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Moustafa Bayoumi, *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror*. New York: New York University Press, 2015. 304 pp.

Nahid Afrose Kabir, Brac University, nahid_kabir@hotmail.com



Moustafa Bayoumi's *This Muslim American Life: Dispatches from the War on Terror* examines what it is to be a Muslim in the United States after September 11, 2001, and particularly during the War on Terror. Bayoumi briefly discusses the long presence of Muslims in America since the arrival of Muslim slaves from Africa. Later, from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century with the arrival of some early immigrants from Syria and Palestine, a few Muslims also migrated to America. Bayoumi summarizes that like other immigrants, for example the Chinese, some Arabs also faced resistance from the wider society. The author examines some interesting naturalization cases of the Arabs and Muslims in the USA.

Bayoumi discusses changes in U.S. immigration policies. With the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, the U.S. began to attract more immigrants of diverse nationalities including skilled immigrants. However, after the 9/11 Twin Towers attacks, Muslims became the Other.

Bayoumi provides five informative themes: diversity within the Muslim community; the excessive security measures of the U.S. government; Islamophobia in the public domain; inhumane treatment of detainees; and the representation of Arabs and Muslims in the media and Hollywood movies.

In his discussion of diversity within the Muslim community, instead of discussing broader Islam in America or the two major divisions among Muslims (Sunni and Shia) and the school of thoughts within each division, Bayoumi chose to discuss the offshoots of Islam—the Ahmadiyya community and the Nation of Islam. He discusses the contact between the Ahmadiyya community and the Nation of Islam, and similarities and differences between the two.

Bayoumi analyzes the writings of three commentators: Ayaan Hirsi Ali (an ex-Muslim), Irshad Manji (described as “barely Muslim”) and Reza Aslan (Muslim). Bayoumi observes that Ali and Manji’s perception of Islam is problematic because it is based on their negative cultural experiences. Aslan’s writings on Islam are relatively unproblematic but they are similar to the writings of Ali and Manji. They perpetuate Western narratives that for centuries the Western world has been invaded by Islam. Bayoumi’s arguments in this context are thought-provoking.

While discussing the excessive security measures of the U.S. government, Bayoumi examines how after 9/11 the Bush administration established national security measures (for example, the Entry-Exit Registration System) that were mainly directed against the American Muslim community. The Obama administration ended the “special registration” program. Yet surveillance against Muslim Americans has continued in other forms. For example, the New York Police Department’s (NYPD) surveillance of

Muslim Americans in public places, educational institutions and mosques is an invasion of their privacy.

Bayoumi discusses how some Muslim student associations were under the NYPD's surveillance. Bayoumi, who is of Egyptian heritage, was not listed as a "person of interest" but his student of Egyptian background who was a visible and practicing Muslim was under the NYPD's surveillance. However, Bayoumi shared his experience during his U.S. citizenship interview where the citizenship officer asked him if he wanted to retain his middle name "Mohamed." The author retained his middle name but kept wondering the meaning behind that question. Bayoumi also discusses the fear-mongering tactics of some politicians. For example, in 2013 North Carolina became the seventh state to sign the anti-Sharia bill. In 2014, voters in Alabama approved an anti-Sharia ballot initiative.

Bayoumi is critical of U.S. involvement in a war that resulted in the indefinite detention of "unlawful enemy combatants" in Camp Delta at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba and in Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq. In the process of arresting terrorists, U.S. troops detained some innocent civilians. For example, a lawyer in Mosul, Iraq, who was investigating allegations of U.S. troops' torture of Iraqis was arrested and subjected to the same kind of punishment he was investigating. The torture cases in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Guantanamo Bay discussed by the author are revealing—such as the "five techniques": being hooked and handcuffed, sealed in containers, doused with cold water, subjected to strobe lights, and blasted with brutally loud music.

Bayoumi discusses in detail how Muslims and Arabs have been racially profiled in the American print media and Hollywood movies. Sometimes Arabs and Muslims have been lumped together by race while other groups such as Jews and Hindus are described by their ethnicities. Before 9/11, Arabs were racialized as terrorists on American soil, for example in the movie *The Siege* (1998), while in *The Kingdom* (2007) terrorist attacks on the American compound in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, were told through different stories but the message was the same—the dangerous Arab Other. On American Muslim issues, Bayoumi provides a brief but novel analysis of the proposed Park51 (Ground Zero) Mosque in New York. He is critical of Fox News, which was quick to side with the anti-Muslim blogger Pamela Geller, and how the right-wing media transformed Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf into a "covert cultural jihadist."

One strength of this book is that Bayoumi constantly compares the present incidents involving American Muslims with other ethnic and racial groups in the past, for example, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and American Japanese internment during World War II. He also describes how some movies depicted Arabs and Muslims as the Other

before 9/11, and how they became more intense after 9/11. The descriptions of torture of detainees are vivid and informative. Nevertheless, the limitation of this book is that it is written within a postcolonial framework where the author adopts a theoretical over-generalization that Muslim life in America is distressing because of the Islamophobic attitudes of mainstream Americans and the policies of the U.S. government. Yet since 9/11 (and during the War on Terror), many more Muslims have been immigrating to the U.S., and there are also American Muslim success stories. Some discussion of the positive stories would have made this book more balanced.

Overall, this book synthesizes information in insightful ways. It will benefit students and scholars of American studies, cultural studies, and media studies.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

