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Book Reviews

Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and Representation after 9/11
by Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin. Cambridge, MA, Harvard
University Press, 2011. 256 pp. \$27.95.

This is an eloquently written book about how British and American media portrayed Muslims after September 11. It is written as a long thought piece that deconstructs and critiques in depth and at length how some British media and American TV series cover events and news related to Muslims or produce fictional narratives of Muslims. The style and method, as the authors clearly state, follow in the tradition of the late Edward Said—this is a book of wide-sweeping literary criticism that addresses the content, form, authors, agendas, and power relations involved in the manufacturing of the image of the Muslim in Western media.

The book has its flaws. It sometimes makes glaring mistakes (there are considerably less than seven million Muslims in the United States; p. 7). Its emotional tone sometimes leads the authors to exaggerate or lapse into poor or convoluted argumentation (for example, p. 11) or degenerate into the realm of the bizarre (linking stereotyping to fear of castration, p. 24). The authors' arguments also sometimes suffer from *coupures* in logic, such as when they hop from describing positive portrayals of Muslims who were killed by the 7/7 bombers in British newspapers to concluding without explaining their reasoning that “we should not be surprised that it is only at the extremities of life, and in the manner of their deaths, that Muslims can prove their Westernness (*sic*)” (p. 71). The manuscript's reliance on selective articles, events, and productions leaves social scientists hungry for data to put negative coverage in context—how does it vary across media properties, between tabloids and so-called broadsheets, and between NewsCorp properties and other same-format newspapers?

Skepticism (something often encountered in such cultural and literary criticism) also leads to sometimes-unwarranted negativity. After criticizing many productions for their portrayal of Muslims, for example, the authors ask, regarding a particularly supportive BBC movie (*White Girl*, 2008), whether its “portrayal is a corrective piece of positive representation or more a case of killing credibility with too much kindness” (p. 125). The authors also devalue attempts by Muslims to create counter-narratives or representations of themselves (the topic of chapter 6) with statements such as, “in merely inverting what are presumed to be equally uniform Western modes of femininity—having to do with the oversexualization of the teenage female body—to what extent do such attempts actually break free of the power of the frame?”

The authors also sometimes get bogged down in windy descriptions of the contents of media products, such as several episodes of a BBC radio series

(pp. 95–106) that have little to do with the promising subject of chapter 3 (a discussion of the creation of institutional Muslim representation) that is unfortunately not developed as well as it could be. The sixth and last chapter is more interesting and successful. It discusses the emergence, content, and context of counter-discourses on Western Muslims that are being developed by members of the minority and Muslims elsewhere.

In spite of these occasional flaws, Morey and Yaqin do a nice job of being what they coyly refer to as “scribes who have made it their business to cut through walls of ignorance around the Muslim issue” (p. 55). The book therefore makes a very satisfying read, on an emotional level, for scholars who study the affairs of Western Muslims and who shake their heads at every new low of ignorance and misrepresentation in media productions of the image of the beleaguered minority.

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Gay Rights at the Ballot Box by Amy L. Stone. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2012. 272 pp. Paper, \$22.50.

Amy Stone takes a detailed look at the history of gay civil rights direct democracy measures in the United States. Based largely on archival research and interviews with activists, this is very likely the most-exhaustive history of gay rights in ballot contests yet published. Stone begins with the infamous Anita Bryant campaign in Florida and works her way up through the same-sex marriage ban ballot battles of the 2000s, ending her analysis in 2009. Along the way, she focuses our attention on what ballot measures have meant to the gay and lesbian movement and its organizations, the campaign lessons learned, and the tactical and strategic choices faced by activists on both sides of the issue.

The central thesis is grounded largely in sociology and posits that although many of the gay rights ballot measures have resulted in defeats for the lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender (LGBT) community, they have often had the side effect of mobilizing the LGBT community at the local and state level and have sometimes created enduring LGBT groups that have gone on to effectively represent the LGBT community in the policy process. Although the thesis is not a new one in the gay rights literature, Stone’s account examines this phenomenon across a wide range of ballot contests around the United States. Her evidence supports the thesis as well as the previously documented argument that ballot measures forced the LGBT movement to think locally rather than nationally. And indeed, it is at the subnational level that the movement has achieved its greatest successes.