Contemporary Iraqi Women’s Fiction of War: A Story of Survival
CWS seminar by Angham Abdulrazaq

In this seminar I examine selected works by contemporary Iraqi women novelists written during three periods of wars, sanctions and occupation. I will take you through these three periods to examine how writers, characters and myself as a researcher share being eye witnesses, victims and survivors who try to preserve the Iraqi history that was falsified by the previous Iraqi government of Saddam Hussein and, later, maimed by the occupiers.

I argue that the unceasing chain of wars portrayed in the open-ended narratives I analyze unsettles mainstream conceptions of women as victims at the home front and men as brave fighters at the battle front. Instead women are constructed as survivors, working to preserve the memory of Iraq and its history, gesturing towards a possible rebirth of Baghdad. The stories the writers provide entail a testimonial account where a record of historical happenings is presented to the reader in fictional form.