

The Racialized Other. Arabs and Muslims in the United States Before and After 9/11

Andrea Carosso

This essay explores the ways in which American culture, post 9-11, has depicted Arabs and Muslims as the new enemy around which to polarize fears relative to its national security, a racialized other whose status has shifted from invisible subjects to contested “problem minorities”. Carosso looks at the way in which the racialization of Arabs and Muslims in the US has a history of its own, well predating the so-called “war on terror”, and ultimately going back to the unresolved racial status of Arabs amid US assimilation practices predicated upon the performance of a “racial dramaturgy”. The author suggests that the post 9-11 backlash has been based on previously consolidated Orientalist biases in the US aiming at marginalizing Arabs and Muslims from the national body politic.

“The Race is On”. Muslims and Arabs in the American Imagination

Moustafa Bayoumi

In “The Race is on,” from *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror* by Moustafa Bayoumi, the author touches upon the evil power of race and of representation in public debate in the United States. Through the analysis of several novels and movies, Bayoumi draws a clear sketch of the stereotyped Arab-american as it is portayed in American fiction and in current discourse. Particular attention is given to the topic of racial profiling and to the similarities in the representation of

Black and Arab people, where the latter are often seen as “the new Black Folk.”

Muslim First, Arab Second

Nadine Naber

This article sheds light on the politics of *Muslim First* and on the rise of a global Muslim consciousness. In the context of Islamophobia, migrations, and US-led armed conflicts in Muslim-majority countries, younger generations of Muslim Americans have been struggling to find new ways to articulate their own identity, to resist racism and ignorance, and to question patriarchy. Here, the traditional view of the struggle between traditionalist immigrant parents vs. assimilated Americanized children is rejected. Instead, the author draws on the experiences of a number of interlocutors, as well as on a sound historical and transcultural analysis, to better understand how young Muslims approach the question of being Arab, Muslim, and American.

Ethnic American Writing and the Challenge of Tradition

Khaled Mattawa

Khaled Mattawa tackles one of the most controversial issues concerning so-called “ethnic” American writing and poetry: the identification of whole genres with the skin color or (post)colonial descent of the authors. The author traces the history of the label, attributed from mainstream culture, with more or less racist intent, to authors with the most disparate styles and histories. The author sheds light on the intrinsic danger of the label “ethnic writing”: the

tendency to overlook, or even underestimate, the creativity and originality of the authors in favour of the “raw material”, i.e. their geo-political and ethnic background. This implies that “ethnic” authors are often considered unskilled writers, to the point that they either abandon any stylistic experimentation or merely sell their “raw material”. The sense of alienation experienced by “ethnic” writers is explored by Mattawa through the reading of authors like Le, Hong, and Silko. Thanks to the originality of their works which breach the imposed ethnic and stylistic boundaries, it is possible to envision a future balance between tradition and innovation

Contested Memories, Fragmented Identities. Lebanese Diasporic Literature in the United States

Alessia Carnevale

Lasting from 1975 to 1990, the Lebanese civil war also caused the mass emigration of one third of its population throughout the world. In the United States, Lebanese diaspora authors found a fertile ground to experiment and explore their exile through literature. This essay examines the work of Etel Adnan, Patricia Sarrafian Ward and, more extensively, Rabih Alameddine. Besides the experience of war and uprootedness, these authors share complex family backgrounds and unconventional biographies. I will particularly focus on the narrative and stylistic strategies through which the authors represent trauma, while deconstructing univocal social representation of gender, race, religion, and historical narration. Plunged into the intricate Lebanese context, the key themes of

postcolonial and ethnic literatures here take new significations and shapes.

Shuffling the cards of Arab-American Literature. An Analysis of gender/genre

Lisa Marchi

This essay surveys of the origin and developments of Arab-American literature, taking into consideration the intricacy of the gender/genre pair. Drawing on Judith Butler’s provocative text *Gender Trouble and Precarious Life*, the essay disturbs the linear and progressive representation of the history of Arab presence in the US and its ensuing literature. Arab-American historians, novelists, poets, and playwrights, the author argues, have attempted to, and most of the time succeeded in, making visible subjectivities and personal histories that would have otherwise remained outside the frame of representation. By bending well-established gender norms with fixed genre prescriptions, they have managed to inaugurate and reinforce intercultural, interracial, and transnational alliances, to shake dogmas, thus opening up spaces of contestation, recognition, and liberation that are not only locally but also globally relevant.

Lively Scenes of Love and Combat: Arab and Muslim-American Theatre in the XXI Century

Cinzia Schiavini

The essay explores of how Arab-American and Arab-Muslim playwrights have reacted to the growth of Islamophobia, surveillance and discrimina-

tion within the US after 9/11. It also explores the pluralities of cultural, religious and political fractures that have characterized both the national and the international arena in the last two decades. Together with the criticism to the “state of Exception” in the work of playwrights like Youssef El Guindi and Rania Khalil, Arab-American and Muslim-American theatre engages with the Us/Them dichotomy Islamophobia relies on, and deconstructs this binary opposition by showing how, as shown in Betty Shamieh’s *Roar*, Jamil Khoury’s *Precious Stones* and in particular in Ayad Akhtar’s *Disgraced*, cultural preconceptions and distorted representations form a blurred continuum in the history of minority cultures

Embracing Orientalism in the Homeland

Brian T. Edwards

One of the assumptions about globalization in the realm of culture is that American ideas and cultural products circulate endlessly around the world. Moreover, it is assumed that digital age technologies have made those cultural products abundantly available in the Middle East and North Africa. But what happens when those cultural products make it back to the US? By focusing on the TV serials *Homeland* and *Tyrant*, the graphic novel *Habibi* by Craig Thompson, Dave Eggers’ *A Hologram for the King* and Kevin Powers’ *The Yellow Birds*, this essay explores the persistence of Orientalism in those returning artifacts known as “neo-orientalist” works, as well as the emergence of new creative work in Cairo, Casablanca and Tehran which is shifting the cultural

center of gravity away from the US and in ways that frequently defy American expectations.

Towards the 2018 Midterm Elections: The Nationalization of US Politics

Marco Morini

The 2018 midterm elections could be crucial for the future of the Trump presidency. If Democrats win one or both chambers, they could slow down the GOP’s legislative agenda and revive the federal investigation on Trump and his associates. But if Republicans retain control of the Congress, they will have a free hand to introduce policy changes that could impact the nation for decades to come. Meanwhile, the Supreme Court is turning more conservative, with a second Justice to be nominated by Trump. Opinion polls, political history and President Trump current unpopularity seem all to suggest a Democratic win, but the midterm electorate is usually whiter, older and more conservative than the general elections electorate. 2018 midterms are also evidently showing the current nationalization of US politics, with fundraising, communication strategies and candidates’ selection mainly decided by parties’ national committees.