

also valuable for the sheer number of literary and filmic texts it mentions, and is written in an accessible prose that invites both general and specialist audiences.

DALIA M. A. GOMAA, *The Non-National in Contemporary American Literature: Ethnic Women Writers and Problematic Belongings*, American Literature Readings in the Twenty-first Century (Raleigh, N.C.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016). Pp. 207. \$95.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781137502865

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In *The Non-National in Contemporary American Literature*, Dalia M. A. Gomaa uses a comparative approach to multiethnic literature in the United States to propose the “non-national” as disruptive of the spatial, temporal, and affective logics of the nation. For Gomaa, the non-national “means problematic national identifications that entail ambivalence and paradox” and a “subject reconfiguring implications of ‘here’ and ‘there’ within that interstitial space” (p. 5). From the non-national, a term she draws from American Studies discourses, Gomaa also cites non-national moments and spaces—times and places wherein the non-national interrupts and redefines the national, transnational, and home ideologies both in the United States and elsewhere. Gomaa studies the non-national in contemporary Arab American, South Asian American, Chicana, and Cuban American women's writing. Each chapter analyzes an Arab American text alongside another ethnic literary text. The monograph's contribution to academic scholarship is thus three-fold: it refines and redefines theories of the non-national in American Studies; it expands Arab American literary criticism; and it puts Arab American literature in much needed conversation with other ethnic literatures.

In this last regard, Gomaa's monograph is most welcome. Texts comparing Arab American literature, subject formation, and racialization in the United States with other hyphenated ethnic communities can usefully highlight shared struggles and begin to develop cross-ethnic alliances. They also, as Gomaa's text demonstrates, reveal fissures in the collective structures that suppress and regulate minorities within the US nation-state and as subjects of US empire outside North America. These comparisons are understudied—not only in American and Ethnic studies, but also within Arab American and Middle Eastern studies. As such, the text assists in developing a more rigorous intersectional and comparative Middle East and Arab American studies. Gomaa's analysis allows readers to see how racialization, in Chapters 1 and 3, for example, impacts Arabs and South Asians alike, but also does not erase the critical differences in Arab and South Asian immigrant experiences in the United States. However, her chapters do heavily favor the Arab American texts. While the introduction to each chapter offers a comparative reading of the texts, the chapters themselves are broken into separate analyses of each book. It would have been useful, both rhetorically and by way of argument, to see a more robust engagement of the texts with, rather than alongside one another.

As a piece of Arab American scholarship, *The Non-National* is also successful. It contributes to the growing field of Arab American literary criticism. Many Arab American texts are understudied, but Gomaa highlights texts that have not received any attention—for example, the subject of Chapter 2, Pauline Kaldas's *The Time Between Places: Stories that Weave In and Out of Egypt and America*. (Fayetteville, Ark.: University of Arkansas Press, 2010). As Arab American texts become increasingly included in minority literature classrooms, Gomaa's chapters can offer companion analyses that: introduce readers to popular Arab American writers; foreground some

Arab Americanist questions around belonging, inclusion, transnational identity, and fraught relationships to home; and serve to make Arab difference more familiar through proximity to other more traditionally studied groups. Her use of Arab American studies is thorough and engaging, and her deftness with Arab American texts is the true draw of the monograph. Gomaa's acuity is sharpest in her fourth chapter, "Transnational Allegories and the Non-national subject in *The Agüero Sisters* and *The Night Counter*." The chapter unpacks Jameson's reading of third world literatures as allegorical within the context of US immigrant writing; her analysis makes visible the "third" world within the "first" and offers, through the novel's allegorical subjects, a critique of global capital (p. 133).

At times, the main theoretical apparatus of the text—the non-national—was difficult to distinguish from other similar concepts. For example, Gomaa introduces and references Benedict Anderson's "imagined community" as foundational to how American studies conceptualizes the nation. Through close analysis of food metaphors in Diana Abu Jaber's *The Language of Baklava* (New York: Anchor Press, 2007) and Bapsi Sidhwa's *An American Brat* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Milkweed Editions, 1993) Gomaa argues that our conception of the nation is more accurately "an imagined (transnational) community" (p. 30). It was unclear how the non-national differed from the transnational in this instance, and what the analysis gained from reading the disruption of national subject formation as non-national versus transnational. Similarly, Chapter 2 juxtaposes Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003) with Cherríe Moraga's *The Last Generation* (Brooklyn: South End Press, 1993) to introduce the concept of non-national time, a simultaneous but nonsynchronous temporality that disrupts a linear and progressive imagination of national subject formation and imagined (transnational) community (p. 64). Primarily, Gomaa uses non-national time to describe the events in *West of Jordan* while queer time accounts for *The Last Generation*. Where might these uses have overlapped? What are the differences between queer time and non-national time? A more thorough engagement with theories of queer time, namely J. Jack Halberstam's *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies and Subcultural Lives* (New York: New York University Press, 2005) and Elizabeth Freeman's *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Press, 2010) might have produced a more nuanced analysis and vibrant comparison. Overall, more attention to what the concept of non-national might offer beyond other available concepts (for instance, diaspora or diasporic) would have benefited the argument.

The Non-National in Contemporary American Literature is an exciting addition to the growing body of Arab American scholarship and has specific appeal for comparativists working to place Arab Americans within a US ethnic frame. It foregrounds Arab American concerns that sometimes overlap and sometimes deviate from other ethnic community concerns, and highlights the transnational and non-national as ways that ethnic others redefine the "nation" in the American context. It would read well in literature classrooms broadly and is an important resource for Arab American literary criticism specifically.

RICHARD SERRANO, *Qur'ān and the Lyric Imperative* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2016). Pp. 238. \$95.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781498520706

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"Why has a French professor with a PhD in Comparative Literature written a book about the Qur'ān and Arabic poetry?" (p. 1) Good question. The blame probably falls squarely on the boom