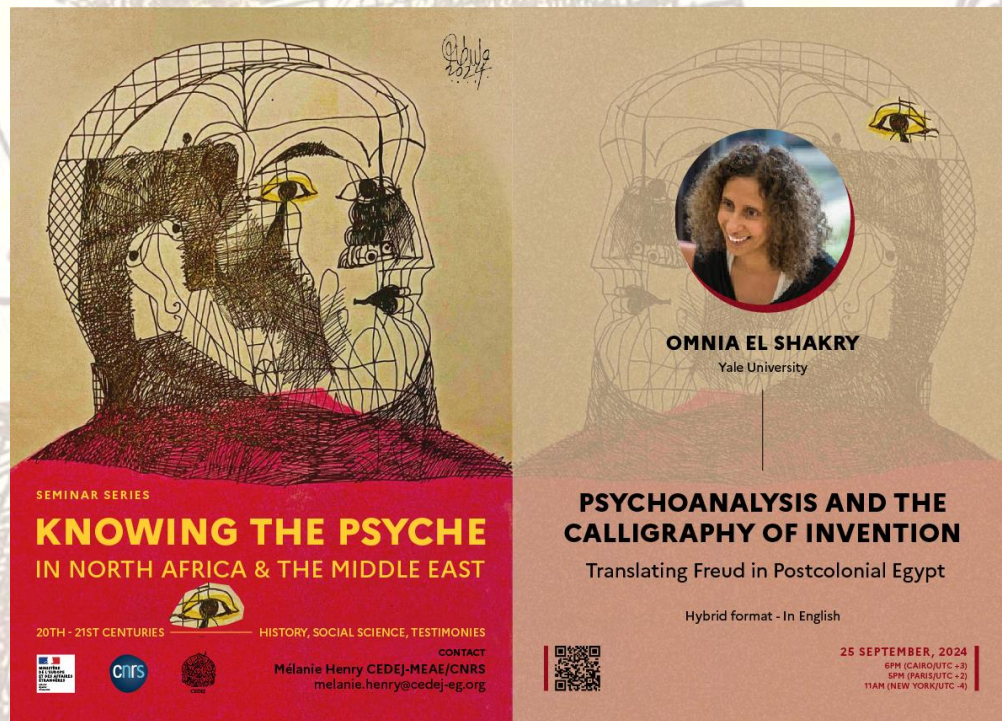




## Psychoanalysis and the Calligraphy of Invention Translating Freud in Postcolonial Egypt

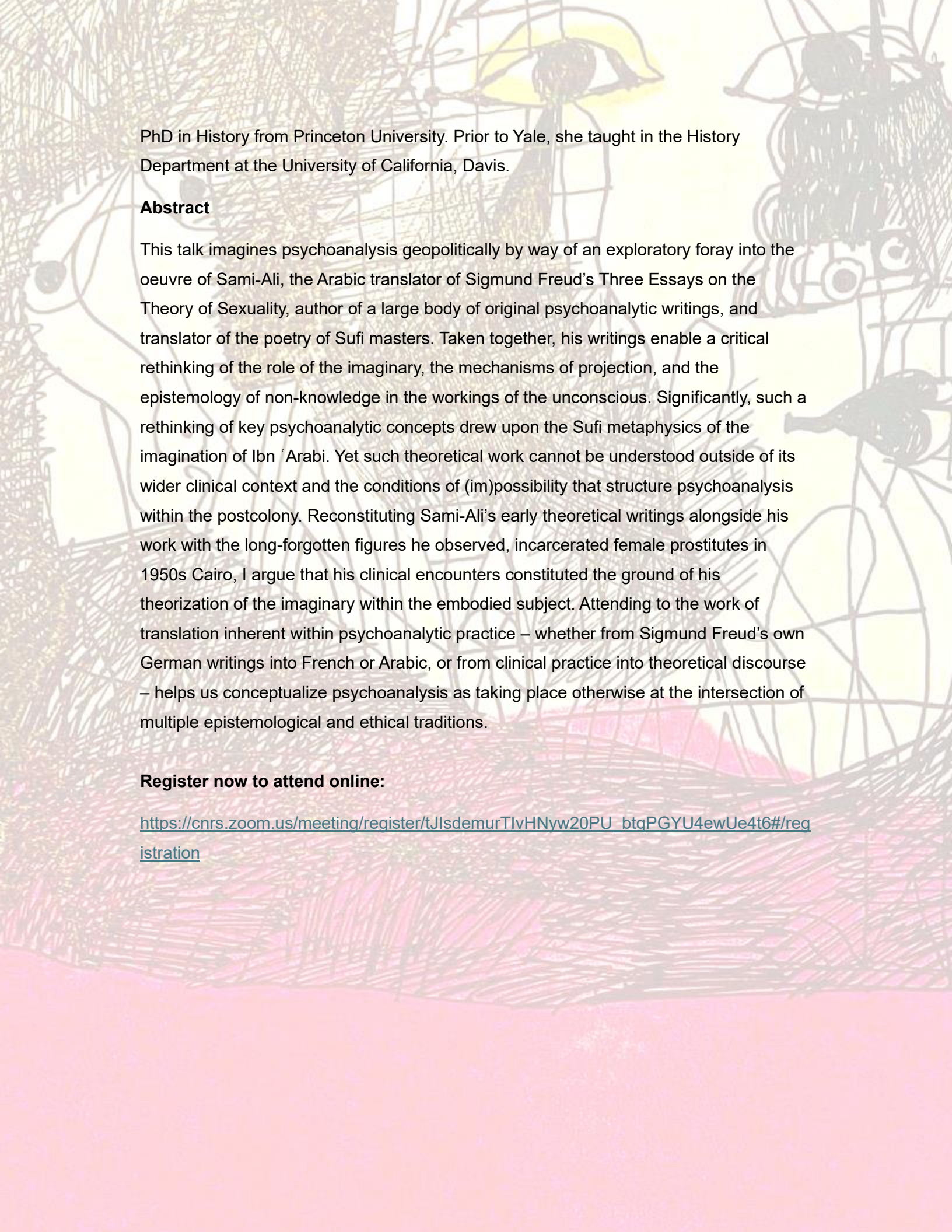


Date: September 25, 2024

Time: 6pm (Cairo/UTC+3) - 5pm (Paris/UTC+2) - 11am (New York/UTC-4)

Speaker:

**Omnia El Shakry** is professor of History at Yale University. She specializes in the intellectual and cultural history of the modern Middle East, with a particular emphasis on the history of the human and religious sciences in modern Egypt. El Shakry is the author of *The Arabic Freud: Psychoanalysis and Islam in Modern Egypt* and *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt*. She is also the editor of *Understanding and Teaching the Modern Middle East and Gender and Sexuality in Islam*. El Shakry received her BA in Psychology from the American University in Cairo, an MA in Near Eastern Studies from New York University, and her

The background features a complex, abstract line drawing in black and grey. At the top center, a bright yellow sun is depicted. Below it, several stylized human figures are shown in various poses, some appearing to be in motion or interacting. The drawing is composed of dense, overlapping lines that create a sense of depth and movement. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century abstract art or perhaps a collage of various sketches.

PhD in History from Princeton University. Prior to Yale, she taught in the History Department at the University of California, Davis.

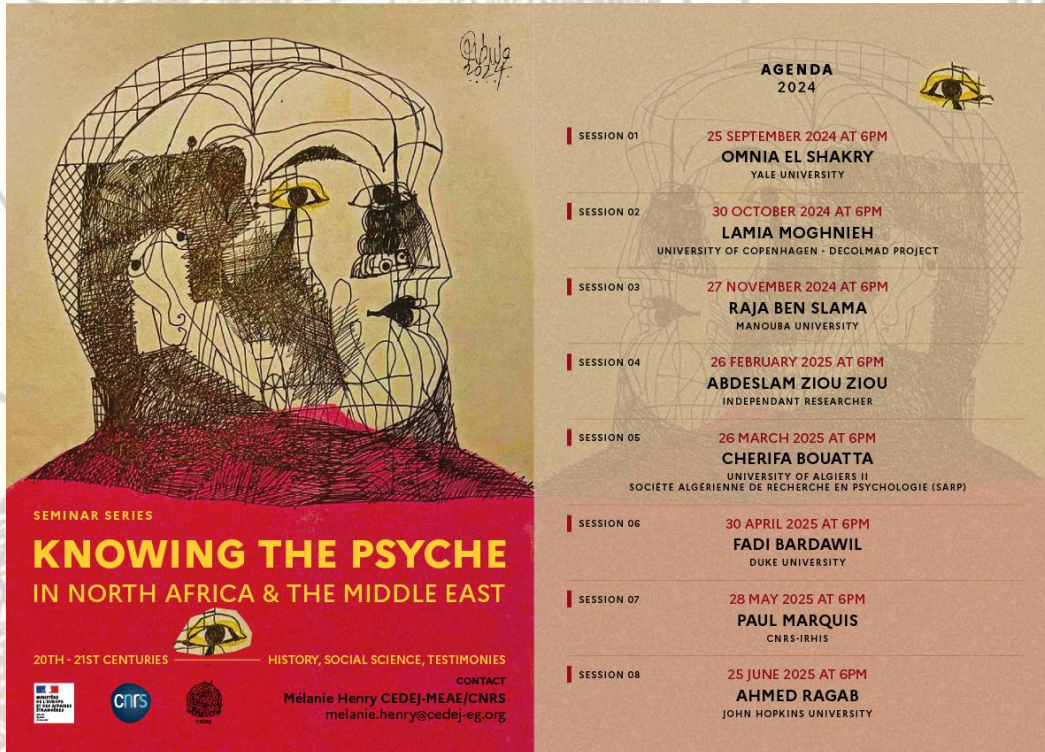
**Abstract**

This talk imagines psychoanalysis geopolitically by way of an exploratory foray into the oeuvre of Sami-Ali, the Arabic translator of Sigmund Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, author of a large body of original psychoanalytic writings, and translator of the poetry of Sufi masters. Taken together, his writings enable a critical rethinking of the role of the imaginary, the mechanisms of projection, and the epistemology of non-knowledge in the workings of the unconscious. Significantly, such a rethinking of key psychoanalytic concepts drew upon the Sufi metaphysics of the imagination of Ibn 'Arabi. Yet such theoretical work cannot be understood outside of its wider clinical context and the conditions of (im)possibility that structure psychoanalysis within the postcolony. Reconstituting Sami-Ali's early theoretical writings alongside his work with the long-forgotten figures he observed, incarcerated female prostitutes in 1950s Cairo, I argue that his clinical encounters constituted the ground of his theorization of the imaginary within the embodied subject. Attending to the work of translation inherent within psychoanalytic practice – whether from Sigmund Freud's own German writings into French or Arabic, or from clinical practice into theoretical discourse – helps us conceptualize psychoanalysis as taking place otherwise at the intersection of multiple epistemological and ethical traditions.

**Register now to attend online:**

[https://cnrs.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlsdemurTlvHNyw20PU\\_btqPGYU4ewUe4t6#/registration](https://cnrs.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlsdemurTlvHNyw20PU_btqPGYU4ewUe4t6#/registration)

**Research Seminar**  
**Knowing the Psyche in the Middle East and North Africa (20th and 21st century)**  
**History, Social Science, Testimonies**




**AGENDA 2024**

- SESSION 01 25 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 6PM  
**OMNIA EL SHAKRY**  
YALE UNIVERSITY
- SESSION 02 30 OCTOBER 2024 AT 6PM  
**LAMIA MOGHNIEH**  
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN · DECOLMAD PROJECT
- SESSION 03 27 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 6PM  
**RAJA BEN SLAMA**  
MANOUBA UNIVERSITY
- SESSION 04 26 FEBRUARY 2025 AT 6PM  
**ABDESLAM ZIOU ZIOU**  
INDEPENDANT RESEARCHER
- SESSION 05 26 MARCH 2025 AT 6PM  
**CHERIFA BOUATTA**  
UNIVERSITY OF ALGIERS II  
SOCIÉTÉ ALGÉRIENNE DE RECHERCHE EN PSYCHOLOGIE (SARP)
- SESSION 06 30 APRIL 2025 AT 6PM  
**FADI BARDAWIL**  
DUKE UNIVERSITY
- SESSION 07 28 MAY 2025 AT 6PM  
**PAUL MARQUIS**  
CNRS-IRHIS
- SESSION 08 25 JUNE 2025 AT 6PM  
**AHMED RAGAB**  
JOHN HOPKINS UNIVERSITY

**SEMINAR SERIES**  
**KNOWING THE PSYCHE**  
**IN NORTH AFRICA & THE MIDDLE EAST**

20TH - 21ST CENTURIES HISTORY, SOCIAL SCIENCE, TESTIMONIES

CONTACT  
Mélanie Henry CEDEJ-MEAE/CNRS  
[melanie.henry@cedej-eg.org](mailto:melanie.henry@cedej-eg.org)



This seminar reflects on new scholarship about the psyche as object of knowledge and care in the Middle East and North Africa. It aims to highlight a polycentric approach to the history of psychiatry, psychology, and psychoanalysis. Thus, by focusing on the 20th and 21st centuries, it looks at these dynamics in post-independence states in their historical depth. It also fosters a conversation between studies of what is usually known as medicine, religion and popular knowledge.

Sessions with social science researchers and mental health professionals will explore such subject matters as knowledge production, actors' trajectories, health policies, practices of care, and representations – all elements of a regional history of norms that relate to interiority and mental health.

Seminars take place on the last Wednesday of each month starting in April 2024, between 6 and 7:30pm (Cairo time). The working languages will be English and French.

**Contact:**

Mélanie Henry (CEDEJ-MEAE/CNRS)  
[melanie.henry@cedej-eg.org](mailto:melanie.henry@cedej-eg.org)