

Contemporary Arab Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Resistance

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I am currently working on my book manuscript entitled *Contemporary Arab Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Resistance*. The book is under contract with Edinburgh University Press and is forthcoming in their Edinburgh Studies in Modern Arabic Literature series, edited by Rasheed El-Enany. My book project falls directly into the interests of Moving Biography Summer School particularly in the way it investigates issues relevant to the autobiographical genre and the role and implications of life writings in critically engaging with, reflecting on, and rethinking key socio-political and cultural contexts that shape their enunciation.

My project interrogates the relationship between revolutionary movements and experimental life writing forms by contemporary Arab women. In the context of twenty-first century Arab uprisings, women invoke the complexity of their experiences as citizens, revolutionaries, women, and writers through a range of narrative strategies. Autobiographical discourses that emerge as part of national revolutionary struggles make audible Arab women's voices and experiences, foregrounding women as active social and political agents and redefining conventions of self-representation and narration. Drawing on autobiographical and postcolonial theories, *Contemporary Arab Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Resistance* examines twenty-first-century Arab women's life writing as sites for the articulation of resistance to interlocking power structures and sociocultural and representational norms. Looking comparatively at subgenres of memoir, auto-portrait, testimony, diary, and digital life writing across different linguistic (Arabophone, Anglophone, and Francophone) and national contexts (including Egypt, Algeria, Syria, Palestine, Tunisia), this book explores *why* resistance is important when writing about the self for Arab women and *how* it is articulated through experimental formal and thematic approaches to the autobiographical genre.

Modern and contemporary Arab autobiography has flourished in contexts of, diverse yet overlapping, colonial and anticolonial struggles, and thus situates its subject at a particular historical juncture. In *Contemporary Arab Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Resistance*, I am particularly interested in the political implications of genre, as it is stressed by postcolonial and feminist studies. I draw from postcolonial studies and feminist autobiographical theory in order to examine ways in which contemporary Arab women's life writings situate their subjects in relation to gendered, social, historical, and political axes of power. I explore how these subjects write themselves out of the dominant discourse of genre criticism which is a source of patriarchal, racial, and colonial authority. The postcolonial, feminist lens of analysis deployed in this book enables us to analyse cultural manifestations of oppositional forces in Arab women's life writing discourses which reflect the complexity of historical processes of imperialism and colonialism and their enduring effects on identity formation and multiple neocolonial struggles.

Short Biography: Hiyem Cheurfa has PhD in English from Lancaster University and is an Associate Fellow of the UK Higher Education Academy. She specialises in auto/biographical literature, with a focus on women's writings from the Middle East and North Africa. She has published her research in leading peer-reviewed international academic journals, including *Comedy Studies* (10:2, 2019), *A/B: Auto/Biography Studies* (35:2, 2020), and *Biography* (44:3, 2021). Her first monograph *Contemporary Arab Women's Life Writing and the Politics of Resistance* is forthcoming with Edinburgh University Press. She is currently an associate lecturer of postcolonial literature and is based in Algeria.