

# *Al-Raida*

## ***Women At The Earth Summit***



***Yearning*** by Emily Nasrallah  
***Short Story from her latest book***  
***A House Not her Own***

**Excerpts from the**  
**Women's Action**  
**Agenda 21**

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### Yearly Contribution

Lebanon: L.L. 6,000 for  
1992 only  
Other Countries: \$22  
plus \$3 postage(\$25),  
payable to the order of  
the Institute for  
Women's Studies in the  
Arab World

# Letters

## Imitating Men

I am a feminist myself, but it seems to me, from what I see and hear, that the movement is trying to immitate men. If men are so biased and imperfect, then why try to immitate them, why not come up with a more perfect formula?

Anomynous young men crtiticizing  
the Women's Liberation Movement  
after discussing Al-Raida

## More Daring Stand

We have been exchanging WIN NEWS for your publication for a number of years and have been impressed with your excellent coverage and interesting articles and the many resources you make available to your readers. I am writing to you as editor of WIN NEWS at this time to commend you for the very attractive new format and appearance of your journal. We just received the Spring 1992 issue which is most attractive and interesting. We also have been impressed with the stand you have taken on many controversial issues that face women worldwide as well as in the Arab world.

Fran P. Hosken  
Editor/WINMEWS



Letters to the editor may be sent to : Al-Raida,  
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# Saying of this Issue/Quotation

**Q.** Some environmentalists argue that women, more than men, have inherent wisdom to preserve scarce indigenous resources, because of their relationship with nature?

**A.** Women have this wisdom from historical experience, resulting from the history of the division of labour. Historically they have had to bother with the essential things of life: food, water, feeding children. When resources started depleting they learned how to cope with less.

The argument must be used to switch the debate and ask the proper questions: Who has the knowledge? Whose knowledge counts? Answers to these questions are important for knowing where to begin, for it is through these qualities we can redress the imbalance by acting in ways which are not destructive to the environment.

**Vandana Shiva**



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Taken from an interview with Dr. Vandana Shiva in the Planeta Fermea tent in Rio' Earth Summit. Interviewed by Annemiek Hoogenboom for *Terraviva*, The independent daily of the Earth Summit, Monday June 8, 1992 issue.

## Arab Women at the Rio Summit?

Why Environment again? But then, how many times have there been Earth Summits, if only for the purpose of reminding the world of an important issue: The Environment? This issue of *Al-Raida* does not pretend to be an expert in environmental science or in the political and economic debates and dialogues that surrounded the Summit. *Al-Raida* only wishes to shed some light on the place, the participation and the involvement of women in the struggle for protecting nature, improving the quality of life and saving the Earth.

Dr. Julinda Abu Nasr, Director of our Institute and Dr. Raja Hajjar, Dean of Beirut University College took part in NGOs' activism at Rio, thus, participating in this call to raise environmental awareness and support a healthy planet. Upon her return, Dr. Abu Nasr told us of *Planeta Fermea*, the Women's Tent in the Global Forum, outside the Summit. "The Women's tent was one of the largest structures in Rio, and probably the most organized", she said. Daily events were announced to keep track of the development of activities and events around and in the Summit. NGOs, women's groups, and individual activists participated in panels, podiums, and discussions on various topics that are crucial to them in this context. (see page) 9. In this issue we also list a number of the women who were active and outspoken in important debates which took place in *Planeta Fermea*.

These women come from the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Canada, Europe, Africa, and other

countries but not from the Arab World. Arab women were not totally absent from the Rio Summit, for surely they participated with the delegations of their countries. For instance, Lebanese Parliamentary Deputy, Ms. Moawad is said to have made significant contributions to the Lebanese delegation.

However, strong, aggressive and loud Arab women's voices seemed absent in Rio and their NGOs were not in the front race for demanding and asserting issues of concern. As I prepared this issue I was constantly reminded of their absence. Arab women are quite active in their own rights and in their own countries. However, they did not enter the global debates openly. If they had, they might have made some progress in terms of pressure-building for better environmental policies and resolutions in their countries, but they would have also reserved a share in economic policies and NGO budgeting for the preservation of the Earth.

Nevertheless, the Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, and other concerned organizations are earnest and determined to bring women to the forefront of environmental issues in the Arab World. As previously announced our Institute is in the process of organizing a National Conference on Women and the Environment in October 1992, and an International Conference on Arab Women and the Environment in October 1993.

In December, this year, the High Institute of Public Health at

Alexandria University, Egypt is also holding an International Conference on Women and the Environment.

Naturally, these conferences will review environmental conditions in the Arab world, the link between the environment and women, the role of women in preserving the environment, how they can become pressure groups and active members of the ecological and environmentally conscious world community. These Conferences are intended to produce solutions, guidelines and action plans which include women in the environmental mission, propose means of improving women's conditions and their participation in maintaining healthy environmental parameters, and national sustainable development programmes and projects.

There is a general consensus that the awareness and responsibility of women is a major asset for the safeguarding of a healthy environment. Arab women are taking part in the plight, and their efforts must expand to include all sectors of society throughout the Arab world. It is our duties to assist them: first, by setting them on a proper and scientific track as the conference purposes, second by offering them assistance and coverage of their activities and potentials, through *Al-Raida* and other publications.

Sustainable development is intended as the ultimate outcome •

Randa Abul-Husn

# The Women's Action Agenda 21<sup>(\*)</sup> of the World's Women Congress for a Healthy Planet Miami, November 8-12, 1991

In five intense days (November 8-12, 1991), The World Women's Congress for a Healthy Planet rated an overwhelming success by participants, and realized that the nations of the world were rolling to Rio with barely a nod toward the participation of women.

The World's Women Congress for a Healthy Planet(1) which was held in Miami, Florida, produced a "Women's Action Agenda 21" for environmental action at Rio's Earth Summit. Earth-Summit secretary-general, Maurice Strong, attended the congress and vowed to endorse and promote it.

Here are excerpts of the Agenda emphasizing women's demands at the RIOSUMMIT:

## Women Militarism and the Environment

Knowing that military expenditures, the international arms trade, and armed conflict deprive billions of human beings of basic security and well-being.

Realizing the disastrous environmental impact of all military activity, including research, development and production of weaponry, testing, maneuvers, presence of military bases, disposal of toxic materials, transport, and resource use,

Aware that research on and use of military weaponry, including nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons, contribute significantly to environmental degradation, genetic mutation, illness and deaths,

Recognizing that militarism often leads to the occupation of lands and the denial of human and environmental rights,

We call on UNCED to include in its Agenda 21 and final documents statements on the impact of militarism on the environment, development, and humanity and to support measures that

will transfer the world's vast military resources to positive, life-enforcing programs.

We urge an immediate 50% reduction in military spending, with the money saved reallocated to socially useful and environmentally friendly purposes.

We demand creation of gender-balanced national civilian commissions that would open to public scrutiny all military activities, expenditures, and research and development.

We demand that nuclear weapons be dismantled, that nuclear testing cease immediately, and a global nuclear test ban treaty be negotiated, signed, and enforced.

We demand the cessation of space activities and supersonic flights that release carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and threaten the ozone layer.

We demand that more decisive action be taken to ban international traffic in nuclear, chemical, biological, and poison gas weapons or constituents of such weapons. Mechanisms should be developed for enforcement of this ban, whether

against governments, businesses, or individuals.

We support a UN commission report that recommended re-assigning military-related satellites and other information-gathering systems to monitor and share global environmental data.

We demand that armies be used as environmental protection corps to monitor and repair damage to natural systems, including clean-up of war zones, military bases and surrounding areas, and to be available to assist citizens in times of natural and man-made disasters.

We condemn governments that turn their armies against their citizens, causing millions of individuals to become refugees and displaced persons.

We will educate our daughters and sons to shun military service if it is in the service of governments that use military power to exploit the resources and people of other nations.

## Women, Poverty, Land Rights, Food Security and Credit

Recognizing that while their living conditions deteriorate, women in many regions bear major responsibility for domestic food production (Africa 80%; Asia 60%; Latin America, over 40%) as well as for protection of soils and other natural resources,

Noting that no one knows the realities of the over-exploitation of the land more intimately than the women who till it, draw its water, use its trees for fuel, harvest its forests for healing herbs and medicinal plants, and use their traditional knowledge for the benefit of the community, preserving species and ecosystems,

Recognizing that in many communities the nutrition of the family depends upon women's ability to produce family and market food products,

Aware that growing inequities in land tenure and ownership are the primary causes of women's poverty, emigration to urban slums, homelessness, environmental degradation, and the dispossession of indigenous people,

Recognizing that current agricultural policies in the industrialized and developing nations are uprooting and displacing land-based communities and diverting land from food production to cash crops for export,

We declare that because women and children are a majority of the one billion people in the world who go hungry every day, women's access to food, land inheritance, tenure, and ownership must be regarded as a basic human right.

We call on the UN, governments and non-governmental organizations to cease discriminatory practices that limit women's access to land and other resources, to increase allocation of resources that enhance food security,

and to provide appropriate technologies to reduce women's work.

We will strive to create awareness of the environmental impact of land-use technologies guided by immediate profit at the cost of long-term sustainability and productivity. Policies should encourage use of indigenous foods and invest more resources to develop local expertise in traditional production, storage and seed protection for future crops.

We urge women everywhere to join an international campaign to support

*Women founded the environmental movement, are its backbone everywhere in the world, suffer most directly from environmental devastation - yet have virtually no decision-making power in the councils and the corporations that rule the Globe. (Only 10 percent of the world's parliamentarians are women.) (2)*

women, men, and children depending on tropical forests, maintaining their communal rights to land and forest products. We recommend the World Rainforest Movement's statement on forests and forest peoples as a guide to action by UNCED at its meeting in Rio de Janeiro.

We call on multilateral and bilateral development funds and programs and NGOs to promote women's access to credit. They should increase their support for microenterprise lending through women-run financial

institutions as well as central banks in developing countries.

We demand that women be given greater access to water and fuel supplies and to food processing technologies (e.g., grinding mills; processing and packaging; oil extraction) and be assisted in setting up food cooperatives, community kitchens, women-owned seed companies, and farmers' markets. To protect trees from being used as fuel, alternative energy sources should be developed, such as inexpensive, durable, heat-storing solar or photovoltaic household cooking stoves, or at minimum, fuel-saving biomass (woodfuel, charcoal, or waste) stoves.

We reject as unacceptable the use of hormones, contaminants, additives, and irradiation in food production.

We call for special attention to the needs of women and children in urban centers experiencing phenomenal population growth. In refugee camps and hostile urban environments, the majority are denied land titles, low-cost decent permanent housing, use of basic amenities, such as water, sanitation, energy, and transportation, and access to building materials and credit.

We will campaign for the rights of urban populations not to be forcibly evicted from their homes and from their rights to use urban land for subsistence production of crops and livestock as well as small-scale trade and production, without the harassment and with support from governments and international agencies.

We urge UN member states to adopt and implement the UN Conference on Settlements (Habitat) Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 200, by strengthening women's involvement in the human settlements delivery process. Central government planning

and implementation must involve local government and communities in these decisions, with non-governmental organizations functioning as a bridge between the official male-dominated policy-making mechanism and the practical approach of local communities and women's groups.

We call for the transformation of development strategies and development cooperation agencies. In every new or already established aid-giving mechanism or program, policy that specifies the involvement of women on an equal basis with men in determining the allocation of funds should be enforced.

We seek immediate enforcement of directives specifying that every funding proposal be examined for the participation of women, including grass-root women, in design and management, and for its impact on the economic, social, health and educational status of women as well as community-level and indigenous people.

We demand that, to compensate for 46 years of underfunding the needs of women and their families, half of the international development resources should be reaching women through broad-scale projects such as access to drinking water, upgrading technologies, and researching ways to reduce women's workloads.

### Women's Rights, Population Policies and Health

Knowing that the major causes of environmental degradation are industrial and military pollutants, toxic wastes, and economic systems that exploit and misuse nature and people, we are outraged by suggestions that women's fertility rates (euphemistically called population pressures) are to blame,

Recognizing that this analysis, if unchallenged, lays the ground-work

for the re-emergence of top-down, demographically-driven population policies and programs that are deeply disrespectful of the basic human rights of women as guaranteed in the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

Knowing that it is the number of people plus their consumption of resources plus their wastes that

*Esteemed heads of states, the Agenda 21 and the various treaties that are adopted and signed are a gesture of goodwill, commitment, and recognition of the fact that the Earth's resources belong to all and should be equitably shared by all, as far as possible. Agenda 21 sets the stage for the policies to be ratified and enacted by governments and funded by the international community.*

determine their environmental impact, we note that a person in the industrialized world has a far greater negative impact on the environment than a person living in a poor country,

Aware that the right to reproductive health and choice is a basic human right for all individuals, we point out that the World Fertility Report

estimates that there are 500 million couples who wish to plan their family size but have no access to the means to do so,

Fearful of the threat to women's lives by the HIV pandemic and recognizing that women's ability to protect themselves from AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases and to determine when-and-if to have children is a prerequisite for women's health, self-determination, and empowerment,

We condemn any attempt to deprive women of reproductive freedom or the knowledge to exercise that freedom.

We demand women-centered, women-managed comprehensive reproductive health care and family planning, including the right to prenatal care, safe and legal voluntary contraceptives and abortion, sex education, and information.

We urge governments, multilateral and donor agencies to increase investments in comprehensive reproductive health services and to include men as beneficiaries of family planning education and services. Family support services should include child care and prenatal leave.

We call on policy-makers to recognize that raising the economic, health, education, and social status of women are essential to ending environmental degradation.

We call for recognition of the existence of a global, environmentally induced cancer epidemic and demand removal from the environment carcinogenic substances, which have particularly adverse effects on women and children. Particular

attention in medical research and treatment should be paid to women's cancer: breast, ovarian, cervical, uterine, and vaginal. Research and remedial action should also focus on the effects on health of toxic chemicals, nuclear wastes, radiation, pesticides and fertilizers.



We demand that all governments systematically alert their citizens to the danger of AIDS and provide them with the information on how to avoid contamination.

We ask the World Health Organization, International Labour Organization, The Food and Agriculture Organization, national governments, public health groups, corporations and unions to increase efforts to eliminate environmental occupational hazards in factories, offices, and on the land.

## Women's Consumer Power

Recognizing that women are powerful catalysts, as individuals and in groups, in creating a healthier planet for ourselves, our families, our communities, and nations,

Believing that our spending choices should express concern for environmental protection,

Aware that the power of the consumer is decisive in industrial planning and production,

Believing that women can use their consumer power to enforce

environmentally and socially friendly industrial development,

Noting that many products bought by women in industrialized nations are based on low wages and hazardous working conditions of women in poor countries and communities,

We pledge to act in solidarity with women around the world to change policies responsible for economic, social, and political inequities and restore our planet to health.

We will form and strengthen existing networks among women globally to facilitate the analysis of consumer goods, from the extraction of raw materials through production processes to use and disposal - to measure holistically the environmental, socio-economic, and health impacts of a product.

We will engage in campaigns supporting investment in environmentally sound protective activities and encourage initiatives to reduce fossil fuel energy use, overconsumption, and wastes.

We pledge to use women's enormous consumer power to boycott businesses and institutions that are not

eco-conscious and to support and commend those that are.

We pledge to reduce paper consumption and to promote recycling - not just recycled use products but developing reusable products.

We will organize campaigns against siting sewage treatment plants and incinerators in poor urban communities and seek non-polluting solid waste management planning and restrictions on mercury emission restrictions.

We will seek to reduce the use of cars and encourage the use of public transport systems, redesigning them to reduce energy consumption, and focus on safety and accessibility to those who experience difficulty in using mass transportation.

We will choose natural products, avoiding those based on animal testing or toxic chemicals, and seek safer food products.

We advocate development of retaining programs and creation of new socially useful job opportunities for those displaced by the transition of more eco-friendly societies.

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"The Women's Action Agenda 21" also includes demands and claims related to the implementation of **Democratic Rights, Diversity and Solidarity; Code of Environmental Ethics and Accountability; Foreign Debt and Trade; Biodiversity and Biotechnology; Nuclear Power and Alternative Energy; Science and Technologies Transfer; Information and Education;** Furthermore, the Agenda offers recommendations to the United Nations asking for a gender-balanced participation in all agencies, policy-making and actions to protect and preserve our environment and our

planet.

The environmental issue is a global concern, the solutions need to be implemented on the global level. The women of the world exist in both situations. Thus, this Women's Agenda Action 21 is proof of women's abilities and capabilities to make a difference in saving the planet. •

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Footnotes:

(\*) Reproduced in part from the Official Report of the World's Women Congress for a Healthy Planet which took place in Miami Florida on November 8-12,

1992.

(1) The Women's World Congress for a Healthy Planet was held in Miami on November 8-12, 1992. It brought together 1500 women from 83 countries determined to put a women's agenda at the centre of the United Nations' Earth Summit.

(2) quoted from Michele Landsberg's Overview in the official report of the World's Women Congress for a Healthy Planet.

# Rio News Briefs

## How Women Made it to Rio

The first UN PrepCom (UN Earth Summit preparatory committee), in August 1990, did not include women in the draft. Delegates from several countries as well as a number of women's organizations initiated action on the missing gender perspective. The mobilization ranged from UNCED Conference in Geneva (1) to two gatherings organized by The Women, Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) in Miami Florida. The proceedings and conclusions of these meetings were also forwarded to the UNCED Secretariat, and parts were incorporated into the official document.

Hence, by PrepCom 4, held in New York in March 1992, The Women's Caucus was present and well prepared. Daily briefings were held in the UN Secretariat as women took on the task of monitoring the meetings.

Consequently, the language adopted in the Agenda will serve as a basis for policy planning and implementation at international, regional and national levels. It reflects a consciousness of how the issues affect women and how women, in turn, can affect issues.

taken from "Women are on the map and in the Agenda by Anita Anand in *Earth Summit Times*, the official newspaper of record for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Tuesday June 9, 1992. pp.2.

(1) See *Al-Raida*, #56, pg. 14.

## Women at the Summit

Of the 178 official delegations present in Rio de Janeiro for the Earth Summit, only 10 were headed by women. But hundreds of women delegates were cooperating with their heads of delegations in the negotiation of compromise for a healthier planet. Their prominent presence was noticeable from the very first day of activities of the Summit in Riocentro. The women delegates said their participation in the Summit was real -- but not enough. The only occasion which grouped them together in the UNCED general agenda was the "woman Caucus" held earlier.

Nevertheless, the largest and most central of all structures in Flamingo Park, where the Global Forum was held was the **Women's Tent, Planeta Fermea**. Thousands of participants and visitors went in and out, visiting the largest platform, to be informed and stimulated with on-going debates and panels. Planeta Fermea witnessed, sponsored, discussed, and raised issues such as population issues, freedom of choice, reproductive health, sustainable development, water, sanitation, involvement in policy making, energy, forestation, fresh water, and other gender-related environmental and global issues.

taken in part from "Women at the Summit: We're here, but too few" by Lyon-Hou Ramirez, *Terraviva*, The independent daily of the Earth Summit, Friday June 12, 1992, p. 10

## Survival of the fittest is bad ecology politics

"How many people are too many people for the planet?" was the question asked in the packet tent of the Planeta Fermea, by Vandana Shiva from India, in response to Jacques Cousteau's statement that the population explosion is the biggest environmental enemy.

Shiva said that an isolated discussion of demographic growth of the Third World "is a false question". She said the variable of unequal consumption of resources in different regions and the unbalanced population distribution should not be excluded from the question.

The French oceanographer Cousteau made his comments about population in the presence of Brazilian President Fernando Collor de Mello and Rio-92 Earth Summit officials.

Smiling and serious, Shiva denounced the "Philosophy of selection" in population politics.

"Selection is a military tactic for times of war, when the weak and wounded were abandoned to allow the strong to survive," explained Shiva.

*Jornal Do Brasil/English Edition*, June 7, 1992, pg.7

## Women will not be Coerced/ Policies Violate "right to fertility"

AS the Chorus to halt population growth in order to save the planet rose around them, women's groups put women's reproductive rights at the center of the population debate in the Earth Summit.

At a forum on population and the environment, on the weekend of June 6-7, June 1992, speakers said population policies violate women's "rights to their fertility" and how they choose to exercise this right. They said this is being done by institutions or structures that coerce women not to reproduce on the one hand and not to be sterilized, not to have abortions and not to use contraceptives on the other hand.

The women who raised the issue include presidents of women's groups in Latin America and the US. Population policies, they felt, must follow the basic principle that "no human being can be used as a means to someone else's ends." This means population policies that inform, educate and make it possible for women to make good choices and trust that they will act ethically in relation to their communities. •

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Excerpts from "Women will not be Coerced, Policies violate 'right to Fertility'", by Eulalee Thompson and Bert Wilkinson. in *Terraviva*, The independent daily of the Earth Summit, Monday June 8, 1992. No. 5. pg.8.

## Women At the Global Forum and in participating NGOs

**Wangari Maathai**, was chosen as the sole NGO representative at the Rio-92 Earth Summit. Maathai was elected unanimously by NGOs as the best expression of the path that the ecological movement will take after Rio-92.

Maathai is the founder of the Green Belt organization, a women's organization whose objectives include seeking solutions to desertification of Africa's water problems. She is also a member of the Executive Committee of the National Women's Council of Kenya. On the eve of the last preparatory meeting to the Earth Summit, last March, she was arrested and detained while participating with others in a strike to obtain the freedom of children, political prisoners and the tortured. She was freed in time to send a message on behalf of the Third World to the official delegations participating in the preparatory meeting.

At Rio she said that the unequal relations between the North and the South are reproduced in Third World countries and neither of the two inequalities can be corrected in isolation.





**Frances Kissling** is a practicing Catholic and militant feminist, who has worked for the women's health movement since 1970 heads the US non-governmental organization (NGO) "Catholics for the Right to Decide". She is active in all national and international efforts to improve the conditions of women. She is also founder and treasurer of the Women's Global Fund and the International Network of Feminists promoting reproductive health. In Rio, Kissling participated in the debate on population, Health and the environment policies of the "The Planeta Fermea". Kissling criticized Rome's attitude rejecting family planning and birth control for women.

"No woman should be forced into birth control, she said, but neither should it be denied".

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**Christina Vollmer**, the Vatican representative, on the other hand, accused Kissling of being totally wrong on the Church. To Kissling's accusation that the Church is ambivalent about the population issue, Vollmer insisted that it has always maintained a position of absolute coherence. "The Church opposes the unnatural methods of contraception since they only harm women, children and couples. But it encourages couples to decide, freely and responsibly, how many children they will raise," she said in an exclusive interview to *Terraviva*, the daily of the Earth Summit (June 11, 1992).



**Barbara Bramble**, director of international programs for the National Wildlife Federation in Washington, DC is a member of the coordinating committee of the International NGO and Social Movement Forum - the group which produced and presented a series of seminars on alternative NGO treaties to the Earth Summit.

More than 2,000 persons signed up to work with the Forum and to draft more than 30 treaties on a variety of environment, development, and related issues. Under considerations were treaties on the search for alternatives, NGO global decision making, technology bank, the sharing of resources, a code of ethics, communication, trade, transnational corporations, and international debts, as well as alternative economic models, biodiversity, toxic and nuclear waste, climate, oceans, forests, energy, sustainable agriculture, food security, fresh water, fisheries, women and population, indigenous peoples, education, militarism and the environment, the urban question, racism, and children and adolescents. The treaties contained commitments to some means of implementing the principles.



**Mabel Bianco**, Argentinian militant feminist and member of the Foundation for Women's Studies and Research in her country, also raised the issue of freedom. She participated in the panel on "Ethics and Freedom of Choice" in the Planeta Fermea at the Global Forum and spoke on the theme of "Gender, Culture Religion and Society." What the panel analyzed was the situation of women as citizens vis-a-vis political systems, she said, there was a consensus that there is a need to create conditions for true democracy in which the rights of minorities are taken into account. On the gender problems under discussion in the panel was the need to develop a new ethic. Thus, the recuperation of values to confront the deterioration of socio-economic conditions which limit access to education, health and other basic services, and affect women's decisions in the area of reproductive rights. Bianco said that the capacity to take decisions regarding reproductive rights has to be backed by truly integrated health services.

# The Lebanese Imbroglia

## By Rose Ghurayyib

In the introduction of a book he wrote about the Lebanese war, the well-known journalist, Joseph Abu-Khalil, says: "Some countries are called ill-fated because their misfortunes come from natural catastrophes such as floods, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, tornadoes, etc

In Lebanon, our misfortunes derive from our submission to ignorant, despotic or corrupt leaders, whose misrule has led a developed and flourishing country into ultimate ruin and misery."

In a period of change and evolution, our leaders, representing secular, religious or intellectual categories, stand as the pillars of traditionalism. In an age of liberalism, they keep us chained to ancient forms of slavery, while they declare to their native subjects, and to uninformed foreigners, that Lebanon carries the torch of freedom in the Arab World. Only recently did I realize how flagrant

our political life is, when I read in Al-Raida (#57, p.9)<sup>(1)</sup> that women form 25 percent of the Syrian Parliament and 40 percent of the professors of the Syrian University. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, we have only one female deputy and 14 percent of women professors at the Lebanese University.

In the same issue of Al-Raida, (pg. 19)<sup>(2)</sup> the interview between lawyer Laure Moghaizel and journalist David Livingstone, gives a sad report about legislation in Lebanon. The Personal Status Code includes seventeen different codes representing the seventeen religious communities of Lebanon. When we think that Personal Status Codes cover the by-laws of marriage, divorce, inheritance, custody of children, burial procedures, and other family matters thus governing a person's life from birth until death, we realize how they (the codes) stand as barriers to practical knowledge and intermarriage between the various sects. The lack of free

choice has led many couples to convert from one religion to another or to perform civil marriage outside Lebanon.

The laws concerning inheritance are particularly complicated. Hence, while the Christian communities grant men and women equal shares in inheritance, the Muslim ones reduce women's rights to half of those enjoyed by men. If a Christian woman marries a Muslim, she cannot inherit him unless she converts. The same applies to a Muslim woman married to a Christian husband. Such a marriage is not recognized by the Orthodox Christians nor by the Orthodox Muslims, who, however, tolerate the marriage of a Muslim man to a Christian woman.

These laws were probably created to ban inter-marriage between people of different religious denominations and to keep Lebanon divided among seventeen mini-states. While Personal



Status laws stand as keepers of the status quo and as impediments to unity and personal freedom, the penal and civil laws contain flagrant forms of injustice against women, such as the inadequacy of their testimony or signature in public transactions. If they want to start a trade, or travel abroad, they have to obtain the permission of the husband. A most flagrant form of injustice exists in the law connected with crimes of passion or "crimes of honor", which scarcely impose any penalty on the male perpetrators. A few days ago, I read in a paper about a man who was arrested on several charges, one of which was the dynamiting of College Hall, the most ancient and monumental building in the American University of Beirut. The man readily admitted that he had killed his sister because he saw her walking with some young men, but he vehemently denied having any connection with the blowing up of College Hall. He knew that the latter crime would condemn him to several years in prison, while the crime of honor of his sister was an act of bravery to save his family's honor and therefore deserved only a few

weeks imprisonment.

Unjust legislation against women exists everywhere, particularly in Third World Countries. Yet persistent united efforts, even in that part of the world does not fail to bear fruit. In Brazil, the Confederation of Brazilian Women succeeded lately in reforming the law concerning crimes of passion or honor using various forms of pressures including demonstrations, conferences, broadcasts and press campaigns (3).

In Lebanon, the promulgation of optional civil laws of Personal Status is as necessary as a counterpart to the seventeen codes in number. In addition, the following steps could be taken:

1. Return the displaced to their homes which they were forced to leave in accordance with the plan prepared by those who intended to divide Lebanon into minor sectarian states. This step may be immediately taken since it has been officially approved.
2. Increase the number and raise the standard of public or government

schools which attract and bring together students of various creeds and classes. Private, sectarian schools may equally contribute to national unity if they implant in their students, who represent various creeds and classes, a common, moral code based on tolerance, human brotherhood, mutual respect and cooperation.

3. Create a liberal-minded generation of men and women, ready to work together on the task of arousing women's awareness regarding their political rights, preparing them to participate in the legislation as members of parliament, and try to redress their injustices and wrongs which stand as the source of women's complaints •

(1) "Middle Eastern and Arab Women Speak", *Al-Raida*, #57, Vol.X. p.9

(2) "Problems Facing the Women's Movement in Lebanon", Interview with Lawyer Laure Moghaizel by David Livingstone, *Al-Raida*, #57, Vol.X, p.19-20

(3) see *Time*, December 1990.



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# Patriarchy in Love Songs

by Nada Awar

Throughout the centuries, ancient as well as medieval and contemporary history, females were and still are considered to be more sentimental than males. Love songs in general, project the romantic story of a hero and a heroine; thus, speaking of a psychological situation, pronouncing conflict and sometimes provoking a revolt, reaching the unconscious to direct the actors to a particular pattern of social behavior which is either traditional or liberal, and thus outlining the institutionalization of the patriarchal system.

In this article I will discuss the romantic behavior of an Arab woman by analyzing the lyrics of two love songs and by studying the effects of such songs on both males and females.

The songs are *Habaitak biSaif* (I loved you in Summer) sung by Fairouz<sup>(1)</sup> and *Intal Hubb* (You are the Love) which is sung by Um-Kalthoum<sup>(2)</sup>. A large Arab audience - irrespective of class, religious and other socio-political and behavioral variables -- is known to identify with the stars' songs.

Both songs depict an ancient well of traditional female submission and surrender to male lovers who are only heart-breakers. The heroines are helpless and dependent. Their stories are old-fashioned tales of tears and lament for the superman of their dreams, who never really acknowledges or reciprocates their love. Ironically, both songs 'beautify' the image of submissive women by emphasizing determination and loyalty to an essentially melancholic, unjust and unequal relationship. Her submission and slavery to love is due to the discrepancy between their feelings for each other and reinforced by the patriarchal and societal sex-role definitions.

The songs are widely broadcasted and enjoyed by a large audience of women who dance to the music as if in a therapeutic search for easing the inner pain of their own hopeless love stories. Hence, they (the songs) seem to personify their own stories and romantic inequalities.

*Habaitak biSaif* is the story of endless suffering . . . It tells of a young woman who sacrifices her days and the seasons, while years pass by, waiting for her sweetheart who is completely careless and ignorant of her feelings. She waits for her lover at a fictitious date, season after season, year after year, he remaining indifferent. As the song unfolds, she repeatedly emphasizes her love and loyalty. She represents the ideal image of that female who cherishes love and romance, delivering her life, happiness, and soul to it. It sounds, almost, like a version of Romeo and Juliet, in which the heroine plays both roles, while the intended hero is an absent and cold lover.

*Intal Hubb* justifies the attachment of a deprived woman to an unappreciative man. This love portrays a master-slave relationship in which our heroine, again, insists on playing the role of the ever-lasting martyr. The song seems to reinforce traditions of women's passivity to love, whereas men, on the other hand, are blessed with their freedom. The hero is welcomed into the heart of the heroine, although he is lavishly enjoying other women, when she says *so many hearts are flying around you wishing to reach happiness and gain your satisfaction, but I am the one whose heart belongs to you, you make me happy, you deprive, as you wish* . . .

However, when alone, she realizes that he does not reciprocate her love, yet does not blame him. There is no revolt, only hopeless devotion and

while he remains master of the game, she refuses to put an end to her jealousy and torment by breaking free. The lyrics go on in a torrent of illogical sentimental self-torture.

These two songs can be considered an extension of the *al-Jahilia* period when Arab women were owned as *Jawary*. A *Jariah* did not have any freedom or will to choose her life. The more educated she was, the more expensive she became and consequently, the more owned and enslaved. *Al Jariah* had to satisfy her owner in any possible way. She was considered his property with no considerations to her feelings as a human being.

However, the inherited master-slave patriarchal system acts as an invisible thread of backwardness hindering young women from making their own choices and producing change in traditional norms and customs. These socially inherited concepts dictate certain role definitions for women. They have to be patient, submissive, passive and bear the burden of being the martyrs. Women are compelled to walk in the shadows of male guardians, whether father, brother, cousin, lover or even a friend.

Hence, songs like the ones reviewed in this article are nothing more than a call supporting the patriarchy imposed on women. They (the songs) are representative and influential for they have spread throughout the masses. Even if they hold different interpretations for each of the sexes, they express the ultimacy of romance and love •

(1) (2) Fairouz is a Lebanese Singer who enjoys a wide Arab audience for her romantic songs. Even more acclaimed throughout the Arab world is Um-Kalthoum of Egyptian origin. For further information also see "Female Singers in the Arab World: Cultural Symbols in a Traditional Society" by Nada Awar in *Al-Raida* #51, November 1990.



# The Image of Women in Television Commercials and Drama: Media as Creator or Mirror of reality

**The** question of mass media as creator versus mirror of culture is one of the most debated issues in the relationship between mass media and society. Some critical media sociologists emphasize the value-producing function of mass media, whereas others are foremost interested in demonstrating how social reality is reflected in the media.<sup>(1)</sup>

## TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

While IWSAW was reviewing the production of a commercial promoting reading for children with an art director, we were instructed to use a man's voice for the slogan. Why? Because his is the voice of authority. It is more effective! Is this technique a reflection of social reality or is it a 'value-producing' technique?

The scopes covered by the different forms of the media are numerous and each projects itself and utilizes images to serve its own goals. For instance, television commercials project desired images with the sole purpose of creating brand awareness and affecting consumption patterns. It would seem, to a simple observer, that commercials attempt to produce new values in a setting which reflects reality or at least partial reality, in order to arouse desired images and motivate consumption. In short, the entire package represents a desirable, even exaggerated life style within the general context of the societal framework. For instance, generally speaking and cutting across cultural lines, women

are the major consumer group of domestic products ranging from detergent to food products, cosmetics, and therefore women appear more in the relevant commercials. Children are the target group for sweets, toys, music items, soda, and fad items, and consequently, women appear as the wise, friendly and loving mothers in these commercials. Men, on the other hand, are the target for corporate products, alcoholic beverages, travel items, etc.... The appearance of women in these commercials tends to rotate around being portrayed as a sex object, the prized and proud companion of the man, or a loving and conscientious wife, with physical beauty as the common denominator. The methods used for marketing the products coincide and reinforce traditional role-definitions of sex and age in society, because the products themselves fall into the traditional division of labor. To make it more attractive, the presentation of this reality tends to thrive on values such as independence, upper socio-economic status, and success, portrayed by fantasies of sophistication, beauty, and fancy gadgets.

Yet in most cases the fantasies and images are exaggerated and do not coincide with practical and social reality. For instance, a local commercial of a corn oil, shows a woman preparing french fries for her husband who is fully dressed and ready to go out to dinner. She is also dressed in her evening dress, full hair and make-up, as if going out to

dinner. In fact her hand reaching out to taste the crispy fries seems to have just emerged from the room of a manicurist. The commercial ends with them cheerfully and romantically walking away in each others arms leaving behind them a full platter of crispy french fries.

Hence, the commercial contains, a happy, young couple, a spotless kitchen, sophisticated and fashionable appearances, no sign of children, therefore, newly weds. By the way, the talk-over voice is that of a man!

Commercials of men's products never fail to show a beautiful young woman, even if only for a glance, as a component of the successful man's life. For sales purposes, these images seem to be effective, or else they would not persist despite the objections and lobbying of feminists.

## TELEVISION DRAMA

Another interesting study that landed on my desk was "The Image of Women in Drama and Women's Programs in Egyptian Television", a regional paper by Dr. Soha Abdel Kader for the population Council. Dr. Abdel Kader's study goes into an in-depth and elaborate analysis of the components of drama, broadcasting time given to women's programs, the content of women's programs, Egyptian television public policies and additional sociological research making the study comprehensive. However, we have restricted our reference to part



of the results in the scope of this article.

Although the study dates back to 1985, the results of the analysis concerning female characters in drama revealed interesting results.

Thus, Abdel Kader's measure of women's image in Egyptian television drama is based on comparing it to men along a number of parameters, including total representation, socioeconomic status and personality traits portrayed on the screen.

1. By representation, Abdel Kader means the degree of visibility: There is flagrant under-representation of women in terms of the numbers and percentages of dramatic characters, and very limited screen visibility as compared to men. This under-representation may not be intentional, she notes, but may simply serve to emphasize the marginality of women in society.

2. The analysis of socio-economic status of female drama characters compared to male drama characters shows a traditional attitude towards women. "In terms of age and marital status: female characters are depicted as young, usually in their twenties, physically attractive, overdressed and over made-up, they are identified mainly by their affiliation to the men in their lives. Whereas male characters are in their thirties, identified by their professional or occupational status, and only secondarily with their relationship to women."<sup>(2)</sup> Working

women are usually single, and tend to concentrate in traditional fields like secretaries and the like. According to Abdel Kader, these characteristics reflect the traditional sexual division of labor and sex-role in Egyptian society.

3. The analysis of personality traits of female and male dramatic characters reveal evident stereotyping. "As wives, they are the stabilizing force; as daughters, they are more obedient, more loving, and more supportive of their families than sons; as women in love, they are serious, dedicated, considering marriage the only legitimate and justifiable aim of romantic involvements."<sup>(3)</sup> This depiction of women as the upholders of morality in society is in many ways traditional, concludes Abdel Kader.

In conclusion and in agreement with Abdel Kader and other research conducted on the topic of women and mass media, reinforcement of traditional stereotypes for women is persistent. These stereotypes cannot be classified as value-producing techniques but fall more into the mirror of culture role of the media. Hence, the media cannot completely deviate from reality, it can only use itself as a form of art to modify reality and project fantasy. But what is the source of fantasy if not reality itself?

These generalizations remain totally unscientific, because one would have to study each form of the media in order to put reality, fantasy, images, traditions and art into their proper

perspectives. One could tentatively generalize, however, that the image of women in television commercials and drama, in most parts of the world, is far from emphasizing equality between the sexes. Further research is necessarily to understand the image of Arab women in the media and to point out that regional and local media do not challenge traditional values and traditional role-definitions in such a way to produce new values and stimulate change •

R.A.H

(1) Soha Abdel Kader, "The Image of Women in Drama and women's Programs in Egyptian Television", Regional Paper for **The Population Council**, West Asia and North Africa, Cairo, February 1985.

(2) Abdel Kader. pg.60.

(3) Ibid. pg. 61.

Additional source: Matilda Butler and William Paisley, **Women and the Mass Media: Sourcebook for Research and Action.**New York Human Science Press. 1980

# The Health of Women and Girls in the Middle East and North Africa(\*)

**Female** health has become a major issue and priority in the nineties. Reproductive health is highest on the agenda of world population issues, starting with the abortion debate, to the Vatican's condemnation of the use of unnatural birth control methods and women's demand for the right to control their own bodies, and the need for proper and reliable medical assistance, keeping in mind the disparity between developed and developing countries<sup>(1)</sup>.

Fertility rates and use of contraceptives, pregnancy spacing and maternal deaths are a major priority in developing countries. Hence, in the International Safe Motherhood Conference, held in Nairobi in 1987, it was noted that for every maternal death in the industrial world, some 200 maternal deaths occur in developing countries if one compares populations of similar size for the same period.

In the Middle East and North Africa

region, there is a particular lack of progress in reducing high maternal mortality rate, which calls for urgent attention. The current situation summarized from the MENA report suggests the following:<sup>(2)</sup>

1. The disparity in practice and health care with the regions shows that:
  - Female illiteracy averaged 60 percent in 1990.
  - The average age of marriage is

Table 1  
Total Fertility Rates and  
Contraceptive Prevalence Rates  
in MENA 1989

COUNTRY	Total Fertility Rate per woman	Contraceptive prevalence rate percent
YEMEN	7.7	1
OMAN	7.2	-
SAUDI ARABIA	7.1	-
LIBYA	6.8	-
SYRIA	6.6	20
SUDAN	6.4	9
IRAQ	6.3	14
JORDAN	6.0	26
ALGERIA	5.2	7
IRAN	5.1	23
U.A.E	4.7	-
MOROCCO	4.6	36
EGYPT	4.4	38
BAHRAIN	4.3	-
TUNISIA	3.9	50
LEBANON	3.8	53
TURKEY	3.6	51
KUWAIT	3.6	-
DJIBOUTI	0	-
QATAR	0	-
<b>MENA AVERAGE</b>	<b>5.3</b>	<b>29</b>

Source: SOWC, 1991

UNDP Human Development Report, 1990

MENA "The Health of Women and Girls" programming Brief

16.1 years. More than 60 percent of women still get married before the age of 20 in most Middle Eastern and North African countries

- High parity characterizes the region. The average total fertility is 5.3 ranging from a low of 3.6 in Turkey to a high of 7.7 in Yemen (see table 1).

- Prenatal, delivery and post natal care is deficient or absent for many communities, though there has been progress in the Gulf, Jordan, Iraq, Turkey, and Iran.

- Family planning programmes are weak in Turkey, Egypt and Morocco, and very weak or absent in Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Sudan and Syria.

2. Maternal death is defined as the death of a woman while pregnant, or within 42 days of the termination of pregnancy from any cause related or aggravated by the pregnancy

Maternal mortality in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region are:

- as low as 40 per 100,000 annually in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain and as high as 660 per 100,000 in Sudan and 750 in Djibouti.(see table 2)

In countries where maternal services are deficient and maternal mortality is high, poverty and lack of resources seem to be the underlying factors. Lack of personnel and midwifery services, primary health care and distances between homes and referral centers are also related to high rates of maternal mortality.

The goal of MENA and UNICEF is to reduce maternal mortality rate by one half, alleviate female ill-health and improve the quality of life of women, between 1990 and the 2000. They propose to do so by directing action in two areas:

1. Outside the health sector: This approach involves taking up issues having direct bearing on mortality and motivating institutions which can influence positive change. Hence, UNICEF, institutions at grassroot levels and government institutions must be mobilized to promote sustained awareness and provide services. The aim is medium and long term behavioral changes, which results from education, informed choice and available services.

- Education, is the basic tool for

Table 2  
Maternal Mortality rate per 100,000 in MENA 1980-1989

COUNTRY	MMR 1988	NUMBER OF DEATHS
DJIBOUTI	750	137
SUDAN	660	7148
YEMEN	378	2219
EGYPT	320	5558
TUNISIA	310	750
MOROCCO	300	2565
TURKEY	210	3289
ALGERIA	130	1074
SYRIA	134	717
IRAN	120	2107
IRAQ	117	901
LIBYA	80	153
BAHRAIN	40	6
SAUDI ARABIA	40	227
U.A.E.	13	4
OMAN	7	5
KUWAIT	6	3
JORDAN	-	-
LEBANON	-	-
QATAR	-	-
<b>MENA AVERAGE</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>26862</b>

Source: MENA "The Health of Women and Girls" programming Brief

achieving development. Hence, decreasing illiteracy, achieving development can reduce social inequity and empower women to have a say about their health and well-being.

- Media coverage must be directed to bring knowledge to the homes. Health education and encouragement to refer to health facilities and trained medical assistance may be disseminated through the media.

- Early marriage, needs to be addressed with care and in an indirect way. It can be addressed through expansion of education up to sixteen years of age complimented with health education and hazards of early marriage.

- Government awareness of the high scale of ill-health and death among children is needed in order to motivate concrete action. Such action should lead to appropriate planning of control measures and the monitoring of progress.

- National population policies should be set and governments must commit themselves to them.

2. Inside the health sector: This approach is geared to supporting women through successful pregnancies, safe delivery and healthy post-delivery return to normal life. This area involves support, initiation and continuation of breast-feeding, the ability to make informed choice regarding child spacing and birth planning. The provision of support and local health facilities is also essential to this sector.

- Integration of child and mother survival activities into existing health programmes. Thus, the Immunization Programme should be expanded to integrate maternal health care into the primary health care model.

- Trained personnel are needed to care for pregnant women, screen for problems and assist in labor or refer to

help.

- Help in planning pregnancies needs to be introduced at primary health care units, and advice on birth spacing and family planning and high risk pregnancy should be provided.

- Facilities for referral need to be established for women who need higher technical help during pregnancy, delivery, post-delivery or emergency situations.

- Attendance and assistance in delivery by a trained person should be provided. The person will support the mother, receive the baby and perform the needed procedures in appropriate cleanliness to avoid complications.

- Care of the mother and baby through the puerperium, i.e the 42 days following delivery, is essential to insure well-being of both mother and the child, to encourage breast-feeding and to monitor proper diet and eating habits for better nutrition.

- Registration of births, deaths and referrals are crucial for development, follow-up and a change in attitude

towards child and mother health.

These statistics and suggested solution confirm the existence of a problem and the need for action. Hopefully, the action suggested in the report summarized here can be coordinated between UN organizations, related institutions at the grassroots level and government offices to produce reliable and effective action programmes. The health of the mother and the child are a part of the global concern for the protection of life, human rights and the environment, that must be taken into action immediately

R.A.H.

(\*) Source: "The Health of Women and Girls" Programming Brief from MENA (Middle East and North Africa) Regional Office Programme Section. A UN Agency

(1) See "Population and the Health of the Mother and the Child in Jordan", *Al-Raida*. No 57, Spring 1992, pp. 17-18.

(2) MENA report pages. 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.



# Land Before Honour: Palestinian Women in the Occupied Territories(\*) by Kitty Warnock<sup>(1)</sup>

## HONOUR

*In Palestinian peasant society, there were components of honour that the Homeric Greeks would have recognized - courage, generosity, magnanimity. Honour is also related to land and qualities associated with land, stability and long history, plentiful sons and good husbandry. "Ma illu ard, fish 'indu 'ard - He who has no land, has no honour. . . . . Honour was not a measure of individual moral qualities; it pertained to families, not individuals and was a relationship between a family and the community. . . .*

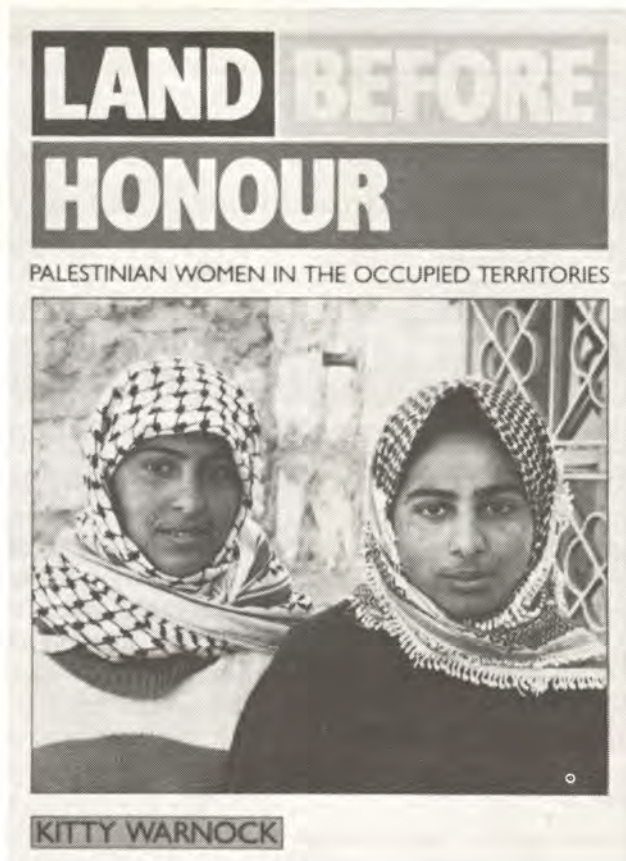
*One function of the ideology of honour was to support the internal structure of the family; to be precise; to idealize men's control over women. Its most keenly felt daily requirement was that the male members of a family should protect the female from all dangers, but particularly from sexual impurity. The supremacy of this demand over other aspects of honour was demonstrated in 1948, when many of the Palestinian who fled their homes did so primarily out of fear that their women would be raped by Zionist soldiers.*

*The Achilles' heel of national resistance was subsequently acknowledged and condemned in a reversal of the old saying : "Al-Ard qabil al-'Ard - Land before Honour".2)*

Kitty Warnock's *Land Before Honour*, is a result of four and a half years of living and working in the Palestinian West Bank. It is not politicized. It is based on simple observation, she notes. Her interest rose from the striking contrast

between the lives of many Palestinian mothers and their daughters; women with no formal education, bound by family, and daughters who study abroad achieve higher education in leading institutions.

Based on interviews with women of all ages and social backgrounds she examined key areas such as history, social change, freedom,



education, agricultural work, industrial work, politics and national struggle, women's organizations and the impact of the Intifada. She reveals the different ways in which women see themselves, their experiences and their place in the Palestine of the future.

For instance, she explains how Palestine was predominantly a peasant agricultural society sharing many characteristics with other peasant cultures whereby the mechanism for controlling wealth was the patrilineal family. In the interviews she noticed that "Older Palestinians appreciated labor saving devices which have made life easier for their daughters, but at the same time expressed a pride in their own competence, capacity for hard work and skills in the crafts now no longer used. In the occupied territories, these feelings have inevitably been overlaid by the sense that the land which made life possible

is slipping away and has often ceased to play a central economic role in people's lives, although it remains as a potent emotional and political symbols.<sup>(3)</sup>

The changes that have occurred in the lives of Palestinian women were compounded by the many events, developments and controversies around them. The women she interviewed, women of all ages, were in a process of examining their lives. They were collectively and individually searching for their identities. She explains and analyses how they have responded to the opportunities and the setbacks of the changes and turmoil that surrounds them, in ways that are active and complex.

Land before honour as a title implies the conflict between traditional codes of sexual purity, submission and

obedience of women, traditional methods of subsistence like agriculture, and the violent and turbulent struggle for independence and a national identity. In both cases the women must uphold the honour of the family and bear the struggle for a national identity •

R.A.H.

(\*) Kitty Warnock, *Land Before Honour: Women in the Occupied Territories*. New York: Monthly Review Press. 1990. ISBN 0-85345-810-3.

(1) Kitty Warnock spent four years at the Palestinian University of Birzeit in the occupied West Bank, teaching the history of ideas and political theory. She now works as a development consultant in the Middle East and Africa.

(2) Warnock, *Ibid.* pg. 22

(3) Sarah Graham-Brown, "New Writing on women, Politics and Social Change", *Middle East Report*. November/December 1991, No. 173 Vol.21, No.6. pg.32.

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# Images of Woman in Literature(\*)

by David Holbrook

**David** Holbrook's *Images of Women in Literature* approaches the issue from totally unusual angle, that of philosophical anthropology. He claims that a significant theme that remained unexplained to him emerged after a number of publications in poetry, on education, notably English literature, novels and literary criticism and philosophy. The theme in question is the association between woman and death. To be more specific, he wishes to examine *the problem of a man's relationship with his female element and the phantom woman of his unconscious*.<sup>1)</sup>

He examines images of women in literature by looking at two plays by James Barrie, the author of *Peter Pan* and a selection of Shakespeare's plays.

It sounds a bit too literary at first, but the style and philosophical analysis presented by Holbrook is capturing. Concerned with the nature of human nature and symbolism, woman is studied as a symbol. The emphasis is on the fact that everyone of us comes from a woman, was inside a woman's body. Each one of us was totally dependent on a woman without whom we would have died. Even more extraordinary is that being inside a woman means being inside a woman's psyche.

*As far as literature is concerned, the connection we have to make is between the truths of philosophical anthropology - a discipline that takes into account the subjective and intentional - and the phenomena of consciousness surrounding our subject - that is, we must examine the symbolism of woman and the meanings attached to woman as a subject of poetry, fiction, and drama.*<sup>(2)</sup> I found it easier to understand what Holbrook means when I read another sentence in the same paragraph where he says that the women in various literary works may be understood as *attempts to express the author's attitudes to woman and their own female elements and the female component in human nature. They embody the author's attitudes to female knowledge and other modes, particularly within the authors' themselves*<sup>(3)</sup>

Holbrook takes the reader on an in-depth journey into the psyche of men and women, tracing back the personal philosophy implied in the authors' characterization of their female characters. It is an interesting and brainstorming book. •

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(\*) David Holbrook, *Images of Woman in Literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1989. ISBN 0-8147-34600-X.

(1) Ibid. pg. 1-2.

(2) Ibid. pg. 63.

(3) Ibid.



R.A.H.



## Greenham Memorial Proposed



**This** year marks the tenth anniversary of the start of the march by people from Wales which led to women's peace camp at Greenham Common. A proposal had been launched to set up a commemorative sculpture to all the women who supported Greenham.

It is to be a simple, natural figure of a woman with a baby, on a plinth where women can sit, with a plaque with dates of the main events at Greenham.

The protest marches began when women decided to oppose the siting of US cruise missiles in Britain. Many marches followed, and women began to occupy the land at the entrance of the missile site. The movement grew to encompass solidarity actions with the miners in the region and to fund-raising for famine victims in Ethiopia.

On March 5, 1991, the last cruise missile left Greenham Common. The proposed sculpture would be a fitting memorial to the women who set off from Cardiff in 1981.

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Reprinted from *Echoes*. World Council of Churches Programme Unit III on Justice, Peace and Creation. No. 1 1992, p.28

# The Egyptian Women's Health Book Collective (\*)

The Egyptian Women's Health Book Collective, inspired by the publication of the Boston Women's Health Book Collective, "Our Bodies, Ourselves", decided to produce a health book for Egyptian and Arab Women. The initial group which gathered in May 1985 included 22 interested women from various areas of specialization. They decided that the book would be written in Arabic, would not be a translation of the English version of "Our Bodies, Ourselves", but an original version altogether. They divided the book into two parts: The first part adopted a life cycle approach to women's health from childhood to menopause; the second part dealt with particular issues such as work, nutrition, violence, traditional health care and social and psychological pressures on women.

Taking their time the collective outlined every detail of the book, starting with simplicity of the language, clarity of the information, validity of the illustrations, discussion of the controversial issues like rape, the right of patients to question medical treatments, and others, publication procedures.

The book was finally published in early 1991 and the Collective held a public seminar to discuss it in May of the same year. It was received enthusiastically by different women's groups and the public.

Upon the suggestion of an illiterate

woman at one of the Collective's seminars, the Collective is pursuing the idea of putting the information on tape and producing separate pamphlets that can be used in literacy classes. The Collective says it is receiving numerous requests from various Arab women's groups to buy the book, and some have asked for help in forming sister organizations.

Information taken from "The Egyptian Women's Health Book Collective" by Nadia Farah, in *The Middle East Report*, 1991. p. 16.



# Kuwaiti Women are demanding for the right to vote

A coalition of Islamic and secular women's groups in Kuwait circulated and signed petitions demanding the right to vote. The elections are due in September 1992. Under current law only Kuwaiti men whose ancestors can be traced back to 1920 are eligible to vote. The new women's movement says some 100,000 Kuwaiti women as opposed to 90,000 men could qualify under the current law if women were allowed to vote.

From the *Women's Watch*, published by IWRAP. July 1992.pg. 6.

# A Woman in the Russian Cabinet

Ella Pamphilova is Russia's new minister for social protection who is proposing social welfare measures to help the disabled, pensioners and children. Apparently women in the new Russia are not part of her assignment.

From the *Women's Watch*, published by IWRAP. July 1992.pg. 5.

## Lebanese Female Deputy gets the Highest Number of Votes in the Country



**Ms** Nayla Moawad was elected to the Lebanese Parliament on August 23, 1992 with a sweeping majority of 90,000 votes, the highest received by any of the running candidates. The only female in the race for Northern Lebanon, she received the highest number of votes yet to be received by any of the candidates for the North or in the rest of the country.

Ms. Moawad was already serving as a deputy since 1990. She was appointed in place of her husband, the late President of the Republic, Renee Mouawad who was assassinated in November 1989.

She has been active on various levels of local development, notably in areas like the environment, women

and children in Lebanon. She was a member of the Lebanese Delegation to the Rio Summit, and will participate in the National Conference on Women and the Environment, which is being organized by our Institute in October of this year. Ms. Moawad is also dedicated to improving the legislative conditions of women, pressuring for Lebanon to ratify the convention for the Elimination of all form of Discrimination against women, human rights and the welfare of the child in Lebanon.

It is worth noting that these are the first elections to be held in Lebanon since 1972. The victory of Ms. Moawad with such flying colors is a promise for the women of this country.

## The Other Women Candidates for Parliament in Lebanon

**Ms.** Maha Khoury ran among the candidates for Jbeil in Mount Lebanon. Due to the boycott of the elections in her district, by competing candidates and voters, she only received 41 votes, yet won the election in the absence of a competitor. Ms. Khoury is the second female deputy of the Lebanese Parliament.

**Women** candidates for the district of Beirut, the capital city were absent.

**Ms.** Bahia Hariri ran in the district of South Lebanon. Ms Hariri is the sister of Mr. Rafik Hariri, the Saudi Tycoon of Lebanese origin. The third woman to become a deputy in parliament Ms. Hariri won got approximately 48,000 votes.

The Parliamentary election of August 1992, the first in twenty years, brought three women to the new Lebanese parliament •

## Janine Rubeiz



**Al-Raida** pays tribute to Ms. Janine Rubeiz who passed away on August 2, 1992. Ms. Rubeiz, a refined and active woman worked for the cause of women for many years. The first and last time I saw her was in January at a panel discussion by Dr. Nawal Saadawi. Ms. Rubeiz voiced a certain disappointment in the trifle debates that continue to plague empowerment and development of women in society. She reported that she had worked for the women's cause for years, but had been disappointed in what little progress and cooperation was made. Indeed, Ms. Rubeiz's contributions were numerous and sophisticated.

She was known as an active woman promoting art, literature, poetry, theater, painting and sculpture exhibits, intellectual discussions and debates working with a group of leading women in a association known as "Dar al-Fan wa Al-Adab" "The House of Art and Literature". The group has been inactive for the years of the war of Lebanon.

Yet the name of Janine Rubeiz is synonymously associated with the group and the long list of its memorable and outstanding activities. The quality of art in all of its visual and its literary forms achieved by Janine Rubeiz and her colleagues is cause for reminiscence of the golden age of art,

literature, theater, intellectual awareness that prevailed in Lebanon.

The friends of Janine Rubeiz are saddened by the loss of this outstanding member of society and asset to the world of literature and art and to the women's cause •

# Yearning

by Emily Nasrallah (\*)

**There** was a light tapping on my door. I thought I was dreaming. I was alone at home and it was after midnight, so I thought I must be dreaming. I made no effort to open my eyes or get out of bed to open the door.

But the tapping recurred, soft and rhythmic.

I jumped out of bed and stood behind my closed door whispering, "Who's there? Who is it?" But I received no answer. My heartbeat quickened: who visits at this time of the night? Who would knock on my door at this hour and fill me with dread? Who would even dare open their door on this battle-heated Beirut night?

My questions stopped when I realized that this was my bedroom door and not the main entrance to the house - the entrance that one would normally use to get indoors.

My heart went into a panic. Someone could be inside the house. Someone could already have invaded my home, using the force of weapons, as is often the case in these broken times.

But no, I must be imagining things. My imagination running wild again. Or maybe I just forgot to lock the front door.

Yes, that's probably exactly what happened. For I have begun to notice lately little holes gaping through the pages of my memory, and forgetfulness has become an inescapable reality for me. Haven't

names started slipping away whenever the faces they belong to appear?

Can I deny that one morning I even forgot my own name and spent a few seconds drowning in embarrassed silence? Is it any wonder, in the light of all that has happened and has taken place, and all that is happening and is yet expected to happen, that I would forget to close my front door?

But I thought again. And my thoughts cancelled out all doubts, assuring me that this could not have been the case. I could not have left the front door open. Locking one's doors is no longer a habitual, reflex action you perform without thought. In these days of war and destruction, locking doors has become a ritual that demands thought and time and planning. And I, like any citizen governed by the laws of the jungle, perform the locking-up operation with precision and efficiency, motivated by my survival instincts and the drive to cling to life.

To retire peacefully, I need to perform the ritual that would allow me that peace. I close the corrugated iron door, pulling at it with all my might, until it locks at the threshold, then I close the heavy wooden door. Then I pull the chain into its latch and I clamp a padlock over it. But I do not snap the lock until I have made sure the key to the main bolt has closed all the way, and I pull at it until my teeth grind together. Finally I snap on the padlock, after making certain all the little openings and joints are closed to

the outside world. Then - only then - do I move quietly to my bedroom. There I close the bedroom door - from the inside, of course, and do not feel safe until I have closed the shutters and the glass windows and drawn the thick curtains over them. But I never forget to leave the window panes slightly ajar lest they shatter with the force of the tremor reserved, usually, for volcanoes and other natural disasters. In our case, they are brought on by flying rockets and bombs that infiltrate our little alley.

Once I am sure that all security measures have been taken, I can finally relax. Only then do I allow my weary body and wilting soul to surrender to sleep.

"He surrender to a peaceful sleep," is an expression that creeps up from childhood memories and old essay books. We borrow it today to describe different situations, daily occurrences.

You can be sleeping soundly, sunk in a sea of dreams, when you are surprised by the sound of a bomb, or the explosion of a booby-trapped car beneath the window, or the ululations of a machine gun, or the screaming of anti-aircraft artillery, and rockets that explode inside your brain first and then spread to other parts of your body, until all your senses have sucked it in and it resides in the very depths of your subconscious.

Or maybe you are surrendering to the ecstasy of dreams that have

become the only escape in our times - a place to run away to form the daily images of war that stab at you like sharpened spears.

Or you can be lulled into a false security, lifting your soul above the clouds where you can float in peace, until someone knocks at your door and disturbs your peace, drives you out of the dream, out of the ecstasy you seek, out of the fake security and false warmth.

Someone comes along and robs you of the freedom you attained through your own special means, and you may never be able to repeat it. Someone kidnaps you out of the remembered past, when you lived a normal life, when freedom meant the freedom to leave your home, to walk the streets, to swim in the sea, to visit the mountains-times when it did not take courage to fulfil your child's dream of taking him out for a drive, or a walk in the woods.

How did we not know that we would arrive at times like these? How did we not foresee that we would become as cowardly as alley rats? How did we not know that the rats would discard their skins and become the rulers of the streets?

Someone was still tapping gently on my door, while I stood behind the door and asked softly, "who's there? Who knocks?"

The tapping continued and no one answered my question.

I had waited so long in vain. The tapping had not grown stronger nor had I gleaned any information from my repeated question. I was becoming more frightened and anxious. My doubts were growing. Was this reality or was it a dream?

Why couldn't it be a dream/ An illusion? Was I now rising from the depths of sleep? Our way of life has

turned our nightmares into reality. And the two states have merged together with the frequency of bomb-interrupted sleep and heavy shelling. We no longer know dreams from reality; we no longer differentiate between the circle of peaceful, restful sleep and the maze of nightmares.

At that point I realized my thoughts had come full circle and I no longer had any choice but to surrender totally.

But surrender to whom, to what? To Sleep again? Or to confrontation and wakefulness and bravery? How could I travel outside this circle that had transformed me in time and place and thrown me into a loop? How could I explain my feelings and sensations?

The gentle tapping returned. I grew silent. I tried with my silence to start a discourse with the unknown standing behind my door, maybe through telepathy.

I was not given more time for reflection, for the stranger entered my room suddenly, although my door remained firmly closed.

How could he have come in? I did not dare lift my gaze to him, and, of course, I did not have the courage to ask how he had managed to get in.

"Have you forgotten?" asked a gentle, pure voice that wakened within me dormant feelings and burst the dams that contained my tears.

"Have you forgotten?"

I knew this voice. I could feel it crawl over my skin, through my pores, through the rest of me.

"I know this voice!" I said out loud.

"Of course you know the voice," he said immediately. "Lift your eyes to me. Look at me."

"Father?" I screamed.

"Yes," he said calmly.

"But you are . . ."

"Say it . . . Don't be frightened of the word. Say it."

"But you have been gone for . . ."

"Six years. And now I feel I want

to pay you a visit. To check on you, that's all."

"But . . . How?"

"You mean how did I get in? That was easy. Do you want the details?"

"No, no . . . It is enough that you are here. The sweetness of love and warmth envelopes me. But tell me . . ."

"Why did I come alone?"

You're reading my thoughts. I never knew you could do that."

"It is a natural thing to do, in my new home. Where I have come there are no longer any barriers. People are free beings who intermingle and interlace, and then separate like atoms in the air, without effort or sadness or anger."

"And Mother? I mean, are you . . . together?"

"Yes. And we are as close as we always were. I cannot say we are husband and wife. In our new world those words have no place, no one understands them. But that does not prevent two beings from meeting and staying together for eternity, forming a union."

"Why didn't you bring her with you? My heart is breaking."

"Please, use simple words that I can understand."

"I long to see her."

"She visits you all the time."

"Yes, I know. But not the way you are visiting me now. She comes to me in dreams. You have opened a new door for communication."

"Don't talk like a fool. This door has been open since eternity, and it will be open forever."

"Now, you are using complicated language, Father."

"Tit for tat."

"You have not lost your sense of humor. I always knew you would never change."

"Oh, but I have changed a great deal. Only you are unable to see it, for the old picture still blurs your vision."

"But this is your present picture. The way I see you now."

It is a picture I borrowed from the



past, so you would know me."

He said those final words and turned to face the door. I reached out to him swiftly with my hand. I did know what I meant to do. Stop him from leaving? Keep him with me? Or touch the hand that had made no move to touch me?

Maybe I would say what I used to say as a child, "Take me with you . . . I miss so much going for a walk with you."

I was confused, of that I was certain. My arm stretched out in the air and he faced the door, his back to me fading slowly, like a puff of smoke fades in the wind. He was gone and I had not had the chance to ask him: Do you feel as I do now? Does the yearning boil within your souls nearly melting them, as it does within us?

I did not ask my question. But I heard the whispered answer from behind the closed door, "Of course we yearn. Why else would we endure the journey to return?" •

Reprinted by permission from Ms. Emily Nasralah

# Why Will We Grow Old (\*)

by **Jumbe Nogma**  
from Zambia

Dear Ma  
Here I am  
Alone in this crowd  
Sway from home  
Everybody is talking  
About questions and answers  
I still find no solutions  
War  
My Throat chokes with stench from unburied bodies

Poverty  
How can I forget those big stomachs  
Heavily placed on thin feeble legs

But Ma  
I met a Hungarian  
She spoke of "rising from a wheelchair"  
I met a Palestinian  
With no gun in his hand  
A South African  
With an unclenched fist  
A European with a smile so real  
An American with no patronage  
The laughter filled my heart with warmth

Here I am  
In communion with life  
A call to share  
Why will they grow old Ma  
to prejudice  
to hate  
to kill  
Why will they grow old

(\*) taken from the article of Anu Talvivaara, "Justice, Peace and Creation: A Youth Perspective" in ECHOES, of the World Council of Churches Programme III on Justice, Peace and Creation, No.1, 1992

## PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

### *"Violence Against Women Violates Human Rights"*

*The Universal Declaration of Human Rights protects everyone "without distinction of any kind such as race, colour, sex, language . . . or other status" (art.2). Furthermore, "everyone has the right to life, and security of person" (art. 3) and "no one shall be the subject to "torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" (art.5). Therefore, we, the undersigned call upon the 1993 United Nations World Convention on Human Rights to comprehensively address women's human rights at every level of its proceedings. We demand that gender violence, a universal phenomenon which takes many forms accross culture, race and class, be recognized as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action.*

*Signature*

*Address*

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*Please Copy and return form to: Center for Women's Global Leadership, 27 Clifton Avenue, Douglas College, New Brunswick, NJ. 08903, USA. Fax: (908) 932-1180 or the International Tribune Center, 777 UN Plaza, NY, NY 10017. USA. FAX (212) 661-2704.*





For information on how to order contact: The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, Beirut University College, P.O.Box 13-5053, Beirut, Lebanon.