

Nour Salman

The most recent collection of letters by *Dr. Nour Salman* is her book «Ila Rajol Lam Y'ati»* (To a Man Who Never Was). *Nour*, a well known Lebanese writer who lives in Beirut spoke to Editor *Aida Arasoghli* about her book. *Dr. Salman's* dynamic and warm manner belies the context of the book which reveals the political, social and emotional turmoil in Lebanon and the Arab world. The principal character in the book is a man to whom all the letters are addressed. In these letters, *Nour* resists the conventional roles ascribed to people in a relationship by withdrawing from the relationship. She refuses to join the Qafila (Convoy) of tradition. She tries to escape this by ending the relationship and this entails longing, anguish and separation. The letters reveal memories that have not faded and a strong feeling of alienation. She retreats to herself and writes these letters, «why is it that I always suffer, always defying the norms, sometimes by obstinate silence». Writing satisfies in *Nour* «the need for communication, the need to end my isolation. I believe everything is universal in life, the letters do not reveal personal experiences, instead, they reveal the experiences of life and love». Her book is marked with a serious analytical approach and an endless search for solutions «vertical vision helps me think clearly of the problem and find a solution. My perspective of things is very comprehensive, honest and authentic. Honesty is very essential for every writer, every artist and every leader».

Question: What is the impact of honesty on your writings?

Answer: There is no eloquence in literature without honesty. Writing well involves authenticity of feelings and ideas. The problem of people lies in the schism between what they do and what they say. I believe that the confessional and sectorian problems of the country will be resolved with the emergence of an honest leader.

Question: The feelings of anxiety and alienation are overwhelming in these letters, what are the reasons for these feelings?

Answer: Defying tradition and choosing to be a writer was not an easy task, there was a high price to pay.



My father always warned me of the problems that face women who choose writing as a career in this part of the world; but I believe that rationalization is not the only means of finding truth and reality. Logic could limit our perception of things. My perspective of life is very analytical, skeptical and very intuitive, I think that one cannot gain without losing, and I am more than ready to pay the price.

Question: What about the strong feelings of homelessness which are pervading in the book?

Answer: The strong feeling of homelessness is caused by the confessional dissension in Lebanon that is leading to the fragmentation of the whole country. I feel that I am in constant struggle against the windmills of war and violence. I am determined to go on with the struggles; I have a vertical vision to problems. One should not be lost in futile details that will mislead him from envisaging the real problem and thus the right solution. My feelings of homelessness could be attributed to strong feelings of disappointment in the status-quo of things that need to be changed.

Question: Your letters reveal strong symbiosis between life and love, how do you explain this?

Answer: For me, life and love are symbiotic because they are one. Both life and love should not be restricted to time and place. The axis of life is the human being who is more important than the game of winning and money. Most people are trapped in the money race, love becomes secondary or non-existent. I believe

* Salman, Nour. *Ila Rajol Lam Y'ati* (To a Man Who Never Was). Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Beirut 1986. 223 pages.

that love is the guarantor of happiness and peace.

Question: The letters show very clearly that you have chosen the symbolic style; what is the symbolic dimension of the convoy and homeland?

Answer: The symbolic style in this book is a reflection of my contention that reality and symbol are one, abstraction and reality are also one. There is unity in everything in life. Reality is very important whatever dimension I choose. There are many perplexing questions that do not have an absolute answer, and the symbols in life are an answer to these perplexing questions. The convoy is the imposed symbol of tradition, the imposed arranged path of life. The homeland is the extension of life and destiny. It is the present and the future. All the symbols in my book have a human dimension.

At present, *Dr. Salman* is preparing a research study on *Tawfic Youssef Awwad*. She is also professor of Arabic Literature at the Lebanese University. In December 1986, she plans to travel to Algeria where she is invited by the Ministry of Higher Education and Culture to give a lecture on her book on Algerian Literature. She also plans to publish ten short stories in the near future.

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Articles and contributions will be appreciated from all our readers. Articles chosen to be published will have a special acknowledgement to the writer.