Review:

Nasir, Kamaludeen Mohmed. 2020. *Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the September 11 Generation.* Indiana University Press, p. 222, December 1.

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Abstract

The book Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the September 11 Generation *(2020) by Kamaludeen Mohmed Nasir explores the entangled relationship between Islam and hip-hop. The book centers around Muslim hip-hop artists affected by the war on terror and the long-term consequences of the 9/11 attacks; increased surveillance, a securitization of Islam, and an amplified islamophobia, not only in the United States but around the world. The centrality of 9/11 for this diverse group of young Muslim artists is reflected in the fact that references to the attacks have been staples in aural, visual, and textual modes and occur as t-shirt prints, in punch lines, and metaphors as well as on record covers and sound bites.*

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The book *Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the September 11 Generation* (2020) explores the entangled relationship between Islam and hip-hop. The book centers around Muslim hip-hop artists affected by the war on terror and the long-term consequences of the 9/11 attacks; increased surveillance, a securitization of Islam, and an amplified islamophobia, not only in the United States but around the world.

Building on Karl Mannheim's influential essay "The Problem of Generations" the book describes the exitance of a 9/11 generation–born between 1980 and the eve of the events of 9/11, 2001 – for which the 9/11 terror attacks are a symbolic node that in many ways bonds them together and puts them in the same analytic framework for the author. The centrality of 9/11 for this diverse group of young Muslim artists is reflected in the fact that references to the attacks have been staples in aural, visual, and textual modes and occur as t-shirt prints, in punch lines, and metaphors as well as on record covers and sound bites.

Many previous studies that have focused on the concept of "generation" have primarily examined it from American or European empirical data. Here lies one of the great benefits of the book; Nasir takes on the topic from the perspective of a global sociologist who is as familiar with hip-hop in New York as he is with the hip hop scenes in Kuala Lumpur or Sydney. The author moves freely from one national context to another which gives rich empirical weight to his arguments and observations.

The book consists of an introduction which sets the theoretical stage for the investigation, and six lucidly written chapters. In the chapters, Nasir engages with much of the previous scholarship on Islam and hip-hop, providing a useful overview and in many ways connecting the dots between works. Each of the book's six chapters introduces and discusses theoretical issues of relevance for anyone who seriously wants to engage with Islam and hip-hop such as gender, human rights, and authenticity. The combined chapters underscore the importance of examining aspects of youth culture – for example hip-hop – to understand imperative aspects of what shapes Islam.

Anders Ackfeldt

In one of the book's most interesting and innovative chapters, "Enemy of the State," Nasir investigates the relationship between hip-hop and states mainly outside Europe and the US. He points to the fact that "the potency of hip-hop often puts it at odds with the establishment" and that "governments the world over serve as the most important gatekeepers of hip-hop" (p. 135). In the context of authoritarian or soft authoritarian political regimes, Nasir argues that it is essential that scholars take hip-hop – distributed independently online – seriously as these artists often provide a counter-narrative to that of the governing elite.

In the above-mentioned chapter, Nasir touches on some examples where states have utilized hip-hop as "soft power" to obtain policy goals. This area is most certainly worthy of further critical investigation by scholars. I, for one, would be interested to read more about Muslim rappers who support the ruling elite. Contrary to the popular belief that rappers are always in opposition to the political establishment, there are more than a few examples around the world where hip-hop artists support and even act as mouthpieces for economic and political elites. This observation was made apparent when a long line of rappers such as Da Brat, 50 Cents, and Lil Wayne in different ways came out supporting the former US president Donald Trump.

This chapter, as all the chapters in the book, is rich in illustrative examples from around the world; for example, China, Singapore, Indonesia (I, for one, did not know that the former Indonesian president Joko Widodo was a fan of the heavy metal band Metallica), and Malaysia.

It has been nearly fifteen years since the hip-hop scholar and journalist Jeff Chang published the article "It's a Hip-Hop World" (2007) in *Foreign Policy* where he pointed to the fact that hip-hop had developed into a global means of communication. Kamaludeen Mohmed Nasir's important contribution to the field most certainly gives the reader a theoretically insightful and empirically thorough account of the Muslim side of this development. *Representing Islam: Hip-Hop of the*

Anders Ackfeldt

September 11 Generation is highly recommended to specialized readers interested in Muslim popular culture, religion in general, globalization as well as avid hip-hop heads interested in the global impact of their culture.