

great deal of work to follow the overarching line of argumentation. Part of the difficulty may also rest with the prose, which feels simultaneously labored and rushed, alternating between an academic and stilted style at some points, casual and flippant at others. A distilled set of arguments in half the number of pages might have resulted in a less cumbersome and more accessible theory of market Orientalism—a phenomenon that Smith convincingly defines and critiques.

BRIAN EDWARDS, *After the American Century: The Ends of U.S. Culture in the Middle East* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015). Pp. 288. \$35.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780231174008

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In his fascinating book *After the American Century*, Brian Edwards is interested in the circulation of US culture in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) during an era marked by the end of the Cold War and the ascendance of digital media. Edwards' study is set at a time when US influence and prestige is declining across the region, when citizens across the MENA have engaged in populist uprisings, and when digital media enables new possibilities to creatively translate globalized culture into local idioms.

Edwards' most important contribution to transnational cultural studies is his theorization of "circulation" as a trope of global cultural dissemination and reception. Rather than conceiving of global culture as something disseminated from a cultural hegemon outward to the globe, Edwards conceives of transnationalism as a global circuit with local terminal nodes. Thus, when Edwards writes of the "ends" of US culture, he means the terminus of American culture in Arab and Middle Eastern publics that reconstitute American culture into something indigenous and perhaps untranslatable back into American culture. He intends for this analysis to work against celebratory readings of the promise of American culture and US-based technology to "liberate" the greater Middle East. Through his careful study of materials in Persian and Egyptian- and Moroccan-Arabic dialects, Edwards shows that American culture gets digested in ways that are unpredictable yet always rooted in indigenous and local contexts.

Edwards' analysis is organized around three primary—and lengthy—case studies that explore the circulation of American culture in Egypt, Iran, and Morocco, respectively. In each case, Edwards successfully unearths a dense archive of local culture and shows how it resists and reconstitutes global, Americanized culture. The first case study revolves around the question of how purportedly American forms of social and popular media—cyberpunk fiction, superhero comics, social networking software, and text messaging language—arrive and get reconstituted by Egyptian publics. Extending the analysis of circulation outlined in his lengthy introduction, Edwards argues that cultural forms "jump publics," by which he means to show that the Egyptian public makes them meaningful in ways that are different from how an American public would. For Edwards, the stakes of this argument are to contest the rather celebratory reading within the West of the Egyptian uprisings as a product or consequence of American cultural diplomacy or US-based social media—think of the US media coverage of Tahrir Square that appealed to the "Facebook revolution." Edwards' focus on the limits of American cultural products to act as cultural diplomacy allow him to advocate for a new reading practice—focused on circulation—as well as to identify the limits or ends of the influence of the American century.

The most interesting part of Edwards's Egypt chapter is his focus on Magdy El Shafee's graphic novel, *Metro*. Although *Metro* employs an idiom popularized in the West, Edwards shows that it

does not mirror a Western form but rather “jumps publics” in ways that make it fully localized. As he puts it, “El Shafee’s work jumps publics rather than stand as an example of the diffusion of the Western form, it takes aspects of that form, combines them with Egyptian literary traditions (the social protest novel, the nationalist novel, and so on), and summons up its own local public” (p. 64).

In his second case study, Edwards analyzes the circulation of Iranian cinema as well as American films inside Iran, demonstrating how American culture travels beyond the pathways intended by cultural diplomacy. This fascinating reading of Iranian cinema is focused on the technology of digital filmmaking in order to demonstrate ways that film can be spliced, narratives translated and transformed, images reconstructed. Here the analysis is less on the limits of American power, as in the Egyptian case, and more on the ways that transformations in digital media enhance the ability of American culture to jump publics in unexpected ways. The most provocative example in section is Edwards’s reading of the circulation of the Disney film *Shrek*. Edwards demonstrates how multiple, illegal Persian-dubbed versions of *Shrek* appeared in Tehran. Through an astute analysis of how computer-generated imagery animation enables audiences to make their own cultural products out of existing cultural forms, Edwards shows that what audiences make out of *Shrek* transforms the original in ways that make it completely local. By talking with consumers, Edwards demonstrates that the act of dubbing the film into Persian by Iranians turns out to be what is most provocative and popular to Iranian audiences.

Turning to the circulation of American films in Morocco, Edwards focuses on the purportedly liberal politics of sexuality in American film in order to argue that like many forms of globalized culture, Moroccan publics construct their own indigenous culture out of various transnational fragments. Although many Moroccans harbor a desire for an American higher education, and even American culture generally, Edwards argues that the case of Moroccan cinema illustrates the ways in which cultural modes originating from abroad may be “recalibrated or reconfigured in ways that render them unfamiliar or incomprehensible to observers from the outside culture” (p. 145). Edwards takes as his subject Moroccan films and literature that utilize tropes and symbols from their US counterparts and yet are fully localized to Moroccan political culture. While Moroccan writers make claims for LGBT rights in Morocco, for example, often using human rights language originating in the West, Edwards argues that, in fact, Moroccan artists use social media and fragments of global culture to construct a local and indigenous cultural politics.

After the American Century asserts that the American century is over without fully engaging the geopolitical relationship of the United States to the Middle East. While Edwards’s focus is on cultural politics, it may have been helpful to say a bit more about the status of US state power across the Middle East and North Africa after the Cold War. Moreover, while Edwards argues that digital media and the end of the American century present new conditions of possibility for the dissemination and reception of US culture, it is not entirely clear from the discussion in *After the American Century* what is new about these particular phenomena in the present moment. Audiences have always made meaning that is unanticipated by culture producers—just as the US State Department sponsored jazz tours throughout the Middle East during the Cold War that led to several unanticipated readings of American culture across the region. Edwards rests much of his reading on the ascendance of digital media as enabling new forms of reception and circulation of American cultural products, but it is not always clear to what extent the end of the American century should be understood as formative in this regard.

These critical questions are not posed in order to undermine what is a rigorous, lucid, and fascinating study. Edwards is to be commended for his ethnographic methods, his command of local languages, and the originality of his archive. *After the American Century* is a valuable contribution not only to studies of transnational American Studies, but also to cultural studies across the MENA.