many to escape the country and live abroad). All women from all regions and socio-economic classes suffered, for war was all-embracing.

However, if we want to divide women into certain categories according to what they did and how they performed during the war, the following divisions emerge:

a) **Women who maintained a more or less normal rhythm of life.**

These women, who will not be mentioned in history books, maintained the normalcy of everyday living by performing humble and repetitious tasks (fetching water, bread etc...)⁽²⁾ They calmly and patiently wove (and are still weaving) the history of a bleeding country by a strong and continuous faith in life.

b) **Women who wanted to participate in war or war-related activities.**

By being nurses, first-aiders and social workers, or by fighting in the militias.

This second category of women, who fought the battles with men is definitely a minority. Their rarity propelled them in the public eye, and they are «used» for publicity purposes. As for the first category it is only a crystalization of a woman's traditional role; the man makes war and the woman heals the wounded. These women are necessary, they do not bother anyone; they do not decide anything, they repair.

c) **Women heads of households.**

This phenomenon appeared mainly during the war because many men were obliged to live away from their families, either as fighters or as migrant workers (Gulf countries mainly). Women found themselves the main authority figure in the family, they had to make decisions alone and

take on the double responsibility of being a mother and a father at the same time. This event was beneficial for women. It also changed the image of masculinity and power in the eyes of children. The image of a strong and protective male started thinning down when children saw the mother in control. Moreover, no one could be superior to bombs and shelling, which were the supreme commanding power.

d) **Widows,**

We now have in Lebanon what could be described as «the widowhood of war», which is an alarming and acute problem. These women, whose husbands died, found themselves suddenly without any moral or material support, after having mainly depended on their men. Moreover, family law in Lebanon deals with widows as minors, thus irresponsible for their children's future. It imposes a male tutor or guardian to take care of the children's wealth and education. And it is only by permission from a civil or religious tutor that a woman can become responsible for her children. This law applies to all religious faiths.

e) **Displaced women**

The war has resulted in the displacement of many families, either from one part of a city to another or from one region to another. This change of residence meant an adaptation to new customs and a change of old ones. It also meant that women bore the main brunt of this change, whether it was negative or positive. Economic hardships, due to loss of jobs, houses or land, pushed women to work outside the house to earn money. So, even if the decision to work was brought up because of economic reasons, this increase in the percentage of working women had a noticeable effect on society as a whole.

References:

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- (1) «Hiya Tatbukh, Huwa Yakra'», (The Image of Woman in Children Schoolbooks in Lebanon) published by the Institute For Women's Studies in the Arab World, BUC, Beirut 1983.
(2) See Juliette Haddad's testimony p. 8.



Juliette Haddad Sociologist ☆

During ten years of war in Lebanon, women, except for a few who fought with militias, played no major role either in the politics of the country or in its military destiny.

However they did play an indisputable role in the preservation of the social structure.

Violence threatened to tear apart the structure of society everywhere. In villages, towns, and cities, women helped to maintain a certain coherence, and sometimes even to restructure the network of social relations. Some examples from everyday life illustrate this:

1. The damage inflicted by the war brought us back to an **elementary level of needs**. Much time and energy was channelled into finding water, bread, and light (electricity often being non-existent).

These tasks became the woman's lot... her traditional role. The constraints of war seemed to revive and reinforce traditional practice.

(*) Dr. Juliette Haddad received her doctorate in Sociology at the Catholic University of Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium. She has written a book entitled *La femme et le Couple en Jordanie* which analyses the transformation of women's bodies as a result of modernization.

However, the urgency of the war and the determination to face it gave these traditional tasks a new meaning.

Women from the same building, who before the war barely said hello to each other, started gathering around water points. As weeks passed, they developed stronger ties, some leading to solid friendships.

When bread was scarce, women reverted to traditional ways of baking it, like Sabriyyeh who started making Lebanese mountain bread on an iron board using old newspapers as fuel, or Sitt Hind who baked shortbreads on her gas stove.

It was difficult to satisfy even life's elementary needs but the extremity of the situation channelled women's inventiveness and initiative. They adapted traditional methods meant for a different era and environment to the war-torn city environment.

2. But life does not depend on bread and water alone! The fact that schools have remained operating despite the long years of violence is due mainly to... women.

The instinctive reaction of a mother is to gather her children around her in times of danger. This was the initial response of mothers at the beginning of the war.

In October 1975, all schools in Beirut were closed, but in November one school opened after few women teachers decided to perform their duties as well as was possible. The school soon swarmed with children who came from everywhere, children of all ages, even the very young.

What was the motive of the parents? It was a refusal to «bury» the children in a «mouse-hole» at home, as slaves to TV and card-playing all day long.

Lebanese women preferred the permanent anguish and risk of sending their children to school rather than keeping them at home with an illusion of security. School means an opening up to a possible new and different future and an affirmation of the will to believe in that future.

3. In another refusal to be crushed, Lebanese women have expressed superbly a constant concern to be beautifully groomed.

Whatever anguish or insecurity they have felt during the last ten years of war, the women of Lebanon have kept their «will to please and be pleasant» intact. The care women have given to their clothes and beauty implies more than «coquetterie». It signals a will to resist, a desire to stand up and to live. I'm deliberately ignoring the financial factor in being dressed up to concentrate on the psychological one. The psychological attitude of Lebanese women during those long and difficult years has been a refusal to bow to despair, to the atmosphere of violence and to issues of basic survival.

4. One is not subjected to a violent situation for such a long time without suffering negative consequences, especially when violence defies individual as well as communal commonsense. Interpretations of the reasons for this war and its various episodes abound and clash. For most, there was no chance of looking at events from an objective perspective or of explaining them rationally. Life and experience were lived on emotional levels, and led to a multiplicity of reactions and a tendency to escapism. People were often left with the illusion of an answer, of protection, of compensation.

This **retreat of rationalism** hit women as well as men. However despite the cliché of women being more emotional than men, Lebanese women seem to have proved more resistant to the irrational. They have been more «rooted in life» and in closer contact with the realities of everyday life. In my opinion, a major sign of the rejection of the irrational has been the refusal to resort to violence.

5. «One of the effects of war is to crystallize latent

aggression, one of the necessary components of every social reality. This polarizes and hardens the gap between friends and enemies... Everything that comes from the enemy is bad and everything that we are is good»⁽¹⁾.

Women have tried to counter-balance this atmosphere of hatred by manifesting a pro-life attitude. Their main worry, in the midst of continuous outbursts of violence, has been to care for life, to firmly refuse violence and its sterile logic.

When we found ourselves, all these diverse families of one building, in a shelter, the men would express their feelings of fright and anger against «the others» in verbal violence. But a moment would always come when a woman would raise her voice to answer back and declare that both «over there» and «over here», all those who were dying were human beings. They were sons of mothers like them who would be crying against death and because of it. Hating and killing were no solutions for either side, and the women said so...

Despite this atmosphere of insecurity and impermanence, nurses and social workers never ceased giving their help and care without discrimination or favouritism. Many eye-witness accounts attest to that.

The same applied to school staff and teachers in multi-confessional schools.

I conclude that the woman of Lebanon who found herself concerned with the service of life in a crucial way affirmed herself deliberately as a guardian of life and preserver of its quality. Starting by securing life's elementary needs, water and bread, she moved on to preserve life's more sophisticated reality.. social relations.

In this context of death and ugliness, of fear and violence and of unending hostilities, the Lebanese women's traditional role took on a very «modern» and valuable dimension.

Day after day and with stubborn tenacity the women of Lebanon tried their best to «exorcise fear», to maintain the will to live and to renew hopes for the future of brotherhood and peace.

(1) Gaston Bouthoul, «Les Mentalités,» **Collection Que Sais je?** PUF 1966, pp. 50 - 51.

Also from the same author, «Les Guerres, Elements de Polemologie», Payot ed. 1951.

Nazik Saba Yared: Teaching During the War

Dr. Nazik Yared is an Assistant Professor of Arabic at Beirut University College. She previously taught Arabic for many years at one of the most prestigious secondary schools in west Beirut. She is the author of several books of literary criticism and of a novel, «Nuktat ad Daira», which tells the story of a young woman caught in a conflict between her love for a man and her love for her career.

Al-Raida asked Dr. Yared for an account of her experience as a teacher during the war. This is what she said:

Being neither a psychologist nor a sociologist, it is only as an ordinary High School teacher and College instructor that I can talk about my students during these ten years of war in Lebanon. Moreover, the two institutions in which I teach are in Ras - Beirut, probably the district of Beirut least affected by the war and the students belong mainly to the upper and lower middle class, and are therefore more privileged than others.

At high School

Before the war our pupils came from all over Beirut; but due to the danger, and very often the impossibility of crossing from the eastern to the western part of the city, the pupils who came from the eastern quarters were replaced by children who lived closer to the school. They were a mixture of Christian, Muslim and Druze. A happy mixture. Is this also true of the other schools with mixed students? I cannot tell. But in the school in which I taught, the Muslim, Christian and Druze boys and girls worked together, played together, and went out together. Of course they had discussions influenced by their parents' political and confessional beliefs; sometimes there were heated discussions, at other times closer to joking banter, but never did they spoil the healthy comradeship between them.

In fact, the war loosened many ties and reinforced others. Classes were very often interrupted by the shelling of residential districts. Parents would rush to the school to take home their children, and

sometimes we had to close for several days. Still, my pupils never studied as hard and as seriously as during these years. It was not only that they wanted to make up for all the lost school - days; but being in class and studying was part of a normal life in a world around them gone mad, and they clung to that last straw of normality. More; school became a haven for them an escape from fear in the bomb shelter, from the boredom of being cooped up in an apartment with nothing to do. Outside school most parents were afraid to let their children leave home to visit a friend or for any other activity deemed «unnecessary». Usually, youngsters do not like being in school, but the war in Lebanon made school the dearest thing to our youngsters. On «quiet» days they would show up at 6.30 a.m. to play basketball or football before entering class; and after classes were over, they would linger on and on, postponing as much as possible leaving friends and classmates they were not sure of seeing again the following day. And with the disappearance of entertainment from the city, they created their own entertainment - another excuse to remain at school after classes were over. They formed theater and music clubs, gave plays and concerts. And since they were guided by their teachers in all this, teachers and pupils became bound by new and closer ties. I will never forget the farewell parties that the graduating class gave their teachers at the end of each year, and I never destroy the letters and cards I still receive from pupils I taught years ago.

Also the material taught in class acquired new and different meaning. The Physics teacher, for example, was asked to explain the theories and rules related to the velocity and curves of the various bullets, rockets, shells and similar projectiles. Arabic Poetry and prose connected to the political and tribal strife in the Omayyad period, or other historical events of the past, became suddenly interesting as they were viewed from the angle of contemporary strife in Lebanon. And, naturally, the pupil's language and vocabulary changed, unfortunately influenced by the violence and vulgarity that accompany any war.

And then, of course, there was the loss and pain we teachers felt when we read texts in class about

natural, historical or archeological sites in a Lebanon most of our pupils had never seen, or had forgotten from the days of their childhood. And much worse was our moral dilemma over severe punishment for lying or cheating pupils who experienced the moral and social chaos around them, knew that harmless citizens were being killed by the thousands or had even sometimes seen innocent people murdered before their eyes and knew the murderers went unpunished. No matter how we tried to defend the moral principles we were implementing I do not think that these youngsters were really convinced of their practical value. It is this which makes me worry most about the future of our country.

At University

My experience as instructor in a University College proves that I have every reason to worry. Here I am dealing with adult young men and women who came of age during the war. Most of them belong to, or sympathise with, politico-confessional parties that have accentuated fanaticism, hatred and bigotry. Most of them will not accept ideas or attitudes that differ from their own. Higher education is no longer a quest for knowledge and a search for truth, but a way to acquire a degree, whether deserved or not. (But then, who got only what he deserved in those last ten years?) Therefore, any means are justified to get the necessary grades for that degree: arousing pity, arguing, cheating, and last but not least, threats. What is horrifying is those students' total lack of any sense of responsibility: whatever is amiss, they are never to blame; the fault lies always with others. That, and those young minds immersed in violence: No matter what example I ask them to give in class, they mostly cite something related to violence. In this, at least, they are not to blame.

Black as this picture might be, there are nevertheless a few wonderful spotlights that brighten it: I think of the student who still conscientiously reads every reference book I recommend; of the one who comes to me after class to discuss this or that point; of that other one who asks for more material by and about a poet whose poems he/she liked; of the student who gives me the prose or poetry he/she

wrote privately, asking me to evaluate it; of the students who go on giving us excellent plays in spite of the difficulties they have to face.

It is those students who still make teaching a wonderful experience, and who give us a spark of hope for the future.

Dr. Jamal Karam Harfouche - Pediatrician[☆]

My position during the war in Lebanon was that of bewilderment and pondering. I tried to do things but contrary to the pre-war years where I was actively involved in women's organizations, the women's struggle etc.. I stood watching.

Till now I don't know the causes of this war nor its consequences. I am against war and I don't believe in it even on the international level. War doesn't solve problems, on the contrary it creates new ones.

I feel very distant from the concept of war and its aspects. Even the people whom I considered close to me became alien when they started getting involved in the war and I stopped seeing them.

I believe this war is the biggest evil that has happened to Lebanon and is above the capacity of a normal individual to handle.

All my interests during the past nine years have been centered on my scientific research because I found out that words do not reach people any more. Before the war writing an article or giving a speech used to have an impact. Now the one who does not carry a kalashnikov is not heard by anyone and is a nobody.

I believe that the only way to reconstruct a new Lebanon is to create a new Lebanese individual. The most important thing this new individual must have is morality and a good solid upbringing. For if a nation does not have morality it can never succeed...

[☆] Dr. Harfouche is Professor Emeritus of Maternal and Child Health at the American University of Beirut and advisor to many local and international health organizations.

See Al-Raida, No. 25, p.2.

Nuha Salib Salibi: On Car-Bombs and People

On the 5th of February 1983 a car bomb exploded outside the offices of the Palestinian Research Centre in Beirut. Many of people were killed and wounded. They called it the massacre of Hamra. Many were to follow, more devastating and violent, but in the collective memory of Beirut, this particular incident remained horrific as the first of its kind.

Here is an eyewitness account by BUC English Instructor Nuha Salibi whose apartment is a few yards from the site of the explosion*.

It was a bleak February Saturday, an end to a week when nothing out of the ordinary had taken place. Families were busy either gathering around their lunch tables or hurrying home for the weekend break. In my home, we had just finished lunch. My husband had gone to have his siesta, my daughter was in the kitchen washing the dishes, and I had just left to go and wash my hands. Luckily, none of us were in the same room because this is how we were saved. Quite suddenly, I felt a tremor go from the top of my head throughout my body. Somewhere in my mind the message registered, «Here it is» it being the ninth drastic bomb and rocket explosion we had suffered from in this long period of war. Yet something kept me rooted in my place. I must have blacked out for a minute before I was galvanized into action as I heard my husband move in the next room. I realised what had happened must have been horrible and I started shrieking for my daughter. I shouted and shouted and tried to move to where the kitchen was situated. Of course, in the meantime, the fires had started to rage while the glass was still falling. All around people were screaming for help; all hell had broken loose. As I came to the door of the hallway, treading over glass and furniture, our neighbour

came out of his house pleading for help. The sight he presented was unbelievable: his Adam's apple was hanging out like a slain chicken's with blood bathing his face and hands. Unconsciously, I found myself screeching at the top of my voice, «You need a hospital. Go to the hospital».

My husband started calling from the room. He wanted his shirt and tie. Where could I find them in all this rubble? My daughter came from the kitchen trembling and crying. «Mummy, Daddy», over and over. She was afraid for her father with his heart condition, afraid for me, afraid of the whole rotten mess. I could not believe she was in one piece as I gathered her to me, weeping soundlessly.....

At the end of the day, the neighbours in my building looked like war veterans. Some had faces like sieves; others were swathed in bandages; a bed-ridden sick woman had to be admitted into hospital with six severed tendons. The stories can go on but we still felt we were lucky, because so many others had died. The owner of the little grocery store was burned to death although his son was able to save himself. The bicycle of a thirteen-year-old, a professor's brilliant son living two buildings away, was the only trace left of him. A father and his young daughter were blown into bits as she came down to the car to welcome him. A high school student, a pretty healthy girl, became a heap of flesh as she went home from the cleaner's under my home. A fine arts graduating senior in the college where I teach was trapped in her car as she

* This account was first published in 1983 in a booklet entitled «On the Road to Recovery» and distributed by the author to close friends.

Al-Raida thanks the author for her kind permission to reprint this excerpt, in this issue.

was passing, losing her ear, nose, and eyesight in the process. Around 15 employees in the building next door were killed, people we knew and people we did not. Yet each individual had a family and this family became bereaved.

As for our homes. They were a wreck. The little souvenirs that were more valuable than anything else became bits of glass, wood, metal, and memories. Worst of all was the fear that tore us apart. At night I still dream of the neighbours as they cried out in frenzy, trapped in their burning buildings now gutted and empty. During the day I think of the maimed and the dead and I curse myself for ever having borne children or for the worse folly of keeping them in this crazed city.

The night of the explosion, the three of us in the house huddled on the one bed that was relatively clean. We were exhausted and shattered to the point of death, yet sleep did not come easily. A storm raged outside and I worried lest the earth from the broken plant pots on the balcony clog the drain, causing the house to flood. Without a single pane of glass or closed door, the house was like an open-air balloon and not even our thickest sweaters kept us warm. Mummified, we stretched motionless in case the clinging splinters should bruise us. For the first time, we welcomed the howling of the wind which kept us company that sleepless night and we drew the biggest comfort from the knowledge that we were all together, unbruised and unharmed.

Testimonies

Etel Adnan

Poetess and Painter

«This is what I call tribal behaviour», she adds. «Identification with the group begins as a feeling of solidarity, but when they (the individuals of a group) are at war, the only solution is total eradication of the enemy, his wife and children.

«This is the most dangerous aspect in the Middle East», she declares.

«In the Lebanese civil war, the kidnappings conducted by both sides were unforgivable», she says. The victims of these abductions are used «as pawns, as objects, as small change. My opinion is that even if your cause is just, there are certain things that human nature should not do. You must stop somewhere».

«I think my book is about the moral and physical death of a city», she concludes. «It will take a long

time to feel innocent in Beirut».

The Lebanese poet and painter Etel Adnan was born in Beirut 59 years ago to a Muslim father and a Christian mother. She was educated at French schools in Beirut, then at the Sorbonne in Paris and at Berkeley and Harvard in the U.S.A. From 1958 to 1978 she taught philosophy at Dominican College in California. She currently lives between California and Paris, painting and writing poetry and prose in French and English. She has published six volumes of poetry and a novel, **Sitt Marie Rose**^(*), which tells the story of a Christian Lebanese woman who was the principal of a school for retarded women and supported the Palestinian cause.

In an interview with the MIDDLE EAST Magazine published in London (September 1983), Adnan says: «This is not a book which says who is right and who is wrong in that war - though I have my own opinion on that. I was trying to show how some cultural values which have their good side in time of peace can, in time of war, lead to genocide».

(*) **Sitt Marie Rose**, Post-Appolo Press, Sausalito, California (1982).

Impressions Cèdres et Cendres Evelyne Accad

Novelist, song-writer, poet and professor of comparative literature at Illinois University (USA), Evelyne Accad visited Lebanon on a Fulbright Grant to teach Women's Studies at Beirut University College.

From January to June 1984 and despite a heavy teaching schedule and worsening security conditions, Evelyne managed to write a sizeable part of her forthcoming novel «Cedars and Ashes» which is about the war in Lebanon.

Al-Raida is proud to publish the first excerpts of this book which Evelyne sent with the following message:

“To give my impressions on Lebanon and the war, I can think of nothing better than to send you a few pages from my forthcoming novel, Cedars and Ashes. I wrote these lines in Beirut in the spring of 1984.”

Elle se lève et se blottit contre Samir qui lui entoure les épaules de ses bras. Elle aussi le tient dans un geste de tendresse. Ils sont face à la mer, le dos tourné à la ville. Ils entrent dans le silence de leur amour ponctué par la vague qui se brise devant et la raffale des mitrailleuses qui crépite derrière. Ils se tournent ensemble d'un commun accord face à la ville, affrontant la fusillade. Ils pénètrent de concert le mur de l'oubli pour retrouver la joie première qui leur permettra de retourner à la mer.

L'océan est recoupé de pourpre
Il y a des hirondelles qui meurent dans mon coeur
Il y a des fleurs qui tombent dans le matin blanc
J'aimerais te porter au-dessus du temps
Toi l'enfant de demain
qui n'a connu que la guerre
Toi que j'aimerais serrer contre mon coeur meurtri
Je cherche l'étoile éclatée de tendresse

J'attends celui qui m'aimera vraiment
Je le garderai au chaud dans les plis
de mon coeur et de mon corps
Et nos peaux souffleront
le bonheur de s'être trouvés
et reconnus...

Il n'y a pas de paix pour celui qui cherche...

Il n'y a pas d'électricité. Fadia écrit à la lumière d'une lampe à gaz. Elle note, rédige, pressée qu'elle est de tout exprimer: les souffrances de son passé, les joies de son présent, les peurs et les attentes de l'avenir.

J'ai pensé mourir...
Mon chagrin éclatait par toutes les pores de ma peau
Une fatigue intense s'était saisie de moi
J'avais dans le noir...

Le soleil du Liban me guérit lentement

Je me sens à l'unisson de la souffrance des pierres,
des cèdres et des cendres de mon pays
Je communique avec son peuple frappé par le
malheur

Je pensais revenir ici pour y mourir peut-être...

Mais c'est le contraire qui se produit

Je revis lentement

Une paix intérieure remplace mon angoisse

Les bombes qui éclatent à l'extérieur ne me
touchent pas

Ici, j'arrive à toucher la beauté du noyau de mon
existence

Ici, je retrouve les conflits qui m'ont déchirée et
forcée à partir

Ici, je découvre les pourquoi des choix de ma vie

Ici, je peux faire la part des choses et donner un
sens à ma douleur

Et peut-être à celle des autres

Ici, une société déchirée et meurtrie autant que moi
me porte au-dessus du temps

et m'apprend la patience

Ici, j'accède au sourire dans les larmes

Ici, je peux rire dans l'angoisse avec les autres
car elles partagent ma peine

Fadia rédige et écrit à la lumière d'une bougie.
Elle est accroupie dans l'abri. Dehors les obus
frappent et éclatent. Elle médite sur ce qu'elle
découvrira à la sortie. Elle se demande si le soleil
pourra encore luire sur les morceaux de son pays
écartelé. Même l'amour de Samir et la pensée qu'ils
se retrouveront peut-être, n'arrive pas à panser les
blessures de son passé.

En 1994, la terre existera-t-elle toujours?

Retrouverai-je celui que j'ai aimé?

Lui ferai-je un collier de mes sanglots?

Pourra-t-il accepter les larmes

étant devenu l'homme nouveau

transformé par l'absolu du temps?

Aura-t-il compris l'importance des pleurs?

Il m'a dit avoir une blessure au fond de lui
plaie vive qui ne se referme pas.

Pourquoi ne m'a-t-il pas laissé la lui cicatriser?

Il aurait dû écrire, et moi avec lui

Nous aurions créé, unis dans l'harmonie de nos
deux cœurs faits l'un pour l'autre.

Il y a autour de la terre un réseau de clarté
Mais les hommes ne le voient pas
Ils l'ont voilé par la poussière des canons
Et bientôt par un nuage nucléaire.

Il y a dans mon cœur

un rayon de lumière que je n'éteindrai pas
malgré ma déchirure qui s'est rouverte
et qui saigne et ressaigne
car je n'ai pas voulu ou su me protéger...

Oui, il viendra à moi, peut-être dans l'éternité.

Le reconnaitrai - je?

On ne peut pas aimer sous les bombes

On ne peut pas désirer quand d'autres meurent

On ne peut pas comprendre quand on essaie de
rester en vie

On ne peut pas analyser quand chaque instant peut
vous être arraché.

Mon cœur est une éponge

troué par les obus de mon pays en délire

Ma voix crie la chanson

des oiseaux brûlés sur les trottoirs de sang

La ville crie ses différences fanatiques

et sa soif d'un arc-en-ciel de réconciliation
qui ne viendra plus

La terre, ce petit coin de terre est à sang et à
flammes

Et moi je pleure l'amour perdu

J'ai écrit une mélodie que je ne chanterai plus

J'ai crié un espoir qui ne renaîtra plus

Je lui ai tendu les mains, mais il ne les a pas saisies

Je lui ai demandé une vie qu'il n'a pas désirée

J'ai pleuré dans ses bras des larmes perdues...

Le soleil coulera-t-il sur les pierres fissurées et
noircies par la haine?

Les racommodera-t-il?

Et moi, pourrai-je prendre les morceaux de mon
cœur

et les recoller et donner un sens à ma vie
qui ressemble à ce pays morcelé?

J'appelle, j'appelle le souffle de paix de
l'accordéon...

PAIN



Fear has given way to pain
 We ache, we grieve
 We moan, we plead
 We groan for respite

Enough the agony, sufficient the suffering
 Sated with the death of the innocent
 Riddled with the waste of a nation
 We are overcome

The city has yielded to the village
 Apartment buildings have extended to house and
 hovel

The polluted urban atmosphere has infiltrated the
 fresh mountain air

The people are one, the same

An identical scene is reenacted
 Refugees blindly seeking shelter
 The hungry under siege
 The helpless afraid of massacre

The Tenacious endure
 Living in spite of death
 Hunchbacked and weary
 Shuffling and groping
 Inebriated by the torpid fatefulness of the East
 Rockets fall, generators hum
 We stumble over a festering rat
 Sickened we step away
 Tightening the shelter belt around our minds

blotting out reality
 defeated, lost

There has never been a painless war
 There has never been a fear-less war
 Stones break, lives fall
 Trees burn, civilization dissolves
 Into chaos
 darkness
 the clatter of the gun

We hurt at the mirage of peace
 Proleptic courage lies dormant
 The earth is made barren
 Charred by deadly weapons

Our reveille has not yet sounded
 The bugle black and rusty
 It is the break of dawn
 Jets are screaming; we awake to the torture

Nuha Salib Salibi
 Beirut 1983

Nuha Salib Salibi is an instructor of English at BUC. She is the author of **The Lebanon I love**, published by **Naufal** in 1980. She also writes poetry and books for children.

Azizah al - Hibri Talks About Women and War In Lebanon

Azizah al - Hibri is the editor of *HYPATIA: A JOURNAL OF FEMINIST PHILOSOPHY*. She was born and raised in Beirut and currently lives in the U.S.A.

Last year, she was interviewed by the *AFSC Women's Newsletter*, (Vol. 4, Number 1, 1983) a publication of the *Nationwide Women's Program of the American Friends Service Committee*. Although a year has passed since this interview was published, Al - Raida finds it still topical to include this abridged version.

Q: What is the impact of the current situation in Lebanon on Women?

A: «I never thought that war was particularly good for women. In fact war is a situation where men start fighting and using their guns against each other, and speak a language from which they have eliminated women.

War itself is a kind of situation where authoritarianism becomes rampant and that always means a sacrifice in the status of women. The long term effects of the war will be the most serious and at the moment we can only guess at those. The short term are obvious: many people are dead, families have been torn apart and members of families have been lost, all causing serious psychological damage... I think the psychological damage is severe and pervasive. A major problem now is finding physicians who will give people artificial limbs to save their lives and also their psyches».

Q: What types of roles are women occupying in the current situation?

A: «I believe that the difference between the roles of Christian and Muslim Women in Lebanese society is merely cosmetic. The traditional Muslim woman covers her head, the Christian woman does not. The traditional Muslim woman cooks and stays at home, the Christian woman

may not. She may go out and work but so does the modern Muslim woman. In fact, the modern Muslim woman is hardly distinguishable from the Christian woman in Lebanon today. However, with the exception of the feminist movement, women in Lebanon are mostly playing very traditional roles. They usually recognize the husband as the boss and they work only if they don't shortchange him at home».

Q: Do you have any idea how strong the feminist voice is in Lebanon?

A: «I have seen Lebanese feminist literature as good as what I've read in the U.S. I am referring to feminist novels. For example, a novel which surprised me was the *Story of Zahra*^(*).

Zahra is a young woman from Southern Lebanon whose life is affected by patriarchy and war. She is being used as a commodity by man regardless of her ideals and sensitivities. She is even shot by the lover she gave her heart to. He discovered she was pregnant and didn't want the mess so he shot her. You can do that during war and nobody would know who shot her. This novel is a very good self - criticism from the inside which is honest, outspoken and uncompromising».

(*) The *Story of Zahra* was written by Lebanese novelist Hanan el Sheikh. This title in Arabic is *Hikayatu Zahra*. It was published by the author in 1980.

Maha El Khalil Chalabi and the International Association to Save Tyre



Tyre, the «Phoenician Metropolis» praised by historians for its past beauty and glory, was founded in 2750 B.C. It rapidly became the most important commercial centre of its time renowned for its purple dye and glass industries.

Throughout its long history, Tyre defied the conquerors of the Old World. It stood against the mighty Babylonian King Nabuchadnezzar for 13 years and defied Alexander the Great for seven months. During the 1st century of our era when Saint Paul sailed to Palestine, his ship berthed at Tyre where a small Christian community had already taken root. After the Arab conquests in 636 A.D., the sugar industry flourished in the city and Arab Caliphs used the port to embark on expeditions against the Byzantines. At the end of the 11th century came the Crusaders who captured Tyre and built a magnificent cathedral

using columns from pagan and Roman temples.

However in 1291 the Mamluk dynasty of Egypt totally destroyed the city in order to prevent the Crusaders in Cyprus from regaining a foothold on the Lebanese coast. In the years that followed, Tyre sank into obscurity despite the attempts of Fakhr el-Din, Emir of Lebanon, to rebuild its port in 1634.

It was only a few years after Lebanon's independence that excavations were begun to uncover the remnants of this magnificent city. What has been uncovered till now represents only one tenth of the city's archeological treasures. Maha El-Khalil Chalabi, who founded the International Association to save Tyre, talked to Al-Raida about the past and future activities of the association:

Q: Ms. Chalabi, how would you present succinctly the problem of Tyre to Al-Raida readers?

A: Tyre is internationally known as a first class archeological site, however this has not been sufficiently valued on the archeological level. Excavations which started in the old city in 1943, four years after Lebanon got its independence, were slow. What has been uncovered till now represents only one tenth of the archeological contents of Tyre. This means there is a lot more work to be done.

Moreover, the establishment of Palestinian refugee camps in the city, in places that were not then considered of archeological value but which are considered so now, adds to the problem.

Also during the past nine years of war, these archeological sites were very badly damaged by Israeli air raids and shelling. This is why the International Association to Save Tyre was created in May 1980.

Its main aim is to awaken the international conscience to the cultural value of Tyre and to the necessity of preserving and developing this national Lebanese heritage.

Q: What have been the major activities of the Association till now?

A: The IAST is made up of National Committees from seven different countries: Great Britain, Belgium, West Germany, the U.S.A., France, Tunisia and Lebanon.

Its first activity was to organise a «Day for Tyre» at UNESCO headquarters in Paris with lectures, films and exhibits (5/5/80).

One year later (2/6/81) the National British Committee organised a reception at the House of Commons to present Tyre's problem. During the past two years a number of film exhibits and lecturers on the history and cultural value of the city toured the following places: Wisconsin University (U.S.A.), the Royal Museums of History and Art in Brussels, Royal Museum of Mariemont in Belgium, a Tyre cultural evening in the Tunisian city of Carthage, the making of a

film «Tyre, our Memory in Danger» which obtained a special award, conferences on Tyre at major Lebanese universities and finally a «Week for Tyre» in Paris, Lyons, Marseille, Strasbourg and Chalon-sur-Saone in France.

Q: What resolutions have been adopted by national and international organizations in favor of Tyre?

A: There have been nine resolutions adopted till now by national and international organizations in favor of Tyre.

The first was the resolution adopted by the UNESCO Executive Council (23/5/79).

It was followed few months later by resolution no. 459 of the UN Security Council, then of the European Parliament (19/9/80), by the UNESCO General Assembly in Belgrade during its 21st session. The House of Commons in London signed a petition to safeguard Tyre on 5/12/1980) and The U.S. Senate adopted resolution 1944 in favor of the city.

The last resolution to safeguard Tyre was adopted during the fourth conference of Arab Tourism Ministers in Tunis under the umbrella of the Arab League.

Q: Many people ask themselves, when they hear about the activities of your Association, whether it is the right time now to spend so much effort on stones and past history while there are so many pressing human problems that need to be solved.

What is your answer to these people?

A: I tell them that our concern with the cultural heritage of Tyre is one aspect of our fight to resist occupation and safeguard our country. There are many ways one can serve and defend one's country. There are the political and military ways and also the cultural one. This cultural way is often neglected but I believe it is of the utmost national importance because it aims at preserving our history and heritage.

Q: As a native of Tyre, and daughter of one of its most eminent politicians, how would you describe the role the women of Tyre have played in safeguarding their city?

WOMEN IN INDUSTRY

A: The women of Tyre for instance were among the first to organize manifestations against the French Mandate and to demand the vote in the 1940's. I remember very well how women used to demonstrate in the streets when I was very young.

Also, during the last 15 years, there were many direct political actions by the women of Tyre, and this in a very overt and noticeable way.

Q: Being based in Paris and travelling a lot as part of your work, what image do you think people have about Lebanese during the past nine years of war?

A: I think that the Lebanese woman was a party in the war and not just a spectator. In general she is of course more moderate and has been a moderating or a reconciling element in many cases. She has been more involved in human problems than in political ones. She was not on the forefront of the political scene but has backed many political leaders.

The Lebanese woman has been deeply involved in social and medical problems, which gives her a very respectable image abroad. But it is not enough to be a woman, you have to have other qualities to succeed in life. To be a woman can sometimes be a handicap. So you have to overcome this handicap and demonstrate that you are not only a woman but can play the role you have been asked to play.

Q: What are the future plans of your Association?

A: Parallel to the archeological projects, the association is conscious of the importance of human and economic development in Tyre. This is why it is planning to build a cultural centre and a documentation centre that would be used by all the people of the region. The Association is also planning to set up an office for the planning and reconstruction of the modern city of Tyre which has been badly destroyed by the war. It would also like to set up an «Artisanat Centre» which would help bring life back to local traditional arts and crafts.

Under the sponsorship of the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World a Workshop on Arab Women in Industry was held in Ayia Napa Cyprus from May 21 to 23, 1984.

The workshop, which was financed by a grant from the Ford Foundation, had as its main objectives the identification of relevant research topics and methodology in the Arab countries. Delegates from Egypt, Jordan, Tunis, Algeria, Yemen and Lebanon presented country reports. Dr. Barbara Ibrahim of the Ford Foundation, gave the working paper in which she set a frame of reference for the activities of the following three days.

Research reported revealed that industrialization is opening new opportunities for gainful employment for women. However, such industrialization is creating new problems (e.g. reinforcing occupational segregation, exploitation of female labor) for women themselves and their families.

The getting together of a group of women researchers in the Arab World was helpful in identifying priorities for further work in the area. An agenda for research with emphasis on methodology was developed on three levels: societal, household, and factory. The following are recommendations that emerged from this encounter:

The participants agreed that it was important to pool efforts in order to come up with methodological guidelines based on their research experience. The main purpose of this exercise was to give researchers general recommendations and guidelines to help them design specific methodologies for data



collection and analysis that would be appropriate for regional comparisons.

The following guidelines and recommendations were suggested:

A. Preliminary Tasks:

Develop a network of Arab scholars, researchers and planners in order to:

1. Establish common definitions of key concepts, e.g. economic activity, types of industry.
2. Collect and review existing work (both within and outside the region) on each research topic.
3. Disseminate, and circulate research results.

B. Research Design and Execution

1. Build on existing data sources, either by undertaking secondary analysis or adding time points in order to design longitudinal studies. There is a general need for longitudinal approaches in many of the

research areas proposed.

2. Show greater sensitivity to the historical context, and concern for establishing the linkages between macro and micro levels of analysis.
3. Use an approach where interdisciplinary research teams may be genuinely cooperative.
4. Define the sample population rigorously. In most cases, it will be preferable to focus the analysis on the household of manual workers.
5. Avoid large-scale research or complicated analytic schemes because the returns do not generally justify cost and effort. For many of the proposed topics, clearly-defined designs and basic methods are appropriate.
6. Define target beneficiaries of the research carefully and then involve women, wherever possible, in planning and implementing projects.

Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr.

Women's Dream of Modernity in the Fiction of Tayeb Salih☆☆☆

by Mona Takieddine Amyuni - Lecturer
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*** This is a revised excerpt from a paper entitled «City and Women in the fiction of Tayeb Salih», forthcoming in the «Sudanese Publication Series», Washington, D.C.

Tayeb Salih is recognized as one of the best modern Arab writers.

Born in North Sudan in 1929, to a family of farmers and religious teachers, Tayeb Salih went to study at Khartoum and London universities. He worked first as a school master before becoming Head of Drama in BBC's Arabic Service in England. He is currently the Head of the Information Services in Qatar.

One way to look at the complex fiction of the Sudanese author Tayeb Salih is through a series of confrontations which carry history forward with its heavy load of injustice, suffering and death. Indeed, south and north, village and city, tradition and modern times, clash to create deep rifts in the souls of men and women who wonder who they are, and where they stand in a rapidly changing world.

The scope of this paper compels me to be brief, and will not allow me to draw the outline of the stories I shall mention. I would have succeeded, nevertheless, if I encouraged my reader to turn to Tayeb Salih, and react personally to the few ideas launched here.

Two generations of women are portrayed as they live in the village of Wad Hamid, in the northern part of the Sudan. The older generation of mothers for example, is typified by Amna in **The Wedding of Zein**:

She was a beautiful woman of noble features, and when you looked at her serene and dignified face you were made aware of the wealth of her seven brothers, the vast properties of her father, and the countless date palms, trees, cows and livestock that were owned by her husband. This woman had three sons who had studied at school and worked with the government, also a beautiful daughter... This woman who was over forty

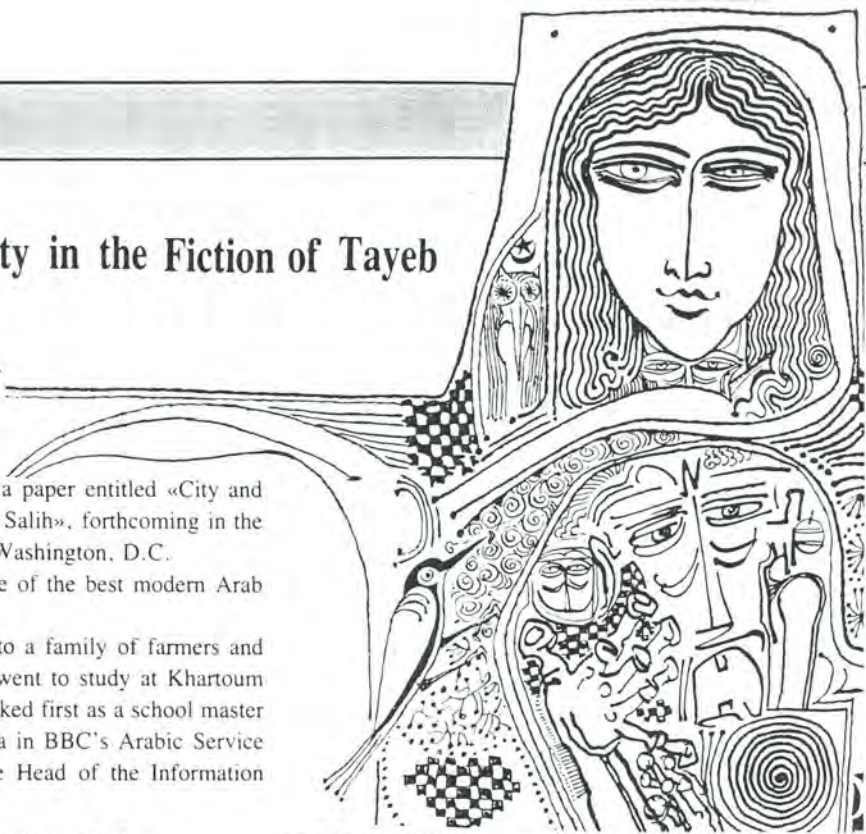
and looked like a young virgin girl, this woman of few words, why did she not say something?⁽¹⁾

Hosna, Mustafa Sa'eed's widow in **Season of Migration to the North** did not say much either. Yet, in contrast with the fertile and prosperous imagery which depicts Amna and her status in the village, young Hosna comes dramatically to life in **Season** in two brief scenes which fill the night with sobs instead of words:

She was silent for so long (says the narrator)... At last, though, I became aware of her voice in the darkness like the blade of a knife. «If they force me to marry, I'll kill him and kill myself»⁽²⁾.

Which actually happens a little later. No one understands her in the village. She had been «citified», we are told, since she married Mustafa Sa'eed, the foreigner to Wad Hamid. People later bury her in Wad Rayyes quickly, at night. One more page is turned in the history of Wad Hamid.

If the older generation is described as being well integrated in village life, as providers of life and warmth in a discreet, quiet fashion, things are certainly different with their daughters. Changes, though, are still hazy, as exemplified by the majority of the young girls who are types rather than individuals. In fact, they don't really come to life, and it is arresting to remark that there is no



fulfilled love between man and woman in the fiction of Tayeb Salih. Fatmah, the wife of Daww-il-Bayt in **Bandarshah**, or Ni'mah, her sister, who marries Zein, are idealized creatures who yearn for self-sacrifice and an all-embracing love within a very live Sufi tradition in the Sudan⁽³⁾.

On the other hand, the girl Mhaymeed loved in **Bandarshah** is forced to marry someone else, and she dies at an early age. Evil seeds are certainly infiltrating into village life, as Hosna and Maryam's tragedies show. These girls have not yet been exposed to the City, yet they do want to live their present differently from their mothers'. But they fall victims to the past.

It is striking to notice that these village girls stand out as intelligent, smart, outspoken. They are good playmates and schoolmates of the boys, and go with them to the Qoranic school so long as they are very young. They yearn to carry on with their schooling, and Maryam at the age of eleven wears boy's clothes for a while to be able to do so. She also wants to marry the man she loves, and live in Khartoum where she would have running water and electricity. Her sons and daughters would become a lawyer, a judge, a doctor, an engineer «**Bandarshah**, Vol. II, pp. 70 - 72).

These girls' growth is curbed, however, and the surrealistic scene in **Bandarshah** where two girls are whipped (Vol. I, pp. 73 - 76) is emblematic of the female plight in the Sudan, and perhaps in the Arab world at large, up to the 1970's. It is suggested that in an increasingly urbanized world, things are rapidly changing, even in village life. The girls Tayeb Salih draws dream of city life which lures them the way London had; with their male counterparts, its «secrets and raptures».

Therefore, if the older women are content and happy in Wad Hamid, their daughters are trying to learn to express different yearnings. Still caught between silence and half-voiced dreams, they may well embody their creator's hidden message in terms of the need to allow them to grow and share fully the responsibilities of the modern Arab individual. Maryam's dream of city life with her beloved man would then come true. They would bring to life

scores of boys and girls who would build up the new Arab city. A proper ruler - **shah** then, could be found for the city - **bandar**, and we would be able to cope with the city as symbol of modern times.

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- (1) **The Wedding of Zein and other stories**, trans. Denys Johnson - Davies (London: Heinemann, 1970) p. 49.
 - (2) **Season of Migration to the North**, trans. Denys Johnson - Davies (London: Heinemann, 1978), p. 96.
 - (3) **Bandarshah** Vol. I, **Daww-il-Bayt**; Vol. II, **Maryoud**/(Beirut: Dar-il-Aoudah, 1971 and 1977).

Reports From Around The World

Pakistan Women's Day Award

In keeping with the theme of World Communications Year, the Pakistan Women's Institute (PWI) decided to bestow its 1984 Women's Day Award on a distinguished woman in the field of communications.

Mrs. Miriam Habib, a senior staff member in the national daily «Pakistan Times», was chosen for the award for her devoted services and deep concern for the advancement of women in Pakistan.

A member of the PWI Advisory Committee and chairperson of PWI Research Project «Portrayal of Women through Communication Media - Pakistan» Mrs. Habib said to the students of Kinnaird College for Women - Lahore, while receiving her award:

«If media are to serve the women's cause, it must be recognized that women, literate and illiterate, have brains, curiosity and creativity. The old restricting images of women should be replaced by fresh ones which depict women in favorable light.

«A code of ethics could be drawn up for the compliance of all media workers and advertisers, directed to the building of a positive attitude and self-confidence among women. Such a code would also discourage the projection of a detrimental or restrictive image of women».

(PWI Newsletter, March 1984)

Vol. IX, No. 4, pp. 2 - 5)



She moves on encircled by canons
She adds wings to her prison...

We have a city to patch up...
E. Accad

Illustration
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Monique Loubet

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