



Embodied Borders: Countering Islamophobia in Ausma Zehanat Khan's Crime Fiction

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Abstract. This essay draws from critical race and affect studies in addressing how the police officer Esa Khattak in Ausma Zehanat Khan's crime fiction embodies race and faith differences within the Global North and thus helps bring attention to bear on the rise of anti-Muslim feelings within allegedly plural liberal democracies.

On 29 January 2022, Canada celebrated its first National Day of Remembrance of the Quebec City Mosque Attack and Action against Islamophobia. On the eve of what was the fifth anniversary of that attack, Chief Commissioner Marie-Claude Landry of the Canadian Human Rights Commission released a statement unambiguously asserting that “[h]ate crimes are a violation of human rights. They threaten our safety, peace and prosperity. We must all stand up to hatred and to the people who spread it. Islamophobia has no place in Canada” (n.p.). Islamophobia, understood as “acts of intolerance, discrimination, and racism against Islam and Muslims” (Kalin 4), is a growing concern across Western nations. Although the term came into use earlier and has been criticized for promoting a monolithic concept of Islamic cultures, it gained currency after 2001 when the September 11 attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon—followed closely by attacks in Europe and elsewhere by global terrorist groups—exacerbated anti-Muslim feelings globally. In Canada, where Islam is the second largest religion, recent studies (Hanniman; Jamil; Bakali; Wilkins-Laflamme; Mercier-Dalphond and Helly) have confirmed the intensification of prejudice, suspicion, hate speech and varying forms and degrees of aggression against

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