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Slamming Narratives: A Critical Analysis of Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan's Slam Poetry

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ABSTRACT

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Some popular literary feminist discourses have reduced Muslim woman's identity to a homogenous monolithic entity devoid of her subjectivity and agency. Resultantly, Muslim women seem to be reduced to a stereotypical image of an oriental, marginalized entity, as these narratives are often employed to rationalize the violence in the third world. Over the years, slam poetry has become a popular medium of counterdiscourse against such problematic framing of Muslim women. This paper examines the slam poetry of Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan as a site of resistance against monolithic representations of Muslim women in both Western and cultural narratives. Situating her work within the post-9/11 socio-political context, the analysis draws on postcolonial and Muslim feminist theories to explore how Manzoor-Khan reclaims narrative authority through performative verse. Through close readings of "This Is Not a Humanizing Poem", "A Story for Ourselves This Time", and "Funeral of the Authentic Muslim Woman", this paper highlights her subversion of Orientalist tropes, patriarchal scripts, and Western expectations of relatability. Manzoor-Khan's poetry resists frameworks of respectability and authenticity, offering instead a defiant, pluralistic vision of Muslim womanhood. By using the slam stage as a political and poetic platform, she expands the possibilities for self-representation and collective storytelling.

Keywords: *Muslim Women, Slam Poetry, Islamophobia, Resistance, Narrative Agency*

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This paper explores the slam poetry of Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan as a site of subversion and creative resistance against the essentialist and monolithic representations of Muslim women in both Western and cultural narratives. Attempting to read Manzoor-Khan's poems, "This Is Not a Humanizing Poem" (2017), "Funeral of the Authentic Muslim Woman" (2017), and "A Story for Ourselves This Time" (2018), this study examines her subversion of Orientalist tropes, patriarchal scripts, and Western expectations of relatability. The analysis situates her work within the post-9/11 socio-political context and draws on postcolonial and Muslim feminist theories to explore how Manzoor-Khan reclaims narrative authority through her performative verse.

The post-9/11 discourse surrounding Muslim women has reduced them to the disenfranchised position of the silent victims of patriarchy while flattening their identities into symbols of religious and cultural oppression. In her critique of these troubling narratives, Lila Abu-Lughod exposes the ideological forces driving their representation. The "oppressed Muslim woman" (2015, p. 9) trope functions less as a call for genuine solidarity and more as a justification for political intervention and cultural and moral superiority. Abu-Lughod challenges the homogenizing narratives about Muslim women that obscure their diversity, agency, and subjective experiences. These narratives often conflate complex personal experiences with cultural generalizations, overlooking their material and political realities. The aftermath of war, occupation, and authoritarian governance gets pushed to the sidelines as mainstream representation reduces Muslim women to passive victims of violence (2015, pp. 31-32). Such representations across media, literature, and policy reinscribe colonial binaries and forecloses the possibility of meaningful political and ethical engagements.

While the Muslim academia is enriched with discourses that critique this monolithic representation of Muslim women, literary arenas have also resisted such dominant narratives. One avenue where Muslim women have recorded their resistance is slam poetry. Slam poetry is an amalgamation of poetry and performative arts, designed for artistic presentation on stage (Smith & Kraynak, 2009, p.5). It is poetry spoken aloud and performed in front of an interactive audience, with the additional aspect of judges who mark the performances. This form of poetry originated in 1984 in Chicago, USA, when Marc Smith, a construction worker turned poet, sensed that poetry was being walled in the Academy, while the general public grew increasingly distanced from it. Smith experimented with poetry by taking it to bars where the audience was not composed of established poets and academics but blue-collar Americans who were enjoying drinks after a long shift at work. Amidst the chatter and clinking of glasses, slam poetry soon took root, becoming a regular event at bars in Chicago and eventually evolving into a national phenomenon (Somers-Willett, 2009, pp. 3-4). The stage of slam poetry has long been claimed as a space of dissent and counter-discourse, especially among marginalized communities.

Muslim youth have employed slam poetry as a potent form of dissent, carving out a platform to challenge Islamophobia, racialized stereotypes, and producing counter-narratives. These artists confront the issues that Muslims face

both at home and in the diaspora as they challenge marginalization, negotiate their identities, and contest the boundaries of national belonging, making slam not just a form of self-expression but a political speech where embodied storytelling becomes a resistance against the silencing and othering of Muslims (Puzon, 2021, pp. 68-69). Suhaiymah Manzoor Manzoor-Khan, a British Pakistani, is one such artist who has taken the slam poetry stage to advocate against the marginalization of Muslim women. As a poet, playwright, and public educator, Manzoor-Khan has worked to counter the dominant understanding of history, race, knowledge, and violence (Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan). This paper takes her selected slam poems, as mentioned above, to record the counternarrative against the reductive Western framing of Muslim women.

The first poem that I scrutinize here is Manzoor-Khan's most famous, "This is Not a Humanizing Poem" (2017). The poem was first performed in the UK's national slam event, Roundhouse[1], where Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan stood tall, wearing her identity as a Muslim woman on her sleeve and rejecting the appeal to subscribe to the Western criteria of humanity. The Western universalism, as critiqued by Edward Said, Frantz Fanon, Sylvia Wynter, and the like, posits a supposedly neutral and all-encompassing definition of the human, yet, at its core, this universal is constructed from the particular values of the West—white, secular, liberal—and excludes those who do not conform. Such assumed universalism grants humanity selectively and denies it structurally. Muslims' acceptance in Western discourse is therefore conditional, dependent on forms of "humanization" that cater to Western sensibilities and moral frameworks.

In "This Is Not a Humanizing Poem", Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan exposes how such narratives pressure Muslims to become legible through familiarity, to appear "relatable," "upbeat," and harmless. She satirizes these demands by listing the tropes expected of the "good Muslim" who must plead recognition from the West through the display of "shared humanity". Such recognition is always conditional: the Muslim must be relatable, apologetic, and assimilable to merit inclusion.

According to Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan, a humanizing poem, thus, asks Muslims to show the Western audience "how wrong their [the West's] preconceptions are." It requires the Muslims to be "relatable", write something "upbeat for a change", "crack a smile" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 00:18), and tell them [the audience] about the movies they love to watch. It also asks them to mention the Muslims' quirkiness and show them that "you [the Muslim] have no idea how to make the perfect amount of pasta." It calls for tell[ing] them stories of "stoic humor", making childhood references, and telling a story about "being frugal." It asks the Muslims to be "domestic, successful, [and] add layers." The poem moves on to tell them about the "complex inner worlds of Sumaiyyahs and Ayeshas." (2017, 00:49) and narrates the Muslims' "tragedies and comedies"—how full of life and

[1] Since I have cited from Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan's poetry performances of all three selected poems, I have provided their YouTube links in References at the end. It is important to note that I cite the time (in minutes and seconds) of the location of lines in Manzoor-Khan's performances.

love Muslims are. Manzoor-Khan reflects on how she is tempted to write such a "humanizing poem", that will appeal to the western politics of appeal, but she refuses to do so because it is not the poem she wants to write, but a poem she is "reduced to." She is reduced to "proving [her] life as human because it is relatable" and "valuable because it is recognizable" (2017, 01:13).

Manzoor-Khan resists this coercive framework by rejecting the politics of respectability. She refuses to write a poem that seeks validation through relatability, insisting instead that Muslims should be loved and respected unconditionally. Since Muslims' acceptance in the west is often tied to them being exceptionally well in academics, she affirms that having good academic records and family memories are not the only things that "count as a life, [but] living is." Manzoor-Khan refuses to be "respectable" as she demands that the West accept Muslims for who they are. She demands them to love Muslims even when they are "lazy, poor, depressed, unwashed, weeping, high as kites, unemployed, joyriding, time-wasting, failing at school", and "love us filthy" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 01:40). Manzoor-Khan states these words with an emotional trance that Muslims should be loved unconditionally. They deserve love and respect without the "right color passports, without the right sounding English", love them "silent, un-apologizing…homeless, unsure, sometimes violent." Love them when they are not "athletes", when they do not "bake cakes", and do not offer their homes. Even when they are "wretched, suicidal, naked, and contributing nothing." Manzoor-Khan reemphasizes that Muslims should be loved and accepted unconditionally because if she is needed to "prove [her] humanity," then she is not the "one that is not human" but the West is (2017, 02:06).

This poem perhaps stands as a conceptual foundation of Manzoor-Khan's body of work, where she persistently refuses to appeal to Western universalism and seek validation by catering to the liberal frameworks of humanity. While the poem is not exclusively about Muslim women, its inclusion here is intentional: to position Manzoor-Khan's voice as a resistive force against the hegemonic and reductive representations of Muslims, particularly in Western discourse. The poem artistically dismantles the logic of conditional empathy. Manzoor-Khan does not seek to persuade her audience of her worth by aligning herself with the values, interests, or moral frameworks. She, in turn, exposes the inherent violence in the politics of recognition that demand assimilation as a precondition for dignity and humanity. The poem refuses to appeal to the dominant gaze and turns that gaze back on itself, asking why such an appeal is even necessary. By refusing to produce herself as relatable, she reveals how liberal discourse often masks coercive demands for conformity. Her insistence that Muslims deserve to be loved "filthy" is not simply about emotional recognition; it is a direct critique of the civility politics that sustain racialized social hierarchies in the West.

While confronting the marginalization in the Western world, Manzoor-Khan is equally wary of the traditional/native problematic tropes of framing Muslim women. In the poem "A Story for Ourselves This Time", Manzoor-Khan exposes the dangers of the reductive framing of Muslim women in their own cultural and

religious settings. Manzoor-Khan reflects Miriam Cooke's "multiple critique," where Cooke refers to the rhetorical strategies employed by Muslim feminists to navigate and resist overlapping systems of oppression. Such feminist discourses critique global hegemonies such as colonialism and imperialism, while simultaneously challenging the patriarchal structures in their own cultural and national context. Islamic feminism then engages in a form of "political insubordination" by holding multiple, seemingly contradictory identities; both as a Muslim and striving for gender justice. Such a position allows Muslim feminists to challenge the boundaries imposed by Western feminism, which often looks at Islam as inherently patriarchal, and takes up the traditionalist interpretations of Islam that marginalize women (Cooke, 2000, p. 94).

"A Story for Ourselves this Time" carries subversive elements as Manzoor-Khan refuses to narrate her womanhood through the prevailing, reductive trope of orientalist exoticism, cultural romanticism, and patriarchal respectability. Manzoor-Khan confronts the established image, roles, and expectations imposed on Muslim women by both internal cultural patriarchies and external colonialist discourses. She laments her constraint to see herself beyond the "bangles and anklets/gold and pretty but still a type of chain" (Manzoor-Khan, 2018, 00:18). Such jewelry, while being symbolic of femininity and culture, also serves as a metaphor for constraints. Manzoor-Khan's inability to see herself beyond these cliches underscores the pervasiveness of such limiting tropes and the difficulty of imagining oneself beyond them. She is caught in a representational labyrinth, where even expressions of joy and grief are mediated by externally imposed binaries, "tears of joy or tears of grief / which for us too often are made the same." She cannot write "outside of our mothers" (2018, 00:50), reflecting the relationship of a mother and her daughter sharing their generational trauma and fear as she reiterates that she is wary of writing herself outside of "fear…whispers and elisions and repeated mistakes." She wonders if her mother, too, had once promised herself not to repeat those mistakes. Manzoor-Khan cannot untangle herself from her mother as she confesses that she cannot write herself out of her mother and how not to make "reference to their [mothers'] spines and silences" (2018, 00:55). Thus, she laments the violence that women have been enduring for generations.

Moreover, Manzoor-Khan struggles to write herself "outside of men / their eyes, their grips, their words, their pleasure," revealing the sexual harassment and abuse that Muslim women endure while their society silently witnesses. She does not know how to "salvage [her] skin from their requirements" (Manzoor-Khan, 2018, 01:03), reflecting on how women are expected to meet the societal definitions of beauty, and they are coerced to conform to those standards. However, Manzoor-Khan's admission of these constraints is not a surrender but a form of critical self-awareness. While her positionality is shaped by cultural frameworks, she challenges such authorities as well. Especially in the ways they have dictated how women should appear, behave, or be remembered. She names the parts of herself that have been hidden or devalued: "hairy arms and upper lips / bushy eyebrows… cracked heels, full bellies, and laughing mouths / not just kissing lips" (2018, 01:13). These physical features, once policed into invisibility, are reclaimed as markers of life, resilience, and authenticity. Manzoor-Khan does not seek a sanitized, idealized

femininity but affirms a messy, unfiltered womanhood, powerful in its refusal to conform. Such refusal is reflected in the metaphors Manzoor-Khan employs, such as the food. While Muslim women are often "made into jasmine, cinnamon, and sugar"—pleasing, sweet, ornamental, she rejects such saccharine reduction and associates herself with "onions, garlic, ginger roots / tough, essential / the basis of everything, indispensable" (2018, 01:26). Similarly, Manzoor-Khan takes cosmological metaphors while critiquing romanticized femininity. She refuses to be seen as the passive light of the moon, "a mere mimicry of another's light," and claims to be the sun, "the blaze, the fiery depth," positioning women as the creators of their own luminosity, "[d]eadly and uncontainable." She also declares, "Take back your rivers, your stars, your flowers / we are the source, the light, the soil" (2018, 01:38), creatively replacing borrowed symbols with elemental, life-giving, ones that originate from the self and the earth. As she concludes her poem, Manzoor-Khan vows to write her story by herself this time, even admits the uncertainty, "I want to write us… even if I do not know how to begin." Writing becomes an act of resistance, a rejection of silence, and a reclamation of authorship. She ends her poem with the hope that "at least that way we'll be a story for ourselves this time" (2018, 02:00) while rejecting the narratives that have spoken over, erased, or aestheticized the identity of Muslim women.

Associating such images with Muslim women's collective identity has also created an archetypal representation of Muslim women, which is considered "authentic." Manzoor-Khan, in her poem "Funeral of the Authentic Muslim Woman," dismantles this so-called authenticity. She starts her performance with a monologue outlining the problematic notion of authenticity:

> . . . it [the poem] is a brave and kind of unapologetic rejection of the idea that there is a way to be a Muslim woman, that there is a real Muslim woman, and that Muslim woman actually refers to a monolith of people. From my life and my experiences, I know that Muslim woman refers to a multitude of multifaceted, contradictory, complex individuals and, for me, embracing that and recognizing that is a brave thing to do and it's an important thing to do because it goes against the way that other people, the media, politicians, even other Muslims, women try to kind of co-opt and say what being a Muslim woman is and I think this is universal beyond just Muslim women. This is about saying that everybody should be allowed and afforded the complexity that we afford for ourselves. I think we often like to think "I'm a contradictory person, and I'm allowed to be nuanced, but other people, they're just this, they're just that, and we reduce other people to categories and binaries". So hopefully this poem stands in the face of that." (Manzoor-Khan, 2017)

Funeral of the Authentic Muslim Woman is a poetic eulogy not for a real woman but for a constructed archetype, a fictional "authentic" Muslim woman who was never real but has been imposed, idealized, and weaponized across cultural, religious, and political domains. Manzoor-Khan declares such a woman "was written by others / made for others / and imposed on us" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 01:48). The poem represents the funeral of such an imaginary "authentic" Muslim

woman, where Muslim women are gathered to "bury the memory of the one who never was." Manzoor-Khan has gathered Muslim women to "stamp on her grave and the world she was made to hold us in." The women present at the funeral possess contradictory traits to counter the "authenticity" of the monolithic, imaginary woman.

The poem is structured as a collective celebration of plurality, ambiguity, contradiction, and self-definition among the Muslim women. The performative act of burial again reflects Cooke's "multiple critique", where the Muslim women simultaneously resist internal patriarchy and external orientalism. Cooke emphasizes that Muslim women reject the "either/or" options handed to them, victimhood or complicity, and instead assert nuanced identities that speak across religious, cultural, and political boundaries (2000, p. 94). For Manzoor-Khan, the stamping on the grave is for the "girls who cover their hair in the mornings and hang it loose by night," "For the girls who keep it covered and those who never do," thus, countering the veiled image of the "authentic" Muslim woman. Contrasting girls who are "forced" to keep their hair covered and those whose parents make "no comment", Manzoor-Khan narrates the subjective realities of Muslim girls who have different experiences in different cultures. Some girls wear their hair "loose, wear it barely, wear it groovy", reiterating the subjective differences, some "don't know why they wear it", and others wear it as "anti-capitalist male-gaze resisters." While some remove it "the day after the attack" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 02:18), commenting on how Muslim women in the West are targeted for hate crimes after a terror attack happens.

Islamophobia has rendered Muslim women wary of showing their identity in times of crisis, as their hijab could potentially expose them to hate speech and racially-motivated attacks. Such a nuanced portrayal of Muslim women resonates with Amina Jamal's piety and transgression. Jamal critiques both Western liberal feminism in its obsession with "saving" Muslim women and also the conservative Islamic frameworks that define piety through modesty, obedience, and visibility. Jamal argues that Muslim women often embody both piety and transgression simultaneously, not as a contradiction but as a nuanced negotiation with faith, gender, and power (2015, pp. 57-58). The poem explains such complexities of Muslim women while talking about Hijab, "the taking-it-off-on-days-after-attack / the wearing-it-in-bolder-colors / the more-than-their-wearing-it / the consumed-by-their-wearing-it" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 02:22). For Manzoor-Khan, hijab is not fixed in meaning; it is worn in grief, pride, as a resistance, confusion, and desire. The hijab becomes a marker not of fixed religiosity but of an evolving relationship with identity, safety, and resistance as Muslim women have a personal relationship with the hijab and its political meanings. Such complexity disrupts any totalizing claim on what it means to be "pious" or "authentic.

The poem continues to unpack how women's bodies have been politicized, both internally and externally: "The girls who learnt their bodies meant shame / before they learnt anything else", "the quickly covered up, the unjustly touched, the unafraid." These lines reveal how Muslim women are constantly policed through moral scripts, whether from their families, communities, or by the government.

Manzoor-Khan, rather than proposing a narrative of sexual liberation, acknowledges the silence, secrecy, guilt, pride, and grief as coexisting states for Muslim women. As Jamal also describes that transgression is not simply rebellion (2015, p. 69), it may emerge from within a moral worldview, creating new ethical and spiritual subjectivities. Manzoor-Khan embraces this ambivalence, refusing to vilify piety or romanticize defiance.

Manzoor-Khan continues to dismantle the characteristics of the so-called authentic Muslim woman. The authentic Muslim woman is known as the one who keeps an uptight reputation. One who carries "piousness" and calmness, and who cannot speak for herself. Manzoor-Khan stamps on the "authentic" Muslim woman's grave for the women who've been spat at for their faith" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 02:28), who have had "people cross the road over their faith" and "the overlooked ones." Those who are asked if they "drink" or are "the drinkers." Those "who do what the boys do and better, who denounce the boys, who love the boys, are loved by the boys." Those who "wish they had the freedom of the boys" and those who "steal the freedom of their boys." For those who "stands for the boys", "don't vilify the boys" and those who are "vilified by the boys and still stand for their rights" (2017, 02:56), all these different Muslim women exist. The "authentic" Muslim woman carries "piousness" that defines her being a Muslim, and any deviation would cast her out of her religion. Manzoor-Khan again resists such presuppositions in her poem as she mentions the girls "who learnt their bodies meant shame before they learnt anything else." Girls who are taught to be ashamed of their bodies, those who "shave off the shame," and those who "own it." The women who have "secret relationships, the secret bodies, the embodied secrets of the silent babies, the never born" (2017, 03:15). Manzoor-Khan addresses the shame associated with abortion, yet the same people do not address the root issue when women are "unjustly touched"—women who suffer from sexual harassment and rape, yet they are taught to "quickly cover up" their pregnancies.

Here again, Jamal's insights are useful. These women do not exist in moral binaries; they transgress even while seeking meaning within religious or cultural codes. Their "secrets" are not confessions but assertions of agency in unjust systems. The "authentic" Muslim woman is domesticated; she marries, has children, and spends her life taking care of her children. However, this definition of womanhood has been imposed on Muslim women who do not fall into this categorization. Manzoor-Khan draws out the differences, again to stress the separate subjective lives of Muslim women who do not adhere to the "authentic" image of the Muslim woman. She would stamp on the grave of that "authentic" woman for the "married and the unmarried", the "never-married and the soon-to-be-married", "the unmarriageable, the second marriage", "the anti-marriage, the marriage conversation, the wedding daydream", the women who marry for the sake of their parents and the "runaway brides". The "authentic" Muslim woman also does not complain and endure any type of abusive marriage; however, Manzoor-Khan specifies the Muslim women who realize their "marriage mistake" and the "happily divorced" (2017, 03:36) women who defy the so-called authenticity of the made-up woman.

The "authentic" Muslim woman also possesses a degree of faith and piety, and without her demonstrating her belief, she is no longer considered a Muslim. Manzoor-Khan juxtaposes this image with Muslim women who "wake consistently at dawn and those who never can for the prayer." The "sleep-defying" ones, the "sometimes-waking and the sleepy", the ones who "stumble over the words", the ones who "know the entire book", and the ones who "struggle with it." The women who "get five times a day" and the ones "who get five minutes a night" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 03:55) all these women deal with their faith and religion on their own. This spectrum of spirituality exemplifies Cooke's view that faith can be reinterpreted from within rather than discarded. The poem defies the reduction of Muslim women to one type of spiritual or social being. By affirming both those who pray five times a day and those who manage only five minutes at night, the poem collapses the binary between the devout and the secular, instead centering the ongoing, uneven, deeply human processes of faith and struggle. The women in the poem are not asking to be "liberated" from religion but are resisting its monopolization by those who gatekeep authenticity.

Some discourses about Muslim women have created checkboxes for Muslim women that they must meet to become the "authentic" Muslim. One such convention is that Muslim women endure abuse and hardship no matter how unbearable their lives become. They do not speak for themselves. Manzoor-Khan verbalizes the presence of Muslim women "who speak too much" and those who cannot speak, "the spoken for" and the "spoken over", the women who speak for other women, those who "speak wrongly", the women who think they can speak for women, and those "who don't speak." Moreover, there are those who are "sick of speaking", the "already spoke", and those who spent too long being "woke", the women "whose words are lost, whose voice is hoarse, and those still shouting" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 04:20). All these different Muslim women celebrate their presence as they "were always here and she [the Authentic Muslim woman] never was" (2017, 04:27). This direct confrontation with the myth of the "authentic Muslim woman" reveals how women's lived realities have always exceeded and subverted the narratives told about them. Cooke calls this move a reclaiming of narrative authority to speak from within, across, and beyond the cultural boundaries that once silenced them (2000, p. 108).

Manzoor-Khan ends her poem with a concrete statement that whether she and all other Muslim women are offered "victimhood, or the total refusal of it", they will find comfort in their hands–envisioning a shared sisterhood. They will find their peace in the "spaces between [their] hands where the camera never flashes" and where stories do not "weave themselves" (Manzoor-Khan, 2017, 04:43), referring to the conditional victimhood and humanization of the West. They will gather together and stamp on the grave of the so-called authentic Muslim woman who was never even present, to declare their ever-presence and record their resistance. This statement reflects Cooke's idea that Muslim women must refuse externally imposed roles, whether in the form of voiceless victims or the hyper-visible symbols of resistance. The poetic funeral staged by Manzoor-Khan is not just metaphorical; it is ideological. The act of publicly declaring the death of the

"authentic" Muslim woman is a symbolic dismantling of a carefully maintained fiction, one upheld by political rhetoric, orientalist scholarship, and internal community policing. The diversity of women invited to this funeral reflects the diversity that is denied by the politics of authenticity. By gathering women who are pious and not, married and not, vocal and silenced, she makes the category "Muslim woman" more inclusive rather than prescriptive. The power of this act lies in how it challenges every essentializing claim, whether external or internal, and in doing so, it creates space for self-definition that is not based on conforming to dominant norms.

As analysis in the foregoing pages shows, Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan's slam poetry characterizes a bold, embodied resistance to reductive narratives that seek to confine Muslim women to singular identities. Her poems dismantle the politics of representation, whether stemming from colonial legacies, media caricatures, or patriarchal prescriptions, by reclaiming the power of voice, metaphor, and performance. By refusing to cater to the Western gaze or conform to internal expectations of "authentic" Muslim womanhood, Manzoor-Khan asserts a radical subjectivity that is plural, contradictory, and unapologetically political. Her work not only challenges the limits imposed on Muslim women but also redefines the act of poetic creation itself as a space of liberation and reimagining. In a world that demands legibility and respectability, her poetry insists that Muslim women deserve to be heard, loved, and accepted unconditionally and on their own terms.

Moreover, it may be argued that slam poetry has provided a liberating space for Muslim women to articulate their agency and resist marginalization and oppression. The growing visibility of Muslim women in slam poetry, notably Ayesha Nasir, Amal Kassir, Amina Jama, and Sarah El Hamed, underlines a broader cultural shift in how marginalized groups are choosing to counter the dominant narratives. While mainstream media often speaks about Muslim women, rarely does it provide space for them to speak for themselves. Slam poetry operates as an intervention in this discursive imbalance. It provides a space where the politics of representation is not just a list of abstract questions but lived experiences recited, embodied, and reclaimed in front of live audiences. In this context, the poet's body becomes a site of contestation: veiled or unveiled, racialized, politicized, and already read before she speaks. Manzoor-Khan's presence on stage, therefore, serves a dual purpose: she challenges the audience not only through her content but also through visibility. By asserting control over her narrative and its delivery, she resists being merely interpreted or consumed. This makes the slam stage not only a space for poetic articulation but also a site of political resistance, where the stakes are reputational, epistemic, and affective.

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