

Abstracts

Stefano Luconi, *The Color of Citizenship: Asian Immigrants to the United States and Naturalization between 1870 and 1952*

The 1870 Naturalization Act granted migrants from Africa and their descendants the right to apply for US citizenship. Consequently, while blacks joined whites among the potential beneficiaries of the naturalization process, Asians remained excluded from it until the 1952 McCarran-Walter Act repealed the “aliens ineligible to citizenship” clause from US legislation. Yet, the contours of who was white and who was Oriental turned out to be somehow blurred when it came to Asians with light complexion and to peoples residing in regions bordering with Europe and Africa. Drawing primarily upon a few landmark cases before the Supreme Court and lower federal courts, this article highlights the efforts of a few Asian applicants who endeavored to exploit loopholes in the naturalization legislation to become US citizens. Moreover, it examines the racial and religious criteria to which federal judges also resorted to define who was Asian and, thereby, not eligible for naturalization and accommodation within US society.

Alice Balestrino, *Post-9/11 Rhetoric and the Split of Safety in Amy Waldman’s *The Submission**

The article investigates the theme of citizenship in relation to individual and collective civil rights in post-9/11 US, by focusing on Amy Waldman’s *The Submission* (2011), a novel that speculates on a fictional controversy, ignited by the accidental selection of a Muslim American architect in the competition for the design of the 9/11 Memorial. Within this framework, the narrative represents the discrimination of Muslim and Arab Americans as a minority group singled out by assumptions of collective responsibility for the attacks on the World Trade Center and it reflects on the notion of safety and its implications. Waldman addresses these issues by adopting a multi-perspective narrative that allows for the depiction of differing understandings of safety – perspectives that the author seems to place on a continuum. On one end lies a slice of the American population that resorts to national security rhetoric in order to prevent a Muslim architect from memorializing 9/11, because his religious background is reputed as a threat in itself. On the opposite end lies a Pakistani immigrant without documents who lost her husband in the 9/11 attacks (himself an illegal worker at the WTC), a woman for whom this climate of mounting racial friction results in the total negation of her safety when she is killed in an anti-Muslim riot. This tragic event can be interpreted as the apex of a trajectory, developed over the whole novel, that

interrogates the dynamics of a comprehension of safety and of national identity that opposes “Americans” to “immigrants,” and eventually leads to a split in the notion of “safe” into its two antithetic meanings of “not likely to be harmed” and “not likely to cause or lead to harm.”

Ayman Al Sharafat, Attitudes of the United States’ Presidents Towards Immigration: George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump

The year 2001 marked a turning point in the attitudes of the United States Presidents towards immigration. In order to chart these changes in attitude, this study will analyze official documents from the administrations of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump. The documents will be examined to see how immigrants and immigration are described by the three Presidents, and how they differ in their views. To examine immigration policy issues which appeared on the presidential agenda, the searchable “Public Papers” archive of *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/>) are used by John Woolley and Gerhard Peters. To clarify the Presidents’ attitudes toward immigration, James Q. Wilson’s classification of policy model are used. Wilson supposes that attitudes and policies have distributional consequences. The results indicate that Presidents Bush and Obama showed similar attitudes towards immigration. They emphasized the concentrated benefits and concentrated costs of immigration. On the other hand, the attitude of President Trump towards immigration is distinct from that of the previous two administrations. He downplays the benefits of immigration all over the United States and throughout its history, and concentrates on its costs.

Lindsey N. Kingston, Healing the Scars of Forced Migration: An Italian-American Story

In this research-informed essay, the author connects her Italian-American heritage (and the political processes by which Italians “became” white and American) to current migration issues within the United States and Italy. She argues that migration comes with consequences, good and bad, and represents the loss of home as much as the gaining of a new one. She contends that we can begin to re-humanize migrants in our political discussions by telling stories from our own families, and by recognizing the complicated and sometimes ugly histories from countries such as the United States and Italy. Just as skin color or national origin do not determine who is a “legitimate” claimant of asylum, neither does the “achievement” of arriving somewhere first. The suffering of war and poverty still resides within living memory in places where many citizens vehemently protest the integration of refugees. Those shared human experiences ought to reaffirm our commitment to human rights norms, including the right to asylum, and give us the courage to fight against exclusionary rhetoric.

Lin Ling, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*: Diasporic Muslim Identities in Literary Representation

This article explores the representation of diasporic Muslim identities in a coming-of-age narrative, Arab American female novelist Mojha Kahf's bestseller *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, published in 2006. It examines how the religious diasporic hybrid identity is mobilized within the female protagonist Khadra Shamy, including how she struggles to negotiate her identity across different cultural terrains and gendered, racialised, intergenerational configurations. It attempts to show how these literary representations construct – and help conceptualize – the ways we understand diasporic Muslims in the US. The individual experiences as narrated in the novel illuminate a series of essential socio-political questions facing the community as a religious minority in a secular context. This study addresses these questions through the representation of cultural hybridity in literary narrative within the framework of postcolonial theory. It focuses on three constructs of the novel central to the conceptualization of the female protagonist's hybrid identity: firstly, the mirror images and moral panics that generate cultural clashes in the East-West encounter; secondly, the predicament of the protagonist's ambivalent existence as a diasporic individual; and thirdly, the ways she forges her hybrid identity as a New Woman within the diasporic context.

Nicola Paladin, The “Men” of the Crowd: Mobs, Armies and Public Space in Classic American Literature

The meaning of crowds in US culture has always been controversial, and the disruptive potential they might have has generally been considered dangerous. Historically, the few large manifestations of this latent power and its impact on the public space trace back to the revolutionary years: in 1776, a crowd of New Yorkers tore down the statue of George III. They were not only erasing a symbol of oppression, but also modifying the shape of the city, because the relationship between people and the space they inhabit is not unequivocal: the agency of mobs determines tangible effects on space, defining public space in many ways through its massive occupation. The article investigates the military nature of crowds portrayed in classic American literature, by analyzing crowd scenes in Washington Irving's “Rip Van Winkle” (1819), Nathaniel Hawthorne's “My Kinsman, Major Molineaux” (1832), Edgar Allan Poe's “The Man of the Crowd” (1840), and Herman Melville's *Israel Potter* (1855).

Margarida São Bento Cadima, The Production of Space in Colson Whitehead's *Sag Harbor* and Edith Wharton's *Summer*

At first glance, Edith Wharton's 1917 novella *Summer* and Colson Whitehead's 2009 novel *Sag Harbor* do not have much in common. Not only were they written almost

a century apart, but the protagonist of Wharton's text is a young woman while the protagonist of Whitehead's book is a young man. Additionally, *Summer* takes place in a fictional New England countryside village, whereas the setting of *Sag Harbor* is the Long Island coastal town that lends the text its name. However, they both take place during a summer and it is worth remembering that the protagonists of both texts are teenagers and close in age: *Summer's* Charity Royall is eighteen and *Sag Harbor's* Benji Cooper is fifteen. So what arises of the unlikely pairing and analysis of these two texts? Wharton's novella has been analyzed in detail from a gender studies perspective and Whitehead's novel has been scrutinized for its racial significance. However, up until now, no objective and detailed geocritical cartography has been undertaken in either of these texts. Location is of the utmost importance, and two opposite perspectives are presented in the opening chapters of either text respectively. This article draws on space conception theories and establish how they apply to both *Summer* and *Sag Harbor* – thus also delineating their tenuous similarities. Eventually, a better understanding of both texts can be achieved and new critical perspective can be attained.

Federico Bellini, To Make the World in the Maelstrom of its Undoing: Cormac McCarthy's *The Stonemason*

Possibly due to the fact that it has never been produced in its entirety, Cormac McCarthy's play *The Stonemason* has thus far received only scant attention by critics. However, an analysis of this text, supported by the manuscripts held at the Wittliff Collections, proves highly rewarding for an understanding of the author's poetics. The article discusses the intrinsic limits of the play in light of the history of its reception and of its failed productions as well as McCarthy's misattribution of a quote from Jean-Baptiste Le Rond D'Alembert to Carl Friedrich Gauss in the first stage direction. It also analyzes the play following McCarthy's own suggestion – recorded in his correspondence with Emily Mann – that the piece was intended to be “a simple, classical story about a hero and his mentor, how the hero loses his way, and how he recovers it.” In doing this, it relies on the several intertextual references in the play. Finally, it considers McCarthy's decision to publish the work in spite of its limitations as a meta-poetic statement about his authorial ethics.