

MICHAEL SULEIMAN, SUAD JOSEPH, and LOUISE CAINKAR, eds., *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2021). Pp. 488. \$95.00 cloth, \$55.00 paper. ISBN: 9780815636847.

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The edited collection, *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal*, revisits the academic field of Arab American women's studies and introduces interdisciplinary, transnational, and multimethodological approaches to this under-recognized discipline. Carefully curated, the six-part, nineteen-chapter book points to a specific timeline differentiating Arab American women's studies from neighboring subject areas. Specifically, the book reflects the momentum of critical race theory. These vital characteristics make *Arab American Women* a unique and invaluable collection for readers across academic disciplines. This review focuses on how the collection contributes to liberal, transnational, and anti-racist feminism(s). I analyze the book under four categorical clusters recognized by these versions of feminism: historiography of Arab American women's studies, social construction of gender and sexuality, racialization of Arab American women's bodies after 9/11, and politics of place and space.

In the first section of the book, "Early History," Michael Suleiman surveys Arab American women's writings from their early arrivals in the 1890s to World War II (21–52). What stands out in this chapter is Suleiman's differentiation between Arab men's and women's histories of migration to the United States, with particular attention paid to existing literature's consideration of Arab women's gender roles within the Arab family. Another chapter later in the collection that provides a specific view into the field's history is Ummayeh Cable's interview with Elaine Hagopian on political activism. In "Forging Her Own Path," chapter 13, the prominent scholar Hagopian maps the

collective efforts to bring the field into existence and talks about the struggles of Arab American academic women in this journey (311–26).

Seven chapters throughout the book focus on gender questions within the canon of Arab American women's studies, with several chapters considering the relationship between gender and labor. In chapter 3, Jess Bier highlights the intersectional history of Arab women's work and the stigma against their labor (55–83). Chapter 4, written by Amy Rowe, discusses the strict standard of intracultural marriage for Lebanese women immigrants and their choice to remain single, and shows how these never-married women shoulder the care work and acculturation of the next generations (84–113). Chapter 5, "Rose and the Four Sisters of Fate," illustrates one example of such care work through Gregory Orfalea's memory of his mother and four paternal aunts, who chose not to marry but played motherly roles in his upbringing (114–33). The diversity in the four sisters' characters represents various adaptations of American identities.

Other texts highlight the importance of social class, interfaith marriages, discrimination toward Arab men of color and their masculinities, and the need for the immigrant community to sustain its traditional values as other variables that speak to the history of Arab women's work in the US. For example, in chapter 6, Charlotte Karem Albrecht investigates the experiences of Syrian women who worked as peddlers during the period of 1880–1935, highlighting the double standard imposed against Arab women's work (134–68). Specifically, next to perceptions of these women's gender and social class being at the root of the racialization of Arab Americans, Albrecht argues for "social welfare workers' scrutiny of the Arab American peddling economy" (136). Together, such chapters add different and intersectional layers to the historiography of Arab women's work in America and complicate the notion of Arab American women's right to work. While locating their paid work in the heart of multiethnic feminism(s), this section disillusiones the mainstream feminisms of the white upper and middle-class women as the dominant way to achieve economic independence.

Continuing the theme of gender, in chapter 7, Sarah Gualtieri studies Afifa Karam's writings on gendered roles and regulations within the Arab family in multiple archives across the globe (169–88). Gualtieri shows how from a bourgeois and middle-class perspective, Karam not only questioned the clergies' authority in imposing their religious views on child marriage and the submission of specifically Arab Muslim women to their husbands, but she also pushed for Arab

women's work outside the home. With an oppositional approach, in chapter 11, "Daughters of Fatima," Bridget Blomfield adopts Saba Mahmoud's "politics of piety" concept in an intersectional study that highlights religion's influence in shaping the culture and gender-binary familial roles of Iraqi Shia women (282-98). As Shia Arab women are an underrepresented minority among other Muslim women, Blomfield's contribution is particularly significant for its study of these women's lives and their previous persecution under Saddam Hussein's regime, the role of rituals in the embodiment of the community, and their ages in analyzing pious cultures. Finally, in chapter 14, Suad Joseph focuses on Arab women's writings in the *New York Times* from 1851 to 1919 to highlight the tensions and struggles with gender roles (329-64). On the one hand, Joseph's work underlines the intersection of race and gender in representations of Arab girls and women; on the other hand, it provides a complicated, nuanced picture of different published pieces.

While discussing the issue of gender in Arab American women's studies takes various forms and spaces in the collection, surprisingly, the question of sexuality only appears in one chapter. In chapter 9, "Scheherazade and Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab American Literature," Mejdulene Shomali investigates the literary implications of the Scheherazade character in different authors' works to call out the lack of inclusive space for queer representation (214-43). Shomali focuses on the necropolitics of Arab queer bodies and bridges sexuality and security studies. Feminist scholars and teachers would benefit from a separate section, including more chapters on the topic of sexuality. A lack of adequate attention to this focal topic marks the collection's only, but critical, shortcoming. Additionally, this gap implies a more significant problem: Arab American women portrayed in the collection are primarily cisgender and heterosexual. There is no acknowledgment of the absence of trans, nonbinary, and nonheterosexual Arab women.

Next to addressing the questions of gender and sexuality, the book's second thematic cluster focuses on the impact of the racialization of Arab Muslims after 9/11 and the organic connection between Arab American women's and the academic field of feminist security studies. Chapter 12, "An Anti-Imperialist Transnational Approach to Middle Eastern Women's Studies," advocates for "anti-imperialist transnational feminist studies" (300) to bypass the overlooked structures of race in area studies field that talk about Arab women's issues (299-10). Through this approach, Nadine Naber

suggests a way for acknowledging the racialization processes before and after 9/11, emphasizing the role of US imperialism, and studying of the Middle Eastern women, in a transnational context and in relation to other women of color worldwide. Chapter 15, "Evoking Sympathy for Muslim Women after 9/11," pays attention to the conflicting consequences of 9/11 in the social construction of Muslim genders (365–85). The author, Evelyn Alsultany, elaborates on how Muslim womanhoods are seen as needing sympathy or liberation, but Muslim masculinities are portrayed as violent and are targeted by the War on Terror agenda. This chapter is the only text in the collection that addresses the issue of masculinity. The remainder of the chapters in this cluster are located in the book's sixth part, "War and National Security." In chapter 17, Rita Stephan provides a lesser-known episode of the aftermath of 9/11 in racialization of Arab American women: the Israeli siege of 2006 (411–22). Stephan uses this event to illustrate Arab American women's struggles navigating national (American) and ethnic/ racial (Arab) identities. Chapter 18, "Dangerous Women/ Women in Danger" by Louise Cainkar, discusses how Muslim women have been targeted as dangerous women who disrespect American values of freedom, primarily because of veiling, and have been victims of higher numbers of hate crimes (432–61). In chapter 19 "Gendering the Security State," Therese Saliba investigates the role of the rhetoric of "saving brown women"¹ in the hypermilitarization of the US and in the racialization of Arab American women (432–61).

In addition to these two clusters and the single chapter on sexuality, just one chapter in the collection addresses the politics of place and space. Chapter 8, "Transfigurations: Homespace in Two Arab American Women's Novels" poses an essential question about the social construction of home and belonging in the Arab diaspora (189–213). In this chapter, Lisa Suhair Majaj contends that though the concept of home has long occupied the center of immigrant and diaspora studies, this concept holds specific significance for the Arab diaspora because it constantly evokes the binary of Arab American and Muslim Arab women as objects to be saved. However, as Majaj argues, Kahf and Jarrar's novels showcase moments of self-assertion of the Arab American women authors that negate the simplified binaries mentioned above. Additionally, Majaj shows how both novels navigate the metanarratives of Muslim and Arab womanhood and pose a spectrum of identities and possibilities for their readers.

Despite glossing over the topic of sexuality of Arab American women and the concepts of home and diaspora, various academic

audiences would benefit from reading the book. Specifically, the historical chapters diversify area studies syllabi by articulating Arab American women's experiences. Chapters from the gender cluster make solid additions to courses focusing on gender on a transnational scale. Chapters mentioned in the feminist security studies cluster provide resources for upper-level or graduate syllabi that address the intersection of race and gender, focusing on the racialization of Muslim and Arab communities. Addressing the question of home and belonging for the Arab and Muslim diaspora enlightens the unseen angle of the subject in transnational feminist and diaspora studies syllabi, and the chapter on Scheherazade adds insight to various literary, feminist, and queer syllabi. These multidimensional insights and contributions make *Arab American Women* a required read for various audiences across academic fields, within area and ethnic, security, and feminist studies.

NOTES

¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, ed. Rosalind C. Morris (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 48.