

*“Good” and “Bad”  
Muslim Citizens:  
Feminists, Terrorists, and  
U.S. Orientalisms*

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THE WAR ON TERROR waged by the United States since 2001 has focused on religion, nationalism, and gender as linchpins in the U.S. discourse about bringing “democracy” and “human rights,” particularly “women’s rights,” to regions that presumably need to catch up with Western modernity. In this social Darwinist model, human subjects trapped in antidemocratic, patriarchal, and tribalistic cultures need to be liberated in order to achieve the “freedom” of individual autonomy promised to the fittest by neoliberal capitalism. Muslim and Arab femininities and masculinities are a central focus of this politics of rescuing and reshaping subjects. Missionary feminism and liberal humanitarianism have infused the rhetoric used to justify the U.S. invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq and to warn of the threats attributed to Iran and Pakistan. Within the United States, notions of “freedom” and autonomy shape liberal definitions of citizenship that divide certain subjects as worthy of belonging from others who must be expelled from the nation. However, this moralized logic of virtue and the rhetoric of “national security” mask U.S. imperial designs and strategic interests in the Middle East and South/Southwest Asia. The reasons that certain individuals or groups are “anti-American” and resist U.S. occupation and corporate control are obscured through a

discourse of “anti-terrorism” that targets Muslim and Arab males but is also preoccupied with women’s bodies. This article describes how constructions of gender are intertwined with religion and nationalism in a state discourse about “terror” and how “good” and “bad” Muslim citizenship are interpreted in the United States after September 11, 2001. What do these gendered performances tell us about U.S. nationalisms, feminisms, and race politics in the War on Terror?

This article builds on earlier work by feminist and postcolonial scholarship, extending it to the current moment of U.S. empire. The logic of the War on Terror is embedded in the gendered politics of colonialism, nationalism, and liberalism. Feminist critics Minoo Moallem and Laura Nader argue that the “Muslim Woman,” especially the veiled woman, is a foundational trope for Orientalism and colonialism.<sup>1</sup> In the post-9/11 period, too, notions of the assimilability of Muslim women and men are intertwined with gendered discourses of neoliberal citizenship and imperial nationalism that are couched in rhetorics of Western modernity, democracy, and the “American way of life.”

The analysis here sheds light on the implications of these questions for the U.S. academy and the new “culture wars,” centered on the tropes of the “feminist” and “terrorist” and infused by discussions of gender, Islam, and cultures in the Middle East and South/Southwest Asia. The article explores representations of South Asian Muslim terrorists and feminist activists in the U.S. mainstream media as well as the production of gendered, religious, and political identities, focusing on the case of a presumed terrorist sleeper cell and on widely circulating autobiographical texts by two Muslim women.

#### TERRORISTS AND CITIZENS, GOOD AND BAD

The notion of the “terrorist” does not simply delegitimize violence by non-state actors that threaten a particular state; rather, it is embedded in the framework of liberal politics. Terror is “an epistemological object” defined by modernity and attributed to the “nonmodern” and “nonliberal.”<sup>2</sup> The U.S.-led War on Terror is based on these assumptions and embedded in a binary framework: a state that does not promote terror fighting a network of non-state actors who inflict terror. Because terrorists

do not resemble a “conventional enemy” and can presumably blend into the citizenry, they must be contained by cultural as well as military tactics of repression. Counterinsurgency thus has a cultural front that rests on racialized understandings of populations. Practices of state terror are often justified by distinctions between premodern and modern subjects, “civilized” people who deserve “rights” versus those who are evicted from the modern political community. These distinctions form the core of imperial thinking about “loyal” citizen-subjects and “enemy aliens” and have a long history in the United States, as evident in the vilification, deportation, and incarceration of targeted groups during the Palmer Raids of 1919-1920, the internment of Japanese Americans in World War II, and the Red Scare of the cold war era. Thus, the disciplining practices of the War on Terror extend well before the events of 9/11 and the Patriot Act: the profiling of Muslims, Arabs, and South Asians in the United States is not exceptional but is shaped by U.S. interests in consolidating its hegemony after the cold war.<sup>3</sup>

The War on Terror has produced two, largely dichotomous modes of expressing cultural citizenship for Muslim Americans after 9/11. These are what I call “good” and “bad” Muslim citizenship, drawing on Mahmood Mamdani’s book, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror*. Mamdani observes that after 9/11,

President Bush moved to distinguish between “good Muslims” and “bad Muslims.” . . . “[B]ad Muslims” were clearly responsible for terrorism. At the same time, the president seemed to assure Americans that “good Muslims” . . . would undoubtedly support “us” in a war against “them.” . . . But . . . unless proved to be “good,” every Muslim was presumed to be “bad.”<sup>4</sup>

Mamdani’s analysis distinguishes between “good” versus “bad” Muslims from the perspective of the state’s War on Terror but does not focus on the political responses of individual Muslims themselves, so I am extending his framework to the selves represented by Muslim Americans and the ways their political identities are interpreted in moral and gendered terms. These “good” and “bad” identities rework notions of “enemies” and “defenders of freedom” from the cold war era as part of the culture of the national security state.<sup>5</sup>

“Good citizenship” is performed by Muslim American individuals and organizations in a variety of ways, testifying loyalty to the nation and asserting belief in its democratic ideals, often through public testimonials that emphasize that Muslims are peaceful, loyal U.S. citizens. An “imperative patriotism” that deems dissent against state policies unpatriotic has long been used by the United States to suppress radical movements, such as the American Indian movement and the Black Panthers, which were considered enemies of “American values.” Although the hyperpatriotic nationalism of the post-9/11 moment has been widely acknowledged, Steven Salaita traces this imperative patriotism to the history of settler colonialism and the “need to create a juridical mentality that professes some sort of divine mandate to legitimize [the settlers’] presence on indigenous land” by dividing chosen peoples from uncivilized savages.<sup>6</sup> These foundational myths continue to underwrite discourses about barbarism and civilization that legitimate the occupation of Muslim and Arab nations and the regulation, surveillance, and torture of Muslim and Arab subjects. U.S. Orientalism has legitimated imperial interventions overseas that, unlike older European forms of colonialism, often rest on covert interventions, indirect control, and a discourse of benevolent empire that masks the internal exclusion and violence against native peoples, African Americans, and others.<sup>7</sup>

It is easy to critique overtly jingoistic nationalist discourse about U.S. domestic and foreign policies, but I also want to explore the liberal variants of these discourses that provide humanitarian justifications for imperial intervention and help build national consensus for the War on Terror. “Good” Muslim citizens are key to the War on Terror because their testimonials affirm the humanitarian premise of U.S. invasions that presumably liberate oppressed peoples around the world. This is the paradox of “benevolent imperialism,” or what Paul Gilroy calls “armored cosmopolitanism,” which intervenes in order to shock and awe other nations into supporting the United States and the globalizing of neoliberal capitalism.<sup>8</sup> Clearly, there are different degrees of self-defense in performances of “good citizenship” by Muslim Americans, given the surveillance and repression of political speech in the Patriot Act era. However, public testimonials affirming “good Muslim” citizenship that are not accompanied by

acknowledgment of the political context of terrorism implicitly reinforce the premise of U.S. wars as fights for “freedom” and “democracy,” even if they challenge particular state policies of racial or religious profiling.

This article discusses these issues in light of the cases of an exemplary “bad Muslim” citizen, Hamid Hayat, a young Pakistani American man from Lodi, California, linked to terrorism by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) in 2005, and of a “good Muslim” feminist, Irshad Manji, a Ugandan Canadian woman of Indian/Egyptian origin who became a prominent spokesperson in the U.S. media after 9/11. I focus here primarily on representations constructed by the U.S. mainstream media, but these representations are certainly debated within Muslim American communities themselves.

The two cases I discuss here are inherently uneven as Hayat became visible as the target of an FBI investigation and has no writings of his own; Manji is known as an author, media figure, and producer of a PBS documentary, “Faith without Fear.” But this discrepancy in legibility is in fact part of the logic of the “good” versus “bad” Muslim. By definition, “good” Muslims are public Muslims who can offer first-person testimonials, in the mode of the native informant, about the oppression of women in Islam, the “freedoms . . . in the West,” as Manji describes them, and the hatred, racism, and anti-Semitism of Arabs and Muslims.<sup>9</sup> These Muslim spokespersons are the darlings of the Right-wing and mainstream media, publish widely distributed books, and have slick websites. For example, Manji has been invited to speak at the Pentagon, is senior fellow at the European Foundation for Democracy, was affiliated with Yale University, and directs the “Moral Courage” Project at New York University. There are several other Muslim women spokespersons, such as former Somali Dutch Parliament member Ayaan Hirsi Ali, affiliated with the Right-wing American Enterprise Institute; Iranian author Azar Nafisi, based at the School for Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University, who has worked with neoconservatives such as Paul Wolfowitz;<sup>10</sup> and the exiled Bangladeshi writer, Taslima Nasrin (who has been embraced by the Hindu Right in India), a fellow at the Right-wing Hudson Institute. These native informants about “the Muslim world” are made into public exemplars of pro-Western allies by state and university support, extensive media ap-

pearances on FOX News or CNN, and funding and promotion by a web of neoconservative, conservative, and pro-Israel think tanks and organizations. In contrast, “bad” Muslims are made into public exemplars of anti-Western enemies by state allegations of threats to national security and U.S. democracy; hysterical media coverage; virtually no opportunities to present, let alone publish, their own views and stories; and often distorted accounts of their activities and politics.

I want to note that I deliberately chose to focus on the case of Hayat because he was *not* a traditional political activist and did not belong to any known Muslim or political organizations. Although greater attention has been paid to the targeting of Muslim activists since 9/11, the vast majority of “bad Muslims” scapegoated in post-9/11 detentions and deportations have, in fact, been ordinary people like Hayat and his father, an ice-cream truck driver who was arrested with his son. The Hayats and countless other working-class or undocumented immigrant Muslims are vulnerable due to their lack of financial and legal resources, and the abuse they suffer at the hands of the state is largely unknown. Although Hayat’s case did receive some media attention—of a rather sensational nature except for an investigative PBS documentary<sup>11</sup>—there are many more Muslim and Arab immigrant men who were detained after 9/11 whose names were kept secret by the government. These issues of class and labor get obscured by the framework of “good” and “bad” Muslims/immigrants/ minorities, and the differentiation between loyal and threatening subjects ultimately leads to disciplining many working-class, undocumented immigrants who have become afraid to organize after the crackdown. Yet classed imaginaries are often implicitly foregrounded in representations of Muslim women spokespersons in the media—often elite, generally elegant, and always portrayed as recognizable to American viewers—in contrast to the alien, sometimes bearded, often working-class Muslim and Arab immigrant men who speak in foreign accents and pose a threat to womanhood, there *and* here. Fantasies and fears of “other” femininities and masculinities underlie these performances of good and bad Muslims or Arabs, linking them through feelings of sympathy, horror, desire, and disgust. In fact, the entrepreneurial “good Muslim,” such as Manji, needs the “bad Muslim” to stay in business, to have an object of condemnation justifying her critique

and from which the “reform-minded” Muslim can be distinguished. *The New York Times* described Manji as “Osama bin Laden’s worst nightmare,”<sup>12</sup> but I would also suggest that bin Laden is Manji’s favorite dream.

The framework I am offering here is not a strictly gendered binary, despite the heavily Orientalist investment in maintaining one. There are several examples of “good Muslim” male spokespersons in the public sphere, older figures, such as Fouad Ajami, Salman Rushdie, and Kanan Makiyah, and a newer crop of spokespersons such as Walid Shoebat, a Muslim convert to Christianity on the Right-wing college lecture circuit who falsely claims to have been a Palestinian “terrorist”; Kamal Nawash, a Palestinian Republican who is founder of the Free Muslims Coalition against Terrorism; Walid Phares; and, to some extent, television commentator Fareed Zakaria. These men are educated, articulate, and dressed in Western business attire. But clearly, Muslim women spokespersons are important for a liberal feminist narrative about Muslim societies: their “personal confessions” are promoted and marketed because they provide “authoritative” and authentic testimonials about their oppression by Muslim and Middle Eastern men.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, there are also a few women who are associated with the figure of the “terrorist.” For example, Tashnuba Hyder, a sixteen-year-old Bangladeshi girl from New York, was deported after writing an essay on religious views of suicide and visiting radical Islamic Internet sites; yet these rare cases receive relatively little attention. In juxtaposing the figures of the “terrorist” and the “feminist,” I am not trying to suggest a rigidly binary framework but, rather, questioning the work these figures do in late-imperial culture and their collusion with each other.

#### THE “TERRORIST”: THE STRANGE CASE OF HAMID HAYAT

On June 7, 2005, the FBI arrested twenty-two-year-old Hamid Hayat and his father, Umer Hayat, for funding and organizing a “terrorist cell” in Lodi. The initial affidavit released to the media alleged that Hamid Hayat, who is a U.S.-born citizen, had attended a terrorist training camp in Pakistan in 2003 and had returned to the United States after two years intending to “attack . . . hospitals and large food stores.” The FBI also interrogated numerous members of the Pakistani community in Lodi and

raided several homes, making the community feel under siege, as I found when I visited Lodi during the investigations. The arrests and allegations created a national media blitz and panic-mongering about terrorist sleeper cells in the Central Valley of California, focusing on this small agricultural town. About forty miles south of Sacramento, and with a population of approximately 60,000, Lodi is known for winemaking and fruitpacking. The Pakistani community is largely working class and numbers between 2,000 to 4,000, many of whom work at the local fruit-canning factory. The community has lived in Lodi since the 1920s, so it is a much older community, but less affluent, than the upwardly mobile South Asian population in the San Francisco Bay Area, and without any immigrant or civil rights organizations to support the community.<sup>14</sup>

This sensationalized “discovery” of Muslim terrorists lurking in the vineyards broke just as George W. Bush was pushing for the renewal of the Patriot Act amidst increasing criticism of the assault on civil liberties and the lack of breakthroughs in the War on Terror. Yet the government eventually charged the Hayats only with lying to federal investigators about the son’s alleged links to Al Qaeda training camps. As it became apparent that the FBI had no tangible evidence that Hamid Hayat was linked to a terrorist group, government prosecutors admitted that none of the five men had plans to bomb targets in California or anywhere else. The case rested on the role of another Pakistani man, Nasim Khan, who had befriended the Hayats after moving to Lodi, becoming particularly close to Hamid and staying with his friends. Khan vanished just after the arrests. Later it was revealed that he was an FBI informant who had been paid \$250,000 for spying on Lodi residents for three years, after he had been convicted of burglary and investigated by the FBI. The government’s allegations rested on taped conversations with Hamid about his support for Islamic militant groups. Khan insisted that Hamid should attend a “jihadi camp” while he was in Pakistan, yet Hamid repeatedly refused as the informant swore at him in frustration. What is disturbing is that the Hayat case implied that verbal statements expressing militant dissent against the United States are a potential criminal offense, despite explicit rejection of militant action. The Lodi case highlighted an important dimension of the War on Terror, that of paid FBI informants infiltrating mosques and



South Asian, Arab, and Muslim immigrant communities across the United States. These are often Muslim immigrant men who cultivate friendships with other Muslim men. A pattern has emerged of undercover informants framing young Muslim men who are critical of the War on Terror and angry about the U.S. occupation of Iraq and military atrocities in the Middle East. The informants provoke, then record their subjects' statements of desire to attack U.S. targets, or as in Hayat's case, of support for militant resistance. Muslim masculinity is thus the site of potential "radicalism" and militant violence, which is coproduced, ironically, through the manipulation of homosociality and traditional hospitality. The "native informants" engage in a quasi ethnography of Muslim communities in collaboration with the FBI and other agencies of the state, mapping mosques and social networks and relying on Orientalist tropes of Muslim and Arab masculinities and social and religious codes.<sup>15</sup>

The Hayats were separately brought to trial in spring 2006, and Hamid Hayat was found guilty of making false statements and providing "material support" for terrorism; he faced up to thirty-nine years in prison. His father's trial ended in a hung jury, and Umer Hayat was charged only with lying to U.S. Customs; his terrorism charges were eventually dismissed.<sup>16</sup> The cruel paradox, of course, is that Hamid Hayat's statements had been produced by someone who had made false statements himself, engaging in dissimulation and covert espionage, under the cover of his insider status and authoritative cultural knowledge. "Good" Muslim informants who work for the government (or "not-so-good" Muslims who are absolved by cooperation with government agencies) are recruited to produce testimonials by "bad" Muslims who symbolize terrorism, fanaticism, and irrational violence and represent the threat of "home-grown terrorism."

The Lodi case was also based on the preemptive detention of individuals for political expression and alleged intentions of possible attacks, rather than actual terrorist activity. These policies parallel Bush's doctrine of preemptive war overseas. Preemptive detention and deportation policies under the guise of "homeland" security are used domestically to repress and regulate immigrants, workers, and dissidents, justifying what is essentially the racial management of populations. The corollary of this strategy

of “preemptive denunciation” is that Muslim and Arab Americans have become increasingly reluctant to express dissenting political views, even with others who are from the same communities, because the informants often are insiders themselves, a twist on the logic of the “enemy within.”

Given the FBI’s pattern of using informants to provoke Muslim Americans into declarations of dissent, the state seems to seek out and even foster the radical ideas that it then uses as examples of terrorist conspiracies. For example, FBI informants provided the plans and weapons for proposed attacks in the cases of the Fort Dix Five (five young Muslim men arrested in New Jersey in 2007) and of four men arrested in 2009 for plotting to attack a synagogue in New York.<sup>17</sup> This is the strange irony at the heart of the War on Terror: the state needs “bad Muslims” in order to justify its assault on civil liberties, and if they are not visible, it must call them into public being to prove the threat to national security. This mechanism is based not just on entrapment but also on the twisted political logic embedded in a war that, by definition, needs terrorism. As Gayatri Spivak observes: “Something called terror is needed in order to declare a war on it—a war that extends from the curtailment of civil liberties to indefinite augmentation of military self-permission. Without the word terror, this range of things, alibied in the name of women, cannot be legitimized.”<sup>18</sup>

Increasingly, then, the only statements that Muslim Americans feel secure making to distance themselves from “bad” Muslims are denunciations of terrorism and insistence on Islam as a peace-loving religion. Salaita proposes an “ethics of refusal” of this “prerequisite to speaking” for Arabs and Muslims, given that invoking the specter of “terrorism” by denying it nevertheless reinscribes Orientalist notions of Muslim and Arab violence and evades discussions of political grievances and state-sponsored violence.<sup>19</sup> Although some Muslim and Arab American spokespersons feel compelled to make public statements asserting good citizenship in response to the criminalization of their political views, I would extend Salaita’s call for an “ethics of refusal” to the broader issue of political resistance: there also needs to be an ethical defense of the collective right to express dissent, even “radical” or heretical ideas.

## GENDER AND ORIENTALISM

Performances of “good” and “bad” Muslim citizenship are heavily gendered and Orientalized. As Miriam Cooke observes, “Imperial logic genders and separates subject peoples so that the men are the Other and the women are civilizable.” The preoccupation in the United States with women in hijab, or presumably “oppressed” Muslim and Arab women, coexists with a desire to rescue them from their tradition in order to bring them into the nation. At the same time, there is a deep anxiety about Muslim and Arab men as potential terrorists and religious fanatics who are antithetical to Western liberal democracy and ultimately inassimilable. Examining recent controversies about Islam, immigration, and culture in Canada and Norway, Sherene H. Razack argues that the figure of the “imperilled Muslim woman,” who can be emancipated in the West and saved by Western feminists from “forced marriages, veiling practices, and female genital mutilation,” provides “a rationale for engaging in the surveillance and disciplining of the Muslim man and of Muslim communities.” The tightening of borders in Fortress Europe—and the U.S. garrison nation—is intertwined with moral panics about defending the modern, liberal, European/“Western” individual against the racialized figures of the “dangerous” Muslim man and the oppressed Muslim woman.<sup>20</sup>

The politics of rescue of Muslim women is also steeped in liberal concepts of individualism, autonomy, and choice that shape a binary and neo-Orientalist world view. A resurgent imperial feminism assumes that it is the United States or Western culture that must bring “freedom” to certain areas of the world, even if paradoxically via a military force—another case of white men (and white women) trying to save brown women from brown men. Missionary feminism has long produced a cultural discourse of saving Muslim women in different colonial encounters with terrorists or insurgents, ignoring the indigenous women’s movements and the complexities of race, nationalism, and class at work.<sup>21</sup> For example, according to Marnia Lazreg, the French military in Algeria “found in the ideology of ‘women’s emancipation’ a weapon of choice” in their military strategy to counter the resistance of the National Liberation Front by professing “to liberate women (from their cultural norms

deemed beyond the pale),” making women a “Trojan horse” in their “pacification doctrine.” The French military produced radio shows targeting Algerian women and staged public “unveiling ceremonies of Algerian women” that involved a deceptive “battle of the veils” because rural Algerian women, who did not generally veil at the time, had to be first coerced into veiling in order to then be coerced into unveiling.<sup>22</sup> These counterinsurgency strategies resemble current U.S. programs aimed at cultivating support for U.S. policies in Iraq and the Middle East, from Radio Sawa and the U.S. Middle East Television Network (Al Hurra, which means “free”) to U.S.-funded nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) for Iraqi women, some of which were founded by the U.S. administration before the war to justify the invasion of Iraq.<sup>23</sup> The U.S. State Department has already recruited “moderate Muslim” feminists to testify to the freedom of religion in the United States through Web chats with audiences in Muslim-majority countries. These interventions involve the use of gendered bodies and ideologies as well as assumptions about modernity, “progress,” and women’s rights, shaped by colonial and racial thinking.

As Razack observes, contemporary imperial feminists are only concerned with the violence against Third World women associated with patriarchal traditions and not with “the violence of poor educational and job access or the dislocation and forced migration of large numbers of Muslims through war.” These material issues of globalization and imperialism trouble “culture talk” and raise questions about the role of the United States. Such imperial feminists show little sympathy for the Afghan (and now Pakistani) women and children bombed by the United States and U.S.-backed forces, for girls who were raped and murdered by U.S. soldiers in Iraq, or for Palestinian women who live under an illegal occupation funded and supported by the United States.<sup>24</sup>

The selective global focus of late-imperial feminism is embedded in a larger history of using the plight of other women as a foil for domestic U.S. debates about feminism and internal tensions within feminist movements. Sylvia Chan-Malik, for example, explores how preoccupation with the cause of Iranian women during the Islamic Revolution in the late 1970s allowed U.S. Second Wave liberal feminism to divert attention from

the critiques of race and class being waged by Black and Third World feminists and to regenerate itself through staging a “global feminism.” Similarly, Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan argue that much liberal feminist discourse now universalizes a notion of global sisterhood under attack by Islamic fundamentalism, female genital mutilation, and “honor” killings. Clearly, complex questions of nationalism, imperialism, religion, secularism, race, and class underlie conflicts within U.S. feminisms that are signified by the tropes of the Arab and Muslim woman, as well as of the Arab and Muslim man. At the same time, Muslim and Arab American communities hold divergent views about how to respond to the War on Terror that also implicate Arab and Muslim femininities and masculinities.<sup>25</sup>

#### THE “GOOD MUSLIM” FEMINIST: IRSHAD MANJI

For “good Muslim” feminists such as Irshad Manji, the most pressing problem of repression for Muslims in the West is not that by the state but that by other Muslims. Manji’s book, *The Trouble with Islam Today: A Muslim’s Call for Reform in Her Faith*, emphasizes the pervasive fear among “moderate” Muslims of denouncing the excesses of their faith, which in her view is far less tolerant of dissent than Christianity or Judaism. For Manji, attempts by Muslims to distance themselves from terrorism by claiming that Islam is a peaceful religion are disingenuous, and she rejects this disclaimer—but on very different grounds than Salaita. For her, the root of all conflicts today is the repressiveness of Arab and Muslim societies and the “imperialism” of Islam.” Other scholars have discussed Manji’s distortions of Islam, so here I focus on the implications of her writing for post-9/11 feminisms and highlight the political structures that enable the religious and cultural paradigms of the War on Terror.<sup>26</sup>

For Manji, the production of the “moderate” Muslim is both profitable and strategic. She plays the role of a fashionable but fearless warrior, with gelled hair and stylish glasses. Invoking the moral panic about fanatical Muslim youth, particularly young Muslim men, she combats “the ideological occupation of Muslim minds” by offering a liberal, liberated feminist alternative. In Manji’s book, her own father symbolizes the oppressiveness of Islam as embodied by the figure of the patriarchal and violent Muslim

male, who has the potential to darken into the sinister figure of the “bad” Muslim terrorist. Instead, Manji claims to preempt terrorism by reforming Islam through economic entrepreneurship and Western-style democracy. She claims that it is “thanks to the freedoms afforded” by “the West—to think, search, speak, exchange, discuss—” that she was able to resolve her “personal clash of civilizations” between Islam and the West. Manji concludes that there was “no need” to “choose between Islam and the West,” for the West gave her the freedom to “choose Islam, however tentatively.” The West trumps Islam through the possibility of individual choice, key to neoliberal citizenship. But choice is not easily available to Muslims who are still within their totalitarian religious community. On a panel discussion for the MTV Desi show, which targets young South Asians in the United States, Manji lamented that many young Muslim Americans who attend her talks can only whisper their thanks to her for fear that they might be afterwards attacked or raped by other Muslims. This hysterical ranting, combined with youthful, catchy language, has endeared Manji to equally hysterical, if also smoothly packaged, Right-wing media commentators such as Glenn Beck, whose mantra is, Where are the “moderate” Muslims and why aren’t they speaking up? The neo-conservative framework for the War on Terror is careful not to critique Islam in general but to pay multiculturalist lip service to religious and cultural “others” and embrace and promote “good” Muslims. Beck even declared to Manji on his CNN show, “I love you!”<sup>27</sup>

Manji is sometimes included within the category of “moderate” Muslims; yet her views are actually deeply racist and illustrative of the worst Orientalist clichés, what Razack calls “the view from inside the harem.” Manji presents herself as an objective native informant, although it would be more accurate to call her a “native Orientalist,” who can explain the “roots of Muslim rage” to Western audiences. Manji writes as someone who has fled the harem, and while her expertise rests on her authoritative knowledge of its interior, she performs what is not really self-critique, or *ijtihad*, as she claims, but a “good” Muslim citizenship that resonates with both neoconservative and liberal feminist critiques of Islam and the Middle East.<sup>28</sup>

For Manji, the racism she may have experienced growing up in Canada, or the profiling of Muslims during the Gulf War, is overshadowed by the virtues of Western neoliberal citizenship, which promotes “diversity of opinion” and individual freedom. In comparison to the “unremitting subservience” of the Muslim community in Uganda, where her family previously lived, and the “autocracy” of the madrassah (Muslim school), Manji finds the “dignity of the individual” in the Baptist church (where she spent time in daycare as a child and won the Most Promising Christian of the Year Award at age eight). She is not the model minority version of the “good” Muslim citizen, but a “model native Orientalist” who had the sense to reject Islam. Manji is enamored of the freedom of individual will she finds in the Christian culture of Canada but even more of the democratic thought she apparently finds in Judaism, which is where she ultimately finds her home.

Manji admits that Jewish Zionists invited her to visit Israel, a key experience that crystallizes her politics. It is striking that the case she focuses on in detail to illustrate the brutish, antidemocratic, and misogynist culture of Muslims is that of Palestinians who embody for her the worst excesses of Islam—setting aside the indigenous Palestinian Christian community and conflating them into one backward Muslim bloc. In contrast, Manji portrays Israeli society as democratic and self-critical, yet she fails to note the critique of Israeli policies by anti-Zionist Israelis. Each brief acknowledgment of the realities of Israeli occupation is immediately followed by an observation of the dishonesty, stifling repression, violent vengefulness, and culture of the “death wish” of Palestinians, who are ultimately blamed for the fact that they live under apartheid-style occupation. Manji’s book is rife with the most blatant examples of anti-Arab racism; for her, the problem with Palestine and with Islam in general is the pathological tribalism of “desert Arab culture” and Arab cultural imperialism.<sup>29</sup>

While praying at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, Manji realizes: “More viscerally than ever, I know who my family is.” Her journey to belonging is thus framed through the metaphor of family, rejecting her own biological family and community and embracing a fictive family through identification with the Zionist project. Manji goes to great lengths to show how the West’s secular democracy and Israel’s are at core the same; according to

her, Israel is “one of the most progressive states in the world.” Inadvertently, her defense of both U.S. and Israeli militarism and her denial of their violations of international law conjoins U.S. and Israeli exceptionalism, a key conjuncture at the core of U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and of the War on Terror. This negative focus on Palestine is essential to her role as a media spokesperson funded by neoconservative think tanks that support U.S. interventions in the Middle East and oppose a just peace in Israel-Palestine. Much is at stake here, given that the U.S. role in the Palestine question is seen as the crux of “anti-Americanism” in the Muslim world. Having Muslim and Arab spokespersons, such as Manji, Nonie Darwish of Arabs for Israel, and others publicly defend the U.S. position on Israel—through their testimonials that Palestinians/Arabs/ Muslims must be saved from themselves—is important because it justifies the crackdown on those who oppose Israeli state policies and the silencing of those who dare to do so as automatically anti-Semitic.<sup>30</sup>

Manji’s position is clearly welcomed by Right-wing and Zionist organizations, who support her politically and financially; but it is also appealing to liberals, particularly liberal feminists. Manji, who founded Project Ijtihad, which she describes as “the world’s first leadership network for reform-minded Muslims,” has been celebrated globally by institutions promoting economic neoliberalism. She was named a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum, was given the first Chutzpah Award by Oprah Winfrey, and was named a “Feminist for the Twenty-First Century” by *Ms.*<sup>31</sup> Contrary to conservative accusations that liberal feminists are afraid of being called “racist” if they denounce abuses against Muslim women, I argue that liberal guilt over U.S. imperial excesses and racism can be assuaged by the belief that the problem is really what Manji calls the “asylum logic” of a “Brain-Dead,” “desperately tribal” Islam. Liberal feminists may use less hysterical language and speak in cultural, rather than racial terms, but they still legitimate a civilizational discourse of culture framed through Western modernity and individual emancipation. Because national identity and national difference are often embodied by the figure of the woman, national subjecthood can draw white and non-Muslim American women together into the fold of neoliberal



eral individualism by asserting superiority over Muslim/Middle Eastern women.

Manji is not the only South Asian Muslim female spokesperson catapulted (or self-propelled) into fame as a “good Muslim feminist” in the United States via the “jihad industry” and confessional memoir. Another more complicated figure is Asra Q. Nomani, a former *Wall Street Journal* correspondent and friend of the journalist Daniel Pearl, who was killed in Pakistan while doing research on Al-Qaeda and was the subject of a major Hollywood film, *A Mighty Heart*. Nomani’s autobiography, *Standing Alone: An American Woman’s Struggle for the Soul of Islam*, departs from Manji’s approach by positioning herself as a believer who critiques Islamic fundamentalism and comes closer to her faith after traveling to the Middle East. On her visit to the West Bank, Nomani is shocked by the racism and humiliation experienced daily by Palestinians due to the Israeli occupation. However, she eventually arrives at almost the same destination as Manji in resorting to a cultural, rather than political or historical, argument about ancient hatreds and essential intolerance.

Nomani, too, concludes that Islam in the United States is defined by hate and intolerance and that prisoners in Guantanamo have more rights than she does in her local mosque. Neither author acknowledges the surveillance, detentions, and deportations of Muslims and Arabs in the United States, nor the atrocities of Abu Ghraib or the occupation in Iraq. Nomani ultimately makes the same claims about Western neoliberal democracy as Manji, expressing gratitude for living in a “secular state” where she won’t be lashed for being a single mother. She proclaims that as an “American” she has a “cultural affinity” for “values of freedom” and “self-determination” that she imbibed while growing up in West Virginia, and she thanks U.S. “democracy and freedom” for bringing her closer to her faith.<sup>32</sup> In fact, as a less reactionary but avowedly courageous fighter against Muslim patriarchy, Nomani is perhaps more appealing than Manji to a liberal American audience.

Wendy Brown argues that the universalizing discourse of “tolerance” at the turn of the twenty-first century is at root a practice of “imperial liberal governmentality” that “regulates the presence of the Other both inside and outside the liberal democratic nation-state and often forms a

circuit between them that legitimates the most illiberal actions of the state.” This serves to justify the U.S. War on Terror by distinguishing “Occident from Orient, liberal from nonliberal regimes, ‘free’ from ‘unfree’ peoples.”<sup>33</sup> The success of Manji and Nomani illustrates the need of imperial governmentality for testimonials by “other” women who can use a multicultural/feminist language of tolerance to justify the distinction between “free” and “unfree,” “secular” and “fundamentalist,” and the new binary, “jihadist” vs. “liberal.”

#### NATIVE INFORMANTS/ORIENTALISTS

It might seem that figures such as Manji, and even Nomani, are too easy a target, but it is precisely the accessibility of their works, and the articulate presentations of Nafisi and Ali, that makes them so useful for shoring up popular support for U.S. empire through a discourse of neoliberal citizenship, women’s rights, and religious reform. A growing crop of Arab women spokespersons in the mainstream media play the same role of native informants, some of the most shrill being Brigitte Gabriel, the Lebanese Christian founder of American Congress for Truth, and Wafa Sultan, a Syrian American psychiatrist who became famous for declaring on Al-Jazeera in 2006, “There is no clash of civilizations but a clash between . . . civilization and backwardness, between the civilized and the primitive, between barbarity and rationality.”<sup>34</sup> Authors such as Nomani and Nafisi, who use the language of classical liberalism, are particularly appealing to audiences sympathetic to universalizing ideas of women’s rights and simultaneously suspicious of the immigrants in their midst.

Currently, a burgeoning industry of memoirs by Muslim women do the work for imperial feminism that texts such as Betty Mahmoody’s *Not without My Daughter* did in an earlier era. However, the oppressed Muslim/Middle Eastern woman is no longer just produced by Western feminists but is also self-produced by Muslim authors in the spirit of entrepreneurial capitalism, while carefully protected and promoted by Western states, media, and conservative organizations. Farzaneh Milani points out that in 2002 “more books were published in the United States by Afghan women than in the entire history of American letters. In contrast, memoirs of life in Afghanistan after the fall of the Taliban, depicting the escalating vio-

lence, . . . and the harsh living conditions for women, are rare.” Memoirs by Muslim women about the oppressiveness of Islam provide an “ameliorative narrative” that legitimates U.S. imperial policies and appeases the guilt or uneasiness of readers about U.S. wars overseas, as Afghan American author Khaled Hosseini’s best-selling novel, *The Kite Runner*, also did in offering a narrative of rescue and redemption about the war on Afghanistan, evoking images of perverse Muslim masculinities.<sup>35</sup>

The testimonials of Muslim authors about salvation in the West also play a crucial, if less obvious, role in the politics of the U.S. academy and contemporary culture wars. In a trenchant critique of Nafisi’s *Reading “Lolita” in Tehran*, Hamid Dabashi pointed out that it is not just that Iranian memoirs by “native informers turned comprador intellectuals” help mobilize public opinion for the next round of “regime change” in Iran but also that this genre bolsters the collective amnesia about U.S. imperial history and counters the critique of U.S. empire and racialization in ethnic, post-colonial, and feminist studies. Ali Behdad argues that memoirs such as Nafisi’s, Roya Hakakian’s *Journey from the Land of No: A Girlhood Caught in Revolutionary Iran*, and Azadeh Moaveni’s *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing up Iranian in America and American in Iran* reinforce a historical amnesia about violent subjugation within the United States, including the disciplining and surveillance of Iranian, Arab, and Muslim immigrants well before 2001. Behdad suggests that these narratives help “defer confrontation with core contradictions lying at the heart of American identity” that challenge its foundational myths, “particularly at times of national crisis.”<sup>36</sup>

Both Nafisi and Manji defend the neoconservative position on multiculturalism and explicitly attack Edward Said’s work on Orientalism.<sup>37</sup> Manji, Sultan, and Darwish have participated in campaigns that directly attack ethnic studies and women’s studies, including David Horowitz’s so-called Islamo-Fascism Awareness Week on college campuses in fall 2007.<sup>38</sup> In Europe, women such as Ayaan Hirsi Ali have played a similar role in supporting attacks on liberal multiculturalism, immigration, and the social welfare state, serving, according to Joshua Holland, as a “cultural ideologue of the new right.”<sup>39</sup> Manji is affiliated with the European Foundation for Democracy, which promotes a “coordinated defence of European values and interests against the threat” of “radical or violent ideologies,” and is

linked to pro-Israel think tanks in the United States.<sup>40</sup> This highlights the transnational circulation of native women informants who defend Western “civilization” and colonialism, as well as free-market capitalism. The “good” Muslim has gone global.

Furthermore, as Ronald A. Judy and others have pointed out, the U.S. state has played an active role in constructing “a ‘moderate’ acceptable Islam” that would endorse its neoliberal vision for the New World Order and imperial interventions in the name of “democracy.”<sup>41</sup> For example, the White House National Security Council established the Muslim World Outreach program in 2003 for “transforming Islam from within” by supporting existing “moderate” organizations in Muslim countries.<sup>42</sup> In March 2007, the RAND Corporation, which provides analyses for the U.S. defense and intelligence agencies, issued a report on “Building Moderate Muslim Networks” which argued that the United States needed to learn from its experiences in the cold war and actively, if covertly, support “moderate” Muslim activists and intellectuals in order to counter “radical Islamists” who reject “liberal Western values such as democracy [and] gender equality. . . .” However, the report evades the history of earlier Central Intelligence Agency cultivation of the radical Muslim mujahiddeen in Afghanistan during the 1980s, including U.S. support of Osama bin Laden during the proxy war with the Soviets. It does mention that the United States learned during the cold war that Left-leaning, generally secular movements were critical of the United States and so it is these movements that need to be cultivated for “democracy promotion” in the “Global War on Terrorism.”<sup>43</sup>

The authors of the RAND report observe that “the issue of women’s rights is a major battleground in the war of ideas within Islam” and recommend that the United States advance its agenda by promoting NGOs focusing on “gender rights.” Clearly, the policy recommendation here is to shift from President George W. Bush’s early discourse about a clash of civilizations underlying the War on Terror and Samuel P. Huntington’s thesis pitting Islam against the West to a policy of reforming Islam “from within.” Figures such as Manji thus become key to containing the threat of Hayat and his brethren.<sup>44</sup>

Native informants/Orientalists are crucial for this project of co-opting the liberal discourse of rights, based on gender as well as sexuality. Joseph A. Massad and Jasbir Puar have shown how the internationalizing of Western feminism has been paralleled by a universalizing discourse of rights for queer subjects that focuses on the “liberation” of gays and lesbians in the Muslim countries. NGOs focusing on gay rights have promoted a culturally specific epistemology and ontology of “rights and identities” to be imposed on non-Western societies, according to Massad, and have also collaborated with the U.S. State Department and Congress to threaten sanctions against Arab nations for their policies toward gay men; what Massad calls the “Gay International,” like international feminism, is embroiled with U.S. foreign policy. These critics do not deny that homophobia and patriarchy exist in Muslim and Arab societies, but they highlight the colonialist and Orientalist impulses that often underlie activism targeting gender and sexual politics in these societies or diasporic communities and the generally obscured ways these are linked with state policies. Feminism needs to account for state-sponsored violence and state-sanctioned terror inflicted on women or queers—not just abuses associated with cultural “tradition” or religion—as radical and anti-imperialist feminists have long argued.<sup>45</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The desire to perform “good” Muslim citizenship has inevitably altered the politics of Muslim American communities after 9/11. It has heightened class and religious cleavages within targeted communities and reinforced distinctions between “good” and “bad” Arabs, and “good” and “bad” South Asians, similar to those between “good” and “bad” Muslim citizenship.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, it has profound implications for movements resisting the War on Terror, particularly feminist movements. As Pakistani activist Farida Shaheed commented, the “self-serving use of women’s rights as a U.S. flagstaff” for the war on Afghanistan or other interventions in the Middle East is dangerous for indigenous feminist movements, for it can lead to the perception that they are complicit with U.S. imperial policies, creating false polarities on the ground.<sup>47</sup> However, if what was hijacked on September 11, 2001, was not just the airplanes that crashed into the World

Trade Center and Pentagon but also a particular feminist discourse, there are strategies for walking the fine line between apologizing for fundamentalism and patriarchy and justifying imperial policies that depend on a deeper analysis of the linkages between Orientalism, feminism, and U.S. imperialism.

The figures of the “terrorist” and the “feminist” are part of an imperial allegory about terror that obscures these linkages while reflecting deeper anxieties in the United States about religion, gender, and race. It is an allegory that tries to create a national consensus by uniting liberals and (neo)conservatives through opposition to the “terrorist” and sympathy with “the feminist,” thus glossing over tensions of racialization, class, gender, and nationalism that shape the realities of terror in all forms. The allegory helps consolidate an alliance between sometimes unlikely bedfellows, such as (neo)conservatives, Right-wing thinkers, religious evangelicals, and mainstream feminists—who are often but not always white—that essentially works, as Razack has noted, to “install the colour line between modern white subjects and pre-modern white subjects, between those who help and those who require assistance.” Imperial benevolence conceals the racial color line, and it also mystifies violence. As Spivak observes, “The impulse to help by enforcing human rights, by giving things, giving money, . . . ignoring gender-consciousness, has a relationship with the impulse to kill.” The notion of the terrorist obscures the role of state terror and the violence of poverty and starvation, created directly in some cases by state sanctions (as in Iraq) and in other cases indirectly by the equally willful policies of economic institutions. The feminist, in her/his liberal and Orientalist guise, participates in this regime of terror by sanctioning which forms of violence are “just,” which ones are knowable, and which groups deserve them.<sup>48</sup>

Juxtaposing the “good” Muslim feminist with the “bad” Muslim terrorist helps us critique the broader frame of terror. Both these figures are, in fact, portrayed as dissenters in the War on Terror. One promotes a militant political “dissent” that is intolerable to the imperial state, and the other promotes an internal religious “dissent” that speaks in the multicultural state’s language of tolerance. Both are implicated in the notion of the native informant: the bad Muslim terrorist can be framed by an informant,

and the good Muslim feminist is framed as one herself. In between and outside this binary constructed by the state and media are a range of positions that are more complex and nuanced and that would force us to take into account questions of imperialism, nationalism, gender, race, religion, and class. Such an analysis is crucial for academic politics at the current moment as well. We need to show how Right-wing campaigns targeting the U.S. academy parallel the state's strategy of preemptive expulsion of dangerous ideas embodied by Muslim and Arab criticism of state-sponsored violence and terrorism. Furthermore, the stifling of dissent in the United States since 9/11 has occurred not just because of the attacks of Right-wing movements but also because of the self-censorship within the academy and the complicity of liberal intellectuals.<sup>49</sup> A radical anti-imperialist and feminist response would resist letting the issue of gender rights become either a pawn to justify U.S. interventions in the Muslim and Arab world or an apology for Islamic fundamentalism and would also defend the right to express radical dissent against imperial terror.

#### NOTES

My thanks to Veena Dubal for her initiative on the Hayat incident and for coauthoring an article for the media that inspired part of this essay; to Humar Dar, Purnima Mankekar, and several others who gave me opportunities to present different versions of this article; and to Magid Shihade and the anonymous reviewers for their feedback.

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