1. Introduction

> We've learned a lot since 9/11 about places like Kandahar and Fallujah and Guantanamo Bay, about al-Qaeda and the Middle East, and about ourselves. What have you learned since 9/11? Our phone number is 800-989-8255. Email us, talk@npr.org. You can also join the conversation at our website. Go to npr.org, and click on TALK OF THE NATION. (Chertoff et al.)

The year 2011 witnessed the tenth anniversary of the most cruel terrorist attacks the U.S. has ever faced. Months before the commemoration day, TV broadcasts, radio shows and panel discussions across the nation called attention to the attacks themselves, their immediate consequences and their present-day impact. Prominent politicians, journalists, as well as average Americans shared their memories and insights on how 9/11[1] changed the country. There was a lot of grief and pain in these reports. Most importantly, however, this discourse did not focus on terrorism only. Instead, the question was one of information seeking and knowledge gain. "What have you learned since 9/11?" the talk-show host Neal Conan asked his audience. An e-mail by a listener in Chapel Hill provided an answer that summarized what others had expressed before: "I've come to realize just how fundamentally 9/11 altered our national consciousness, our world view and our sense of ourselves and others" (Brandon qtd. in Chertoff et al.).

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[1] The author is aware that the abbreviation 9/11 without the use of quotation marks appears problematic because it supposedly reifies the dominant American narrative on this series of events. While this is an important aspect to acknowledge, this study still uses the unmarked spelling of 9/11 to also account for the fact that various disciplines, e.g., Media Studies, also use the abbreviation in different contexts without stressing a particular interpretative lens.

The question of learning about "ourselves and others" turned out to be the most challenging one in the aftermath of 9/11 because Americans for the first time in their history had to realize that the very limits between self and other, between *us* versus *them,* could get blurred. Not only did they discover cruel and bloody terrorism on the day of the attacks. 9/11 also constituted "the day on which Americans discovered the Arab world," as the Arab American author and literary scholar Gregory Orfalea provokingly stated (224). All of a sudden, one of America's previously forgotten minorities – Arab Americans – stood in the spotlight. For many centuries, Arabs had been living in the United States mostly unnoticed by the public. They counted as the "Most Invisible of the Invisibles" among America's minorities, as the Arab American writer Joanna Kadi strikingly put it (qtd. in Fadda-Conrey, "Arab American Literature" 187; Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 148). Exactly *these* Americans now constituted the most visible subjects and objects of national discourse. After all, the terrorists who hijacked the planes that crashed into the World Trade Center were Arabs from the Middle East. The public and political attention, however, quickly shifted to Arabs living within the borders of the United States. Consequently, they became major targets of racial profiling, ethnic discrimination, and human rights violations (Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 152). Along with political decisions made by the Bush administration, the media started to spread a "discourse of fear and hatred," intentionally labeling Arabs and Muslims as enemies (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 150). Binary rhetoric ruled the public and political agenda; "either with us or against us" was the credo initiated by the president (qtd. in Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 171).[2] There were only "good Arabs or Muslims" and "bad Muslims" and nothing in-between (Naber, Introduction 3). This demonizing of Arabs and Arab Americans and those who were mistaken as such quickly turned into the new reality of America's public discourse.

No matter how fundamental the impact of 9/11 was for America and the world, it was also "The Day that Didn't Change Everything," as James Zogby provokingly puts it (11). Above all, the day revealed a general lack of knowledge about Muslims, Arabs, and Arab Americans and many unanswered questions which had existed long before the attacks. Who are these Arabs? What role do they play in the United States? Are they all terrorists, as popular sentiment seemed to suggest? What resulted from the attacks therefore was not only a literal war carried out in the battlefields of Afghanistan. It also caused what James Zogby calls "Knowledge

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2   This binary rhetoric is usually depicted to have affected mostly those targeted by the axis theory. This one-sided approach, however, conceals the fact that the 'us versus them' language also led to another internal division among the American population at large. The pressure to take sides in the war on terror thus led to a form of "imperative patriotism" that saw any dissent with government decisions as inherently unpatriotic and treacherous (Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 154).

Wars" against misinformation and unanswered questions (41). The actors that are generally considered to have been the winners in this war of information are the media. Actors who have mostly been forgotten when the question of 'what have we learned from 9/11' is posed, can be found in the realm of literature. Both actor groups are usually treated as separate domains.

It is the intention of this book to shed light on the complex yet highly enlightening relationship between the media, literary production, and public discourse. Knowledge gain linked to the strategic framing of information on Arabs living inside and outside U.S. borders is seen as the key to analyzing the trajectories of Arabs' and Muslims' public image. Interdisciplinarity thus forms the core pillar of this book, which seeks to make a theoretical as well as an analytical contribution to American Studies as a field that has the capacity to accommodate approaches and research concerns from various disciplines. Theory and methods development at the intersection of Media and Literary Studies will be given just as much room as the application of a newly developed framing approach in the analysis of contemporary Arab American life writing. This study has therefore been written in a way that multiple audiences in the academy and beyond can hopefully derive valuable findings; above all for American Studies scholars who are open to the methodological incorporation of social science approaches, for Media Studies scholars who embrace the value of non-quantitative research methods, and for all those concerned with Postcolonial Studies and Orientalism in various other disciplines. In addition, this study wants to *practice* the very topic it *explores*, namely the mediation of Arab and Muslim lives as examined through multiple frames. This reflects the larger aim of the book to contribute to the status of Arab American Studies by tracing the past and present of Arabs and Muslims in the diaspora – groups that as yet have not been written into the multicultural history of the U.S.

Arabs in America – The History of the Invisibles

When speaking of Arab identity, it needs to be clarified from the outset that the term Arab serves as a "label" (Shakir, *Bint Arab* 1) rather than as a coherent description of an ethnic origin (Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 157). As Yvonne Haddad states: "It is clear that the word Arab has meant different things to different Arab groups in this country" (79). "Arab" constitutes a pan-ethnic term that includes geographically, socially, and culturally diverse groups (Ajrouch, "Gender, Race" 377; Hassan and Knopf-Newman 11; Hopkins and Ibrahim 1; Ashmore, Deaux, and McLaughlin-Volpe 80). For those who self-identify as Arab, defining criteria are

the use of the Arabic language[3] as well as a national origin in one of the countries of the Arab League[4] (Naber, Introduction 5). Furthermore, a common confusion concerns the terms Arab[5] and Muslim. Whereas Muslim refers to anyone who adheres to Islamic belief, Arab is a more general ethnic category that does not include religious affiliation (Haddad 65). Suad Joseph identifies three types of commong misperceptions about Arab identity: 1) all people who live in Arab nations are considered Arabs, whether or not they identify with their ethnic roots, 2) the entire Middle East[6] is perceived as Arabic, and 3) Arabs are conflated with Islam (260).[7]

Clearly defining Arab identity becomes even more confusing if one considers the interdisciplinary dimension of Arab American Studies where the differentiation between Arab and Muslim identities varies according to the discipline and the national scholarly background. In Europe, for example, Middle Eastern Studies are often located within the Social Sciences with focus areas in politilal science, ethnography, geography, and linguistics. Social science scholars tend to follow official criteria of national and ethnic identification, such as home country in the Arab League, to delineate Arabs and Muslims. By contrast, Arab and Middle Eastern Studies Departments have a more hermeneutical tradition and focus more on Cultural and Literary Studies, particularly in the U.S. Accordingly, they tend to approach the study of Arab identity from a more inclusive perspective when it comes to categorization. While eschewing the reductionist confusion of Muslim and Arab identity, Arab American Studies scholars also investigate literature and other cultural material created by Muslims living in or originating from non-Arab countries in the Middle East, such as Iran and Afghanistan.

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3   Considering the large variety of local and regional dialects found in the Arabic language, these linguistic and national "unifiers" are highly "vague;" yet, they serve the purpose of analytical categorization (Hopkins and Ibrahim 6).

4   The Arab League is composed of 22 countries located in the "Old World," surrounded byAsia, Africa, and Europe. This conglomerate of nations constitutes the so-called "Arab homeland" for Arab immigrants living in the diaspora (Hopkins and Ibrahim 3).

5   Despite the confusion of Arabs and Muslims, Michael Suleiman finds alternations in the naming of Arabs, e.g., "Arabians." He interprets this "changeability of the name" as an indicator of the "absence of a definite and enduring identity" (Introduction 2).

6   As Sunaina Maira and Magid Shihade point out, the Middle East as supposedly neutral geographical description also represents a "colonial construction of space," for it is always defined relative to what is seen as the center of the world map (129).

7   A common term used to refer to Arabs living in the U.S. is "Arab community" (Saliba 307). The unifying function of this umbrella term, however, obscures the internal heterogeneity among Arabs, which is why the concept will only be used in this text when specific commonalities justify its significance.

In order to prevent scientific reductionism and avoid confusion, the term "Arab" will be used throughout the present study to refer to members of the Arab diaspora who trace their origin back to one of the countries of the Arab League. The term "Muslim" is used to denote religious identity affiliation. These definitions leave space for aspects of self-affiliation, as Muslim and Arab identity characteristics can be assumed to overlap to varying degrees.[8] Literature produced by Arab Americans as well as works produced by Muslims originating from non-Arab countries in the Middle East, e.g. Iran, will be considered to be part of 'Arab American Literature' as an umbrella category frequently used in U.S. academic institutions. This practice prevents the complication of needing to separate Muslim from Arab American literature is by no means a homogeneous categorization.

The history of Arab life in the U.S. is as diverse as the term "Arab." The genealogy of Arab immigration to the New World dates back to the end of the 19th century. The first wave of immigrants reached the shores of the "land of opportunity" in the 1870s (Suleiman, Introduction 6). At the time, most of them were workers from Lebanon who came for economic purposes and in search of more favorable living conditions (Suleiman, Introduction 1). They considered themselves sojourners with no intention of spending their entire lifetime in the U.S. (Haddad 62). The majority sought to help their families in "the old country" by means of the prosperity pursued in America (Suleiman, Introduction 6). Until the 1930s, about 130,000 Arabs had thus started a life in the New World.

The second wave of immigration lasted until the beginning of World War I. During this period, mostly Syrians from well-educated families settled in the U.S. with the intention to find a permanent home there. This also affected their cultural attitude. Whereas former immigrants had mostly retained their cultural and national identity, second-wave immigrants due to their different immigration goals, were much more inclined to adapt to their host culture and leave behind their Arab cultural ties. This had the effect that by World War II, many Arab Americans could not be distinguished from their host society anymore (Suleiman, Introduction 8-9). Coherence could also be found with respect to religion. Up to the 1950s, 90% of Arabs were of Christian descent (Haddad 63).

With the third wave of immigration, this relative homogeneity in immigrant demographics changed again. Recent immigration spanning from the post-World War II period up to the present has been marked by an even more decisive degree of diversity; in terms of religious background, national origin, demographic structure, and immigration motivation. Arabs from various nations continue to settle in the

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8   Due to the conflation of the terms Arab and Muslim in mainstream literature, quotations will be used which differ from this rule. Explanations will be provided to clarify whether the given quotation is based on different criteria for defining the terms Arab and Muslim (Haddad, Smith, and Moore 26).

U.S. Despite economic reasons, which have always counted as a major pull factor for immigration, political conflicts and religious prosecution in the recent past have served as major reasons for Arabs from several nations to seek a home in the U.S. (Suleiman, Introduction 2). This has also altered the cultural attitude of the various immigrant generations. In the 1980s and 90s in particular, Arabs became more politically active and founded cultural and church organizations (Haddad 76). Contrary to the pioneer generation of the 19th century, Arab Americans of the later era have been especially eager to rediscover and retain Arab culture and language by rejecting the "melting pot approach" (Suleiman, Introduction 8-9).

Current estimates of the Arab American population in the U.S. range from 3 to 3.5 million (Tehranian 166; "Demographics").[9] The states with the largest Arab American population are California, New York, and Michigan, where about two thirds live in metropolitan areas. With 32%, the largest ratio is of Lebanese ancestry. Of this total, more than 80% are U.S. citizens ("Demographics"). What distinguishes Arab Americans from other immigrant groups is their fairly high level of education and their related socio-economic status. About 45% of Arab Americans hold a bachelor's degree compared to only 27% of Americans at large. Similar figures can be found when looking at higher levels of education. Here, 18% hold post-graduate degrees whereas only 10% in the average population reach this education level (Samhan; Kayyali 71). As a result, Arab Americans are facing lower than average unemployment and relatively high income. Due to this continuous development and to steady immigration flows, Arab Americans today count as "growing, wealthy and professional" (Samhan).[10] Scholars therefore predict Arab Americans will constitute "America's Next Top Minority" (Ta 155).

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9   The figures are based on the 2010 data of the U.S. Census Bureau. Despite verified methods of data collection, the figures still count as estimates due to the fact that the U.S. Census identifies only a portion of the Arab population through the question "ancestry." The Arab American Institute consequently assumes an undercount factor of 3. Reasons for the undercount, among others, include limits of the ancestry question and the lack of distinction between race and ethnicity, high levels of out-marriage among later immigrant generations and misunderstandings of survey questions ("Demographics"). Despite these difficulties in determining the exact size of the Arab population, the recent data show a growing trend in pan-ethnic identity affiliation with many respondents self-identifying as "Arabs" or of "Arab origin" (Samhan).

10 A *Time Magazine* article by Bobby Ghosh under the heading "Arab-Americans: Detroit's Unlikely Saviors" explores the economic force behind thriving businesses owned by Arab Americans. They now count as possible rescuers of cities with degenerate economies, such as the former auto industry hub Detroit. This underlines the relatively unusual status Arab Americans occupy within the landscape of ethnic minorities in the U.S. since the former usually count as those needing economic support rather than providing it.

When looking at these figures and the highly unique features of Arab Americans as an ethnic minority, it is quite surprising to learn about the relative historical and social invisibility they have been facing in the overall cultural landscape of the U.S. The American historian William Leuchtenberg has even called Arabs "a people who have lived outside of history" (qtd. in Suleiman, Introduction 1). In contrast to other minority groups, Arabs have thus never officially become part of the multicultural history of America (Saliba 307). Recent opinion polls on the awareness of Arab Americans as part of U.S. culture and history tend to confirm this image. A clear division among non-ethnic[11] Americans and Arab Americans and Muslims manifests social and cultural cleavages. In a poll conducted by *Time* magazine in 2010, 62% of American respondents stated that they did not personally know any Muslim Americans (Altman). Learning about Arabs and Muslims *from* the respective 'other' therefore hardly takes place, as these figures indicate. Learning *about* Arabs through other channels is common practice but still does not fill all knowledge shortages. Only 29% of the American respondents in a 2010 poll therefore stated they "knew enough" about Arabs and Muslim countries, whereas 60% were in favor of learning more ("American Views" 4).[12]

A very different picture emerges when it comes to the question of what Americans *seem* to know about Arabs. The investigation of this question reveals a series of "knowledge tales"[13] rather than fact-based information (Cainkar 163). As an

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11 The term non-ethnic is pragmatically used here in order to demarcate Americans categorized as ethnic minorities and the mainstream American population without multi-ethnic background. This should not downplay the fact that the term 'non-ethnic,' despite its frequent usage by Cultural Studies scholars (see Shakir, "Mother's Milk" 44; Fadda-Conrey, "Arab American Literature" 204; Sollors xiv), is otherwise based on a tautology for a definition of self also entails ethnic origin as core factor (Hall, "New Ethnicities" 443). Hence, non-ethnic identity by definition cannot exist. Spivak once provocatively pointed to this finding by asking, "who is the nonethnic American?" ("Acting Bits" 788).

12 Interestingly, with respect to the question of knowledge about Islam as opposed to knowledge about Arabs, the figures are considerably higher. The number of respondents stating they knew enough about "Muslims and Islam" ranges around 36% with 49% stating they would like to learn more ("American Views" 4). This points to the fact that Islam is a more widely-discussed issue in public U.S. discourse than Arab and Arab American culture and ethnicity. It remains questionable, however, in how far respondents in the poll were able to differentiate between Arab ethnicity and Muslim religious identity.

13 Louise Cainkar in her study on the situation of Arab Americans post 9/11 entitled *Homeland Insecurity* defines knowledge tales as "discourses in which the speaker asserts informed knowledge about Arabs and/or Muslims using information gleaned from American popular culture […]" (163). The function of tales as sources of human knowledge has been a key concept in studies on the history of knowledge and ideas (Stark 310).

opinion poll from September 2011 reveals, one in three Americans believes that Muslim Americans are more sympathetic than Americans to terrorists. 55% say they at least know someone who holds negative prejudices against Muslims (Condon). Even though these figures have slightly dropped in the latter half of the past decade, widespread anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment persists (cf. Montopoli, "Poll"; Bayoumi 3). Verbal harassment such as e-mails sent to Arabs in the professional environment bearing the subject "Dear Terrorist"[14] (Elias) are only examples of the public inclination toward open racism which emerged post 9/11 (Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 159; see Chapter 3.3).

Overall, this burst of hostility paired with lasting half-knowledge about Arabs constitutes a major factor for the emergence of a lasting "backlash"[15] in the struggle of Arab Americans to claim their position in the multi-cultural landscape of America (James Zogby 15; Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 14; Naber, "Look, Mohammed" 278). Moustafa Bayoumi thus concludes that Arabs and Muslim Americans now constitute the "new problem" of American society (2). He thus takes up the question "How does it feel to be a problem?" which W.E.B. Du Bois' in *The Souls of Black Folk* asked more than a century ago (qtd. in Bayoumi 3; Du Bois 11). Contrary to the notion of many, however, the problem for Arab Americans did not start on 9/11 – it reaches back to a century-old history of stereotyping and emergent "Super Myths"[16] on Arab identity in the context of Orientalism (James Zogby 57).

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14 In an interview with *USA Today* conducted in the fall of 2006, a 28-year-old Muslim software engineer who was born and raised in the U.S. reported having received an internal e-mail from a co-worker with the opening line "Dear Terrorist." The e-mail was directly related to a current event a few days earlier, where a train bombing in India had killed more than 200 people and Muslim fundamentalists had been held responsible (Elias). This exemplary story gives a vivid picture of the daily discrimination faced by Muslims and Arabs living in the U.S.

15 As Anny Bakalian and Mehdi Bozorgmehr point out, "backlash" is used like a household term by authors in various different fields, particularly feminism, to express the reversal of positive integration developments in the Arab American population, whereby it often lacks further conceptualization (14). Despite its negative connotation, however, the effect of suffering backlash has also proven to be a key factor in political mobilization and integration (Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 14; James Zogby 33).

16 James Zogby, who counts as one of the best-known public opinion researchers on Arab American relations, clearly propagates the idea that the lack of knowledge on Arab Americans can only be solved by detailed public opinion research. As he explains in *Arab Voices*, "[w]e poll Arab opinion, let Arabs speak for themselves, and then listen to what their voices tell us about their political concerns [...]" (67). As his brother John in addition formulates in *The Way We'll Be* on the significance of polling: "We are prognosticators, of course [...]. But as I conceive of this work, we are equally priests and philoso-

Uncovering the Frame: Orientalism and Public Discourse

When Edward Said passed away after a long battle with cancer in September 2003, the *New York Times* cited his words by describing him as "a man who lived two quite separate lives," i.e., the one of an American university professor and acknowledged intellectual and, at the same time, the life of a "fierce proponent of the Palestinian cause" (Bernstein). The two works which gained Said most of his fame in both worlds, namely in academia *and* political activism, were *Orientalism* (1978) and its sequel *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In addition, Said's international acclaim was and still is largely based on his active participation in public social discourse, as numerous appearances in the media document (Shereen 114; Marrouchi, *Edward Said* 210). What tends to be forgotten, however, is that Said also greatly contributed to academic subject areas not directly related to the fields of politics and literature. One of the most important fields in this respect is Media Studies where Said's theoretical framework of Orientalism set lasting, though mostly unacknowledged, theoretical milestones.

Said's object of investigation in *Orientalism* was the origin of the "mysterious Orient" (Said qtd. in Tehranian 105). What today counts as common knowledge for students in many different academic disciplines related to the study of culture and history was, at the time of the book's publication, groundbreaking. Said in his historical inquiry revealed imperial and colonialist power mechanisms underlying the multitude of Orientalist myths and the supposed inferiority of *Eastern*[17] civilizations. Drawing on Foucault's contention that knowledge is power (Varisco 255), Said analyzed in how far the discourse of the *West* established an image of the *Orient* as backward, barbaric, and inherently inferior. Middle Easterners thus became caught in the process of othering without the agency of defining their own identity. For the following study, it is crucial to underline how central the concepts of binary thinking and its relation to imperial discourse have been in shaping contrasting worldviews. In *Orientalism* and even more extensively in subsequent theoretical writings, Said conceived of the term discourse in a much more far-reaching but at the same time differentiated manner than previous scholars, including various cultural and social realms as well as different actors in his model. In his view, lit-

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phers trying to make sense out of the always confusing human condition" (x). This assumption of letting Arabs speak through data represents an interesting complement to the literary perspective where the idea of letting different voices speak usually takes place through narrative means.

17 Due to the central but problematic significance of binary vocabulary such as *East* and *West*, *Orient* and *Occident* as markers of Orientalist discourse, these expressions will be spelled in italics throughout this work, unless they appear in the context of citations marked by respective quotation marks.

erature and popular culture contributed as much to the prevalence of Orientalist myths as did political figures and scholars.

The centrality of discourse as dynamic social concept became even more elaborate in the publication *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* which succeeded *Orientalism* in 1981. As the title already indicates, Said here devoted particular attention to the role of the media in shaping public discourse. His method again relied on a historical but also literary analysis of *Western* media representations of Islam and the Middle East which demonstrated in how far a number of recurring stereotypes have come to dominate the global view of Arabs. The title of the book thus works as a pun pointing to the fact that the "*covering*" of Islam in the media works toward "*covering up*" Islam as a universal concept (iii). Said thus also revealed the trajectories through which a "quasi-objective representation of the East" led to the evocation of Islam as a religion and culture inherently inferior to the *West* (*Covering* 24-25). He placed this finding in the larger context of Orientalism as an "interpretative project" carried out by the *West* to exert power over the *East* (*Covering* 155).

When reading Said's analysis of the entanglement between media stereotypes and the image of Arabs around the globe, the timelessness of his study becomes apparent. He investigated the effects of media discourse on politics and social constellations long before the media revolution fully unfolded[18] with the widespread use of the internet and the manifestation of "mass-mediated culture" (Shohat and Stam 10). This also went along with a truly interdisciplinary approach to discourse analysis which combined actors from various different social realms. As emphasized by the subtitle "*How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World,"* Said did not limit his critique of reductionism and universalist stereotypes to the media itself but rather extended it to all those who enjoy a wide credibility in the public eye (*Covering* viii). The term "experts" thus includes public opinion leaders,[19] such as journalists, and outspoken intellectuals inside and outside the academy (Said, *Covering* x; McQuail 308-09). To Said, all of these actors contributed to the social reality that the "media's Islam, the Western scholar's Islam are all acts of will and interpretation that take place in history and can only be dealt

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18 Visionary scientists in the field of communication research emphasized, however, as early as in the 1960s, the outstanding meaning of the media for society. In 1964, Walter Lippman in had already described the media as the central force "upon which the human race depends to hold it together. Mass communication is rapidly becoming, if it is not already, the main framework of the web of social life [...]" (qtd. in Fortner 190). Given the early moment of these insights into the cultural significance of the media, it is quite surprising that the actual inclusion of the media society in the research agenda of cultural and literary critics has only taken place fairly recently at the end of the 20th century.

19 For further details on the concept of opinion leadership see Chapter 2.3.

with in history as acts of will and interpretation" (*Covering* 45). This very inclusive definition of the actors functioning in the media environment also points to Said's broad conceptual understanding of the media. This especially refers to the intersection between Literary Studies and news media production since both rely on the practice of "storytelling" (*Covering* 49). Storytelling and narration, however, are only some of the structural and functional similarities combining Literary and Media Studies, as Said demonstrated. Eventually, the media-theoretical findings can count as core elements of Said's larger theoretical contribution to Cultural Studies with its increasing interest in media culture and production.

This interdisciplinary orientation of Said with a particular emphasis on media inquiry becomes particularly obvious when analyzing the vocabulary Said used in his discourse analysis of Orientalism as universal ideological concept. Said did not adhere to the usual terminology employed by former generations of historians, philosophers, and literary scholars. Rather, his overall register is shaped by a very clear analytical and less aesthetic perspective. The most striking term with respect to Said's ultimate contribution to media theory is found in his usage of the concept of 'frames.' Said explicitly discussed stereotypical media representations of Arabs as "organizational frameworks" which exceed the mere factual content of information and ultimately evoke particular interpretations on the part of *Western* audiences (*Covering* 62). In an interview entitled "In the Shadow of the West" conducted in 1986, Said specified his notion of framing by stating that "everything can be and is objectively itemized, framed, formed [...]" (Interview with Crary and Mariani 45). In another instance, Said describes these frames as forming "thematic clusters" at the basis of media reporting (Said, "Scholars, Media" 295), naming Muslim fundamentalism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as prominent examples of this effect. In addition, Said in the same interview also revealed what to him constituted the core mechanism underlying this process of framing, namely the function of selectivity. As he asserts, "there is never anything neutral about it [media reporting]: the entire process represents choice and selectivity, exclusions and inclusions, and things of that sort that are highly sophisticated" (Interview with Crary and Mariani 295). Said here, seemingly unintentionally, identifies the core elements of what would later become known as framing theory in media research. The concern about interpretative frameworks, the observation of "communities of interpretation," and the social effect of media representations on the real-life world all bear testimony to this interdisciplinary link (*Covering* 9). To Said, framing was the fundamental taxonomy steering the complex links between knowledge gain, media representation, and public opinion management.

At the time of Said's study, no one could estimate how astute his insights with respect to the future impact of the global media would become. Currently, one of the central theoretical frameworks for the analysis of news coverage, framing gained prominence at the end of the 1980s especially, and its analytical tools and

the scope of its empirical investigations in the field of Media Studies have been continuously refined and expanded ever since. Especially in the case of long-term political conflicts, such as the Cold War, but also in connection with major current events in the Middle East, framing has been instrumental in explaining how media reporting shapes the opinion of the audience. This also holds true for one of the most important and globally mediatized key events, namely, 9/11 and its aftermath. As popular culture scholar Jeff Birkenstein and his colleagues formulate with respect to the significance of a larger narrative frame for the perception of the incident: "Without a story, we are, as many of us were after September 11, intensely vulnerable to those people who are ready to take advantage of the chaos of their own ends. As soon as we have a narrative that offers a perspective on the shocking events, we become reoriented, and the world begins to make sense again" (Birkenstein, Froula and Randell 1).[20]

Said in *Orientalism* and to an even more focused degree in *Covering Islam* showed that the media and all actors taking part in mediated discourse offered just that story. This also raised the question of alternatives. Who could compete with the communication and interpretation monopoly represented by the media? As a self-proclaimed public intellectual and political activist (*Covering* x), Said himself took up the challenge and used his work to initiate a counter-movement to the previous Orientalist practice by providing alternative knowledge[21] about the Middle East, Arabs, and Muslims.[22] He thus contributed to upending the previous framework of

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20 In addition to written media content which stands at the center of this study, it must be pointed out that narrative creation by today's media largely takes place in a visual format (Orfalea 218). This particularly impacts the reception process of respective media content if particularly emotional events are covered, such as the traumatic footage surrounding the 9/11 attacks or the torture scandal of Abu Ghraib in 2004 (Whitlock 194; also see Chapter 6.2). As a number of studies in media effects research demonstrate, visual representations are processed very differently from written information (McQuail 348). Since the following analysis focuses on written life narratives and compares them to the effects achieved by other print media, the role of visuals will mostly be disregarded.

21 This view is in line with a more general definition proposed by Said according to which knowledge is not based on "the recitation of facts" but needs to be constantly challenged anew (*Covering* 160). Due to the scholar's constant involvement in knowledge production, Said thus also refined the role of the professional intellectual to include the duty of battling stereotypes by providing alternative knowledge (*Covering* 24).

22 Moustapha Marrouchi describes Said as a "*strategic* intellectual," thus implicitly suggesting that Said always paired his intellectual insight with political interest ("Counternarratives" 256). Despite the admiration which this unified embodiment of politics and scholarship expresses, it also constitutes one of the major strains of criticism applied to Said. Derogatively, critics call this the "Said phenomenon," suggesting that Said pursues his

cultural misrepresentation in public media. Despite his activist vigor, however, Said still doubted the effectiveness of his means to counter the all-subsuming reductionism used to "demonize and dehumanize a whole culture" (*Covering* xxxv). As the further dissemination of Orientalist stereotypes in the media would demonstrate in subsequent decades, Said's outlook would prove to be true.

The "*TV-Arab*" and Other Mediated Stereotypes

In contrast to the fairly recent visibility of Arabs in the American cultural landscape, the image of the Arab in U.S. media and popular culture has been highly publicized for many decades. The first to thoroughly analyze the phenomenon with a particular focus on the spread of television was the mass-communication researcher Jack Shaheen. In his book with the laconic title *The TV Arab* published in 1984, he investigated the origin of public stereotypes surrounding the Arab as "cultural Other" (Shaheen, *Arab and Muslim Stereotyping* 1). As he declared, his research was based on "eight years of television viewing" (*TV Arab* 4). Shaheen analyzed a total of more than 100 entertainment programs, including documentaries, cartoons, and other independent formats adding up to a total of 200 episodes relating to Arabs. His investigation started out with the assumption that "[t]elevision tends to perpetuate four basic myths about Arabs: they are all fabulously wealthy; they are barbaric and uncultured; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery; and they revel in acts of terrorism," as he states in one of the opening chapters entitled "In Search of the Arabs" (*TV Arab* 4). Shaheen's thorough analysis suggests that this thesis is solid: In entertainment programs and supposedly enlightening documentaries alike, Shaheen spotted greedy oil sheikhs, dagger-dragging bearded terrorists and "belly-dancing harem girls" (Naber, Introduction 4). As he concludes at the end of the book: "The stereotype remains omnipresent" (*TV Arab* 113).

Despite Shaheen's rather discouraging research results with respect to the legacy of Orientalist stereotyping, it must be pointed out that he showed a more optimistic outlook as to whether the trend could be halted. Two findings derived from his analysis are of particular importance for current research. The first one is that Shaheen did not attribute the contorted depiction of Arabs in the popular media merely to bad intentions or some colonialist endeavor carried out by a white-mainstream monopoly. Instead, Shaheen saw the root of constantly (re-)emerging stereotypes in the lack of knowledge on the part of the media themselves and in the

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"intellectual mission" with an alsmost religious verve in order to proselytize (Marrouchi, "Counternarratives" 209). Marrouchi does not fail to highlight, though, that exactly this practical involvement separates Said's concept of discourse from that of Foucault who limited his influence to theoeretical activism (Marrouchi, *Edward Said* 233).

public (*TV Arab* 4). Ultimately, and this can count as the second innovative contention he makes, Shaheen did not regard the media as merely the source of Arab stereotyping but also as a potential interlocutor for changing these stereotypes. As he states with respect to the role of documentaries and other informative programs, "the main objective of the television documentary is to inform and to enlighten – to provide viewers with facts, questions and points of view that make us a more knowledgeable people" (*TV Arab* 112). This larger focus on knowledge acquisition through media consumption governs the chapter "Dispelling a Stereotype," in which he further delineates ways the media, through detailed and balanced information procurement, can use their powerful potential to draw an alternative frame around the Arab (*TV Arab* 126).

Following Shaheen's pioneering investigation of the role of television in creating stereotypes of *the* Arab, a multitude of further studies in the field of mass media research followed in his footsteps. The methodologies and range of these studies expanded with the proceeding revolution of the mass media, such as the evolution of the internet and the respective advance of mass communication research itself in the 1990s (McQuail 39). When looking at the enormous number of studies containing the terms 'Arabs, Muslims, Media and Stereotypes' in their titles, one is overwhelmed by the allure the issue seems to cast over researchers.[23] Gregory Orfalea in this context ironically remarks that the analysis "of American popular culture's stereotyping of the Arab has become something of a cottage industry; there is no lack of material on this subject" (8; Pulcini 35). Some of the more recent publications on the shelves of academic libraries include *Pens and Swords: How the American Mainstream Media Report the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (2008) by Marda Dunsky, Shaheen's *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs after 9/11* (2008) and his most recent work *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (2009). The titles of these studies already indicate that the bottom-line conclusion of media stereotyping has not changed considerably.[24] Recent movie releases thus often

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23 A January 2012 search of the popular academic database *JSTOR* using the terms "Arab, Media, Stereotype," yielded 980 hits with the oldest result dating back to the year 1882. An even larger wave of studies and reports on the relation between mediated stereotypes and Arabs can be found when searching popular search engines like Google. Here, the same search terms lead to more than 1.2 million results. This overwhelming number of academic and non-academic resources points to the general social significance of the issue of Arab stereotyping.

24 Recent studies of Hollywood's tendency to denigrate Arabs provide compelling support for Shaheen's results. As James Zogby explicates, a 2008 study on American movies found that in pre-9/11 movie releases, only 12 portrayals of Arabs out of a total of 900 were positive. This picture did not change dramatically in the post-9/11 era. As the study

recycle former blockbusters, such as *Aladdin, 1001 Arabian Nights*, and *The Mummy* with Arabs appearing as "airborne fanatics" (Little 11).

The earlier interest in analyzing the skewed media image of Arabs with a particular focus on the entertainment sector has meanwhile taken a more political turn. The events of 9/11 as well as former cases of terrorism connected to the Middle East conflict marked decisive incisions to trigger this shifting research attention. Following 9/11, most empirical analyses in Media Studies therefore have explored the installation of the "War on Terrorism" (WOT)[25] as a major frame of interpretation and source of stereotypical images of Arabs (Kern, Just, and Norris 292; Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 152). These analyses mostly focus on news media items from television and newspaper outlets. In addition, comparative studies and cross-country analyses have been pursued. These studies provide sufficient evidence that the WOT has especially dominated the global media coverage of Arabs since the 9/11 attacks (Kern, Just, and Norris 298). At the same time, they also confirm that this image of the Arab as bearded terrorist was prominent long before the attacks of 9/11 (Wöhlert 21). Hardly any report on Arabs or events in the Middle East therefore fails to refer to terrorism and the construction of fear caused by the alleged Muslim enemy (Fritsch-El Alaoui 14; Altheide, "News Media" 658). Randa Kayyali in this respect talks about a post-9/11 "media frenzy" and "cacophony" which was driven by the representation of Arabs and Muslims by non-Muslims (144). Gillian Whitlock even uses the dramatic term of an "epic war between the worlds since 9/11" (125). As Nadine Naber concludes, the image of the Muslim terrorist has steadily come to replace earlier more romanticized images of the "rich oil sheikh and belly-dancing harem girls" (Introduction 4).[26]

The increased visibility of Arabs in the media following 9/11, however, did not only awaken scientists in the field of communication research to explore the con-

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further records, since the attacks 200 Arab characters have been created in new movie releases. Less than 30% of them showed positive features (40).

25 All further references to the War on Terror will be abbreviated by WOT.

26 The media scholar Evelyn Alsultany points to the social normative dimension of stereotypes. In an interview with the author she explains: "We live in an era in which stereotypes are no longer socially acceptable. But this does not mean they have disappeared. In the case of Arabs and Muslims, the stereotype of the terrorist is still common." While the Muslim terrorist still counts as the most vivid image many non-Arabs have in mind, new stereotypes have come to emerge. Alsultany observes that "new kinds of representations have also become common – for example the patriotic or victimized Arab American after 9/11. These are certainly improvements but they are also new limiting types of portrayals." This finding highlights the more general trajectory that stereotypes can hardly be grasped based on universal value-criteria but rather in connection with particular characteristics, such as a limited view on a certain social group (see Chapter 2.2).

nection between the media and Arab identity.[27] Especially in the fields of Literary and Cultural Studies, the impact of the mass media on manifesting stereotypes also gained widespread attention. Hardly any publication or review of Arab American literature nowadays lacks references to media stereotypes about Arabs, even if the literary or cultural object under scrutiny has no connection to the media world. No matter if dealing with poetry, feminist issues, or ethnic identity negotiation in Arab American novels – the Hollywood Arab and negative stereotypes surrounding him/her usually provide the starting point and major research motivation of the vast majority of analyses found in the field (see Banerjee, "Arab Americans"[28]). Similar to respective studies in media research,[29] analyses conducted in the field of Cultural Studies mostly focus on media effects and share major conclusions. Almost ex-

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27 Sadly though correctly, scholars in the fields of Literary Studies and American Cultural Studies also mostly belong to the group who only discovered their research interest in Arabs after the events of 9/11 (Salaita, "Ethnic Identity" 148). This finding by Steven Salaita counters his somewhat glorification of scholarship and its real-life impact expressed in the following statement: "Many of us also promote the semi-idealized notion that scholarship shapes events just as much is it is shaped by them" ("Ethnic Identity" 148). The impact of 9/11 and the wave of studies that followed show that scholarship is more reactive to events than proactive.

28 A recent essay by Mita Banerjee in the *American Studies Journal* of 2008 entitled "Arab Americans in Literature and the Media" demonstrates the close link between media and literature in today's Literary Studies. Critically speaking, however, this pairing of literature and media both neglects and creates certain methodological and analytical differences between the two fields in suggesting a cultural impact on the part of the media which the respective studies do not empirically prove.

29 For the sake of differentiation and contrasting, this study uses the terms Communication/Media Studies to refer to the mostly empirical field of media research. The terms Literary and Cultural Studies in turn are used as umbrella terms for the hermeneutical analysis of texts and other cultural materials. This is not to deny that Literary Studies in the past two decades have undergone a tremendous transition to include a more society-oriented discussion of literature (Bissell 156; also see Chapter 2.1). Although Cultural Studies serves as an umbrella term or "metatheory" which is highly contested, its major preoccupation is seen in investigating the interrelation between culture and ideology (Kellner 139). At the basis is a historicist approach, meaning that concepts and methods are regarded as originating in a specific historical and social context (Kellner 141). This also facilitates an opening towards various cultural and media formats other than written texts. The logic of differentiation in the present study thus primarily rests on the different methodologies prevailing in the respective field. Whereas mass communication mostly locates itself in the sciences, which are characterized by the empirical method (Slingerland 224), the humanities employ hermeneutical methods (Slingerland 226).

clusively, they suggest that the high mediatization of Arabs creates a predominantly negative image of this group which in turn steers public opinion and consequently impacts the identity negotiation and self-definition of Arab Americans themselves.

From a methodological viewpoint, it must be noted that real interdisciplinary links to media research are missing, although the media nowadays constitute such a well-favored topic in the field of Cultural and Literary Studies (Gray 25). The two spheres of the humanities and the social sciences thus remain largely distinct.[30] On the one hand, this leads to the result that efforts to incorporate theories and methods from communications research and to consult empirical data from quantitative studies are hardly undertaken in Literary Studies. On the other hand, communication research with its empirical focus on quantitative data collection has not paid attention to the more hermeneutical insights provided by cultural and literary scholars. This particularly concerns the question of how media images impact ethnic and multi-ethnic identity negotiation.[31] The interdisciplinary door opened by Said's investigation in *Covering Islam* has thus not been pushed further and the dominance of public media presentations remains mostly unchallenged in filling the mental blanks in the research agenda (Cainkar 160). In his study on Arab Americans and their racial history, John Tehranian summarizes this status quo as follows: "Through the consumption of media, individuals who have had no personal experience with Middle Easterners receive and internalize a clichéd image of the group as a whole. The tabula rasa has now disappeared, replaced with a flawed maquette of the quintessential Middle Easterner who resides in the minds of many" (105). Outside the realm of scholarship, it is Arab American writers of the contemporary period who have set out to challenge this frame of the mediated TV Arab.

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30 As Ann Gray in Pertti Alasuutari's 1999 edition *Rethinking the Media Audience* noticed, there were only a handful of major studies in the field of communication research which were frequently cited in Cultural Studies (24). Despite the continuous inclusion of media research in Cultural and Literary Studies since that time, this situation has not changed much, whereby the growing differentiation tendency of academic subjects has also brought about an even stricter division of methodologies.

31 The most prominent exception is provided by Ella Shohat and Robert Stam who with their book *Unthinking Eurocentrism* count as pioneers in linking Ethnic, Cultural, and Media Studies. Despite this interdisciplinary move, however, their theoretical framework is clearly located in the field of Cultural Studies with a thematic focus in the media area.

"Tilting the Frame:"[32] Arab American Life Writing Today

Given the turbulent political circumstances surrounding Arab identity and the bleak picture emerging from the way in which Arabs and Arab Americans are framed and thus constrained in raising their own voice, it is certainly surprising to read a seemingly contradictory statement by the journalist Jonathan Curiel. In a newspaper article on Arab arts from 2003 he states: "There has never been a better time to be Arabic" (D-1).[33] Focusing specifically on the area of Arab American literary production in the post-9/11 era, however, suggests that this assertion indeed proves true. Writers in this period have become especially active in carrying out Said's urging to define themselves through literary expression instead of tacitly bowing to the constant definition by others. Gregory Orfalea identifies a "publishing renaissance" in the field of Arab American literature (186), which supports the assumption that the tragedy of 9/11 and the backlash it caused for Arabs also marked a unique moment to break the cycle of perpetuated humiliation in public discourse.

The current influence of Arab American literature, i.e., English-language writing produced by Arabs living in the U.S. (Majaj, "Arab-American Literature Today" 128, 134), must be seen within the broader literary tradition of the Middle East.[34] Stemming from a traditionally rich culture of storytelling and performative arts, Arab American writing enabled immigrants to express their identity by means of literature (Majaj, "Arab-American Literature Today" 132; Ludescher 93). The categorization into literary periods roughly reflects the immigration history of Arabs, with the first era dating back to the late nineteenth century (Majaj, "Arab American Literature: Origins"). These writers participated in the so-called "Mahjar" movement, whereby Mahjar in translation means "place of immigration" (Ludesch-

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32 The subheading is a reference to Steinberg's article "Tilting the Frame: Considerations and Collective Action Framing from a Discursive Turn" (1998).

33 Despite this positive outlook with respect to the number of literary productions by Arab Americans in recent years, no Arab American writers to date have succeeded in winning a major American literary prize (Orfalea 223). Obviously, it is highly questionable that the reason lies in a lack of literary quality. Rather, the scant attention paid to Arab American works in contrast to the literature of other ethnic groups, especially by African Americans, seems to at least partly account for this fact.

34 Arab American literature in this study is clearly separated from Arabic literature based on the criterion of language, not on authorship. Although Carol Bardenstein, among others, argues that it is "artificial to maintain these rigid boundaries" ("Beyond Univocal Baklava" 164; Vinson 84) the distinction is essential when taking a comprehensive approach to the study of Arab American literature with a particular focus on the respective audiences that are targeted. Language here obviously constitutes a major criterion deciding over who can actually read the respective texts.

er 95).[35] This also points to the thematic focus of immigrant identity negotiation at the time. The best-known authors of this period are Ameen Rihani and the poet Khalil Gibran (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 61; Majaj, "Arab-American Literature: Origins").[36] Writers at this birth hour of Arab American literature already conceived of themselves as "cultural middlemen" between East and West (Ludescher 97). Their goal was to contribute to the larger body of ethnic literature.

The second generation of writers moved away from the strong focus on immigrant experience displayed by its predecessors. Instead, they turned to more overarching identity themes of the modern period (Ludescher 102). A "defining moment in the history of Arab American literature" in the late 1980s was the publication of the influential anthology *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry* (1988), which for the first time explicitly centered on and highlighted English literature written by Arab Americans as opposed to literature written mostly in Arabic. A second prestigious anthology then soon followed with *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab American and Arab Canadian Feminists* in 1994 (Ludescher 103). As the title suggests, the editors here specifically addressed the contribution of Arab women writers in North America. Both collections featured the status of Arab American literature as a genre in its own right and aimed at granting the latter a place in the pantheon of multi-ethnic writing in America.

The named compilations not only fulfilled a collective function by bringing awareness to Arab American writing through means of cultural documentation, in addition, they also served as lasting inspiration for the current group of young authors to continue the literary tradition (Ludescher 104; Hartman, "Grandmothers" 170-71).[37] This third generation of Arab American writers, among them many women such as Diana Abu-Jaber, Laila Halaby, Laila Ahmed, and Lisa Suhair Majaj, has significantly contributed to the thematic and methodological variety found in contemporary Arab American fiction writing. The engagement with political conflict in the Arab world has fostered this development and served as major motivation for these authors to face the question of "write or be written" (Majaj, "Arab-American Literature: Origins").[38] Despite the central issue of identity negotiation in the context of political and social conflict (Suleiman, Introduction 11),

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35 The Mahjar movement also included non-Arab diasporic artists (Ludescher 95).

36 Ameen Rihani's influential work *The Book of Khalid* was published in 1911, Khalil Gibran's masterpiece *The Prophet* in 1923 (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 50).

37 There is quite a wide diversity of opinions when it comes to determining the exact genesis of Arab American literature. Tanyss Ludescher even adds a fourth period to the list which he labels "The Newest Generation," referring to the youngest group of artists who have emerged after Abu-Jaber and her contemporaries (105).

38 Pulcini reads this wave-like reaction to oppression in the form of increased literary production as a sign of "New Pride" following the media mistreatment (39).

however, a more specific definition of what constitutes Arab American literature remains challenged. Whereas some today categorize it merely as part of ethnic and diaspora writing[39] (Majaj, "Arab American Literature Today" 126; Kayyali 125), others regard the "schism between 'Arab' and 'American'" as unique defining feature, delineating Arab American literature from other ethnic literatures (Majaj, "Arab American Literature Today" 128).[40]

These mostly thematic debates on the question of genre definition conceal the larger variety of different literary formats found in Arab American writing. Here, the novel as "the great book of life" clearly dominates the picture (Lawrence qtd. in Orfalea 189).[41] In addition, poetry has been a popular means of expression as well; starting with the early poems of Ameen Rihani and encompassing the recent prose poetry of Mohja Kahf and others (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 227). The dominance of these two genres is reflected in the scholarly attention devoted to Arab American literature. The former largely focuses on the analysis of fiction writing, thus excluding further important formats which also make up an essential part of contemporary Arab American writing (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 38). This, in turn, is reflected in the critical attention devoted to Arab American works. The strong focus on fiction writing, particularly in the case of the novel, tends to override an important discussion of Arab American autobiographies of the contemporary period.[42]

Contrary to the long-standing assumption that autobiography represents a fundamentally *Western* genre due to its focus on the individual and its neglect of communal ties with the latter counting as the hallmark of *Eastern* civilizations, Arabic literature looks back to a long tradition of autobiographical production (Parker ix; W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 78). Early examples of life writing can be found

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39 Leonard argues that the case of Arabs living in the U.S. does not really constitute a proper example of diasporic identity. Her view is based on the definition of diaspora as enforced life outside one's homeland rather than a voluntary exilic status (80).

40 The notion of Arab American writing as 'just' dealing with identity struggle has brought about severe criticism by scholars arguing that "Arab life" as a thematic label is too simplified to account for an entire canon (Majaj, "Arab-American Literature Today" 134).

41 One of the earliest and, up to this point, best-known Arab American novelists is William Peter Blatty. He gained literary fame in 1971 with the publication of the bestselling novel *The Exorcist*. Even though Blatty thus clearly counts as Arab American, it must be noted that with the exception of his autobiographical publication *Which Way to Mecca, Jack?* (1960), none of his works focuses on Arab American identity or contains Arab American characters (Orfalea 185).

42 The recent publication of Waïl Hassan's *Immigrant Narratives* provides a welcome exception to this rule. Hassan places particular emphasis on the function of life writing in the Arab American literary tradition.

in the pre-Islamic period as early as in the 8th century, with a multitude of works following in the 11th and 12th centuries (Reynolds 53). Above all, the Arabic autobiography was characterized by content and less by form (Reynolds 2). The major intention of Arab memoir was to give a historical record of one's life in order to share this knowledge with others (Reynolds 3).[43] This focus on historical facts[44] marks the key difference to the genealogy of autobiography in the *West*. As Dwight Reynolds summarizes: "Whereas western autobiography achieved its greatest popularity as a genre in tandem with its fictional counterpart, the novel, the threads of the pre-twentieth century Arabic autobiographical tradition were spun from the raw material of historical inquiry" (5). Starting in the 12th century, political autobiographies became increasingly common (Reynolds 65).

The impact of the novel as dominant mode in fiction writing did not leave the development of the Arabic autobiography untouched. When the latter at the beginning of the 20th century came into contact with the *Western* novel, a new system of classification emerged which had been unknown in the Arabic tradition up to this point: the opposition between fact and fiction (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 79). The blending and factual symbiosis of autobiography and novel writing materialized in the 1920s with the publication of the first Arabic autobiographical novel *Al-Ayyam* by the Egyptian intellectual and literary scholar Taha Hussein (Reynolds 10). This tradition has continued up to the present, in which women writers in particular have produced a series of works under the heading of autobiographical fiction (Orfalea 188).[45] Recent anthologies, such as *Post-Gibran: Anthology of Arab American Writing* (1999), *Sheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing* (2004), and *Dinarzard's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction* (2004) mirror this blending of genres in their presentation of fiction with highly autobiographical references.

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43 In contrast to the *Western* understanding of autobiography as motivated by one's own longing to share personal experience for the purpose of self-definition, it is a convention in classical Arab life writing that authors justify their motivation by recalling that they were asked to write down their stories (Reynolds 61).

44 Eakin criticizes historians by pointing out that the writing of history itself is based on textuality. With respect to German historicism, he observes: "Facts *in* history are one thing; texts *as facts* are quite another, and Hayden White's insistence on the *textuality* of history has been largely ignored by practicing historians [...]" (Introduction 5).

45 It is questionable if the popular notion that contemporary Arab American writing is mostly dominated by women really is a result of their dominance in actual literary production or the result of selective appropriation. The latter assumption is hinted at by Lisa Majaj who explains that women writers get more attention by the public and by literary critics than their male colleagues due to an "American sensibility" and inclination to Orientalism as female legacy ("Arab-American Literature Today" 144).

Contemporary autobiographies by Arab Americans which do not show any explicit relation to the realm of fiction writing can be read as an amalgam combining elements of the history of life writing in *West* and *East*. Edward Said also counts as a precursor of modern-day Arab American life writing with his well-known memoir *Out of Place: A Memoir* (2000). The work is commonly discussed as a prime example of "Exilic Memoirs" (W. Hassan, *Narrating Identities* 112), a format focusing on diasporic and specifically Arab American identity negotiation between the two worlds of *East* and *West* and the struggles linked to this "outlandish existence" (Hornung 368). The events of 9/11 then also brought about a significant change in the realm of Arab American life writing, in which autobiographical formats have continuously gained more prominence in the years that followed.[46] The difficult position of Arabs in public discourse has contributed to the fact that ethnic and cultural identity negotiation more than ever before stand at the center of these accounts (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 71). In contrast to earlier conceptions of autobiographical writing in the Arab tradition of historical fact-telling, the Arab American life narrative of the modern period is considered to promote identity based on "fluidity and transformation" (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 77).

Based on the mixed ethnic background of Arab American writers, this identity negotiation necessarily transfers the discussion to the field of multiculturalism. Culture consequently constitutes the predominant meta-theme in the analysis of contemporary Arab American autobiography, an observation which is expressed by the labeling of Arab American life narrative as "cultural autobiography" (Reagon qtd. in Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 75). It must be critically remarked, though, that the term 'culture' in this context is hardly ever defined. The concept therefore gains a very vague, indeterminate, but at the same time simplistic meaning. An example of this is the debate of so-called "cookbook-memoirs," in which food and its preparation function as "essentialized cultural markers" to which Arab culture is reduced (Bardenstein, "Beyond Univocal" 210, 160).[47] Culture in other instances gains a strongly political meaning, as in the case of Said's autobiography *Out of Plac*e. Further examples of this politically-oriented interpretation center on recent narratives from Palestine and personal accounts related to the practice of honor killings in countries, such as Iraq and Afghanistan (Moore-Gilbert 113, 118; Whit-

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46 As Eakin rightly remarks, 9/11 as a major turning point in global history not only triggered a wave of autobiographies by Arab American authors but also by writers of any nationality around the world (*Living Autobiographically* 122).

47 The most acknowledged example of cookbook memoirs in Arab American literature is Diana Abu-Jaber's *The Language of Baklava*. The book has received wide critical attention, whereby analysts indeed tend to reduce the work to its food-related title thus exluding the possibility of further themes related to the realm of cultural practice (Bardenstein, "Beyond Univocal Baklava" 175).

lock 107). In defiance of this limited thematic scope subsumed under the heading of culture, some critics attribute the quality of circulating "intraculturally and interculturally" to Arab American autobiographies, based on their wider choice of cultural issues shared by international audiences (Whitlock 199; Bardenstein, "Beyond Univocal" 161).

When reviewing this long history of Arab autobiographical production in both the Middle East itself and in America, it becomes clear that the notion of autobiography as prototypical display of Emersonian self-reliance and *Western* individualism is a myth (W. Hassan, "Arab-American Autobiography" 13; Eakin, Introduction 10). The "YOU-ESS-AY" as it appears in the lyrics of Bruce Springsteen therefore can count as an inherent part of Arab American I-narration (qtd. in Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 92). With its focus on multi-ethnic identity negotiation, Arab American autobiography allows for intimate insights into the lives of Arab Americans hardly found in other literary formats. The problem remains, however, that autobiographical theory has not kept pace with the multitude of autobiographical works produced by Arab Americans and other members of ethnic minorities.

Autobiography Theory in the Ethnic Borderland[48]

Just like Arab and Arab American life writing itself, autobiography theory has also undergone severe shifts throughout the past decades. The interdisciplinary opening of the field to include findings derived from the areas of cognitive psychology,[49] sociology, neuroscience, and neurobiology has especially contributed significantly to the advancement of autobiographical theory (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 50; Neisser 11). Whereas early Autobiography Studies approached the works as fact-based accounts of life, contemporary life writing analysis stands in the tradition of constructivism (W. Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* 30; Neisser 10). The concept of autobiography as fact-based account has therefore almost completely been given up in favor of a model that regards life writing as narrative invention. In addition, the general role of narrative in the constitution of individual and collective identity has meanwhile gained more prominence in Literary Studies at large (Ashmore, Deaux,

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48 Fadda-Conrey points out that the location of Arab American literature in the "ethnic borderland" might reinforce stereotypes ("Arab American Literature" 190). While this point certainly can count as valid, the use of her expression in the chosen subtitle seeks to emphasize the challenged status of ethnic autobiography theory at large. Arab American literature due to its generally neglected status thus finds itself constantly oscillating between theoretical innovation and the reinforcement of an ideological agenda.

49 This is not to say that cognitive psychology only benefits the subfield of autobiography theory. As Bortolussi and Dixon remind their readers, cognitive psychology is one of the major interdisciplinary links to advance Literary Studies at large (3).

and Mc-Laughlin-Volpe 83; Ender[50] 3). The self as the social conception of identity thus becomes inherently entangled with the cognitive act of remembering which is summarized by Ulric Neisser in the concept of the "remembering self" (1) based on "self-knowledge" (10). In particular, the work of John Paul Eakin and his investigation of *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (1999) as well as studies with far-reaching theoretical value, e.g., *Reading Autobiography: A Guide for Interpreting Life Narratives* (2001) by Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith, have further expanded the analytical scope of the field. In defiance of these advances, however, hardly any autobiographical investigation pays equal attention to the two sides of authorial production and audience reception. This must be registered as one of the crucial weaknesses of contemporary life writing theory.

The transformation of Autobiographical Studies has also brought about an expansion of the definition of life writing as a genre. The category today comprises a range of different formats, such as interviews, blogs, online diaries, and other artistic forms of self-narration (Smith and Watson, *Reading Autobiography* 167). Due to their expression via various media channels, life narratives can thus be considered "Mediated Memories" in at least a double sense (van Dijck 1). On the one hand, the constructed nature of the narrative forms a filter which mediates the actual recollection of personal memories due to the influence of memory distortion and active literary intervention (Neisser 12). On the other hand, mediation also applies to the specific channels in which these narratives reach their audiences. The traditional written memoir in book format thus only constitutes one type of medium next to a series of electronic possibilities.

This inclusion of different media channels in the analysis of life writing has ultimately stirred an enhanced interest in the discursive context surrounding autobiographical production. This also involves a distinguished understanding of present-day political and cultural circumstances, as well as the relation between the author and these conditions and the various audiences connected to them. Ethnic autobiographies here constitute one major field of investigation. Whereas Autobiography Studies have been popular since the 1960s, attention to ethnic life writing only gained prominence in the course of the 1980s and 1990s (Payne xi; Eakin, Introduction 6).[51] Especially the emergence of Postcolonial Studies and the over-

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50 Ender in her ground-breaking cognitive study of autobiography in *Architexts of Memory* calls the autobiographic writer "the remember," arguing that the human ability to record experiences of the past is the foundation of human individuality (3).

51 One reason for this has been seen in the legacy of Autobiography Studies in the *Western* scientific tradition and its major focus on Enlightenment individualism. The latter commonly assumed one of the major motivations for the rise of the autobiographical genre in the first place (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 43). *Western* literary scholarship in consequence continued to dominate the field. This prominent dichotomy with the tendency to valorize

coming of the "death of the subject" in structuralism fostered the need to explore the autobiographical writings of ethnic groups formerly excluded from the literary canon (Eakin, *Fictions* 275; Angus 237; Leitch 73). This accompanied the definition of ethnic life writing as a distinct genre and triggered a growing concern for an advanced theory of ethnic life writing (Eakin, Introduction 9; Boelhower 138). With respect to the ethnic, political, and media dimensions of life writing, the work of Bart Moore-Gilbert is particularly noteworthy due to its urge to include media discourse in the postcolonial analysis of autobiography (128).

The inclusion of ethnic autobiography with its larger focus on political and social implications has also endowed the analysis of the wider spectrum of autobiographical writing with new meaning. In light of the colonialist past faced by many ethnic writers, the "self-defining function" of life writing has become an even more important point of investigation than in previous times (Fivush qtd. in Eakin, *How Our Lives* 111). Narrative and identity thus become inherently linked, which in turn grants autobiography itself a more prominent status in society (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 100). The collective "we-experience" therefore cannot be differentiated from the "I-narrative" and vice versa (Eakin, *How Our Lives* 75). Gillian Whitlock puts this finding into very poetic words:

We are born into webs of narrative, micronarratives of familial life and macronarratives of collective identity, codes of established narratives that define our capacities to weave individuel life stories. From this point of view, autobiographical narrative emerges as a risky dialogic act [...]. The 'unofficial' public sphere of literary, cultural, religious, and artistic movements are vital to political contestation and opinion formation; from this it follows that autobiographical narrative is an agent in complex global dialogues and encounters and a way of thinking through the interdependencies of conceptions of the self and other. (11)

Autobiographical writing in this sense clearly gives up the burden of "crushing objecthood," as Moore-Gilbert remarks (128). Instead, life writing steps out of the merely literary realm and becomes a tool for "strategic intervention" in public discourse which pursues overtly political objectives (Golley, Introduction xxx; Moore-Gilbert 128).

In the case of Arab American life writing and the critical attention devoted to it, the hallmark of ethnic autobiography, however, has also led to questionable consequences. Similar to the argument applied to Arab American novels which constantly face the criticism of stoically focusing on identity negotiation, analyses of Arab

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Western over *Eastern* autobiography research still prevails among contemporary theorists. Even Eakin, who otherwise is very concerned about ethnocentrism, continually contrasts modes of *Western* and *Eastern* autobiography scholarship, thus unintentionally evoking stereotypes (Introduction 10; Eakin, *Fictions* 224; also see Chapter 3.1).

American autobiographies – if conducted at all – almost exclusively stress the aspect of ethnic identity negotiation as a response to *Western* stereotypes. Similarly, the methods applied by literary scholars are largely situated along "ethnic theoretical tropes" (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 135). Waïl Hassan derives two constraints related to this overemphasis on ethnicity, putting forward the "thesis that Arab-American autobiography is constrained, for better or for worse, by two unspoken requirements: first, that it constructs a selfhood that is intelligible in light of American paradigms of subjectivity, and second, that it addresses Western ideas about Arabs, Muslims, Middle Easterners" (10). What often follows from this narrow critical scope is that critics categorize Arab American life narratives as ethnic counter-narratives without providing sufficient textual evidence for this claim.

This tacit treatment of Arab American autobiography as simply one example of ethnic literature points to a more wide-ranging problem of reductionism in the critical discussion of Arab American literature in the academy. The strong focus on ethnicity neglects a multitude of other themes which might go unrecognized because they are completely unrelated to the theme of ethnicity. Furthermore, the label 'Arab' as an ethnic category does not account for some of the specificities which Arab Americans in contrast to other ethnic minorities face. One of these particularities is the high degree of hetereogeneity existing among Arabs on a global level and on the level of Arab American relations. In addition, the fact that Arabs play a much more important role in the national and global media discourse is a specificity which further differentiates Arab Americans from other ethnic groups. All these shortcomings, at least in part, result from the reductionist labeling of Arab American autobiography as broadly ethnic. From an institutional viewpoint, this reveals a larger shortcoming with respect to the lack of differentiated ethnic Literary Studies.

Getting (Dis-)Oriented?[52] Postcolonial Studies and Arab American 'Non-Studies'

There is a popular Arabic saying which states that every "Arabic word has a basic meaning, a second meaning which is the exact opposite of the first, a third meaning which refers to either a camel or horse, and a fourth meaning that is so obscene that

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52 The heading is a modification of the heading "Getting Oriented," used by Holly Edwards in her essay "A Million and One Nights: Orientalism in America, 1870-1930" (18). Edwards here traces the history of Orientalism with an emphasis on American travel accounts and cultural representations such as paintings and other art work.

you'll have to look it up for yourself" (R. Allen).[53] A statement like this in today's post-Saidian world can hardly be surpassed in its Orientalist verve. Above all, it was the major aim of Said's *Orientalism* to reveal the ethnocentric mindset behind literary and cultural practices like this one to expose their derogatory nature. His model of Orientalism, however, did not remain limited to the study of the Middle East. Rather, Orientalism came to serve as the platform for the emergence of a much larger project undertaken to analyze the history of colonization – namely Postcolonial Studies (Fritsch-Alaoui 21; Maira and Shihade 130). Nevertheless, with respect to the study of Arab American autobiographies, the crucial role of Orientalism in Postcolonial Studies has also brought about severe disadvantages. One of the most obvious of these shortcomings is that Arab American Studies still do not exist as a separate discipline.[54]

Although the increased media presence of Arab Americans as well as their rising literary engagement has led to a "hyper-visibility" in the public perception, this trend has not yet extended to the realm of academia (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 174).[55] Critics thus rightfully lament the consistent absence of Arab Americans in the Cultural and Ethnic Studies canon (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 175),[56] particularly within the literary branch of American Studies.[57] The study of

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53 The proverb has been attributed to the Yale professor of Arabic Franz Rosenthal. As the allusion to camels suggests, Rosenthal despite his academic acclaim counts as fierce Orientalist in contemporary Arab American circles (Bardenstein, Personal interview).

54 Orientalism's influence as obstacle to Arab American Studies, however, should not be read in the vein of the polemical critique by the overtly Orientalist writer Martin Kramer. In his book *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America*, he basically holds Said responsible for the long-lasting legacy of Middle Eastern Studies, which focuses merely on the victimization of Palestine (37).

55 This statement establishes a dividing line btetween the two spheres of literary production and academic analysis. Nevertheless, this should not superimpose the complex interjectories which combine both realms, since scholarly attention attributed to a certain body of works is eventually reflected in literary production in turn. As Orfalea points out in this context, "acceptance in academia has a direct impact on publishing, and vice versa. The two worlds for a literary writer are inextricably bound" (221).

56 This is associated with an inherent lack of Arab American scholars in the academy. Very often, the outward racism and ethnic stereotyping found in the public media also falls on fertile ground in the ivory tower, where the political warfare in the Middle East is carried out in an intellectual microcosm. The acclaimed literary scholar and political activist Gregory Orfalea gives a personal example of this practice. Not only were some of his fictional works rejected by publishers due to an explicit objection to his Arab American background but, in the academic setting, an inherent fear existed that a Palestinian might cause political friction. Orfalea consequently was denied a tenure-track position by a Jew-

Arab American literature can at best be considered a niche. Only a few scholars, mostly located in the U.S., count as experts pursuing this particular research specialization.[58] Additional research interest exists among scholars in the social sciences, such as ethnography, anthropology, political science, and sociology. Just as the acknowledgement of Arab American literature as a distinct genre within the broader category of ethnic literature therefore remains contested, so too is the study of Arab American identity defined as a subtopic (Salaita, "Sand Niggers" 440). Arab American Studies as a separate field has therefore not been established on a large scale. Even after more than two decades of scholarly efforts to promote Arab American Studies, the field can nevertheless only be considered as "emerging" and not as established (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 4).[59]

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ish board member on the basis of his putative anti-Semitism (221). This incident reveals larger links to the role of Zionism in the U.S. and the suppression of critical voices (Maira and Shihade 133; also see Chapter 3.2).

57　The situation looks different when considering Iranian American literature. Here, there is a broader choice of studies available, dealing with highly-differentiated topics, such as feminist issues, human rights and native informant theory (Darznik, "Perils" 55). Unfortunately, however, this welcome analytical attention to literature by authors who have not previously been included in the canon of ethnic American literature is diminished by the troublesome finding that Iranian literature is often perceived and discussed under the label 'Arab American.' Since Iran, however, is not an Arab state, this practice again points to a lasting lack of knowledge on the part of *Western* scholars concerning the cultural history of the *East*. Even scholars who aim to correct this fallacy of cultural homogenization sometimes neglect this analytical difference. One example is Whitlock's *Soft Weapons* in which the author devotes a good portion of her work to the discussion of contemporary Iranian literature without clearly delineating it from Arab American literature (see 102).

58　Arab American Studies programs are currently offered only at U.S. universities. Publications by non-American scholars that explicitly focus on Arab American issues are therefore rare. An exception is the recent edition of *Arab American Literature and Culture* (2011), edited by Alfred Hornung and Martina Kohl. From the perspective of U.S. scholars in the field of Arab American Cultural Studies, however, these contributions are scarcely visible. Evelyn Alsultany therefore sees the general interest in Arabs on the rise in Cultural Studies departments around the globe. Yet, this research mainly focuses on Arabs as minority groups living in other European and non-European countries. An example here is the study of the Turkish minority in Germany that has become more visible even to international scholars (Alsultany, Personal interview).

59　There are recent debates on solving the problem of institutionalization by integrating the field into Asian American Studies. Proponents of this move usually justify their claim not on the basis of geographical proximity but on shared historical experiences with colonialism. Without entering this debate, it nevertheless needs to be noticed that the exchange of

This underdeveloped state of Arab American Studies is particularly astonishing in post-9/11 times. Even the increased and explicit demand for detailed knowledge of the Arab world and on Arab Americans has not transferred to the academy in such a way that institutionalization is widespread. Ironically, the impact of the terrorist attacks has caused many in the field to have a slightly more favorable outlook. Overall, optimists such as Steven Salaita claim that the expanded interest in Arabs and Muslims post 9/11 has contributed somewhat to the further advancement of the field ("Ethnic Identity" 148). To such scholars, the multitude of academic and non-academic books "countering the negative stereotyping" related to Orientalism is an indicator of this development (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 174). Others, however, interpret this result in opposite terms. For them, the focus on counter-discourses represents the essential obstacle to a brighter and more visible future in Arab American Studies.

These split opinions on the state and prospects of Arab American Studies can be read as the unintended consequence of the very entanglement of Orientalism as a founding principle of Postcolonial Studies and the role of Arab American literature therein. Whereas Orientalism, on the one hand, allowed Arab American authors and critics alike to find their own voice, its very omnipotence, on the other hand, has come to restrict the field. Hardly any publication can be found without explicit references to Orientalism. Nadine Naber, as one of the most critical voices within the field of Arab American Studies, highlights this point in her book *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*. Naber presents the thesis that most research on Arab Americans suffers from its focus on countering Orientalist images of the Arab as "uncivilized" and "backward" ("New Texts"). In other words, writing against Orientalism continues to reinforce the prevalence of the concept while in addition preventing new approaches from flourishing. Consequently, the question is not only how to tell the Arab American story without reinforcing Orientalist stereotypes, as Carol Fadda-Conrey correctly remarks ("Racially White" 130). In addition, the crucial question is how to counter Orientalism while constantly reinvoking it.

In order to advance and sustainably develop Arab American Studies, the field therefore needs to break away from its Orientalist legacy by means of developing new methodologies. Only such a move allows for novel approaches to investigating the multiplicity of themes and works produced by Arab Americans without becoming stuck in the circular taxonomy of Orientalism and its various theoretical successors (see Chapter 3.1). Arab American literary scholar Carol Bardenstein summarizes this need for scholarly innovation in the following way: "It is time for new

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arguments once again has an Orientalist connotation since integration is perceived by some to be a form of colonialism (Maira and Shihade 119). Others see the merging of both fields as powerful "way to resist empire oppression" (Maira and Shihade 137).

theoretical concepts – Orientalism has become overused and overquoted" (Personal interview). As a possible solution Naber proposes a "de-Orientalizing theory" ("New Texts Out"). It is one of the crucial concerns of this book to contribute to this endeavor by demonstrating the value of autobiographical writing in (re-)-framing the Arab in public discourse.

(Re-)Framing the Arab: Research Design and Method

This review of the position of Arabs in America as an ethnic minority, of their literary contribution, and of the theoretical instruments underlying the analysis of Arab American life writing brings to light a central finding that will set the stage for what follows on the pages to come. Unlike any other ethnic group, the identity of Arab Americans continues to be impacted by interpretive frames established and maintained by the media discourse, also in terms of their understandings of themselves as a group. Historically, the most dominant frame has been Orientalism which is responsible for a mostly negative image of *the Arab* as public stereotype. Recently, the WOT frame has added an additional layer to this trajectory. Although the heightened interest in Arabs in the wake of the WOT has fostered academic research on Arab American identity and literature, the theoretical means underlying this research tend to be limited in their capacity to open up novel research paths.

This shortcoming particularly applies to the interdisciplinary link between literature and media research. While there is no shortage of studies documenting the role of Orientalist stereotypes in both fields, a synergy of their research results is lacking, which might advance methodology development beyond Orientalism. Communication Studies as part of the social sciences and Literary Studies as part of the humanities continue to operate apart from one another. A slight bridging of this cleavage has recently been achieved in the field of autobiographical research with the extended definition of the genre of life writing to include various media formats beyond the traditional self-narrative. *Journalistic autobiographies* in a broader sense have thus come to be read as literary texts by cultural scholars. *Literary autobiographies*, in contrast, have not been read as journalistic texts through the theoretical and methodological lens of Media Studies.

This study seeks to target these shortcomings by engaging in a truly interdisciplinary[60] project at the border of Media and Literary Studies while integrating find-

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60 The topic of interdisciplinary method will play a detailed role for the theoretical merging of framing theory and literary analysis (see Chapter 2.3) For the purpose of clarification, it must at this point already be highlighted that interdisciplinarity is not to be understood merely as thematic synergy as often done in fields, such as film studies and historical investigations. Rather, interdisciplinarity in this study explicitly seeks to achieve a conver-

ings from the philosophy of science, cognitive psychology, anthropology, and political science. It argues that autobiographies have the capacity to (re-)frame the public image of Arabs by actively engaging in media discourse. Usually treated as separate from the media sphere, the literary sphere is perceived to be an inherent part of mass media discourse. Due to their status as non-fiction, autobiographies occupy a specific position in affecting the media audience. Effects that are found to apply in the case of news media content are thus assumed to appear as equally often in the case of life writing.

"Every cultural product frames," Sidonie Smith declares concerning the relationship between cultural production and reception (Personal interview). It remains unclear how this effect is achieved and which role autobiography plays in the process. The theory of media framing allows for the analysis of these trajectories by revealing in how far autobiographies either, reflect, alter, or replace existing media frames. More than simply aiming at a uni-directional theory transfer of the framing model from Media to Literary Studies, this study seeks to demonstrate the multi-directional value of such an interdisciplinary move. The goal therefore is to further develop and refine framing theory to the extent that it contributes novel research insights to the advancement of autobiographical theory at large and possibly also to the field of Communication Studies. What lies at the core of this endeavor is the deep conviction that literature will not make an impact on the real world beyond disciplinary and institutional borders if it continues to be read and defined merely in the realm of Literary Studies. This especially holds true for the genre of life writing which is constantly claimed to embody "the healing and bridging power of literature" (Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 173) while the exact means to heal and bridge remain hidden in the darkness of ethnic autobiography scholarship and its obsession with fighting Orientalism.

Instead of adding another study to the plethora of descriptive analyses concerned with Orientalist stereotypes on Arabs in the media and their deconstruction in counter-narratives, this study practices what critics have long been preaching (cf. Fadda-Conrey, "Racially White" 67), namely, to open up a truly innovative reading of Arab American autobiography and thus "redefine boundaries of autobiographical writing" (Vinson 93). This approach accepts stereotypes as an empirical given and explores the specific trajectories through which they are constituted and received by the public to ultimately find alternative answers to the question of how literature can make an impact on changing them.[61] Ultimately, this study raises the provoca-

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gence of Literary Studies with the empirical sciences as opposed to the idea of literary analysis as merely "human science" (Bortolussi and Dixon 2).

61 From a communication-centered viewpoint, this approach situates the work at the intersection of cultural and media research that Alasuutari terms "cultural media research" (1). This disciplinary delineation allows for the inclusion of reception research.

tive claim that the answer to (re-)framing the Arab does not lie in countering Orientalism. Instead, it demonstrates in how far mediated Orientalism can actually serve as an effective analytical concept to alter the collective image of Arab American identity in the public.

After a recapitulation of the current status of research on Arab American autobiographies and its pitfalls in today's mass media world, *Chapter 2* establishes the theoretical link between autobiography theory and media framing research. Following some essential remarks on definitions, it explores the conceptual similarities between autobiographical texts and news-media content. Since framing theory in Media Studies has a very particular and empirically-based meaning, which often contradicts the vague use of the term in Literary Studies, the chapter outlines the theoretical credentials of framing theory as they are important for the discussion of literary texts. The last section of the chapter merges the two theoretical realms and points to a comprehensive model of framing as a theory for the analysis of life writing. It provides a unique instrument for the comprehensive study of literature by including the two sides of a text's production and reception.

Chapter 3 highlights the significance of the framing model for the particular situation of Arab Americans. Based on a meta-study of previous framing analyses on the representation of Arabs and Arab Americans in the news media of the last decade, predominant frames surrounding Arab American identity and the public perception of Arabs are identified. Crucial attention is devoted to the delineation of Orientalism as a founding concept in Postcolonial Studies as opposed to its conceptual and ideological significance as a media frame. With respect to the different frame levels, the political frame of the WOT is explored in detail and so are further issue frames relevant for the framed media representation of Arabs, such as religion and gender. These findings are then transferred back to the larger theoretical level in order to arrive at a more detailed framing model applicable to the analysis of Arab American life writing in the contemporary period.

Chapter 4 is the first of three analytical chapters which provide an in-depth analysis of Arab American life narratives published in the contemporary period after 9/11. The first is Tamim Ansary's *West of Kabul, East of New York: An Afghan American Story* (2003). The memoir describes Ansary's struggle between the worlds of Afghanistan and America and depicts his return to the Middle East as a journalist. The second memoir discussed in *Chapter 5* is *Letters from Cairo* (2007) by Pauline Kaldas. The epistolary memoir provides a multi-layered record of the author's temporary return to her Egyptian homeland. The last and most recent memoir to be discussed in *Chapter 6* is *Howling in Mesopotamia: An Iraqi-American Memoir* (2008) by Haider Ala Hamoudi. In his life narrative, the Iraqi American author reflects on his two-year stay in Baghdad and his efforts to participate in rebuilding the country.

All autobiographies are analyzed based on the comprehensive framing approach as theory of production and reception developed in the previous chapters. An in-depth close-reading analysis identifies dominant textual frames of interpretation found in each individual work. Regarding the production process of the works, authorial frames are identified based on biographical as well as textual evidence. Concerning reception, dominant audience frames are identified on the basis of a close-reading of journalistic and general audience reviews. These texts are taken from various media sources, such as interviews and reviews on the part of the audience. Each analytical chapter concludes with a comparative overview of the different frames thus identified in order to reveal in how far the theoretical assumptions underlying the effectiveness of framing actually stand the analytical test.

Chapter 7 provides a symbiosis of the preceding theoretical and analytical sections. Based on a comparative integration of the framing patterns identified in the text analysis, detailed conclusions about the form and usefulness of framing as analytical tool are drawn. Particular attention is paid here to the function of Orientalism as political and academic ideology in contrast to a renewed understanding of Orientalism as a cognitive and analytical meta-frame. A focus of the chapter rests on integrating approaches from contemporary philosophy to explain the role of comparativism and binary thinking in current media and academic discourse.

The *Conclusion* summarizes all findings and relates them back to the present state of Autobiography Studies in the academy. This leads over to a broader discussion of the role of ethnic autobiography and of life writing in the contemporary media context and of its impact in the marketplace. Eventually, this points to the mostly neglected capacity of autobiography as active element of the mass-media discourse, which in turn poses new research challenges to the academy.