

For activists and academics—and everyone in between

Who said this?

“It was not easy through my project PROTA (The Project of Translation from Arabic) to penetrate a world forgetful of its cultural responsibility towards others”

Salma Khadra Jayyusi



Opportunities

Call for Papers

The editorial committee of *Al-Raida* invites submissions to a non-thematic, double-blind, peer reviewed issue.

For more information kindly contact al-raida: al-raida@lau.edu.lb

Call for Papers

Feminist Translation Studies: Local and Transnational Perspectives

Deadline for submitting proposals: November 30, 2013.

For full details you can click on the following link:

[http://www.academia.edu/4067988/Feminist Translation Studies Local and Transnational Perspectives](http://www.academia.edu/4067988/Feminist_Translation_Studies_Local_and_Transnational_Perspectives)

Call for Abstracts

45th Annual Convention for the Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA)
April 3-6, 2014 / Pennsylvania
Abstract Deadline: September 30, 2013

For more information you can click on the following link:

<http://nemla.org/convention/2014/cfp.html>



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Tunisian Women Write the Revolution: From Discontent to Hope

Douja Mamelouk*

Before the Tunisian Revolution ignited on 17 December 2010, women writers had not produced politically charged texts that explicitly discussed political matters, out of fear of censorship. However, after the toppling of dictator Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali following his rule of twenty-three years¹, women began documenting and writing the 2011 Revolution. This article investigates the reaction of writers such as Fethia Hechmi², Messaouda Boubakr³ and Amel Mokhtar⁴ to the aftermath of the Tunisian Revolution, which has yet to be examined by scholars. Although not a literature of resistance (it could develop into one depending upon the local political environment), it is a literature rooted in reality and linked to daily politics. In my interviews with authors, questions pertained to pre-Revolutionary and post-Revolutionary writing practices and

the influence and involvement of the writers in political life. The interviewed authors contend that they must document the Revolution in their texts where reality and fiction intertwine. The uniqueness of these texts stems from the fact that progressive Tunisian women writers offer various perspectives on the Revolution as they expose the issues that face Tunisian society in a post-Revolutionary era.

I have interviewed ten women novelists and short story writers for approximately two hours each. Eight women out of the ten wept when describing the effect of the current political events in Tunisia on them and their disappointment with the new government that has failed to offer security and economic stability to its citizens (in six months, there have been two political assassinations), while the National Constituent Assembly has yet

to present Tunisians with a completed draft of the constitution. Furthermore, the interviewees agreed that they no longer feel safe living in Tunisia and are haunted by an uncertain future. The intensity of these women's frustrations with their new reality surfaced when I asked questions such as: "What do you think of the current political scene?" or "How do you foresee the future of Tunisia?" Another query that provoked an emotional response was: "Did the Tunisian Revolution incite nationalistic and patriotic sentiments in you?" All the writers agreed that the unexpected Revolution of January 2011 inflamed their sense of patriotism. Amel Mokhtar declares, "I felt so happy and proud. Tunisia received international recognition for toppling the dictator Ben Ali who had appeared immortal to us." (Interview July 23, 2013).

Tunisian Women Write the Revolution: From Discontent to Hope

On July 25, 2013, Tunisians celebrated Republic Day, which has been commemorated every year since Tunisia's independence in 1956. Under Bourguiba and Ben Ali, such national holidays were excessively observed, with celebrations and events throughout the republic. However, for the past two years, and since the rule of the *Troika* (the alliance of *Ennahda*, *Ettakattol* and the Republican Congress Party), Tunisian poet and novelist Fethia Hechmi maintains that we no longer see Tunisian flags raised on the streets to celebrate national holidays, which had solidified her sense of national belonging. She feels that the new government attempts to erase national memory. Worse yet, on July 25, 2013 Tunisians were faced with the second political assassination in their country. A National Constituent Assembly (NCA) deputy, Mohamed Brahmi, was shot in his car in front of his house at 12:10pm according to Tunisian radio⁵. Like everyone else in Tunisia, women authors were affected by the second political assassination within less than six months. Suddenly, violence shifted from being a random occurrence to becoming part of the post-Revolutionary reality.

Fethia Hechmi revealed that she remains hopeful because without hope there is no life, although she is unable to predict what the future will offer to herself, her family and the rest of the nation. After the assassination of Mohamed Brahmi, Hechmi and her daughter, who is an artist, headed to the National Constituent Assembly to protest. I interviewed her on the morning of July 29, 2013, and her eyes were still swollen from the tear gas that police shot at them despite their peaceful assembly. She told me that she and her daughter were surprised to see their skins turn pink from the effect of the toxic gas. She confessed that at times she joins protests in secret from her family, because she is diabetic and family members worry about her health.

Tunisian novelist and short story writer Amel Mokhtar believes that the Revolution of 2011 should persist in the political space of post-Revolutionary Tunisia as well as in written words.

Having started a novel before the Revolution, she found herself unable to write between 17 December 2010 and 14 January 2011. All she could do was observe the protests in the streets of Tunisia and glue herself to the *Al-jazeera* television channel. In my interview with her on 3 July 2013 she explained that in her latest novel *dukhan al-qasr* (*The Palace Smoke*, 2013) she altered her writing style to reflect the revolutionary atmosphere. The characters of her novel call for a sit-in and threaten to 'fire' her from her job as a writer. She quickly resumes writing and returns to her plot in a post-Revolutionary Tunisia where the characters are divided according to their various party allegiances just as the Tunisian people are divided between the religious and the secular. This is a division that she contends has become the reality of the so-called democratic Tunisia. Another innovation that Mokhtar brings to her novel is her encompassing the pre-Revolution along with the post-Revolution eras. The author interrupts the narrative line with personal accounts of the revolution. In fact three out of the twenty-seven chapters of the novel are Mokhtar's record of a crucial period in Tunisia's history.

Messaouda Boubakr informed me that the title of her latest collection of stories, *adhahki* (*I Continue Narrating*, 2013), was her response as a writer to a young man who approached her while protesting in front of the National Constituent Assembly. She maintains that he: "told me to shut up and go home to my kitchen where I belonged". In my interview with her on 3 July 2013, she declared that her latest collection is a response to anyone who attempts to silence her. She says that only death can silence her and it appears that she is not the only one. All Tunisian women novelists have vowed to speak up, to break the silence and to continue the Revolution until they establish a democracy that satisfies them.

The interviews I have conducted this summer reveal the unanimous stance that Tunisian women authors take in confronting their discontent with the current political developments in their once peaceful country. The lack of security, the fear and unpredictability of the future along with mistrust of the

current government are a few elements that have inflamed these women's pens. The Revolution of January 2011 was a historical and joyful moment in their lives. Yet, the happy feelings transformed into frustration and disenchantment. The possibility of Tunisia becoming a true democracy where women are equal to men not only in the Tunisian constitution but also in everyday life, is a question that women authors cannot answer today, although they remain hopeful that a democratic civil society will prevail eventually.

*Dr. Douja Mamelouk is Assistant Professor of Arabic and French at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville.

¹ In his article *Tunisia: the Fall of the West's Little Dictator*, Esam Al-Amin says: "What took 54 weeks to accomplish in Iran was achieved in Tunisia in less than four. The regime of President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali represented in the eyes of his people not only the features of a suffocating dictatorship, but also the characteristics of a mafia-controlled society riddled with massive corruption and human rights abuses." (58: 2012) excerpt from Sokari Ekine and Firoze Manji's *African Awakening: The Emerging Revolutions*. Fahamu Cape Town, Dakar, Nairobi and Oxford, 2012.

² Fethia Hechmi is a poet, short story writer and novelist. She published her first collection of poems entitled *al-uqhuwan al-maslub ala al-shifah* in 2002, *hafiya al-ruh* (novel) in 2002, *minnah mawwal* in 2007, *mariam tasqut min yad Allah* in 2009 and *al-shaytan ya'ud min al-manfa* in 2012. She can be found on her facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/fathia.hechmi.1.5?fbref=ts>

³ Messaouda Boubakr is a Tunisian novelist and short story writer. She became a political activist in civil society organizations after the Tunisian Revolution. She has published a collection of short stories *ta'm al-ananas* in 1994, her novels *laylat al-ghiyab* in 1997, *Trushqana* in 1999, *wada'an Hammurabi* in 2002, *juman wa 'anbar* in 2007, *al-alif wa al-nun* in 2009 and *adhahki* in 2013. One may find some of her writings on her facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/messaouda.benbouaker?fbref=ts>

⁴ Amel Mokhtar is a Tunisian novelist, short story writer and a journalist in the Tunisian newspaper *al-sahafa*. She publishes parts of her works and short articles on her facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/AmelMokhtarEcrivaine>

⁵ <http://www.mosaiquefm.net/fr/index/a/Actu-Detail/Element/23956-qui-etait-mohamed-brahmi>

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Artwork by Monira Al Qadiri



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Transgressing the Gulf: Dissidence, Resistance and Potentiality in the GCC States

For more information contact:
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NGO Highlight

KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation

KAFA (enough) Violence & Exploitation is a Lebanese non-profit, non-political, non-confessional civil society organization committed to the achievement of gender-equality and non-discrimination, and the advancement of the human rights of women and children.

To know more about **KAFA** you can click on the link below

[KAFA \(enough\) Violence & Exploitation](#)

Call for Papers

Children & Globalization: Issues, Policies and Initiatives

The 10th Joint Area Centers Symposium, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, April 10-12, 2014.

Keynote Speaker: David Oswell, Department of Sociology, University of London "*After Our Children's Image: Human Rights, Capital and the Common*".

Deadline for submitting proposals: September 23, 2013.

For more information click on the following link:

<http://shcyhome.org/2013/08/children-and-globalization-issues-policies-and-initiatives/>

Comments of the Lebanese National Coalition on the Draft Law against Domestic Violence

After three years of continuous pressure and lobbying by activists, the parliamentary subcommittee studying the draft law against domestic violence finally submitted its version to the parliamentary joint committee. Although changes have been introduced to the draft law, activists consider it a positive achievement. Comments of the Lebanese National Coalition for Legislating the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence on the changes introduced by the parliamentary subcommittee can be found below:

The Bill was amended to include all family members, and is no longer specific to women.

Upon its amendment in the subcommittee, the Bill is now titled as follows:

“The Law on the Protection of **Women** and Other Family Members from Domestic Violence”

The word “women” in the title is misleading, if anything, as it gives people the impression that the Committee has fulfilled its duty to protect women. But since women’s protection is limited to the title and does not apply to the content, it jeopardizes any efficient protection of women.

We stick to the title and the content of the Bill namely **“the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence”**, since the protection mechanisms provided for in the text have resulted from a study that establishes the needs of women and the necessity to remove the obstacles they encounter, should they decide to lodge complaints. **We suggest as well that the section on penalties be referred to the Penal Code as established in the main Bill, especially that the Penal Code is of a general nature. In fact, should any person become the victim of a punishable crime, he/she shall be entitled to lodge a complaint as provided for in the Penal Code.**

Amending Article 3-a Paragraph 4-5 on forcing a wife into sexual intercourse as follows:

4-a

Whoever shall, with the purpose of claiming his/her marital right to intercourse, or because of the same, intentionally beat his spouse or harm the same, is punished pursuant to Articles 554-559 of the Penal Code.

The repeated beating and harm may result in the imposition of a more severe sanction pursuant to Article 257 of the Penal Code.

The plaintiff’s withdrawal shall suspend the civil party’s petition in the cases subject to Articles 554 and 555 of the Penal Code.

The provisions governing a relapse or a repeated offense shall remain enforced, provided the conditions relevant thereto are found.

4-b

Whoever shall, with the purpose of claiming his/her marital right to intercourse, or because of the same, threaten his spouse, is punished pursuant to Articles 573-578 of the Penal Code.

The repeated threat may result in the imposition of a more severe sanction pursuant to Article 257 of the Penal Code.

The plaintiff’s withdrawal shall suspend the civil party’s petition in the cases subject to Articles 577 and 578 of the Penal Code.

The provisions governing a relapse or a repeated offense shall remain enforced, provided the conditions relevant thereto are found.

The aforementioned text is unnecessary since the Penal Code criminalizes such beating and harming under any circumstances. Pursuant to the enforced Penal Code, a woman having endured hurting or beating during sexual intercourse with the spouse or before the same may lodge a relevant complaint as established in Articles 554 and subsequent articles of the Penal Code.

Our request is to criminalize any violation of the body’s sanctity and the act of coercion per se. In fact, criminalizing coercion per se carries a moral value regardless of the means used to force the woman into sexual intercourse. The current text is meant to circumvent the law; either the act of forcing a person into sexual intercourse is forbidden or it is authorized and legalized. In sum, if the act of coercion is a crime per se, then why not criminalize it overtly without attempting to get around the text by criminalizing what is already a crime.

Article 16 (now article 12) stipulates the following:

The protection order is a temporary measure initiated by the relevant legal authority pursuant to the provisions of the present law with regards the cases of domestic violence.

The protection order is aimed at protecting the victim, her children and the descendants living with her and exposed to threat, the social workers, the witnesses or whoever provides the victim with assistance in order to stop the violence or the threat to repeat the same. **Pursuant to the present law, children shall mean those who are in the custody of the victim as established in the applicable personal status laws**".

The provisions on custody apply only if the couple is divorced or separated.

Moreover, relying on the provisions of custody, to involve or not children in protection shall cause discrimination between boys and girls within the family itself. In fact the age of custody varies between boys and girls in the same denomination; in other terms, though they both live with the mother when violence is committed one of them will be included in the protection and the other won't. Moreover, the implementation of the provision on children is discriminatory since the custody age varies between the different religious denominations.

Pursuant to Law number 422 on the Protection of Young Persons and as per the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Children a protected child is a human being below the age of eighteen years. The drafting of Article 12 above goes beyond the said Law and causes confusion in the implementation of the Article which will delay the issuing of the protection related decision. In the event of a conflict between two custody related sentences, the designated judge shall suspend the case until the conflict is solved by the Court of Cassation.

Moreover, the present text excludes children from the scope of protection when custody does not belong to the mother, according to the personal status laws. This means that a child who pays a visit to a noncustodial mother shall not be protected if during his/her stay the mother incurs her husband's violence.

The decision to protect must include all those who are present with the mother or live with her when she incurs violence including children because they will be exposed to violence or will bear witness to the same. Moreover, we cannot go below the limits set by the Law on Young Persons. We know that the law upsets religious courts who try to seize the opportunity and win back what they lost in the Law. *More on page 6*

WHO IS SHE?

Profiling: Salma Khadra Jayyusi



Salma Khadra Jayyusi (born in 1926) is a Palestinian poet, critic, researcher, translator and anthologist. She is the founder and director of the Project of Translation from Arabic (PROTA) which aims to provide translation of Arabic literature into English.

Among her edited works are "The City in the Islamic World" (2008), "The Legacy of Muslim Spain" (1992), and among her anthologies are "Modern Arabic Fiction: An Anthology" (2005), "Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature" (1992). Her PhD thesis "Trends and Movements in Modern Arabic Poetry" published in 1977 was translated into Arabic in 2001.

In her early poetry, Jayyusi emphasized and developed values related to the nation and homeland; and in her feminist poems, she gave special attention to issues of consciousness and freedom. Her textual and analytical study of Nizar Qabbani's poetry (*Al-Adab*, 1957) is considered "an important social documentation" (Sabri Hafiz) and a pioneer work in Arabic feminist criticism.

Salma Khadra Jayyusi's biggest success is in the wider dissemination of Arabic Literature and Culture in the west.

Prepared by Dr. Hosn Abboud

Highlights



Gender and Violence in Islamic Societies: Patriarchy, Islamism and Politics in the Middle East and North Africa

Editor: Zahia Smail Salhi
Publisher: I.B. Tauris
Language: English
Year of Publication: 2013

As a result of the revolutions and movements of resistance that spread across the Middle East and North Africa after 2011, the issue of public violence by the state against both men and women dominated the headlines. But gender-based violence, in both its public and private forms, has for the most part remained unnoticed and is often ignored. The forms that this kind of violence can take are influenced by cultural norms and religious beliefs, as well as economic and political circumstances. Here, Zahia Smail Salhi brings together a wide range of examples of gender-based violence across the Middle East and North Africa, from working environments in Jordan to domestics abuse in Egypt, and from verbal violence against women in Tunisia and Algeria to analysis of violence against underage girl domestics workers in Morocco. The evidence demonstrates that the violence, far from being of universal character across the region, is instead diverse, in both its intensity and in the processes of addressing such violence.

Masadir al-Adab al-Nisa'i fi al-Alam al-Arabi al-Hadith (A Bibliography of Women's Literature in the Modern Arab World)

Author: Joseph Zeidan
Publisher: Al-Mu'assasa al-Arabiya li-al-Dirasat walal-Nashr
Language: Arabic
Year of Publication: 2nd edition, 2013 (Revised and expanded. 2 Vols.)

This edition has entries for 3, 130 Arab Women literary authors from 1800 to 2010. Each entry contains biographical information, a bibliography of the women's writings, and a bibliography of critical works on her in Arabic and Western languages. The work concludes with a list of general sources on the topic in Arabic and Western languages.

Article 17 (Now Article 13) on issuing the protection order stipulates the following:

The protection request shall be filed before the Investigating Magistrate to whom the case is entrusted or before the competent Penal Court. In the last case, it shall be examined in the deliberation room. Under all circumstances, an urgent request may be lodged before the Judge in Chambers. ... In the cases established in both the first and second paragraphs, the decision shall be made within no more than forty eight hours.

The Bill, as submitted by the Cabinet, stipulates that the protection seeker shall lodge a request before the Public Prosecution because it was found that when violence occurs women seek the help of the public prosecution either directly or via police stations as public prosecution is the fastest and least expensive refuge.

Restricting the mandate to the Judge in Chambers or the Investigating Magistrate means that women will incur a financial burden because lodging a complaint directly before the judge is very costly and in both cases women should be assisted by an attorney at law.

Moreover, the Judge in Chambers is not available after working hours or on holidays; therefore violence could exacerbate or lead to homicide before a woman can seek a protection order.

In addition to all of the above, no one can guarantee that the Judge in Chambers will make a decision within 48 hours as established in the law.

For this purpose, we see it more appropriate to keep the Public Prosecutor in charge of issuing protection orders; that is if we are really keen on providing women with efficient and fast protection.

To contribute announcements or articles to this newsletter or to subscribe, please email:
amewsbulletin@gmail.com

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