

La guerra e le armi
nella letteratura in inglese
del Novecento

a cura di Lucia Folena

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In copertina: John Nash, *Over the Top* (1918). Imperial War Museum, London

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WRITING THE WAR ON TERROR:
POST-9/11 ARAB-AMERICAN
AND MUSLIM-AMERICAN LITERATURE
AND THE POSTNATIONAL IMAGINARY

Andrea Carosso

Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of pre-given ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex, on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation.

(Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994)

1. The 9/11 Memorial and Freedom Tower

I write this paper on the 12th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. of September 11, 2001. While much of the rest of the world carries on with business as usual, with reports of the anniversary barely fitting the daily news, the U.S. has stopped once again to commemorate. On the site known for many years as Ground Zero in lower Manhattan, family and friends of those who lost their lives have gathered at the 9/11 Memorial, to celebrate what has by now become a well-rehearsed ritual. The national anthem has been performed, silence at 8:46 and 9:03 am has marked the moments when the hijacked planes hit the twin towers. More silence has commemorated the falling of the towers, the attack on the Pentagon and the crash of Flight 93 in Pennsylvania. Bagpipes and drums have sounded during the lengthy recitation of names. "It helps a little," one of the bereaved has told the media (*New York Times* 12.09.2013).

A twin monument of black reflecting pools dug down into the earth within the footprints of the original twin towers, the 9/11 Memorial is a poignant place of remembrance of the 2753 lives that were lost to the bowels of the earth on that September day in 2001. At

the north-western corner of the memorial, the newly-completed Freedom Tower, the world's fourth tallest building, rises from a 185-foot windowless concrete base, designed to protect it against terror threats, to a symbolic height of 1,776 feet, replacing the fallen towers and signifying America's "defiance, strength and resolve in the face of terrorism," as then governor George Pataki announced when the final plans for its construction were unveiled (*New York Times* 29.06.2005).

Together, the 9/11 Memorial and the Freedom Tower recall America's controversial entry into the twenty-first century – their burden of loss and anxiety symbolizing the country's sudden transition from End of History to War on Terror. Dawson and Schueller have argued that 9/11 should not be seen as a watershed moment in U.S. history, but rather as a moment in "the punitive, unilateral, militaristic ideology" of U.S. imperialism (Dawson and Schueller 2007, 2). Although I agree with the overall trajectory of their argument, I would also like to suggest that the 9/11 aftermath has spawned a sequence of catastrophic crises that seem to authorize a distinction between a time prior and one following the attacks. The aftermath of 9/11 has seen the deployment of a State of Emergency that has cost the U.S. over a trillion dollars, two inglorious wars, thousands of deaths, and – perhaps even more importantly – the suspension of the rule of law "in the name of sovereign power in more and more sites at home and abroad" (*ibid.*). Domestically, a financial meltdown and a subprime mortgage crisis have presided over the widening gap between the rich and the poor – the effects of these crises having been felt especially in poor and minority neighborhoods across the country (Kneebone and Berube 2013, 35). Moreover, civil rights for ethnic and racial minorities have taken a backseat in America's grand narrative of progressive inclusion, as specific minorities have been targeted for eviction from the promise of the Melting Pot. From Congress resistance to grant citizenship rights to undocumented Latino workers, to the backlash of the USA PATRIOT Act especially on alien residents,¹ to the thousands

¹ A ten-letter acronym that stands for Uniting (and) Strengthening America (by) Providing Appropriate Tools Required (to) Intercept (and) Obstruct Terrorism Act, the USA PATRIOT Act was signed into law by President George W. Bush on October 26, 2001. The act weakened restrictions for the gathering of intelligence within the United States; allowed the U.S. government to closely monitor and regulate financial transactions, particularly those involving foreigners; and gave

of incidents of hate violence and the revamped practice of racial profiling, this time targeting the new minority under the national spotlight – Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans – the post-9/11 shock therapy has been severe and pervasive.

This paper focuses on the problematic construction of the Middle Eastern-American (often summarily stereotyped as “Arab”, “Islamic” or “Muslim”) as dis-identified citizen in the age of the War on Terror. I will try to lay out a frame of reference to address the practice and consequences of ethnic labeling in post-9/11 U.S., and analyze the way in which cultural representations of Arabs and Muslims in America have contributed to both reinforcing the trope of disidentified citizenry as well as questioning the ideological premises of such disidentification.

2. National Identity in the Age of the War on Terror

The post-9/11 years have called for a redefinition of the relationship between ethnicity and Americanness. Leti Volpp, professor of law at Berkley, has argued that “post-September 11, a national identity has consolidated that is both strongly patriotic and multiracial.” This new national identity, according to Volpp, has been used as a strategy of difference “through its opposition to the new construction, the putative terrorist who ‘looks Middle Eastern’” (Volpp 2002, 1584), a new identity category that groups together persons who appear Arab or Muslim and identifies them as terrorists and disidentified citizens.

As is well known, the media has played a decisive role in creating this space of cultural and civic disidentification, by both reflecting and, more often, encouraging what John Tehranian had defined “invidious stereotyping of Middle Easterners” (Tehranian 2009, 7). In 2012, a random sample period and eleven years after the attacks of 9/11, “invidious stereotyping” abounded: a crude anti-Muslim video circulated on the internet suggesting the existence of a Muslim plot to take over the West; a mosque was burned down in Missouri; an acid bomb was thrown at an Islamic school in Illinois; one speaker at the Republican primaries accused Muslims of harboring plans for “stealth Shariah;” and

broader discretion to authorities in detaining and deporting immigrants suspected of terrorism-related acts.

a group of Republican House members, led by Michele Bachmann, groundlessly accused two prominent Muslim federal officials of loyalty to Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood (*New York Times* 17.09.2012). This list is, by the way, partial.

Unlike many other racial minorities in the U.S., Arab and Middle Eastern- Americans have faced rising, rather than diminishing, degrees of discrimination over time. If prior to 9/11 they occupied “a contested and unclear space within American racial and cultural discourses” (Majaj 2000, 320), in the new century they have shifted “from marginal white status to a more subordinate status that shares many features common to the experience of people of color” (Cainkar 2008, 46). In another current, and more explicit formulation, Arab-Americans have become, post 9/11, America's “new blacks” (Bayoumi 2008, 2). Recent targeted immigration policies, racial profiling, the War on Terror's decided racialist bent, as well as grueling rates of job discrimination and hate crime (Tehrani 2009, 3) have made Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans the subjects of a blatant racial project of exclusion, which postulates their racial inferiority – as Louise Cainkar has argued – “on essentialist constructions of human difference” (Cainkar 2009, 48), i.e. on the idea that Arabs and Muslims have become the antagonist in a “Clash of Civilizations” that opposes the West to its new cultural Other, the “sand nigger,” the Arab/Muslim. “For the first time in decades – a *New York Times* article has recently pointed out – it has become acceptable in some circles to declare that a specific religious minority can't be trusted” (*New York Times* 17.09.2012).

Since the heightened anti-American turmoil in the Middle East of the 1990s, mainstream representations of Arab-Americans have amply condoned, often prior to the laws enacting it, the post-9/11 State of Emergency that has been responsible for the loss of civil rights by Arab and Muslim minorities at various levels: movies such as *Rules of Engagement* (which in fact predates 9/11) have made it clear that Americans tolerate, perhaps even encourage, the murder of civilians in the Middle East by the U.S. military; TV series such as *24* or *Homeland* have provided a compelling case for torture as a desirable anti-terrorist measure. Post-9/11, the U.S. appears less ready to represent itself in terms of the tropes that have shaped its cultural history since the beginnings of European colonization, and especially those of individual liberty and religious freedom. Or, more precisely, post-9/11 the U.S. has appeared less prepared to apply those tropes indistinctly

across ethnic groups. American culture at large seems to have shifted, in the throes of the War on Terror, along an alternate path of viewing nationhood and national definition as less inclusive and more discriminating.

Volpp has called attention to a recent “redeployment of old Orientalist tropes” that have directed America’s collective imaginary to view the Arab World and the Middle East once again as “phantasmic sites on which the U.S. nation projects a series of anxieties regarding internal and external threats to the coherence of the national body,” (Volpp 2002, 1586) and through which the U.S. constructs its national identity in opposition to those categorized as “foreigners,” “aliens,” and “others.” In describing Orientalism as a master discourse of European civilization that constructs and polarizes the East and the West, Edward Said pointed out that Western representations of the East serve not only to define the objects of the Orientalizing gaze, but also to redefine the West by way of its opposition to the East. In a famous argument, Said postulated that the West uses the East as an inverted mirror, imagining the East to “belong to a negative realm” in which it is everything the West is not (Said 1978, 268). Therefore, for example, the West is defined as modern, democratic, and progressive through the East being defined as primitive, barbaric, and despotic. Volpp has noted that, beginning after 9/11, the discourse of Orientalism in the U.S. has received “new currency in relation to what are depicted as the barbaric regions of the world that spawn terror” (Volpp 2002, 1587). It is within this revival of Orientalism that the Arab-American experience has come to be shaped and defined in the age of America’s War on Terror.

3. Arab-American / Muslim-American

The term Arab-American itself has not been around for long. In fact, it is a relatively recent creation, a panethnic designation appropriated over the last twenty years by a minority group under increasing pressure to confront their identity “in a political environment of heightened racial consciousness and mobilization” (Majaj 2000, 327). Echoing other previously designated hyphenated ethnicities – such as African-Americans, Native-Americans, and Asian-Americans – the term Arab-American traces a path of more uneven and contradictory

identification than the others, because it strives to assimilate communities noted for their ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, sectarian, tribal, and national diversities (Haddad 2011, 2). As a linguistic marker, “Arab” refers to a language shared by many but not all; as a religious category, it often functions as a misplaced code name for Islamic; as a term for ethnic designation, it fails to account for the complex ethnic variety among Middle Eastern peoples (Majaj 2000, 325-27). For the purposes of this paper, which focuses on cultural representations of Arab and Middle Eastern Muslims during War on Terror, I also adopt the marker “Middle-Eastern” to refer to Muslim identities that cannot be labeled as “Arab” (such as, for instance, Pakistanis and Iranians), in spite of a simplifying tendency in the U.S. to fit them within that particular paradigm.

There are no accurate figures for Muslims in the U.S., since neither the census nor the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) provide information on religious affiliation of citizens. Estimates range anywhere between two and eleven million, approximations to the latter figure being more frequent in scholarship and media reports. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) places the figure at seven million. “While the numbers are contested,” notes Haddad, “it is generally agreed that they are significant” (Haddad 2011, 2). More accurate figures are available for Arabic-speaking people (and their descendants, a few of whom are in their sixth generation) living in the U.S. – especially in California, New York, Michigan and Texas – who, at around three million, make up about one per cent of the overall U.S. population (Haddad 2011, 2). And although, as I have already pointed out, the terms “Arab-American” and “Muslim-American” are often taken to mean the same thing, these two groups only partially overlap: whereas only 25 percent of U.S. Muslims are Arab, only 25 percent of Arab-Americans are Muslim. Contrary to widespread sentiment in the U.S., the majority of Arab-Americans are Christian (Haddad 2011, 2).

4. Postnational Narratives

In spite of the pressures Arab-Americans and Middle-Eastern Americans have undergone under the War on Terror, readerly interest in their literature has surged in the years after the 9/11 attacks, making

the present time “a moment of remarkable and unprecedented literary production among Arab Americans” (Meters 2012, 3). If in the past Edward Said quipped that the Arab-American community was in a “gestating stage,” and that its literature “simply play[ed] a very tiny, marginal, unimportant role” (Said in Shalal-Esa 2008), the last two decades have seen a dramatic increase in publications by Arab-American writers, a burgeoning which reflects, as Lisa Suhai Majaj has recently noted, “in part the shifting historical, social, and political contexts that have pushed Arab-Americans to the foreground, creating both new spaces for their voices and new urgencies of expression, as well as the flourishing creativity of these writers” (Majaj 2008).

Even more interesting, this last decade has witnessed the emergence of a new generation of mostly young, diasporic, Muslim, Arab, Arab-American and Middle Eastern-American writers (and film-makers) reflecting on the problematic state of “community” and “identity” in America today. Writers such as Mohsin Hamid, H.M. Naqvi, Diana Abu-Jaber, and Mohja Kahf, just to name a few, and as film-makers like Hesham Issawi, Cherien Dabis and Denis Villeneuve have claimed a space for counternarratives to the predominant “white,” “national” intellectual response to 9-11 as well as to the overwhelming official rhetoric of the War on Terror.

The “white” response to 9/11 has been in no way irrelevant. In fact, it has attracted most of the attention. A brief, yet sketchy, survey of this literary sub-genre should include Don DeLillo’s provocative short essay “In the Ruins of the Future,” originally published in *The Guardian* in December 2011 and arguing that the attacks were a sad reminder of the wide gap between America’s self-image and its image in the eyes of the world; DeLillo’s later depiction of America’s post 9/11 emotional landscape in *Falling Man* (2007); Susan Sontag’s courageous argument in the *New Yorker*, against the grain of rampant post-9/11 U.S. patriotism, that the attacks had been a response to America’s imperialism; Jonathan Safran Foer’s meditation on loss in the novel *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, published in 2005 (and also made into a movie directed by Stephen Daldry in 2011); and John Updike’s novel *Terrorist* (2007), which explores the radicalization of a young American Muslim who rejects America’s materialism and hedonism.

Alongside the “white” response to the traumas of 9/11, the emerging aesthetic response to the crisis by Arab, Muslim, Arab-American and

Muslim-American writers combines voices of authors who may or may not be U.S. citizens, yet whose writings appear to make up a corpus focusing on representing and attempting to make sense of the ruptures, discontinuities, and contradictions of the Arab and Middle Eastern experience in the U.S. during the War on Terror. According to Moustafa Bayoumi, one of the writers of this generation, these voices, and the communities that their narratives represent, constitute the “concentrated, unedited, twenty-first century answer to who we, as Americans, are as a people” (Bayoumi 2008, 9).

Arab-American writing is, *per se*, no newcomer to American literature, having spanned most of the twentieth century, yet always remaining peripheral to the national mainstream. Although primarily consisting of poetry, Arab-American literature has witnessed a resurgence since the late 1980s, due to a growing swath of fiction, written mostly by women and extending the safe tropes of food and family through which Arab-American writers had for more than a half century sought inclusion within the American canon. Generally speaking, these novels have addressed the struggle for survival, physical and cultural, within contexts of injustice and violence, emigration, and transnationality, in books such as Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin*, 2010, Patricia Ward’s *The Bullet Collection*, 2003, Laila Halaby’s *West of the Jordan*, 2003, or Sahar Delijani’s *Children of the Jacaranda Tree*, 2013. Others have probed the identitarian displacement that occurs in the passage from Arab/Muslim to Arab-American/ Muslim-American, depicting both the immigrant struggle for adaptation and subsequent generations’ attempt to negotiate the complex facets of their identities, including issues of patriarchy, sexuality and the problematic topic of assimilation within American culture. This category includes novels such as Diana Abu-Jaber’s *Arabian Jazz*, published in 1993 and hailed as the beginning of contemporary Arab American literature, as well as Naomi Shihab Nye’s *Habibi* (1997) and Moja Kahf’s *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006).

Post-9/11, the literary output coming from this constellation of voices that escapes definition in traditional terms of nationality, ethnicity, and even genre, has more and more focused on the predicament of disidentification as well as social and political exclusion in the wake of the War on Terror and its political ramifications. A new corpus of writing has surfaced, merging the established themes of transnationality and assimilation with a questioning of whether transnationality and assimilation as such are still available to Arab and

Muslim-Americans in the wake of 9/11. The English language being the only common, unifying factor of their corpus, these new authors defy the dogma of a national literature, and call for the emergence of new configurations and definitions. Their writings question nation and nationality in any previous, nineteenth and twentieth-century sense of the term, yet engage the idea of nation and nation formation under perspectives that are new for American literature.

In Mohsin Hamid's best-selling *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (2007) and H.Q. Naqvi's *Home Boy* (2007), global, cosmopolitan subjectivities override national definition. These narratives ponder whether the Arab and Muslim diaspora can still claim its own space within the American Melting Pot. In Moustafa Bayoumi's *How Does It Feel to Be a Problem? Being Young and Arab in America* (2008) – a book that many conservatives in the U.S. would like to see blacklisted from university reading-lists (Duboff 2010 and Bayoumi 2010a) – real-life characters shift in and out of their Arab and Arab American identities through their efforts of surviving the xenophobic backlash of the War of Terror.

These writers share a global, transnational condition that engages America in ways that transcend nationality and in fact question the very ideology of American national identity. Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Mohsin Hamid was raised and educated mostly in the U.S., and then has lived between London (he is a British citizen) and Pakistan. H.M. Naqvi, born in 1974, grew up in Islamabad, Algiers and the U.S., where he pursued higher education, later to return to Karachi, where he now lives. Raised in Ontario, Canada, and currently living in Brooklyn, where he teaches at Brooklyn College, Moustafa Bayoumi was born in Zurich, Switzerland, in the 1970s, to Egyptian parents.

Their characters mirror the kinds of global identity that has defined their own experience. Arab or Middle-Eastern emigrés, disenfranchised immigrants or temporary residents from the Middle East to the U.S. in the age of the War on Terror, what these characters have in common is being the subjects of what Donald Pease has defined “postnational narratives” (Pease 1994, 3), i.e. individuals whose identity is defined through conflicting narratives of nation, and predicated in the breakdown of the nation state as guarantor of communal identification. These narratives, according to Pease, challenge “the fallacious assumptions of American liberalism,” the idea that “particulars” produced “out of universal norms” (such as Reason, Equality, Social Justice, Liberty)

could enable the construction of “imaginary relations to actual sociopolitical conditions to effect imagined communities called national peoples.” (Pease 1994, 3-4). Such scene of emancipation, which H.M. Naqvi has defined “the theoretical premise of America” (Naqvi 2009, 14), i.e. the idea of the existence of a self-proclaimed, chosen people, is precisely what postnational narratives take exception from. Their subjects challenge such binary arrangements, by moving figures of class, race and gender “from the status of objects of social regulation within the national narrative into performative powers, postnational forces able to change that narrative's assumptions” (Pease 1994, 4).

The books I am discussing converge in their efforts to address the status of Arabs and Muslims who, in post-9/11 America, have suddenly found themselves to be “problems.” Negotiating their identities in a post-9/11 context, these individuals succumb to various forms of negative stereotyping which fuels widespread discrimination. Inhabiting the same condition evoked by W.E.B DuBois's in *The Souls of Black Folk*, as Moustafa Bayoumi has pointed out, they contest the social and political arrangement of America during the War on Terror, a time when the Arab-American minority has become a “problem” to the rest of the nation in the same way that African-Americans had been a “problem” for America during Jim Crow. To quote from Bayoumi's Preface:

The terrorist attacks, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and the explosion of political violence around the world have put [the American Dream] in jeopardy for American Arabs and Muslims (Bayoumi 2008, 3).

This sentiment is echoed in Naqvi's *Home Boy*, the story of the three young Pakistani-Americans in New York, self-defined “Metrostanis” who have their fingers on what Naqvi calls “the great global dialectic”: straddling between continents and cultures, they listen to Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan, Nina Simone and old school gangsta-rap. They subscribe to the pleasures of American liberated sexuality, drink and use drugs profusely. Yet, they inhabit a cultural space that is as American as it is Middle Eastern, in which their South-Asian culture and customs (food, dress codes, family values), exist as defining markers of their everyday lives. In the aftermath of 9-11, they see themselves suddenly

projected into unfamiliar territory: “We’d become Japs, Jews, Niggers. We weren’t before. We fancied ourselves boulevardiers, raconteurs, renaissance men, AC, Jimbo and me” (Naqvi 2009, 1). The horrors of racial profiling become their daily experience, and they soon realize that “just like three black men were gangbangers, and three Jews a conspiracy, three Muslims had become a sleeper cell” (Naqvi 2009, 153).

The bitter irony of Naqvi’s characters turns to full-blown drama in Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, whose narrator, a Princeton graduate and former employee of a prestigious Wall Street firm, finds himself unable to deal with America’s inward turn after 9/11 and returns to his native Pakistan. In a significant passage, the narrator recalls the horrors of the attacks’ aftermath for American Muslims:

Pakistani cabdrivers were being beaten to within an inch of their lives; the FBI was raiding mosques, shops, and even people’s houses; Muslim men were disappearing, perhaps into shadowy detention centers for questioning or worse (Hamid 2007, 107).

Neither wholly American nor wholly Middle Eastern, these global responses to 9/11 give center stage to sentiments of exile and unhomeliness that transcend the boundaries of national literature. Rather, they designate what Pease has defined the “more complex patterns of interdependence grounded in the belief that the local and international are inextricably intertwined” (Pease 1997, 2). To put this another way, these narratives interrogate the space of the postcolonial within the field of representation of the U.S., in that they resist – in the manner of the postcolonial – the establishment of narrativity as concealment of the state’s sovereign power over the “national people” (Pease 1997, 7).

5. *Postnational, Transnational and Postcolonial.*

The introduction to Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) mapped out a postcolonial modernity emergent from the writings of the migrants, transnationals, and dispossessed. These writings, emanating from interstitiality and unhomeliness, creating cultural hybridities, and interrupting the progressive linear time of modernity, Bhabha argued, testify of a “moment of transit where space and time cross to produce

complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion.” Bhabha posited as theoretically innovative, and politically crucial what he called

the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities [such as class, gender] and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences [...]“in-between” spaces [...] of selfhood – singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself (Bhabha 1994, 2).

If we begin to see our globalized spaces of modernity as caught in a continual shifting of internal and external borders that create racial outsiders (Singh and Schmidt 2000, 38-43), America remains no longer neutral to the creation, in Bhabha’s decisive wording, of spaces “in-between,” that have historically shaped the emergence of a postcolonial imaginary. Within this frame of reference, the dimensions of transnationalism and diaspora are brought to bear on American studies, thereby raising the issue of the plausibility of such a thing as postcolonial American studies.

In an influential 2004 essay published in *American Literary History*, Malini Johar Schueller has argued that the heightened climate of xenophobia and compulsory patriotism, as well as the rallying together behind “Western” values by many intellectuals in the aftermath of the tragic events of 9/11 “makes painfully clear the necessity of interrogating US culture through the lens of postcolonial studies.” Repeated invocations of “differences between our civilization and their barbarity,” entreaties for a “new imperialism,” and calls for reinstating a nineteenth-century type of colonialism² are, in Schueller’s words, “ample proof that the suitability of postcolonial theory to the study of US culture should no longer be a subject of debate” (Schueller 2004, 162).

The editors of *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), one of the founding texts of postcolonial studies, have pointed out that the common trait of postcolonial literatures “is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by

² A *Wall Street Journal* article published on October 9, 2001 was shockingly entitled “The Answer to Terrorism? Colonialism.”

foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial center. It is this which makes them distinctively post-colonial” (Ashcroft 1989, 2). In a more recent essay, Winfried Fluck has defined an approach to U.S. studies that closely reminds of the postcolonial shunning of the “imperial center,” and which he has defined “political transnationalism.” According to Fluck,

Transnationalism [...] is the counterprogram to the state of exception that characterizes the American nation-state and manifests itself in the formation of a national identity that is based on racialization, violent exclusion, or enforced deterritorialization (Fluck 2011, 374).

In characterizing a state of exception that creates individuals of exception, outsiders ‘in-between’ nation-states who manage “to transform trauma into a source of disinterpellation, and in doing so, has been able to envision a new international communality constituted by ‘transnational’ subject positions,” (*ibid.*) Fluck has provided a frame of reference to situate Arab-American narratives within the larger framework identified by Pease as the “postnational.”

Global and transnational, Arab and Muslim narratives in America and about America, especially those produced in the age of the War on Terror, precisely claim a discursive space in which the assumptions of national sovereignty can no longer provide the geographical parameters within which to read cultural texts. These narratives exist within the discursive space that Bhabha has defined as the “moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion” (Bhabha 1994, 2). These postnational narratives function as discursive acts that have “neither ratified the sovereign power of the state nor effected the inclusion of stateless persons within pre-existing narratives”, but rather “materialized the postnational as the internal boundary insisting at the site where stateless individuals have not yet consented to state power and the state has not yet integrated the stateless into its national order” (Pease 1997, 7-8). It is within this frame of reference that further scrutiny is called for on the postnational response to America’s War on Terror.

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