

Arab Women and Literary Creativity



Yuman El-Eid of Lebanon giving a welcoming note at the opening ceremony.

Beirut, September 22-26, 1992

The streets of Beirut filled with banners announcing the opening of the long awaited Conference on Arab Women and Creativity. For four days the Conference hall filled with Arab scholars and writers some of whom had not visited Beirut in years. They came together with their Lebanese colleagues to share ideas, knowledge, praise and encouragement to the quality and quantity of women's participation in Arab literature.

The Conference, organized by the National League of Lebanese Writers and Authors and the General League of Arab Writers and Authors, was the first regional activity concentrating on women in Literature to be hosted by Beirut after the war. The participants, with women forming the majority, came from various Arab countries such as Syria, Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria,

Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Palestine, and Lebanon of course.

Among the Key women expected to attend the Conference was Dr. Najah al-'Aattar, the Minister of Cultural Affairs in Syria, who herself is a writer. However, unable to attend, Dr. 'Aattar sent a word of support to the participants and to women in creative work. In her message, she noted that differentiation between feminine art and masculine art is narrowing hence bringing creativity to its essence, i.e. quality. This differentiation is being bridged even more by the liberal men who have come to acknowledge, rate and encourage the quality, not the sexuality, of women's creative work, she emphasized.

Speakers at the panels discussed various aspects of the issue such as: the historical development of women

in art and literature, notably short stories and novels. They also discussed gender images in literature and literary works of women. Hence, the titles of some of the papers were: Forms of Literature and sexual perception in Literature; The Novel and Woman; History and Development. Furthermore, some papers touched on specific arts in respective countries such as: The Courses of Creative Development of Lebanese Women; The Role of Women's Creativity in Jordanian Modern Art. Other prominent panelists from the Arab World told their personal experiences in literature and creativity.

The General atmosphere praised women's inherent and instinctive talents in the arts, reinforced them and encouraged its growth. The men at the conference urged women to speak up louder. After four days of deliberations and panels the Conferees made certain demands. Here are some of the resolutions:

1. The General League of Arab Writers and authors was called to organize more conferences and panels on the issue of Women and Creativity.
2. Future conferences and panels should be held in various Arab countries.
3. These panels should include issues of women's creativity in other forms of art such as Theater, Cinema and Modern art and Dansing.
4. Seminars and panels should be organized to conduct research and studies on the various aspect of the issues raised •

R.A.H