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# "I Am a New Breed. A Rebel.": Defying Hegemonic Identity Constructions in Contemporary Arab-American Women Writers

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***I* AM A NEW BREED. A REBEL.”: DEFYING HEGEMONIC IDENTITY  
CONSTRUCTIONS IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB-AMERICAN WOMEN WRITERS**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Nancy H. Al-Doghmi

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We hereby approve the dissertation of

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Title: “*I* Am a New Breed. A Rebel.”: Defying Hegemonic Identity Constructions in Contemporary Arab-American Women Writers

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This dissertation presents a critical study of the role that contemporary Arab-American women writers play in creating an insurgent female identity and resisting different modalities of identity construction for the Arab and Arab-American women in their writings. Stepping beyond a binary discourse of “us” and “them,” these writers disclose several dehistoricized formulations which perpetually locate and dislocate Arab women living in the U.S. within multiple forms of hegemonies. Confirming the heterogeneous experiences of Arab-American women who are constantly constructed through the limited lens of homogeneity and monolithism, these authors present a thorough examination of diverse female hybrid subjects amid multiple imbrications of power structures. In an attempt to defy all forms of essentialism, generalization, and categorization, I examine how Diana Abu-Jaber’s *Crescent*, Leila Ahmed’s *A Border Passage*, and Laila Halaby’s *West of the Jordan* are transgressing a normative paradigm already conceptualized in the mainstream western culture for the Arab-American woman hybrid. These authors not only are deconstructing several modalities of female identity for Arab women in the West, but they also are rejecting their homelands’ patriarchal, nationalist, and anti-colonial emancipatory discourses.

Throughout this dissertation, I present a critique of different modalities of cultural identity and hybridity as conceptualized by U.S. multiculturalism, cultural nationalism,