

# alternatif politika

**Women In The Lebanese Daily Newspapers Cartoons**

**Kaynak: Alternatif Politika, Cilt 7. Sayı 1. (Nisan 2015) Sayfa. 32-55.**

**Yazar: Roy JREIJIRY**

*Alternatif Politika; Worldwide Political Science Abstracts, Scientific Publications Index, Scientific Resources Database, Recent Science Index, Scholarly Journals Index, Directory of Academic Resources, Elite Scientific Journals Archive, Current Index to Scholarly Journals, Digital Journals Database, Academic Papers Database, Contemporary Research Index, Ebscohost, Index Copernicus ve Asos Index'de taranmaktadır.*

*AS*



## WOMEN IN THE LEBANESE DAILY NEWSPAPERS CARTOONS

Roy JREIJIRY

### ABSTRACT

Many thousands of people demonstrated on March 8, 2014 demanding the promulgation of the law to protect women from domestic violence. It was the biggest feminist manifestation in the history of Lebanon and which started after a number of cases largely covered by the media of women killed or beaten by their husbands.

In this context we have decided to observe how the daily press reflected the emergence of the feminist movement and what place it has reserved for women during this period through the cartoons. This article proposes the examination of a corpus of cartoons in four Lebanese daily newspapers (*An-Nahar*, *As-Safir*, *Al-Mustaqbal* and *al-Balad*) during a period of one year.

The result that we reached is that the Lebanese cartoonists give little importance to the feminine figure. At the same time the struggle conducted by the feminist movements during the period of the study were almost absent from the cartoonists' work. These cartoonists seem to be led by stereotypes that they reproduce, a rearguard struggle. One of these stereotypes is the model of the beautiful and sexy woman, an erotic object par excellence.

**Keywords:** Lebanon, feminism, daily newspapers, cartoons, Lebanese women.

## INTRODUCTION

### *The Context and the Objective*

Propelled to the front of the media scene and the social networks, notably after the publicity around many cases of women beaten to death by their husbands,<sup>1</sup> the women's rights theme has been feeding the news on the Lebanese information organs recently: claims of a parliamentary quota, mobilization for the acknowledgement of the Lebanese women's right to pass their nationality to their children (rejected under the pretext of maintaining the demographic equilibrium between the religious communities), contestation of the absence of a common Civil Personal Status Code (which is exclusively run by the religious communities which constitute the Lebanese State), struggle for the promulgation of a law protecting women from domestic violence (including marital rape) marked out by the largest feminist manifestation, which took place on March 8, on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

*Beirut witnessed one of the largest protests in recent memory, calling on the Lebanese parliament to pass a law protecting women from domestic violence. Beyond highlighting the latter, the demonstration suggests a growing desire by Lebanese citizens for a political and social system that truly represents their voices and protects their basic rights,<sup>2</sup>*

according to *Al-Akhbar* newspaper in its online English edition. This agitation led the Lebanese parliament to the adoption of a bill protecting women from domestic violence on April 1, 2014; a bill considered unsatisfactory because it does not take into consideration a number of modifications required by the non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

It is in this context that we propose to analyze how the Lebanese cartoonists viewed women during a period of one year, from April 1, 2013 until March 31, 2014. It is a question of interpreting the selected cartoons following the three reading criteria: figurative, narrative and thematic (Everaert-Desmedt, 2007: 225-235).

---

<sup>1</sup> After the media coverage of the cases of Roula Yaakoub (died aged 32, July 7, 2013), Fatméal-Nachar (aged 28, beaten in January 2014 by her husband, her brother-in-law and her mother-in law), Manal Assi (33, brutally murdered by her husband on February 5, 2014) and of Christelle Abou Chaqra (died aged 41 on February 16, 2014, poisoned with Demol). After being accused of beating his wife Roula Yaakoub to death, her husband was later acquitted to the outrage of NGOs and the women rights activists.

<sup>2</sup> Yazan al-Saadi, "Thousands renew fight against patriarchy on International Women's Day", *Al-Akhbar English*, March, 8<sup>th</sup> 2014. URL: <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/18945>.

*The Dailies and the Corpus*

We have chosen drawings found in the daily, general purpose press, published in Arabic. Eight out of the 11 Lebanese dailies publish cartoons. Of these eight we have selected the four most distributed papers: *An-Nahar* (The Day), *Al-Mustaqbal* (The Future), *As-Safir* (The Ambassador) and *Al-Balad* (The Country).<sup>3</sup> By daily representing the news, the cartoonist plays the role of a ‘real columnist’ (Gervereau, 2004: 117), reflecting the paper’s position toward the tackled themes reflecting the paper’s position regarding them.

In *Al-Mustaqbal* newspaper, the daily “Caricature” heading, which disappears starting from January 28, 2014, occupies the top of page 3 (i.e. six columns out of eight and a quarter of the height). This heading, signed by Nabil Abou Hamad,<sup>4</sup> is reserved for the extremely topical issues, often related to the news treated on the first page. Thus women are not represented in the 276 drawings of Abou Hamad in *Al-Mustaqbal*, with the exception of two cases of allegoric personification where freedom and mutiny<sup>5</sup> appear as women. The absence of feminine representations in this paper has led us to eliminate from the studied corpus.

In *An-Nahar*, the cartoon is more valorized, as it appears daily on top of the last page (with the same proportion of *Al-Mustaqbal*’s) and weekly (every Friday) in the middle of page 17 or 23 (over four columns and one fifth of the height), in the middle of the *Dalil an-Nahar* (The An-Nahar Guide) heading, which consists of several pages and is dedicated to entertainment. The line drawings of *An-Nahar* are signed by Armand Homsî.<sup>6</sup>

On the other hand, the cartoon is less valorized in *As-Safir*, while it remains manifold. It changes in format, in position and title, but it is always signed by Saad Hajo.<sup>7</sup> A portrait drawing is published at the bottom of the last page (occupying two columns out of eight and one fifth of the height) under the title « With my Sincere Cartoon » (“مع فائق الكاريكاتور”), another one of the same format appears at the bottom of the penultimate page (occupying two to four columns out of eight and a quarter

<sup>3</sup> The other four are: *Al-Binaa*, *Al-Liwa’*, *Ash-Sharq* and *Al-Joumhouriya*.

<sup>4</sup> Abou Hamad is a known novelist and illustrator born in the 1940s. He signed his cartoons in *Al-Mustaqbal* between November 1, 2008 and January 28, 2014.

<sup>5</sup> The cartoonist extends the association of women with mutiny in the monotheistic religions.

<sup>6</sup> Interior Design and Information graduate Homsî (born 1966) has been drawing cartoons for the publishing group *An-Nahar* since 1995. He has participated in several local and international expositions.

<sup>7</sup> Born in Damascus in 1968, Hajo has been publishing his cartoons since 1989 in several periodicals in Syria and Lebanon (including *As-Safir* since 1995). He has also participated in several expositions.

of the height) under the title « See Figure » (“انظر الشكل”), while a third drawing (in landscape format) appears in *As-Safir*'s weekly cultural supplement entitled « Regardless of » (“بصرف النظر”).

Finally, *Al-Balad* dedicates two headings for the cartoons signed by Stavro Jabra.<sup>8</sup> The first, without a title and sometimes in colour, occupies the upper half of the last page (four columns out of six), while the second is published at the bottom of the second page (over 3.5 columns and the third of the height) under the title “An Event for a Cartoon” (“حدث بكاركاتور”).

While the feminine image is absent from the 275 drawings by Homsî, published on the last page of *An-Nahar* (where the current political issues occupy the majority of the themes), it is present in 16 of the 48 cartoons that appear in the weekly heading of the paper. On the other hand, the multiplicity and flexibility of Hajo's cartoons in *As-Safir* give him a certain thematic diversity, which is expressed in the presence of women in 22 cartoons (out of approximately 400) published in the pan-Arab daily between April 1, 2013 and March 31, 2014. In *Al-Balad*, in addition to four drawings related to current events and representing known women,<sup>9</sup> Stavro signs 43 cartoons, which include feminine images, out of the 447 published during the same period.

In total, our corpus will then be constituted of 81 drawings selected from 1446 initially seen: a rate of 5.6%. This weak representation of the feminine gender in the daily press cartoons is due to the strong prevalence of the political and security themes in a region profoundly destabilized (repercussion of the war in Syria, a run of fatal attacks and a governmental void lasting eleven months), all this at the expense of the social issues.

---

<sup>8</sup> Born in 1947 Stavro Jabra (known by his first name Stavro) has been publishing his drawings since 1967 in a number of national and international publications including *Der Spiegel*, *L'Express*, *Le Monde*, *Le Courrier International*, *The Washington Times*, *Il Giornale*. Author of 16 cartoon and 4 photo collections, Stavro has participated in many international cartoon exhibitions. He received several prizes including the *Cartoon Trophy* at the 4<sup>th</sup> Arab Media Festival in 2006 and the *Prize of Excellence of the Arab Top Award* for his website [www.stavrotoons.com](http://www.stavrotoons.com).

<sup>9</sup> They are the American actress Angelina Jolie during her visit to the Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon (Feb 15, 2014), the Lebanese singer Aline Lahoud during her participation in *The Voice* program in France (Jan 27, 2014), the Lebanese actress Amalia Abi Saleh, who died on January 17, 2014 (Jan 18, 2014) and the wife of a deceased journalist accused of murdering her husband (July 20, 2013).

## 1. ARMAND HOMSI'S WOMEN IN AN-NAHAR

Homsı's representations in the weekly heading of the conservative daily paper are not always related to current events. Knowledge of the Lebanese socio-cultural context seems to us necessary for the interpretation of these drawings. In fact, the phenomenon of the singers/artists who use their beauty to ensure their success occupies the quasi-totality of the cartoonist's drawings. Those are Oriental Lebanese singers brought into the Arab media attention thanks to investments coming from Gulf states. They are stars

*whom we download from the Internet not for the sake of the music but rather for the sake of their reconstructed faces through plastic surgery. Behind their frivolity those singers are so popular that they have acquired a power rarely equaled by women in the history of Muslim countries (Cestor, 2008: 213).*

The cases of Lebanese stars forbidden from performing in certain Arab countries have multiplied since around 10 years under the pretext of the "struggle against the degraded art" or against 'the moral pollution'.<sup>10</sup>

Like some other professionals, Homsi criticizes the degrading of the level of the song, the music and the lyrics. However, he only stigmatizes the female singer in all this industry (a theme tackled in 14 of his 16 cartoons). The motifs calling into question the esthetic dimension and the superficiality of the singers' work follow and complete one another: the clothing style, the plastic surgery, musical knowledge, the platitude of the lyrics and the nudity in the video clips.

### *Homsı's Singer and the Zipper*

The drawing published on August 30, 2013 (Fig.1) is one of four drawings that tackle the question of clothes and nudity. On the figurative level, a zipper occupies the image horizontally (from right to left) with linguistically mentioned scales on a parallel line (it is worth noting that the Arab language is written and read from right to left). The link between the zipper and the scales' axis is visual (their axes are equal and parallel), while the zipper pull is drawn with an arrow (from up to

---

<sup>10</sup> From an interview with the Tunisian Minister of Culture, Mehdi Mabrouk, broadcast on radio *Mosaïque FM*, on February 11, 2012 (<http://archive.mosaïquefm.net/index/a/ActuDetail/Element/18259-Mehdi-Mabrouk--Faudrait-passer-sur-mon-cadavre-pour-que-Nancy-Ajram-%26-Co-participant-au-festival-de-Carthage-.html>). Reported the next day by the press, his statement, refusing the participation of two Lebanese singers at the Festival of Carthage, spark furious reactions, including the one of the Union of Professional Artists in Lebanon.

bottom), which indicates the level of the woman artist/singer according to four levels. These levels thus lay out the narrative level of the image: as the zipper pull – the no conventional role of which is stressed by the intensity of the black colour – moves to the left, the zipper opens and the level increases: “singer”, “professional singer”, “star” and, in the end, the “queen of stars” when, at this stage, the zipper is completely open.

Following a metonymical procedure, the zipper represents the clothes (the skirt or the blouse in the case of the singer) which, lead to a striptease situation. The more the singer “invests” her body, the more she will climb the scales of stardom.

The clothing ingredients of the “Creation of a Star” are reused in a drawing published on February 28, 2014 (Fig. 2). Starting from a three-operand arithmetic addition (bra, panties and stiletto heels) Homsy uses the positioning of those three clothing elements together to create a void in the shape of a star, hinting a human “star”. The creation of this “star” passes henceforth through denuded dresses and stiletto heels (a supremely erotic object), i.e. through a partial nudity, which is more erotic than complete nudity. Another drawing published on December 20, 2013 (Fig. 3) constitutes a gradual transformation (consisting of six scales) of a musical note into a gown hardly covering the body of woman with thick lips and pronounced breasts and buttocks holding a microphone. The title reflects the cartoonist’s ultimate cynicism: “Musical Evolution”.

The female singer’s nudity constitutes the motif of three other Armand Homsy drawings. In the one published on March 28, 2014 and entitled “in the Wings of a Video Clip Shooting” (Fig. 4), the men/women contrast is made clear. On the figurative level and standing in front of a camera and a chair, and whose features and mouth opening reveal nervousness, a man is carrying a notepad holder in one hand and a coat hanger in the other. This coat hanger, which holds a minuscule band, with and intense black colour that attracts the attention, is stretched towards the left part of the image, where a woman’s head appears from behind a draught screen, and who stretches her hand towards the hanger. On the narrative level, the man represents a video clip shooting professional and the woman a female singer. The former assumes that the hanged object is too small that it can only be the “star’s” belt (the speech bubble reads: “Is this your belt?” She answers smiling: “This is my skirt...” This exaggeration – taking a skirt for a belt – reflects what Homsy considers an excessive use of denuded clothes in video clips (in another representation, published in October 25, 2013, he talks about a “nudists club”); the belt, which ‘symbolizes the sacred barrier protecting the vagina’ (Bourdieu, 1998:

31) exhibits, henceforth, the thing it was made to protect. At the same time the cartoonist shows the male professional as stranger to this phenomenon.

### *The Esthetic and the Plastic Arsenal*

The esthetic motif is evoked in three drawings published at distant intervals. In the one dated September 20, 2013 (Fig. 5), we find an “emerging female artist” with the same clothing attributes (short low-necked dress and stiletto heels) and motional attributes (crossed legs, diagonal eyebrows and well cared for hair), which are necessary attributes for the expression of a media femininity. The contrast between the sexes is found at several levels during a solfeggio lesson: on the extreme left sits the artist, on the extreme right the music professor; on the center left a cartoon bubble and on the center right an easel with note figures marked over two spans. The features of Homsı’s man change from one drawing to another. We find him here with a moustache and spectacles.

On the narrative level the music professor asks the singer to read the notes. She only sees them as alphabetical letters, the combination of which forms the word “botox” (noted in the cartoon bubble), while the man is stupefied. This time the cartoonist stigmatizes both the new stars’ resorting to esthetic surgery as well as their lack of musical culture, while obsessing about their physique. He enlarges the gap between the women’s world and that of the male music professional.

### *Flatness of the Lyrics*

In a drawing that appeared September 13, 2013 (Fig. 6), the female singer is presented with easily recognizable clothing, motional and bodily ingredients. The first elements are: short low-necked dress stressing the breasts and letting the legs show, stiletto heels, trivial objects necessary for the expression of a certain femininity (big earrings, bracelets and a ring) and well-cared for hair. The woman’s posture reinforces this impression: crossed legs, the foot flexed forward, the bent wrist slightly supporting the head... As for the bodily elements, Homsı gives his artist equally identifiable attributes related to esthetic surgery: big disproportionate lips (through Botox injections explicitly evoked in the former drawing), a concave and snub nose visibly remade (thanks to Rhinoplasty) and exaggeratedly diagonally lifted eyebrows (as a result of lifting).

At the center of the composition, we find an old man with ugly features sitting uncomfortably on a chair (while the female singer sits on a sofa), his hand resting on a lute. His hand holds a part of his face in a posture of astonishment (reinforced by

the round shape of his eyes and his mouth). And it is here that the linguistic message that occupies the last third of the image on the left comes to set the thematic level. A cartoon bubble attributed the following discourse to the compositor/lyricist (written in dialect): “This is the first time that I am asked to compose a sexy patriotic song.”

For Homsî the exploitation of the sensational, if not the erotic, thus becomes the objective of the new wave female singers, not to mention combining the contradictory elements (the patriotic/sexy syntagm). Once again the *An-Nahar* cartoonist makes his female singers responsible for the degrading of the lyrics. He then evokes the “flatness” of the lyrics in a drawing dated September 27, 2013<sup>11</sup> and in another (published March 7, 2014)<sup>12</sup> he attributes to the female artist (always having the same features) the following discourse addressed to the lyricist: “the level of this song’s lyrics is unacceptable, can we decrease it?”

#### *The Female Journalist with the “Big Mouth”*

In addition to the new stars theme, a drawing by Homsî published on November 29, 2013 stresses the increasingly visible tendency of certain journalists to cut off their guests and to promote their own opinions instead. At the figurative level, the image is divided into two equal parts. On the right we see the shadow of a woman’s head facing a microphone, distinguished by her hair and the shape of her nose. On the left of the drawing, facing her, is the shadow of a man recognizable by manly features sitting in front of an object supposed to be a microphone the grid of which is transformed into a padlock locking his lips. The words “interviewer” and “guest” specify the figurative and respective role of each one of the two protagonists.

Instead of letting her guest, who came specifically to express his opinion, do the talking the presenter shuts him up and monopolizes the dialog. Although this phenomenon is not limited to women, the journalist in Homsî’s drawing is a

<sup>11</sup>Armand Homsî, « Musical Scale », *An-Nahar*, September 27, 2013. URL: <http://newspaper.annahar.com/article/70613-%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1--%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%8A%D9%82%D9%8A> (online edition).

<sup>12</sup>Armand Homsî, (no title), *An-Nahar*, March 7, 2014. URL: <http://newspaper.annahar.com/article/114050-%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B1> (online edition).

woman and the guest is a man, thus perpetuating the stereotype of the woman with the “big mouth”.

## 2. SAAD HAJO’S WOMEN IN AS-SAFIR

The thematic diversity and the plastic and iconic simplicity characterize Saad Hajo’s drawings in *As-Safir*. The cartoonist often gives the priority to linguistic signs. The women’s figure occupies a relatively good place there as well as a diversified role. At the figurative level, although all Hajo’s women have long hair with a fringe, their features and clothing vary from one representation to another (blond or black hair, but never veiled, big or small lips, a dress or trousers, with or without earrings, with flat shoes or stiletto heels). We have classified the 22 drawings according to themes and then analyzed women’s image in them. In many drawings, the cartoonist shows young couples in order to shed the light of the current economical or political situation.

Six drawings represent motifs where women dominate men (the stiletto heel is often used as a reference) against two where men dominate. In addition one drawing refers to violence against men and two denounce the violence against women. Two drawings evoke the burdens of marriage as the responsibility of men; two reproduce social clichés about women, while three others valorize the indispensable role women play in society. Finally, women are shown in three drawing without specific connotations.

### *Feminine Clichés*

The theme of marriage regroups four cartoons, two of which illustrate a dialog involving a couple (frequent motif) during the prenuptial phase. They perpetuate a model, where men are logistically responsible for the marriage. This is the case in the drawing published on September 21, 2013 (Fig. 8), where two faces (profile drawing) occupy the same dimensions and have almost the same features (we can only distinguish between the woman and the man through the length of the hair and the earrings). However, the cartoon bubble on the center of the image relates the following words to the girl: “Start saving money from now for the air ticket to Cyprus where we should conduct a civil marriage.”

This motif is repeated in another drawing that appeared on January 13, 2014<sup>13</sup> (always a face to face close up on a white background but with more clear features) where the cartoon bubble relates a claim to the boy: “I am going to get married in spite of the salary grid.” These two drawings reflect a social reality that makes the man responsible for paying the marriage costs, while also reflecting a precarious economic situation (the civil marriage costs in Cyprus are far lower than the costs for a religious marriage celebrated in Lebanon).

This passive role of women is the center of another drawing by Hajo published in January 18, 2014 and entitled “Marriage” (Fig. 9). The man dominates the woman through a metonymical process, where the hand of the first is placed over the hand of the second (we distinguish between the two hands through the nails). The man’s wedding ring includes a “thumbs-up” (a sign of approbation) while the woman’s includes a “thumbs-down” (a sign of discontent). These two motifs are in fact borrowed from the blue thumb of the “like” in *Facebook*, as the cartoonist draws sometimes from the language of the social networks and new media (in four of the 22 selected cartoons). In sum, men profit from the marriage.

Another cartoon published on September 27, 2013<sup>14</sup> reproduces another cliché along the same line, the symbolic opposition between reason/emotion: “I am looking for emotional stability”, claims the girl. “Frankly I am looking for stability in Australia”, answers the boy. The girl is indifferent to the economic and security situation, which are the masculine interests. A cartoon published on November 21, 2013<sup>15</sup> also reproduces a cliché, which accuses women of being always late. According to the cartoonist the fact of being late is deliberate and intentional: “This the first time I arrive on time, I hope he does not come and notice that I was not late”, says the girl.

### ***Beaten Woman...***

As we have previously stressed many cases of beaten women were highly covered by the media during the period of our study. The drawing of February 7, 2014 (Fig. 10) is the first (among only two) published during this period that stress this current issue theme after the revelation of the death of Manal Assi; A first.

<sup>13</sup> Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, January 13, 2014. URL: <http://assafir.com/Article/333902/Archive> (online edition).

<sup>14</sup> Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, September 27, 2013. URL: <http://assafir.com/Article/322133/Archive> (online edition).

<sup>15</sup> Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, November 21, 2013. URL: <http://assafir.com/Article/327108/Archive> (online edition).

As symbol of masculine virility, Hajo uses the moustache of man (with hard and vicious features) as a murder weapon. In fact it becomes a knife's handle with its blade stabbing a woman (with innocent features) in the back. The impact of the stabbing is stressed through the red spot symbolizing the victim's blood.

*... And On The Other Hand The Femme Fatale*

In a drawing published on November 29, 2013 (Fig. 11), Hajo presents the head of a man holding a sign on which was written: "no to the violence against women". Ironically, it is the man's face that features bruises and injuries (represented by bandages to the head as well as to the index finger pointing to the sentence). The man is thus the woman's victim by insinuation, an inversion of the current issues facts even more manipulating than the publication of this drawing precedes all reference to the violence against women (evoked above).

Beyond the violence, the femme-fatale or the heartbreaker is a recurrent theme with Hajo. A cartoon appearing on May 17, 2013 (Fig. 12) represents a man and a woman at a table. He offers her flowers, while she steps on a heart with her stiletto heels under the table. The stiletto heel returns in another cartoon, which appeared on January 28, 2014 (Fig. 13), establishing the cliché of the femme fatale or the dominating woman, who does not recognize any love: a fetishist icon, her heel hooks four hearts representing the types of love: we can read "first love" and "love at first sight" on two of those hearts.

*The International Women's Day: a Late Hommage?*

More recently, the International Women's Day was the occasion to put forward three cartoons, one of which was published on March 10, 2014 (Fig. 14) showing a family of four members (we must recognize a mother, a father, a boy and a girl) lifting together the banner of women: the engagement in women's favour thus is a matter of a primary patriarchal importance – the family. Another drawing published on March 7, 2014 parodies the Michelangelo's masterpiece *the Creation of Adam*. Entitled "with Michael's permission" (Fig. 15) God presents a woman a red flower, while looking at the man, who is stunned and alone (at the extreme left of the image), stretching his hand in vain. The cartoonist seems to repair a religiously anchored misogyny.

### 3. STAVRO JABRA'S WOMEN IN AL-BALAD

Women in Stavro Jabra's work in *Al-Balad* are almost the same in all their representations and all this through the clothing, bodily and gestural codes. They incarnate the "playboy" woman in almost all 43 cartoons. One of the often repeated motifs in the photograph-cartoonist's drawings is a dialog between two girls: "Al-Balad's Daughter" and "Al-Balad's Sister" (al-balad meaning "the country"). These two persons appear in 28 cartoons where they comment about the current issues. We find their features in 10 other cartoons where only one woman appears as well as in two cartoons where several women appear, always dealing with current issues. Finally, four other drawings constitute cases of allegoric personification, in which the following appear in women features: the government (two cases), the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (one case) and mutiny (one case). These two latter cases are unique among the 43 drawings where Stavro's sexy women are absent.

#### *"The Country's Daughter" And "The Country's Sister": An Imposing Model*

Remaining with the two main persons mentioned above, we stress in the beginning that the term "the country sister" rhymes with a common insult in the language dialect ("The pussy of the sister of..."). This insult is a contracted form where the impact is pacified ("the sister of..."). Stavro's choice of this name ("the al-Balad's sister" or "the country's sister") is thus polysemous:

-it has a link to the daily's name (*Al-Balad*);

-it also has a link to the second person, whose name is "the country's daughter" which means the one who takes charge;

-it constitutes an insult to the country's situation. This meaning is explicit for example in the cartoon published on January 31, 2014<sup>16</sup> where the "country's daughter" says to the "country's sister": "In this crisis many people will be insulting you." To which she answers: "How does this concern me!?", while a third person, named "the country's son", says in anger: "Your sister and the country's sister...".

<sup>16</sup> Stavro Jabra, "Your sister and the country's sister", *Al-Balad*, January 31, 2014. URL: <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=777&pageid=11814> (online edition).

*Women as Erotic Objects*

With their names written over the sensual parts of their bodies (the breasts and the buttocks), the two girls comment about the current issues with frequent sexual connotations. Stavro produces a model of the beautiful and sexy girl, even erotic girl. This model is represented by clothing attributes (the low-necked dresses showing the belly and the half-naked breasts, transparent blouses, micro-skirts, very short gowns and shorts, low-rise pants; sometimes unbuttoned, stiletto heels), behavioural (swaying hips, legs wide apart, but that rest on the belt, movement producing flexibility effects) and bodily (oval face, small nose, big eyes, long hair, slender body but with imposing breasts and big buttocks, thick lips, diagonal eyebrows). Some of these features are sometimes exaggerated in relation to the tackled theme.

*Current Issues Described With Sexual Connotations*

In a drawing published on September 17, 2013,<sup>17</sup> the cartoonist refers to the British Foreign Secretary William Hague's declaration concerning the eventual convening of Geneva 2 (an international conference about the Syrian crisis). "He was relaxed in the first one.... and it didn't work... can he do a second!?", ask the two persons alluding to the masculine sexual organ. This is equally the case of another cartoon, which appeared on October 9, 2013 (Fig. 16), evoking the blocked issues on the national level, which are managed by a resigned government given the task to deal with the urgent issues. « Everything in this country stands on dealing with current issues», says the "country's daughter" in a Lebanese dialect (where the word stands in Arabic also means "erected"). « Weird, we are not feeling it» answers "the country's sister". The sexual connotations are produced in another drawing that appeared on December 9, 2013 (Fig. 17) where a wide view shows all their seductive features. The two girls comment about the imminent arrival of the storm "Alexa" to Lebanon: - "Look how much the sea is agitated (excited) today." – "Do you think it is so because of us or because of Alexa!!!"

On January 29, 2014<sup>18</sup> Stavro also alludes to the erection. Entitled "The parliamentary session is postponed until March 4 for the lack of quorum [nisâb in

<sup>17</sup> Stavro Jabra, "Hague: Our aim is to convene Geneva 2 to attain a solution", *Al-Balad*, September 17, 2013. URL: <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=573&pageid=11814> (online edition).

<sup>18</sup> Stavro Jabra, "The parliamentary session is postponed until March 4 for the lack of quorum", *Al-Balad*, January 29, 2014, URL:

Arabic]”, the “country’s sister” says to her friend: “Do you think if we go down to the parliament they will get the quorum?!” The term “nisâb” refers to “intisâb” which means “erection” (two paronyms words).

Stavro goes even as far as insinuating to his two persons the role of prostitutes like in the drawing published on November 29, 2013 (Fig. 18). Always commenting on the current issues – considering that the increase in the prices of travelling tickets is the reason for people not coming to Lebanon, the “country’s sister” tells her companion: “It is not only the prices but we can bring them here with the best of prices”. The erotic arsenal formerly evoked is well shown to stress this role that is also implicitly evoked in a drawing published on March 20, 2014<sup>19</sup>: -“Every time they want to protest... they cut (barricade) the roads!!”, says the first. -“We are also cut (out of work) ... and our situation is not unblocked”, answers the second.

When it does not contain sexual connotations, the dialog can have cynical political commentaries in the form of word play. This is for example the case of a cartoon published on November 8, 2013<sup>20</sup> and entitled “Sleiman sets a plan to eliminate the worst forms of child Labour”, where the two girls say: “Before eliminating child labour, they should fight the labour of grownups!!”. In a homonymous procedure the term “labour” equally means the fact of being a collaborator, Stavro produces the widespread idea that consists of accusing the political class of being the pawns of foreign powers.

***The Missile-Woman, the Meat-Woman...***

Other cartoons emphasize the erotic features like the one published on July 20, 2013 (Fig. 19) relating to the decision of withdrawing the interior security forces elements responsible for the protection of the Lebanese deputies. While a furious and trembling man representing a political figure cries in the presence of the members of the protection force, we find behind him a typical Stavro girl with giant breasts protecting the man’s back.

---

<http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=772&pageid=11814> (online edition).

<sup>19</sup> Stavro Jabra, “Barricading the roads”, *Al-Balad*, March 20, 2014, URL: <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=851&pageid=11814> (online edition).

<sup>20</sup> Stavro Jabra, “Sleiman sets a plan to eliminate the worst forms of child labour”, *Al-Balad*, November 8, 2013, URL: <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=656&pageid=11814> (online edition).

These giant breasts are equally exploited in a coloured drawing published on September 5, 2013,<sup>21</sup> after the decision by Moscow to send a cruise missile launcher to the East Mediterranean. Entitled “Missile training in the Eastern Mediterranean”, Stavro compares it to a woman by representing three girls, with giant breasts, swimming in the water. He also associates the girl’s body to meat in another cartoon published on October 31, 2013 (Fig. 20). Entitled “The scandal of the aviary meat”, two boys try to pick up a typical Stavro’s girl: «Wow... she has tasty meat», says the first. The second replies: “Make sure it is not rotten”.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

“Can I appear in a caricature without being asked why the caricaturist drew a girl and not a boy?”, a girl asks herself in a drawing by Saad Hajo published on September 23, 2013.<sup>22</sup> Is the cartoonist criticizing himself? Is he criticizing the masculine art? Is he justifying himself? Whatever the answer, we have to acknowledge that the Lebanese cartoonists give little importance to the feminine figure. At the same time the struggles conducted by the feminist movements during the studied period are almost absent in the cartoonists work, who seem to me led by the stereotypes that they reproduce, a rear-guard fight. ‘The fact of being treated materially as an object also means that you are in the mental domain considered an object’, wrote Colette Guillaumin (1992: 49).

Ignored by Nabil Abou Hamad in *Al-Mustaqbal*, women are the object of a categorization activity in Armand Homsy’s work in *an-Nahar*. He increases the similitude between the feminine representations (contrary to masculine representations) and, consequently, creates rivalries between two gendered worlds. Sending an unflattering image of women, Homsy denounces a world of entertainment that he exclusively reproduces. ‘The reason for the spectacle in because modern man is very much a spectator’, said Guy Debord (1967 & 1992: 192). Under the pretext of denouncing a functional aesthetics and eroticism, the *An-Nahar* cartoonist promotes a feminine model (through objects/signs) as reference to femininity and youth; a model where the women’s body is a fetish, a capital ‘deliberately invested’ (Baudrillard, 1970: 201). This model is largely reproduced, with the exclusion of all others, by Stavro Jabra in *Al-Balad* where he encloses

<sup>21</sup> Stavro Jabra, “Missile training in the Eastern Mediterranean”, *Al-Balad*, Septembre 5, 2013, URL: <http://www.albaladonline.com/ar/StavroLegendDetails.aspx?ID=553&pageid=11814> (online edition).

<sup>22</sup> Saad Hajo, “With my sincere cartoon”, *As-Safir*, September 23, 2013. URL: <http://assafir.com/Article/321687/Archive> (online edition).

women in a bodily status promoting a model of identification for the beautiful and sexy girl, an erotic and masculine object par excellence. Outside this representation women have no presence in *Al-Balad* drawings.

On the other hand and despite their thematic diversity, which sometimes reflects the image of an emancipated woman who takes her own decisions and who is equal to her companion, Saad Hajo's drawings suffer from feminine clichés and stereotypes. Women constitute in many cases foils for men, who are the sole responsible for the production. It is however unfair to ignore that 20 out of Hajo's 22 cartoons were published in the second half of our period of observation, a flow that will be correlated to the effervescence of a Lebanese feminist current.

List of Cartons

Fig. 1, Armand Homsy, "The Scale of the Art", *An-Nahar*, August 30, 2013 (online edition).

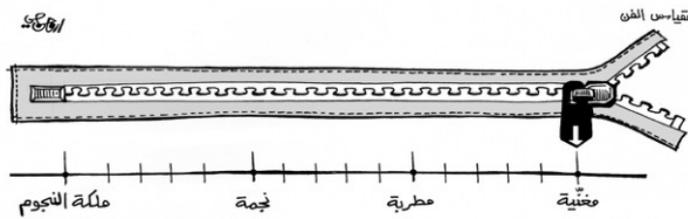


Fig. 2, Armand Homsy, "Creation of a Star", *An-Nahar*, February 28, 2014 (online edition).

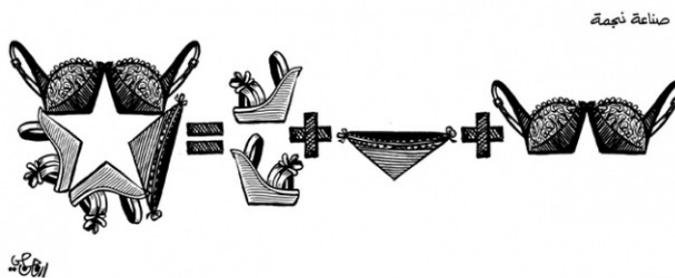


Fig. 3, Armand Homsy, "Musical Evolution", *An-Nahar*, December 20, 2013 (online edition).

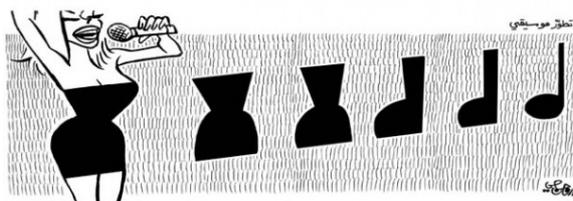


Fig. 4, Armand Homs, “In the Wings of a Video Clip Shooting”, *An-Nahar*, March 28, 2014 (online edition).



Fig. 5, Armand Homs, “Botox”, *An-Nahar*, September 20, 2013 (online edition).

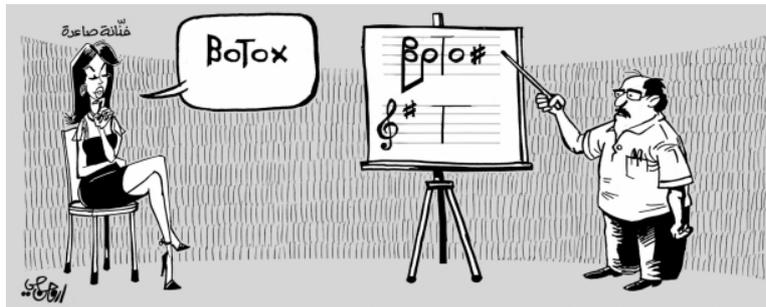


Fig. 6, Armand Homs, (no title), *An-Nahar*, September 13, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 7, Armand Homsy, “The Interviewer and the Guest”, *An-Nahar*, November 29, 2013 (online edition).

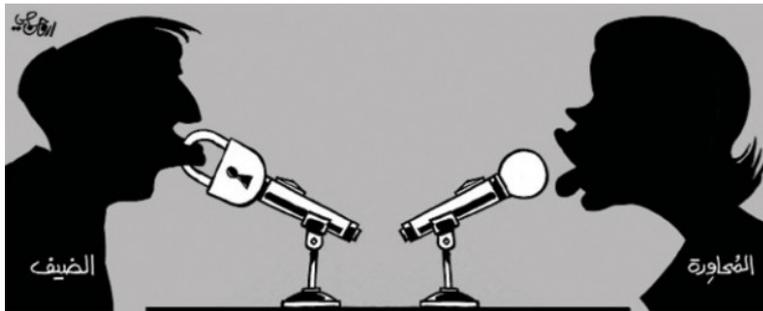


Fig. 8, Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon: It is more Guaranteed”, *As-Safir*, September 21, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 9, Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon: Marriage”, *As-Safir*, January 18, 2014 (online edition).



Fig. 10, Saad Hajo, “Regardless of”, *As-Safir Cultural*, February 7, 2014 (online edition).



Fig. 11, Saad Hajo, “Regardless of: No to the violence against women”, *As-Safir Cultural*, November 29, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 12, Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, May 17, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 13, Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, January 28, 2014 (online edition).



Fig. 14, Saad Hajo, “With my Sincere Cartoon”, *As-Safir*, March 10, 2014 (online edition).



Fig. 15, Saad Hajo, “With Michael’s Permission”, *As-Safir*, March 7, 2014 (online edition).

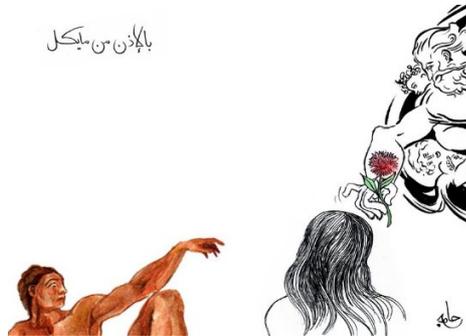


Fig. 16, Stavro Jabra, “Hung State Files”, *Al-Balad*, October 9, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 17, Stavro Jabra, “The storm Alexa arrives tomorrow”, *Al-Balad*, December 9, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 18, Stavro Jabra, “Increase in the prices of travel tickets”, *Al-Balad*, November 29, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 19, Stavro Jabra, « Withdrawing the interior security forces elements responsible for the protection of politicians», *Al-Balad*, July 20, 2013 (online edition).



Fig. 20, Stavro Jabra, “The scandal of the aviary meat”, *Al-Balad*, October 31, 2013 (online edition).



**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

BAUDRILLARD, Jean (1970), *La société de consommation*, Paris : Éditions Denoël.

BERENI, Laure ; CHAUVIN, Sébastien ; JAUNAIT, Alexandre ; REVILLARD, Anne (2012), *Introduction aux études sur le genre*, Bruxelles : De Boeck Université.

BOURDIEU, Pierre (1998), *La domination masculine*, Paris : Éditions du Seuil.

CESTOR, Elisabeth (2008), "L'art de faire entendre son désir au Liban", *La pensée de midi*, n° 24-25, pp. 213-216.

DEBORD, Guy (1967 & 1992), *La Société du Spectacle*, Paris : Gallimard.

EVERAERT-DESMEDT, Nicole (2007), *Sémiotique du récit*, Bruxelles : De Boeck Université.

GERVEREAU, Laurent (2004), *Voir, comprendre, analyser les images*, Paris : La Découverte.

GUILLAUMIN, Colette (1992), *Sexe, race et pratique du pouvoir : l'idée de nature*, Paris : Côté-femmes.