



شبكة المعلومات الجامعية
التوثيق الإلكتروني والميكروفيلم

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم



MONA MAGHRABY



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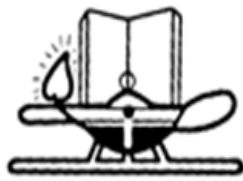


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MONA MAGHRABY



Post-9/11 Arab American Drama: A New Historicist Approach to the Plays of Yussef El Guindi, Betty Shamieh, and Heather Raffo

A Ph.D. Dissertation in English Literature (Drama)

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Dedication

I dedicate this work

To the memory of my dear parents

who planted in me the love for knowledge and left this
world without seeing more of the fruits of their sincere
devotion to me.

To my dear husband and children,

Yassin and Abd El-Rahman,

the spring of my life and my great hope.

To my guardian angel, Dr. Samia Abo Elnaga

To my brother prof. Mohammed and my sister Rasha

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Abstract

Although there is a body of Arab American literature that dates back to the late 19th century, it is usually said that Arab American drama was born on September 11th. Those attacks and their repercussions constitute a defining and dividing moment in the American history, in general, and the Arab American experience, in particular. In this respect, the present study traces the evolution of Arab American drama, concentrating on representative post-9/11 plays by Yussef El Guindi, Betty Shamieh, and Heather Raffo. Keeping in mind the racial, social, and historical constituents of Arab American identity, the study scrutinizes the experience of the 'suspect' and the 'victimized' Arab American. It also examines the theatrical experience of post-9/11 Arab American playwrights in their attempt to rise above the social, political, and cultural segregations and restrictions imposed upon them by a racialized hegemonic discourse. In doing so, the study investigates the emergence of an activist Arab American theatrical movement which attempts to liberate Arab Americans from the various forms of violence, discrimination, stereotyping, and Otherness. This dissertation

is a descriptive analytical study, depending on the theoretical approach of New Historicism which interprets the literary text as both a product and producer of history, culture, and social experience of its own age.

Key words: Arab American (drama), New Historicism, 9/11 attacks, Ethnicity, Identity, Stereotyping, Violence, Hegemonic discourse, Self-representation.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	III
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER ONE: A New Historicist Approach to Arab American Experience and Theatrical Production	9
New Historicism and the Interpretation of the Text	10
Identity and its Crisis: A New Historicist Perspective	19
A Brief History of Arab Immigrants in America	25
Historicizing the Crisis of Arab American Identity	28
Possible Readings of Arab American Experience	34
Historicizing Arab American Literature: Origins and Development	44
Arab American Drama Pre 9/11	51
Arab American Drama Post 9/11	55
Theatre as a Form of Activism	71
CHAPTER TWO: Post-9/11 Discourse of Violence and Imperative Patriotism	75
Post-9/11 Hegemonic Discourse: The Construction of Arabs as Enemies	77

Suspected Terrorists or Patriotic Arab Americans: The Issue of Post-9/11 Imperative Patriotism	79
Patriotism among Arab Americans: A New Historicist Approach	84
El Guindi's <i>Back of the Throat</i> and the Post-9/11 Hegemonic Discourse	93
Betty Shamieh's <i>The Black Eyed</i> : Violence Throughout Ages	118
Heather Raffo's <i>Noura</i> : When Violence Begins at Home	128
CHAPTER THREE: The Dynamics of Arab American Communities and Portraits of Self-representation	140
Raffo's <i>9 Parts of Desire</i> : Portraits of Narrative Trauma and Collective Memory	145
Restaging Palestine: A New Historicist Approach to Arab Americans' Diaspora	172
<i>Shamieh's Roar</i> and the Palestinian Diasporic Experience	177
El Guindi's <i>Our Enemies</i> : Intra-conflicts of Arab American Communities	192
CONCLUSION	206
WORKS CITED	216

Introduction

The history of Arab American literature officially begins at the late nineteenth century, when people from the Arab world settle in North America in quite considerable numbers. However, the importance given to minority movements and literatures during the last century did not shed adequate light on the Arab American literary experience. Ironically enough, the boom in Arab American literature, in general, and Arab American drama, in particular came at the onset of the 21st century as a result of the 9/11 disaster. Though there is a body of pre-9/11 Arab American literary productions, these works mostly concentrate on themes of nostalgia, assimilation, and social experience rather than challenging the racial stereotypes and the common misconceptions. Western popular culture and mainstream media often propagate stereotypes of Arabs' irrationality, backwardness, and terrorism. The attacks of September 11th and their aftermath have intensified these stereotypes and Arab/Muslim Americans' sense of victimization, discrimination, and sociopolitical detention. This atmosphere has led most Arab

American writers to produce literary works that intend to resist racial stereotypes, reveal the patriotic feature of Arab Americans, fix their image, and negate the fanatic misrepresentation of their own reality.

Most researches and scholarship conducted on American literature have either ignored or occasionally referred to the posture of Arab American literature. As a result of the fluctuating racial status of Arab Americans over history, Arab American literature, despite its long existence, has only recently started to get acknowledgement and recognition in the ethnic landscape of American literature. This contemporary Arab American theatrical formation takes as its mission the Arab Americans' striving for liberation from the various forms of stereotyping and racial discrimination. Arab American writers find in the theatre an artistic outlet and a popular ground for activism to encounter the discourses of suspicion and violence that heightened against Arab and Muslim Americans in the period following the 9/11 predicament. Somaya Sabry points out that "the literary writings and performances of