Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin, *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011, $27.95). Pp. 246. ISBN 978 0 674 04852 2.

Elusive in its precise properties, but sufficiently generalized to warrant a high degree of prominence in public discourse, the category of "Muslim" has become a staple feature of contemporary political discussion across both sides of the Atlantic, and indeed beyond. While it is inevitable that different accounts vary, both in their genealogies of the emergence of Islam as a salient marker of minority "difference" and in their understanding of what this heralds, it has nevertheless become passé to observe that the category of "Muslim" has only recently achieved the traction we are familiar with today. It is the content of this familiarity, however, that is of concern, and in this ambitious and timely consideration of "the gap that exists between representation and reality when it comes to Muslims" (1), Peter Morely and Amina Yaqin explore the ways in which "[i]ntolerant images and pronouncements breed a kind of self fashioning that operates as the other half of a distorted dialogue" (5).

Spanning a number of discursive terrains in both western Europe and the United States, the six chapters tackle a variety of relevant themes and recurrent argumentation. The discussion is not intended to be driven by systematic inquiry per se, but rather through a form of critique. Indeed both Morely and Yaqin are humanities specialists, and so the book is stronger in this mode than when it makes recourse to social-science literature. The chapters perhaps therefore work better as essays than as sections of a study as such. This, of course, is to register a different mode in approaching the topic, and so is not meant as a criticism. Indeed, the discussion is successful on a number of fronts. These include, amongst very many others, the elaboration of intersections between masculinity and fanaticism in the omnipresent folk devil of "Islamic rage boy" as "probably the most immediately recognizable of all widely circulated Muslim stereotypes" (23); the wider discursive constraints on a challenging and plural media and adjacent journalistic traditions (and the mockery this makes of liberal-pluralist notions of journalism); the role of reading back in forms of cultural racism as inherent civilizational "safe superiority, often deep-rooted and tenacious" (11) but also needing "constant feeding and stoking" (4).

Indeed, there is much to applaud here and I am in agreement with much of it, but that does not make for an interesting review, and so in the spirit of collegial inquiry I offer a couple of critical observations. The first hinges on a question that recurs throughout the book, namely, what about agency? That is to say that while there is clearly a disproportionate labelling of Muslims, a quieter drama is unfolding in the proliferation of Muslim media. In the UK alone publications such as the *Muslim News*, *Q-News*, *Crescent International*, *Impact International* and *Trends*; media committees at the MCB and FAIR; and radio stations such as *Radio Ummah* and *Radio Ramadan* – as well as the *Islam Channel* – are illustrative of Nancy Fraser's (1992) "subaltern counterpublics." These Muslim media sources represent an important part of an expanding social field which potentially serves both as a corrective to the mainstream press and as an alternative and a countervailing pressure.[1] The second potential issue concerns the characterization of formal political

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[1] See N. Meer, C. Dwyer, and T. Modood, "Beyond 'Angry' Muslims: The Representation of Muslim Voices in the British Press," *Journal of Media and Religion*, 9 (2010), 216–31.

representation of "groups" under the terms of British multicultural citizenship (106) – what David Cameron terms "state-multiculturalism" (as distinct from the fact of pluralism) or what Amartya Sen unfortunately caricatures as "plural mono-culturalism," and especially as these charges of essentialism are mobilized against Muslim representative bodies. It would be foolish to deny that the precise meaning of "Muslim" has taken on a number of competing public forms, some of which have most recently been accentuated in concerns about violent extremism, e.g. between public categories of "moderates" and "Islamists," Sufis and Salafis, and so on. The key point is that Muslim identities are being shown to contain many social layers that are often independent of scriptural texts, e.g. a discernible Muslim presence may be strongly observed in the disproportionate support for a political party (the so called "Muslim vote'); the same is true of a subscription to and modification of particular business models (sometimes called "Islamic finance") or a commitment to equalities and antidiscrimination movements and agendas especially (in seeking to have "Islamophbia" understood as a form of social and not theological discrimination). The same could be said of the community aspiration for post-compulsory education (contributing to a revision of cultural capital theory to incorporate the assets generated in minority religious groups). The ambiguities in these observations permeate the ways in which Muslims have organized and have continued to appropriate the appellation "Muslim" without any unanimity on Islamic matters (precisely as Jewish minorities have historically negotiated and continue to debate what being "Jewish" means). This point is not widely stressed, and as a consequence the dynamic features of Muslims' representation are perhaps reduced to a binary logic of valid or invalid, when in fact the claim amongst Muslim groupings to be able to represent a category in flux is quite consistent with the experiences of other groups, and so probably deserves more generosity.

   All of this aside, Morey and Yaqin offer a sustained and compelling journey through a number of features of contemporary discourse on Muslims, and every reader would benefit, as this reader has, from engaging with their core arguments.

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To match brevity with wit, conciseness with comprehensiveness, is no easy task, but one that the authors of *The Contemporary American Novel in Context* execute with considerable verve and to great success. In this slim, but certainly not slight, volume, Dix, Jarvis and Jenner guide the reader through the workings of the American novel as it reflects, refracts and reacts to the key sociocultural, political and intellectual developments of the decades divided by the millennium. Acknowledging the insights offered by alternative fictional forms such as the short story into the major trends and transitions of the contemporary period (which the study places between 1980 and 2010), the authors justify their focus on the novel by highlighting "this body of work's formal and thematic richness" and "the important cultural and ideological questions which it raises" (4).