

### Research Paper-in-a-Box

In an effort to compensate for the gender (and age) imbalance in our reading list, I'd like you to exercise some basic research skills on an emerging Arab woman fiction writer whose work we're not reading. Some of the writers below have already garnered a bit of international attention; others are less well-known. (Some also write in other genres in addition to fiction.) Do a quick-and-dirty web search to get a sense of who most piques your curiosity. Then choose one of the following:

- Basma Abdel Aziz
- Raja (sometimes Raja'a) Alem
- Mai Al-Nakib
- Alexandra Chreiteh
- Yasmine El Rashidi
- Adania Shibli

For Section 1 of your paper, you will compile, collate, select, edit, and synthesize the best biographical and critical information you can find about your writer, distilling that information into a **two- to three-page sketch**. (Double-spaced pages, one-inch margins, half-inch header in the upper right-hand corner with your surname and the page number.) Remember that one of your challenges—albeit on a smaller scale—is what the critic Leo Robson calls “the central problem of any literary biography: how to connect the life and the work.” As you recount the basic facts of your writer's life, then, try to mark the things that might have had some bearing on her having become a *writer*. (Remember, too, insofar as you're able to glean this from what others have written about her, to give some sense of what characterizes or distinguishes her work, topically, thematically, formally, and/or stylistically.)

In constructing this section, you should draw from *at least* three reputable sources, no more than two of which should be openly accessible web sites. (Other potential sources of information: headnotes and “about the author” sections of print books and anthologies, reference books in the HSU library [or available electronically via the library catalog], scholarly journal articles, profiles or reviews in prominent magazines and newspapers, and so on.) In terms of structure and format, however, you might well model your work on web-based resources such as:

- Author pages on *Wikipedia*
- Author pages at [www.enotes.com](http://www.enotes.com)
- Author pages at [literature.britishcouncil.org/writers](http://literature.britishcouncil.org/writers)
- Poet pages at [www.poets.org](http://www.poets.org), The Poetry Foundation, or The Poetry Archive

(That's not an exhaustive list.)

(over)

It should go without saying that simply cutting and pasting other people's words won't do here; neither will close paraphrases employing minor syntactical rearrangements and strategically placed synonyms. You want to selectively transform your raw ingredients and blend them into a fluid narrative of your own, adding commentary, interpretation, and connective tissue as necessary.

Append a "**Sources**" page to this section, with bibliographic citations in standard MLA format. Include *all* of your sources, including those you merely consulted in addition to any and all that you quote or paraphrase or summarize in your sketch. (I'm counting on you to attribute the latter such sources appropriately, using the standard MLA parenthetical method of citation.)

Section 2 will consist of an **annotated bibliography** in 3 (or 4) sections, as follows. Try your best to track down the following:

- at least two good/worthwhile/oft-cited scholarly books, book chapters, or journal articles that discuss this writer and/or her work;
- at least two *reference* works (e.g., a literary dictionary or encyclopedia), print or online, that include entries for this writer; and
- at least two electronic, audio-visual, or "new media" resources (blog posts; podcasts; "digital humanities" projects; films, videos or TV programs, etc.), devoted in part or in full to this writer.

If you have trouble filling your quota in any of the above categories (these are mostly *emerging* writers, after all, and there may not be much, or even any, scholarly work about them yet), then as needed, you may substitute a substantial book review or profile article from a major newspaper, a respected national magazine, or a literary or academic journal. I also understand that there may be some overlap between the annotated bibliography and the "sources" page of your biographical sketch.

For each item in the annotated bibliography, start with a citation in standard MLA format. Then, below each citation, provide an annotation (in the form of a short, indented, left-justified, block paragraph) that consists largely of description, seasoned with a little evaluation. That is: explain what the item is (if that's not evident from the title), what it does (or what it covers or claims or argues) and/or doesn't do, and why it's worth looking at. If you don't know what such an "annotation" might look like, you can find plenty of serviceable explanations and examples floating around out there on the web. (Google "annotated bibliography.")

If you are a prospective teacher, you might also consider including a *fourth* section comprising at least two good *teaching* resources of any type (print, audio-visual, new media), either on the writer him- or herself, or on a literary/cultural/geographical/historical topic germane to one of his/her most works. Your annotations of each of these items should justify your selection, indicating briefly how you might use it in the classroom, why it might be valuable, and what pedagogical goals it would serve.

Total length of this paper: about 8 pages,  $\pm 2$ .

**Due:** Thursday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at the start of class.