



I Am You (Ana Hiya Anti): A Novel on Lesbian Desire in the Middle East

Ilham Mansur, Elham Mansour, Ilhaam Manosaur

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A groundbreaking work which was first published in Beirut in the year 2000 by Riad el-Rayyes, *I Am You (Ana Hiya Anti)* is the only novel in Arabic which deals exclusively with the subject of female homosexuality in the Middle East. This critical translation of Elham Mansour's Lebanese novel provides a rare insight into the prevalent attitudes towards lesbianism in the Arabic mainstream, whilst also casting a light on that which is often hidden from the public gaze—the lives of some gay and bisexual women. This long awaited critical translation provides the English reader access to a novel which deals candidly and positively with one of the most important and taboo issues of contemporary Arab society—(homo)sexuality. The novel is translated and introduced by Samar Habib (author of *Female Homosexuality in the Middle East*) with a foreword by Rebecca Beirne (editor of *Televising Queer Women: A Reader*)—both critical commentaries help the reader situate the novel within a dynamic historical framework and a broader LGBTIQ context. "This book provides a narrative that depicts everyday lives of lesbians in the Middle East, moving beyond seeing victims of homophobic laws, in order to explore their desires and the possibilities for living life outside societal parameters. *I Am You* is unique in that it is the first novel published in Arabic to truly take up lesbianism as an issue, and I would argue, a cause. For indeed, it is a highly political novel, questioning every prevailing societal belief about homosexuality, and contending that homosexuality is a natural phenomenon. As the first text of its kind, *I Am You* will no doubt one day take its place as a lesbian literary classic, but, more importantly, it outs lesbianism in the Arab world (and specifically, in Lebanon), acting as survival literature, and perhaps, opening up a door for further lesbian representation in Arabic culture." - Dr. Rebecca Beirne, Author of *Lesbians in Television and Text after the Millennium* and editor of *Televising Queer Women: A Reader*

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