Ever since Edward Said's (1978) *Orientalism*, geographers have been attuned to the role of cultural media in shaping geographical imaginations about people and places, and the connections and entanglements between knowledge production and exercises of power. In *Covering Islam*, Said (1981) updates his previous focus on Orientalist scholarship published during periods of European colonial expansion and decline, and analyses 'contemporary' American media representations of, and responses to, Islam, Arabs, and the Orient. The discursive content and repercussions of Western media coverage of the Middle East are similarly at the heart of Karin Gwinn Wilkins' (2021) new book *Prisms of Prejudice*. It is an ambitious project, inspired by Said's seminal texts, that examines social and political constructions of the Middle East in United States (US) popular culture, news, and national agencies since the mid-1990s, and explores their consequences for public opinion and policy. Evaluating myriad sources over an extended time period - including prior to, and in the aftermath of, 9/11 in 2001 - enables Wilkins to identify shifting and enduring framings of the Middle East, and reflect on how discourses shape prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes towards Arab and Muslim communities within and outside the US.

Wilkins' research is grounded in media and communication studies but contributes to cross-disciplinary efforts to situate media within social, cultural, and political contexts. The concept of 'mediation' acts as a theoretical prop for her work: she cites Martin-Barbero (1993), Silverstone (2002), and Couldry and Hepp (2017) as three important theoretical touchstones for her thinking around the interplay between media, culture, and society. Wilkins seeks to move away from a narrow focus on media texts towards a broader conceptualisation of media as central to 'social norms, political decisions, and cultural interpretations' (p.122). Emphasis on the contexts in which media are embedded echoes a 'media-centered', rather than 'media-centric', approach. Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby (2015, p.316) define 'media-centric' research as "a one-sided approach to understanding the interplay between media, communications, culture, and society". This contrasts with 'media-centered' research which offers "a holistic understanding of the various social forces at work at the same time as we allow ourselves to have a particular perspective and emphasis on the role of the media in these processes" (Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby, 2015, p.316). Wilkins' alignment with the latter explains her primary interest in how media constructions of the Middle East shape 'everyday' norms, attitudes, and experiences. With this in mind, she proposes the striking metaphor of a 'prism' to capture how media are disseminated and differentially interpreted, with pre-existing identities, ideas, and experiences conditioning responses to mediated narratives.

Wilkins' book unfolds in a logical and captivating way as each chapter develops an intriguing story of US media discourses and their consequences. After Chapter 1 outlines the critical context and methodological approach of the research, Chapter 2 explores how US government and media sources map the Middle East. The chapter is rich and wide-ranging, comparing and contrasting visual and discursive mappings of the region across state agency documents, television news, and popular culture. Wilkins teases out nuances between sources and over time, but identifies a common and consistent mapping of the Middle East in ways that serve to justify US rescue and conquest. This manifests most clearly in narratives of development assistance by foreign aid agencies, regional violence in television news, and action-adventure in video games and films.

Chapter 3 delves deeper into these narratives and identifies three additional themes, which Wilkins stresses are not mutually exclusive: first, 'action-rescue' which focuses on conflict and violence, perpetuating reductive stereotypes of Middle Eastern 'characters' as victims or villains who require heroic rescue by the US or global North; second, 'empire adventure' which foregrounds conquest and the acquisition of territory, oil, and artifacts, ignoring issues of ownership, state sovereignty, or cultural context, and portraying local people as passive and without agency; and third, 'magical kingdom' which enacts popular imagery of Egyptian pyramids, mummies, and pharaohs to conjure up imaginative geographies of the Middle East as mythical, fantastical, and infantile, whilst erasing the region's history and contemporary politics. The scope of Wilkins' analysis is impressive and the result is an insightful account of dominant and persistent tropes and narratives across US media.

Chapters 4 and 5 shift the direction and focus of the book as Wilkins turns to the consequences of these discourses and potential ways of challenging them. Chapter 4 draws on a survey of more than a thousand US adults who engage with popular culture to investigate how media shape attitudes towards the Middle East. Wilkins claims to add complexity to Said's articulation of Orientalism, demonstrating 'that cultural dominance not only shapes American perceptions of communities outside of the West, but also filters through tensions within the US' (p.105). The key takeaway from her statistical analysis of the survey data is that male action-adventure fans evidence the strongest prejudice against Arab and Muslim communities, and fear of the Middle East. Prior to reading this chapter, I expected Wilkins to present participants with sources cited in Chapters 2 and 3, and reflect on their reactions to them. Wilkins' engagement with popular culture could therefore have been developed further by gathering qualitative responses of audiences to specific films, video games, or news bulletins and assessing the discursive and affective impacts of different media, in addition to the narratives woven within them.

The book ends on a practical and hopeful note. Rather than leaving readers feeling despondent or pessimistic about her conclusions - namely, that US discourses mediate the Middle East in ways that incite fear and prejudice, support imperialistic foreign policies, and promote hostility to those perceived as Other - Wilkins discusses possible solutions in Chapter 5. Chief among those is 'communication literacy' (p.135) which teaches students and citizens to engage critically with media and their production. Although Wilkins mentions the need for greater diversity in media industries, I was surprised that she privileged how media are consumed and interpreted, rather than giving equal weight to engaging with the authors of these narratives and changing methods of production. Nevertheless, education is a persuasive long-term solution given that students have the potential to become future broadcasters, policy-makers, and coders therefore leading, one hopes, to more inclusive, informed, and historically and geographically-sensitive mediations.

Overall, *Prisms of Prejudice* is a timely, comprehensive, and thought-provoking intervention into thinking about the complex interrelationships between media, culture, and society, and crucially, offers a critical framework for studying them.

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