

**REFUSING INTERNMENT, RECLAIMING VITALITY, AND MOVING PAST  
THE BARGAIN OF RECOGNITION**

THE CASE OF A MUSLIM CREATIVE COUNTERPUBLIC

Nadiya N. Ali

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN SOCIOLOGY  
YORK UNIVERSITY  
TORONTO, ONTARIO

April 2022

© Nadiya N. Ali, 2022

## Abstract

The overarching goal of my project is to investigate the tactics of resistance and self-making available and picked up by those living on the receiving end of overbearing racializing structures. Actively listening to the formation and operation of a Muslim creative counterpublic called the *Muslim Writers Collective* (MWC) demonstrates that the analytics of self/social transformation available to racialized actors cannot simply be limited to ‘resistance’, understood as *antagonist-oppositionality*, and ‘transformation’, understood through the frame of *recognition politics*. The study of MWC draws on an ethnographic full-participant observation of two chapters - located in Toronto and New York City - in addition to 30 conversational interviews of performers, organizers, and attendees. For MWC regulars, comprised of racialized actors fielded to perpetually remain in quarantine and internment, *expansion, revelation and mundanification* emerge as powerful acts of *refusal*. Through communal storytelling, improvisation, and congregational experimentation, the altar of whiteness comes to be decentered, and a refusal of *abjecthood* and subalternity is collectively embodied. MWC fosters a space in which generative acts of *refusal* operate to engender an analytics of resistance and transformation prioritizing *vitality and subjectivity*. In consequence, actively rejecting the static, unidimensional, and reductive constructs of Muslimhood circulated in dominant racializing public(s). Hence, in contrast to the re-inscribing role of the corrective curations antagonist-recognition politics demands, MWC locates self/social transformation in the hazardous horizontal work of *bearing witness to internal difference*, in all its contradictions, incoherencies, and divergences, in order to ignite *vitality* as a congregation, as a Jama’ah.

## Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by thanking my supervisory committee, Dr. Christopher Kyriakides, Dr. Shirin Shakorni, and Dr. Sylvia Bawa, for all their support, mentorship, and feedback. This work is indebted to their thoughtful guidance. I would also like to thank my husband, Ala. Doing this work would not be possible without your ongoing encouragement and love. And to my son, Guled, thank you for instilling this work with renewed meaning. Mama needed you to get to the finish line. This journey began long before the start of this PhD, it was birthed in my mother's, grandmother, and great-grandmother's dreams. So جَزَاكَ اللهُ for dreaming አደዬታተዬ.

Bismillah.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract</b> .....	ii
<b>Acknowledgement</b> .....	iii
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	iv
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION</b> .....	1
• Racial Surveillance and Discipline: Contextual Backdrop.....	2
• Racialized Agency and the Margins .....	4
• Counterpublics and Recognition Politics.....	6
• Creative Counterpublics and Re-Entry Politics .....	10
• Necessary but not Transformative .....	11
• <i>Create, Connect, Share and Reflect: Galvanizing a Generative Scene-space</i> .....	13
<b>CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS - FROM CONQUERING-TO-CONTAMINANT/ MAKING THE ‘SAVABLE’ MUSLIM</b> .....	17
• The Conquering Figure: ‘Provocateur’ by Sheer Existence .....	19
• Race a ‘Medley’ of a Concept .....	24
• The Muslim of the Interior.....	28
• Racialization via Eviction/Interment: Making the ‘Savable Muslim’ .....	36
<b>CHAPTER 3: RACING THE MUSLIM PROBLEM AND THE RISE OF COUNTERPUBLICS</b> .....	48
• The Visual Register and the Fictions of Racialization.....	49
• <i>No Guarantees: Marking the “Green Menace”</i> .....	53
• A Sign/Trace Like no Other: The Hijab .....	55
• <i>Muslimness and ‘Muslimstan’</i> : Name, National Origin, Borders.....	60
• Moving Beyond Biopolitics: The State-of-Exception: .....	68
• Muslim “Talk-Backs”: Context of Emergence .....	74
• Transformative Thrust and Recognition Politics .....	77
• Resistance as a First Order Principle and Refusal .....	80
<b>CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN</b> .....	84
• Theoretical Frame and Paradigm .....	85
• Field and Methodology .....	93
• Research Design & Analysis .....	101
• Reflexivity, Ethical Considerations, & Limitations.....	109

<b>CHAPTER 5: PRODUCING “PRODUCERS”: THE GENERATIVE FLIGHT OF JAMA’AH</b>	116
• The Night of April 27 <sup>th</sup>	117
• Doing Scene: “Not an Art space”	124
<b>CHAPTER 6: THE REGULARS: REINSCRIBING VITALITY, RECLAIMING SUBJECTIVITY</b>	143
• April 27th: Continued	145
• The Performances	146
• Reclaiming Vitality, Reclaiming Subjecthood	159
• The Hazard of Revelation	163
• Refusing ‘Internment’ and turning to ‘Enchantment’	171
<b>CHAPTER 7: REFUSAL, MUNDANIFICATION, AND SELF=RECOGNITION AS COUNTER TO THE SPECTACLE OF RACISM</b>	175
• Necessary, not Transformative	177
• Depleting and Uninspiring	180
• How long/How much: Protecting Precious Real Estate	182
<b>CHAPTER 8: CONCLUDING REMARKS</b>	190
• Counterpublics and Refusal	191
• Improvisation and ‘Producing Producers’	193
• Vitality, Subjectivity and the Jama'ah	196
• Recognition, Racialized Counterpublics, and Mundanification	198
• Refusing Finality/ Reclaiming Subjectivity	201
<b>Appendix I: List of Guiding Interview Questions</b>	204
<b>Appendix II: Select Observation Field Notes Format</b>	207
<b>Bibliography</b>	209



# CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

---

In our time of ‘the Muslim Ban’, ‘Daesh’, ‘Trumpland’, and the Quebec City mosque-shooting<sup>1</sup>, what does the emergence and growth of a Muslim creative collective aimed at “reclaiming narrative” tell us about the pathways of resistance and self-making available for racialized and problematized subjects? The context of Muslim racialization and exclusion is such that Muslim communities in the North Atlantic have found themselves entangled within a multifaceted system of reductive caricatures and security architectures structuring “...an atmosphere wherein Muslims can at a moment’s notice be erected as objects of supervision and discipline” (Morey & Yaqin 2011: 5-6; *see also*, Mamdani 2005; Razack 2007; Tyrer 2013; Selod 2019; Morsi 2016). In parallel with this tense post-9/11 climate, Muslim counterpublic efforts centering creativity, voice, and restorative justice have also witnessed exponential growth, spanning the world of the digital mix-media to community-based artistic collectives (Zine & Taylor 2016; Ahmed 2010; Abdul Khabeer 2016; Morey & Yaqin 2011). Counterpublics are said to be politically conscious developments emerging from landscapes of exclusion and otherization (Asen 2000; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992). Although landscapes of exclusion and otherization can also lead to politically conscious developments which maintain or reinforce practices of racialization, counterpublics encompass projects which challenge and trouble dominant discourses (Asen 2000; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992). The *Muslim Writers Collective* (MWC), a trans-local collective focused on storytelling, is one such formation that works to trouble

---

<sup>1</sup> “Six Muslim men were shot and killed and 19 others were wounded in an attack on the mosque during prayers last Jan. 29 2017” Retrieved from [http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-mosque-shooting-islamophobia-1.4478861

dominant frames of Muslim otherhood, and the case study that underlines the exploration of racialization, agency, resistance, transformation, and counterpublic formations that will follow.

The problematic driving the impetus for this thesis was shaped by a disjunction observed between the dominant thrust in the scholarly engagement on racialized action and my own observations of the Muslim counterpublic rise. More specifically, my community organizing work on Islamophobia and Anti-Blackness provided a window into some of the on-the-ground strategies and tactics deployed by the Muslim communities I happen to be in proximity to. And what this window made evident was that the pathways of negotiation deployed struck me as signalling a much wider map of action than generally taken up by scholarly discussions of counterpublics. The self-proclamation of the Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) as a site that aims to challenge the discursive order of the post-9/11 moment, which reduces the Muslim figure into a monolithic caricature for public consumption and discipline, well positions MWC as a site through which to interrogate questions of racialized action, resistance and transformation.

### **Racial Surveillance and Discipline: Contextual Backdrop**

The tragedy of 9/11 and the onslaught of surveillance and securitizing architectures tied to the *War on Terror* are arguably key junctures in the consolidation of a multi-tiered system of racialized supervision and discipline (Selod 2019; Rai 2014; Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013; Razack 2007; Mamdani 2005; Naber 2006) managing the “Muslim threat” or “Green Menace” (Tyrer 2013; Abu Sway 2006: 17; Cole 2011: 127; Haddad 2004: 99; Carr 2015). This system of racial administration has meant disciplining both the presumed “always conquering” marker ascribed to the Muslim located in the geopolitical exterior, in addition to erecting administrative regimes



meant to subvert the “contaminating” effect of the “Green Menace” in the interior (Morsi 2016; Mamdani 2005; Sayyid 2014). All of which results in the proliferation of evictive procedures (Razack 2007) working on overdrive to spot and discipline this *threat* (Tyrer 2013; Tyrer & Sayyid 2012; Rai 2014; Rana 2011; Razack 2007). The Muslim subject is thus racialized as an always “conquering-contaminating” (Mosri 2016; Sayyid 2012; Rai 2014) “anti-modern artefactual figure” (Mamdani 2005) who remains perpetually “haunting”, “unknowable” and “in excess” (Tyrer & Sayyid 2012; Rai 2014; Rana 2011; Razack 2007).

Consequently, Naber (2006, 2008) explains, this racializing discursive frame and system of surveillance/discipline has produced a heightened sense of insecurity and precarity for Muslim communities in the North Atlantic (*see also* Selod 2019; Rana 2011). Creating an anticipatory atmosphere that “...at any moment, one may be picked up, locked up, or disappeared” (Naber 2006: 236). Naber continues with;

*...together, state policies and everyday forms of harassment at school, at work, on the bus, and on the streets, have intensified the sentiments of fear, apprehension, and intimidation that have circumscribed [Arab, South Asian/Muslim] communities for decades, and produced what I refer to as ‘internment of the psyche’, an emotive form of internment that engenders multiple forms of power and control in the realm of the psyche (Naber 2006: 236).*

In effect what is produced is a racial management system operating to suspend the Muslim subject of the interior “...in a perpetual state of quarantine and clearance”, and thus positioned in a type of “virtual [psychic] internment” (Bazian 2004: 5-6; Morsi 2016:15; *see also* Rana 2011; Naber 2006). And so, my pull towards investigating the rise of creative counterpublic formations emerges in close conversation with this socio-political backdrop of

racializing frames marking the Muslim as a ‘problematic contaminating-conquering’ subject, in addition to the aligning multi-tiered systems of surveillance and discipline. The type of ‘interment’ produced through this perpetual state of precarity thus comes to mark the evictive logic of exclusion deployed on Muslim communities (Razack 2007; Morsi 2016; Selod 2019). Warner explains, an important feature of counterpublic formations is that they “...maintain at some level, conscious...awareness of [their] subordinate status” (Warner 2002: 86). Warner continues, this awareness of ‘subordinate status’ means that “the cultural horizon against which [counterpublics] mark themselves off is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant one...[in which] the discourse that constitutes is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility” (2002: 86). Counterpublic efforts are, therefore, politically conscious developments emerging in close conversation with the broader structures at play (Asen 2000; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992). My study locates the literature mapping the racializing politics marking the Muslim subject as a productive overarching backdrop fielding my close investigation of the pathways of resistance and self-making deployed in the formation and development of creative Muslim counterpublics in the North Atlantic.

## Racialized Agency and the Margins

By honing in on the pathways of resistance, self-making, and agentic-action employed by those sitting on the receiving end of racializing architectures, my dissertation orients analytical attention to the interventions and transformative potentialities made possible through the efforts of those subalternized and relegated to the margins. Scholarship in Black Studies, especially

Black Feminist thought (hooks 1990; Lorde 1984, Hartman 1994; Sharpe 2016; Moten 2003), in addition to Indigenous Resurgence literature (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014; Byrd 2011), affirms that domination and white supremacy do not foreclose the possibilities of resistance and agency. In fact, bell hooks locates the racialized margins as carrying expansive transformative potential, writing, “I name marginality as a site of transformation...[a] location of radical openness” (hooks 1990:22). Similarly, Audre Lorde explains, in addition to violence and domination, the Otherized margins are also imbued with fertile grounds for alternative analytics of *doing* and *being* (Lorde 1984:115). In both hooks’s and Lorde’s constructions of the margins, ‘power’ is best understood as diffused and relational (hooks 1990; Lorde 1984; Moten 2003). And according to hooks, “in all relations of power there is necessarily the possibility of resistance” (hooks 1990;116).

Therefore, the take up of racialized agency in the current thesis holds that, “resistance is the micropolitical force of life that can never be fully confined or contained within a political ontological frame (or diagram) of antagonisms” (Kline 2017:62). Therefore, domination and hegemony are not understood to be primary, stable, or all-encompassing. In fact, as Bhabha asserts, “in the ambivalence of power, in the tension and insecurities of power” is where openings of intervention and transformation take root (Bhabha 1994, 1984). Building off these formulations of resistance and racialized agency, my project orients attention to the collective formations and acts of self-making nestled in racialized margins. Taking seriously the standpoint that racialized margins sit as fertile grounds for knowledge building and transformative openings means actively listening-in to the *talk-backs*, and grounded analysis of the present and potential

futures embedded in the very formations and orientations of counterpublics. Actively listening<sup>2</sup> to the *talk-backs* of counterpublics does not simply mean investigating the explicit communicative flows but also examining the *procedures, processes and forms* taken up in these *talk-backs*. In this process-centered examination - my research questions follow: *what can “actively listening” to the formation and operation of counterpublics tell us about the analytics of subject-making, agency, and resistance available to racialized subjects?* Moreover, hooks also frames the margins as a site “...where we can best become whatever we want to be,” irrespective of subalternity and racialization (1990: 20). And so, *what pathways of transformative possibilities are revealed in closely examining the methods of negotiating subalternity and racialization deployed in the formation and operation of counterpublics?*

## **Counterpublics and Recognition Politics**

Situated as the largest Muslim creative collective in North America, the Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) emerges out of the heightened post-9/11 context. The literature examining or pointing to the emergence of counterpublic creative formation makes it clear that the post 9/11 landscape ushered in a new moment in the ways Muslim communities in the North Atlantic organized and carved out space (Zine & Taylor 2016; Jiwa 2014; Abdulkhabeer 2016; Morey & Yaqin 2011). The Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) defines itself as “a bold initiative aimed at

---

<sup>2</sup> “Actively listening” as a method moves away from hard “subject/object dichotomy[ies]” (Code 1991: 27) in the research process and concentrates efforts on cultivating as much constitutive space as possible for the stories and insight shared from the field, taking on an “active-listener” role and positioning research as a co-constitutive platform that can work to amplify voices often invisibilized (Min-ha 1987; *see also* Christians 2005). My ethical standpoint is thus captured well by Denzin’s writing in “cultivating reflexivity”, as an active-listener, he writes, “*I will attempt to function as an empowering collaborator. I will use [material gathered] as a tool of intervention[...] uncovering structures of oppression in the life worlds*” of my demographic of study (Denzin 2003:75; *see also* Burawoy 1998; Breen 2007; DeLyser 2001).

reclaiming the American Muslim narrative...through storytelling, creativity, and culture” (Chiqet 2014; muslimwriterscollective.com 2014). The Muslim Writers Collective has grown since its 2014 launch to be the largest Muslim artistic collective in North America, with thousands of social media followers and five chapters across the United States – in addition to a Canadian chapter based in Toronto (muslimwriterscollective.com 2014). MWC’s recurring keynote event is their themed monthly open-mic. The open-mics have been organized around a range of topical-prompts, spanning from engaging with the “meaning of authenticity” and exploring “new beginnings” to speaking on “love and friendship”. Furthermore, the community-based stage is not genre specific, as performances include anything from short-stories, poetry, spoken-word, comedy to open storytelling. And irrespective of the genre of narration, the MWC open-mic stage calls for a first-person voice, centering the personal and testimonial (Chiqet 2014). In short, MWC is a community-based creative collective dedicated to centering storytelling written and performed by Muslim folks for Muslim folks wherein the personal, sociopolitical, and performative are brought into tight conversation.

Grounded efforts of negotiation and space-making, like MWC, have largely been underinvestigated in studies of Islamophobia and Muslim racialization. While the limited emerging literature speaking to Muslim counterpublics have generally mapped these developments as sites of public-pedagogy and rectification (Zine & Taylor 2016; Jiwa 2014; Abdualkhabeer 2016). This mapping of racialized counterpublic efforts as sites of public-pedagogy and rectification generally follows an orientation in the counterpublic theorizing more broadly (Frasier 1992; Asen 2000; Warner 2002). Theorizing that holds that counterpublics are not only distinguished from other publics by the exclusionary impetus of their emergence, but

also a general operational trajectory or “character” of counterpublics as revolving around “withdrawal” and “antagonism” underlined with a transformative thrust aspiring for “re-entry” primed to transform/shift the landscape of dominant publics (Asen 2000; Warner 2002). For instance, Warner in their much-cited work *“Publics and Counterpublics”* emphasizes that counterpublics are motivated by a transformative politics that does not foreclose “re-entry” into dominant publics (Warner 2002; *see also* Frasier 1992; Asen 2000). In fact, there is an overarching tendency to think of the politics of transformation deployed by counterpublic efforts through this lens of “re-entry” (Frasier 1992; Asen 2000; Warner 2002).

Building on this tendency to center “re-entry” in the transformative politics of counterpublics, recognition politics (Taylor 2013; Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2014; Markell 2003) provides an effective frame of thinking-through the expected pathways of negotiation. Simpson (2014) locates recognition work as labour aimed at shifting the optics of power in a manner that rectifies frames of misrecognition, in the hopes of better positioning the misrecognized subject within the hegemonic field. In the language of recognition politics then the transformative thrust of counterpublic formations are tied to the corrective tactics of recognition politics. And so, counterpublics aimed at ‘re-entry’ position their communicative flows and collective efforts in a manner that may be legible enough to graduate from circulation within counterpublics to hegemonic publics. In other words, the corrective work of recognition politics is then situated as the dominant transformative pathway of negotiation leveraged by subalternized agents.

In the last few decades, the politics of recognition has come to mean a field and language through which questions of marginalization, exclusion, belonging, and difference have increasingly been understood (Markell 2003). The politics of recognition is fundamentally about the making of ‘Liberal citizens’ out of subjects who exist in the margins (Coulthard 2007, 2014;

Simpson 2014; Taylor 1994; Williams 2014). Arguably, this “making” speaks to a “redistributive mechanism” reallocating psychological and material wages to the subjects of misrecognition who are deemed “problematic,” “difficult,” or “perplexing” by the hegemonic order (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson, 2014). And from the standpoint of recognition, it is vital for the Liberal political project to include these “perplexing” subjects existing outside of the hegemonic center through a deliberate and purposeful act of seeing, thereby intentionally shifting the optics of power (Simpson, 2014; Taylor, 1994). More specifically, Simpson (2014) explains that from a state-centered standpoint, recognition implies attaining official access to power through “rights that protect from harm...that provide access to resources...that protect certain resources” (2014:23). In a similar vein, Markell (2003) explains that the politics of recognition is “conventionally approached” as a type of “distributive injustice” involving “the exten[sion] to people the respect or esteem they deserve” in virtue of their humanity (18). Recognition, in other words, becomes a public “good” that makes possible an effectual capacity within the hegemonic regime (Markell 2003).

If the politics of recognition is about an equitable distributive extension of rights and protections through a desirable or esteemed seeing of subaltern subjects, then misrecognition is the negation of this distributive “good” (Markell 2003; Taylor 1994). According to Taylor (1994), “Out of “malice or ignorance” “rights and protections” are not what are extended to the misrecognized subject, rather harm and dispossession come to be disproportionately overextended” (Coulthard 2014; Markell 2004; Taylor, 1994). Consequently, as Fanon (1954, 1961) vividly illustrates through his own encounters in Europe, misrecognition can leave the subaltern subject feeling thwarted, carrying substantive consequences for the agentic and emancipatory possibilities of the misrecognized. Thus, proponents of a politics of recognition

seek recognition in order to ameliorate the thwarting effects that come with misrecognition. The politics of recognition is positioned as the mechanism by which mutual respect and acknowledgement can be redistributed (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Taylor 1989, 1994; William, 2014). This redistribution or extension of “mutuality” will not only serve as the necessary fuel to run an inclusive and democratic society, but proponents argue that it will also aid in the process of producing agentic-emancipated subjectivities (Coulthard, 2014; Taylor, 1989, 1994; William, 2014).

### **Creative Counterpublics and Re-Entry Politics**

Creative counterpublics have long been located as particularly effective sites for recognition driven “re-entry” politics (Conguergood 1998; Elam 2001; Asen 2000; Warner 2002). According to Conquergood, creative counterpublics hold greater efficacy in galvanizing communicative registers better able to travel in a manner that disrupts the “...sedimented meanings and normative traditions” of the hegemonic order (Conguergood 1998:32). Furthermore, Elam explains for marginal/marginalized agents in the Euro-North Atlantic ‘the stage’ has had a long history of being located “as [a] site for pedagogical performance” in which, as Elam writes, “social and cultural agency” is declared and remade by agents living in the margins (Elam 2001:6). In a similar line, speaking on W.E.B. Du Bois’s work on radical black theater (Du Bois 1926:134), Denzin writes, Du Bois’s “radical theater...[was] a political theater about black [folks], written by black [folks], for black [folks], performed by blacks on local stages” (Denzin 2003:5). Further elaborating on this point, Elam emphasizes the liminality of the performance of the everyday with the performance of the ‘stage’, writing “from the arrival of



first African slaves on American soil...the definition and meanings of blackness, have been intricately linked to issues of theatre and performance” (Elam 2001:4). And according to Zine and Taylor (2016), the post 9/11 Muslim generation in North America appears to also place an overwhelming emphasis on destabilizing and re-conceptualizing the manner by which their bodies and practices have been (re)produced in the public imaginary through creative public pedagogy (*see also* Ahmed 2010, 2011; Morey & Yaqin 2011; Zine & Taylor 2016). Hence, the post-9/11 generation located in the North Atlantic is also said to participate in the “politics of recognition”, however fraught the grounds of recognition may be (Fraser & Honneth 2003; Markell 2003; Coulthard 2014).

### **Necessary but not Transformative**

At first engagement, MWC seemed to also deploy the expected politics and tactics of creative racialized counterpublics, carving out a space and stage of storytelling meant for public pedagogy oriented towards recognition and “re-entry”. However, in my ten months of official fieldwork, attending open-mics and meeting with MWC regulars, the manner recognition was deployed, and transformative politics approached, challenged the literature-driven assumptions concerning the work and priorities of racialized counterpublics. Even when the language of recognition (“speaking-back”, “reclaiming”) was employed, a sober-grounded analysis of the future(s) recognition makes possible quickly followed, an analysis that did not equate recognition work with transformative politics. It is worth noting here that Markell (2003) and Taylor (1994) both effectively concur (albeit from different vantage points) that there is no avoiding the language of recognition. The politics of recognition has in fact become a ubiquitous

frame of contemporary political and discursive life and relates to questions of marginalization, emancipation, and agency. Its ubiquity has not only meant that the state uses recognition as a means of ordering and making “citizens,” but subalternized groups also use recognition as a field through which political claims are made and identities are articulated (Coulthard, 2014; Markell, 2003; Taylor, 1989, 1994). In this vein, Taylor writes:

*“A number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need ... the demand, for recognition ... The demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today’s politics, on behalf of minority or “subaltern” groups, in some forms of feminism and in what is today called the politics of “multiculturalism.” The demand for recognition ... is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity ... The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves” (Taylor 1994:25).*

My work with MWC demonstrates that employing the discursive frames of recognition does not automatically mean the underlying politics is also picked up. Homi Bhabha (1984, 1994) makes an important point about the *politics of mimicry* - contending that appearance does not mean conformity. The potential of “re-entry” of corrective communicative flows into dominant public(s) was understood to possibly disrupt the reductive caricatures of Muslim subjecthoods in popular circulation. However, MWC regulars by and large held that partaking in the dance of recognition and re-entry was also stifling. Therefore, MWC regulars approached the transformative ascription of recognition politics with hesitance and apprehension without spilling into all out rejection. Recognition was rather likened to *janitorial-work*, arguably necessary as one tool in an arsenal of anti-racist work, but far from transformative. In other words, the tactics

required in producing one's story, and thus oneself, in frames legible to power may allow for pathways of buffering relative grounds of security. The same labour however was also framed as inevitably resulting in agentic diminishment and subjective erasure. In short, (re)inscribing subalternity anew. Thus, I neither found in the MWC space a politics of turning away/withdrawal (Coulter 2014; Simpson 2014; Sharpe 2016) nor a wholehearted embrace of recognition politics (Taylor 2003).

### ***Create, Connect, Share and Reflect: Galvanizing a Generative Scene-space***

Across my conversations with MWC members, performers, and organizers there was a consistent sober matter-of-fact understanding of the precarity and subsequent violence that is produced when a racialized subject is disciplined through a system of *internment and eviction*. Where everything from speech-acts to everyday dress to the acquaintances kept could be picked up by systems of racial surveillance as a means of marking one as an imminent threat in need of evictive “exceptional” proceedings [i.e. *the bad Muslim, the radical*] (Mamdani 2005; Razack 2007; Morsi 2016; Selod 2019). Thus, the work of “reclaiming the Muslim narrative”, as proclaimed by MWC’s mission statement, was largely positioned as an overarching political goal by my interlocutors, a goal partly served by recognition work and one that Muslim communities in the North Atlantic could not afford to turn away from. At the same time, MWC regulars emphasized, irrespective of the marketing taglines, the work done in the space was not primarily oriented towards this *necessary* political goal.

In fact, the key critique levied by attendees and performers new or irregular to the MWC scene was that the *forms, procedures, and methods* deployed by MWC did not effectively orient

towards the work of recognition and “re-entry”. And many MWC-regulars would largely agree with the above critique. In contrast, the space actively took up *forms, procedures and methods* that were much more concerned with priming a scene that was first-and-foremost *generative*. As one of the founding organizers puts it - a space that could “inspire creativity” was the operational *modus operandi*. And so, the transformative thrust underlying MWC work did not lie in any grand politics queued for a particular arrival, whether this arrival was corralled by the demands of hegemonic forces or by internal community constructions. Simply put, grand gestures or proclamations on ‘*how things should be*’ were largely de-centered, even if the normative proclamations were not necessarily problematic to MWC regulars. MWC was not a place where proclamations, ascriptions, and curated expectations hold any sort of finality as enclosures and trajected arrivals were all seen to thwart the generative atmosphere a transformative orientation requires. Rather, transformation was located in the unanticipated openings a generative space allows. And thus, creating an atmosphere where one is repeatedly grappling with a constant sense of emergence without ever really reaching a clear arrival was taken up as the necessary pathway in the transformative re-making of self and community.

Consequently, a *refusal* to be rehearsed, coherent, efficient, profound, or even “make sense” was located as priming the space in the right direction. A space of uncut raw-inspired storytelling, where the highly crafted pieces largely took a backseat in favour of performances that galvanized mutuality, relatability, and vulnerability. This permits forms to emerge and just as quickly become undone, allowing inconsistencies, discomfort, and silence to take up space. Allowing for tearful stories to encapsulate the room immediately followed with another story vibrating the space with laughter. And thus, letting moments come and go as they may without any singular story defining the stage or space was the work of MWC.

Moreover, the Jama'ah or congregational dimension of MWC was an important factor in maintaining the generative form of the space. In a congregation, or Jama'ah, mutuality and alignment is the foundation of intersubjective engagement. In a Jama'ah, the generative moment does not precede the moment of congregation. In the case of MWC, the congregation operated as the grid allowing for the ebbs-and-flows to activate agentic capacity and collectively expand and stretch the boundaries of self and community. For a subject made to make life in a context where a “virtual/psychic internment” becomes part of the intimate operation of power, and where one’s mobility and agency is regularly surveilled and disciplined, *expanding, and revealing oneself* becomes the ultimate act of *refusal*. A refusal that is not reduced to antagonistic resistance, but a refusal that is concerned with generating *vitality* and subverting subalternity, objecthood, and enclosures that operate to mark racialized life.

The next seven chapters will do the work of outlining how *expansion and revelation* emerge as powerful acts of refusal, and a method through which generative grounds of becoming open up, subverting the field of internment and challenging the homogenizing caricatures of Muslimhoods. This work begins by engaging in discussions of racialization and Muslimhood, providing the theoretical orientation for the dissertation. This is followed by a literature review examining the manner ‘the Muslim problem’ has been raced in conjunction with a discussion of counterpublics, resistance, and racialized agency. Chapter 4 outlines the methodology used in the study. Chapter 5 provides a thick description of the MWC scene-space employing longform quotes from MWC interviewees, outlining *what the space is not* in order to more clearly arrive at *what the space offers*. Chapter 6 continues the process of directly engaging with longform quotes but focusing analysis on the manner improvisation, experimentation, and play come to be taken up as key methods and processes of producing the generative orientation of the space. Chapter 7

wraps up the analysis chapters with another data-driven discussion on how recognition, misrecognition, and transformation are positioned and negotiated through the frame of *mundanification* by MWC regulars. Chapter 8 is the concluding chapter, where a review and final remarks regarding contributions, implications, and significance is made.

## CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS - FROM CONQUERING-TO-CONTAMINANT/ MAKING THE 'SAVABLE' MUSLIM

---

*“From the end of the seventh century until the [1500s], Islam in either its Arab, Ottoman, or North African and Spanish form dominated or effectively threatened Europe [more particularly the imperial work of Euro-Christendom]...[which] cannot have been absent from the mind of any European past or present”*

(Said 1979: 74).

Questions of ‘belonging’, ‘citizenship’ and ‘incorporation’ tends to perpetually follow Muslim communities in the West. Understanding these questions cannot move independent of the broader sociohistorical terrain in which the Muslim figure has come to be enmeshed in and framed through. This sociohistorical backdrop framing Muslim difference as particularly ‘troubling’ and ‘insurmountable’ long pre-dates the current post-9/11 moment, and War on Terror era (Bayoumi 2006; Razack 2007; Said 1981, 1979; Sayyid 2010, 2014). In fact, the discourses that followed the tragedy of 9/11 rejuvenated and renewed longstanding orientalist and eurocentric frames of Muslim Otherhood (Bayoumi 2006; Razack 2007; Meer & Modood, 2010; Tyrer & Sayyid, 2012). And so, disentangling present debates around Muslim difference and the ‘incorporability’ of the Muslim within Liberal society requires a close examination of the sociohistorical backdrop through which the Muslim figure has come into view (Said 1981, 1979;

Sayyid 2010, 2014). Speaking on the challenge of the *Muslim of the interior*, Tyrer explains, the Muslim is marked as an especially urgent ‘problem’ “not...overseas [per say] but...in the postcolonial context when ‘they’ are among us” (Tyrer 2013:76). Furthermore, Sayyid (2014) asserts, “the articulation of a Muslim subject position within the context of the ethnoscaples of Western countries presents a peculiar challenge to Western identity” (2014:34). The Muslim of the interior arouses a contradictory challenge - amplifying and revealing conflicting push/pull forces - the push for ‘domestication’ that follows all Otherized/racialized actors juxtapositioned with historical pull forces that situates “the Muslim” as a distant provocateur (Said 1979, 1981) possessing the capacity for ‘dislodge’ (Weheliye 2014; Rana 2011; Said 1979). Although this chapter will focus attention on the peculiar challenge of ‘the Muslim of the interior’, the first section will broaden up and engage with the work of orientalism and coloniality in feilding the manner the Muslim has come to be produced as a ‘problem’ in the Euro-Atlantic consciousness. This larger discussion will be followed with a closer examination of the Muslim of the interior, engaging with how this frame of “problem people” (Mugabo 2018; Jackson 2011) ascribed on *Muslim difference* meets the internal demands of racialized domestication that entry/settlement into the metropole requires (Mamdani 2005; 2010; Seold 2016). This engagement with the Muslim of the interior will bring in discussion of race, racism and racialization in locating the Muslim problem in the hinterland. This chapter will draw from a range of scholars in the field of Muslim racialization and Islamophobia studies in the Euro-Atlantic, in addition to larger discussions on race, racialization, and racism in order to detangle and outline the “messy-ness”, contingencies, and the operational pathways of Muslim racialization in the contemporary moment. Moreover, this chapter build on the Critical Muslim Studies discussions of making the ‘Moderate’ through the dual register of Bad Muslim/Good Muslim as the operational



manifestation of the racializing regime marking the Muslim subject (Mamdani 2005; Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013; Sayyid 2010; Razack 2007; Thobani 2007; Seold 2018; El-Sherif 2019).

### **The Conquering Figure: ‘Provocateur’ by Sheer Existence**

Sayyid effectively argues in *Fundamental Fear*, and then again in “Recalling the Caliphate”, that the ‘Muslim problem’ can arguably be thought of as a problem of a ‘perceived’ competing epistemic-order with planetary prospect, which inevitably destabilizes the commonplace associations of universalism with Euro-Modernity/whiteness (Sayyid 1997, 2014). As Alcoff contends that the global horizons Modern “categories and concepts” have not only required the conquest of geographic-political sovereignties, but have also required reorganization of temporal-epistemic orders (Alcoff 2007). The type of temporal-epistemic effect colonization produced, as decoloniality thinkers explain, has very much outlived the timeframe of direct colonization - i.e. “coloniality” (Alcoff 2007; Maldonado-Torres 2008; Mignolo 2000b, 2011; Dussel 1993). In other words, Alcoff explains, leveraging key de/coloniality thinkers, that the planetary appetite of European Modernity required the “alienation” and “displacement” of all other “epistemic” orders, or in Oyewumi’s (1997) more holistic coinage “worldsenses”<sup>3</sup>. Worldsense as a conceptual device comes out of Oyewumi’s work with Yoruban ways of being. And so, European conquest was not simply about land and raw material, but also very much about “language, space, time, and history” and “worldsenses” (Alcoff 2007:83). Speaking in a similar vein, Sayyid (2014) asserts:

---

<sup>3</sup> ‘Worldsense’ captures a broader set of epistemological order that do not center the ocular/material dimension the manner “worldview” implicitly privileges (Oyewumi 1997)

*Christendom's appropriation of the Western hemisphere and the subsequent expansion of Europe through the process of conquest, and the establishment of a planetary colonial political economy...[has meant that] the line between the West and the non-West became the axis of the world. In this world the superiority and normality of the West was institutionalised and constantly contrasted with the inferiority and abnormality of the non-West (2014:2).*

Furthermore, the planetary requirements of *coloniality* has not only meant the peripheralization of all Other world-senses/epistemic orders, but has also corresponded with a particular antagonistic relationality with non-Western orders perceived to hold tenable global horizon prospects (Sayyid 1997, 2014; see also Alcoff 2007; Mignolo 2000b, 2011; Sayyid 1997, 2010, 2014). Similarly, Weheliye writes, the threat of “dislodge” the Islamicate<sup>4</sup> world was imagined to hold - irrespective of its material facticity - produced the “Muslim [as a] necessary...racialized category in Europe”, which further perpetuates and consolidating the motif of the “vexing provocateur” (Weheliye 2014:71; Rana 2011; Said 1979). Thus, Weheliye asserts, the ‘Muslim Other’ then continues to be constructed as a looming *threat* to the “unchallenged advantage of whiteness, Europeaness, and protestant secularism” well into the contemporary period (Weheliye 2014:71; see also Rana 2011). This threat of ‘dislodge’, Weheliye points to, should not simply be understood in geopolitical material terms, rather “provincialization”<sup>5</sup> in the broadest sense is arguably what is at issue here. And as Mignolo explains, European Modernity centers itself as the vanguard to the category of the “human” - drawing the “teleological macro-narratives of human progress” in which it locates itself as the only order suited for global horizons (Mignolo 2000b, 2011; Dussel 1993).

---

<sup>4</sup> ‘Islamicate’ was coined by Chicago Islamic Studies historian Marshall Hodgson (1922-1968), author of *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization* (Chicago, 1974). Hodgson aimed to draw attention to a “distinction between religion, on the one hand, and ‘the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion’, on the other” (Morrissey 2021)

<sup>5</sup> My use of ‘Provincialization’ here borrows from Chakrabarty usage in *Provincializing Europe* (2000), which entails returning Europe as one world region amongst many, without the bloated hegemonic dominance it counts to carry.

The monopolization of planetary epistemic horizons is arguably then a requirement of the Modern - its imagined 'rightful' providence is "global" (Mignolo 2012; Maldonado-Torres 2008). Consequently "provincialization" suffocates and destabilizes "both the base and the superstructure" of Euro-Modernity (Alcoff 2007:83). Any epistemic order with possible planetary horizons threatens to 'dislodge' the self-proclaimed global providence of the Modern, of whiteness (Mignolo 2000b, 2011; Sayyid 2010). It's worth noting here that the epistemic and temporal ordering of the Modern does not necessarily require the elimination of all Other world-senses,<sup>6</sup> rather the planetary work of coloniality requires the localization and thus, provincialization of all Others. This localization can unfold in numerous ways, but it is a fixing, distancing, and object-making act wherein the conquered Other is made into a relic, an artefact for view and enticement. Moreover, according to Dussel (1995), it is important to remember that although 'the Modern' is a European project, its working ground is the "transmodern"<sup>7</sup> - "which signifies the global networks within which European modernity itself became possible" (Alcoff 2007:84). Simply put, the subjugation, conquest and provincialization of all various Others is necessary for the Modern (Dussel 1995; Alcoff 2007; Mignolo 2000b, 2011; Maldonado-Torres 2008). Within this planetary reordering, the local and the "prehistoric" are the locus of the colonized - whereas the global and the present-future are constructed as the providence of the colonizer (Mignolo 2000b, 2011). Put another way, Majozi contends:

*The colonisation of history, time, and space, therefore, plays a central role in the constitution of modernity...the partitioning of history between the ancient and the modern constituted the colonisation of time. The division of humanity between the civilised (Europeans) and the barbarians (non-Europeans) encompassed the colonisation of space (Majozi 2018:176).*

---

<sup>6</sup> This is not to say that some world-sense are not approached with a genocidal eliminatory praxis. Elimination in its many formations is part-and-parcel the colonial enterprise.

For Euro-Modernity then the Muslims globalist prospect, geographic proximity, and tenuous history produced the Islamicate world and the Muslim figure as a particularly provocative antithetical Other (Said 1981, 1979; Sayyid 1997, 2010; Rana 2012; Weheliye 2014). As a “civilizational relic” of the past, the epistemic orbit of the Muslim is meant to remain in prehistory, fossilised and localized - in contrast Modernity sits as the rightful heirs of the ‘present’ and the ‘future’. And so, emerging from pre-modern civilizational genealogy of the “conquering” “menacing” Other, the Muslim figure continued to be framed as a provocation to *Westerndom*, simply invigorated by the sheer thirst for *expansion and conquest* (Sayyid 2010; Selod 2018; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). And thus, refusing “provincialization”, spilling over bordering acts, disrupting the order of Modernity without ‘rhyme’ or ‘reason’ - as a refusal of the Modern is framed as tantamount to insanity (i.e. “they just hate our freedom”).

Thus, “Modernity” requires the fixing of all Others in order to produce itself as natural, omnipotent, and ever-present. Speaking in this vein - Alcoff contends, in producing a consolidated civilizational self, “the coloniality of power...produces, evaluates, and manages” the colonial Other in a manner most productive to the bloating of its civilizational horizon (Alcoff 2007:87). Alcoff continues with the representation of ‘difference’ is neither innocent nor a ‘given’, rather the construction and evaluation of ‘difference’ very much speaks to the consolidatory ‘needs’ of the power, writing “power has [long] been [busy] at work in creating difference” for its own sake (Alcoff 2007). Speaking to this ‘need’ or utility of producing a particular ‘Other’, Morsi explains in “Moderate Mask, Radical Skin” - that the Muslim Other continues to provide a ‘robust’ consolidatory effect, marking the civilizational boundaries between “the West and the Rest” (Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2014). Irrespective of the subalternization of the Islamicate world in geopolitical terms, the Muslim figure in the Modern context retains its

position as a “worthy” “clasher” in “the clash of civilization” drama (Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2014). And as Said (1979) explains, in the post-decolonization era the occident has continued to position itself “in a whole series of possible relationships with the Orient without ever losing...the relative upper hand” (1979:15). The facticity of the ‘Muslim threat’ carries very little relevance to the consolidatory work the frame of ‘Muslim Otherhood’ provides, supporting the (re)production of whiteness as civilizational hegemon. Thus, the construction of the ‘provocateur’ attached to the Muslim Other stands regardless of the geopolitical material reality in which this ‘bloated Other’ is “inevitably droned and defeated” (Morsi 2016; Kapadia 2019). Said reminds us that the Orient is, “always symmetrical, and yet diametrically inferior to, a European equivalent” (Said 1979:72). In fact, it would seem the more the Muslim figure is ‘bloated’ and constructed as a ‘conquering’ bearded ‘bougie-man’ the better the frame serves the consolidatory political agendas of the day (case-and-point, ‘the Muslims are taking over’ narrative pushed by the populist right across the Euro-Atlantic).

In this scripted civilizational drama, the colonial logic that marks the Muslim figure is imbued by a dramatized “actability”. However, this actability is always threatening and thus galvanizing border securing efforts productive for the consolidation of empire. The problematic ‘Muslim figure’ in the contemporary moment is thus inscribed by a latitude of actability - though this actability is marked by an erratic irrationality. Consequently, the construction of ‘Muslim difference’ is wrapped in such a way that it makes it not only allowable, but ‘reasonable’ to construct the Muslim Other as a “jarring” figure, always in “excess” - in need of “moderation” and “management” (Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2010, 2014). And thus, the Muslim then comes to be marked as a provocateur by sheer existence, irrespective of power, irrespective of ‘the political’ (Sayyid 2014; Morsi 2016). Weheliye (2014) in his formulation of *Racial Assemblage* tells us

that "racialization is understood not as biological or cultural descriptor but as a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into "full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans" (Weheliye 2014:3). The Muslim problem then becomes a problem of 'essence', a problem of 'culture', a problem of 'race' - an 'erratic' excessive subject, perpetually out-of-place and out-of-time, inevitably calling forth elaborate racial management and bordering architectures meant to fix and put-in-place, and thus discipline the Muslim subject into the abject category of the "not-quite-human" (Weheliye 2014; Rana 2011; Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2010, 2014; Razack 2007; Mamdani 2010).

### **Race a 'Medley' of a Concept**

Goldberg relays, "in a field of discourse like the racial, what is generally circulated and exchanged is not simply truth but *truth-claims* or representations" (Goldberg 1993:46). These representations come to coalesce and form discursive orders that provide "racist expressions" an efficacy and intelligibility (Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Hall 2001). Similarly, Hall asserts, representations allow "an acceptable and intelligible way to talk, write or conduct oneself which "rules out", limits, and restricts other ways of talking, of conducting ourselves in relation to the topic or constructing knowledge about it" (2001:73). In reference to the Muslim figure, racial *truth-claims* have come to produce and corral an assemblage of signs and traces that mark the Muslim figure as a provocateur by sheer existence (Tyrer 2013; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Selod 2019; Volpp 2012; Naber 2006). Weheliye frames "assemblage" in his conceptualization of *Racial Assemblage* as "constituting continuously shifting relational totalities comprised of spasmodic networks between different entities and their articulations...coalesc[ing] at certain points while seceding at others" (Weheliye 2014:46). And as Goldberg (1993) and Omi and Winant (1994) explain, racial *truth-claims* persist to circulate and field the discursive landscape

irrespective of the demonstrated fraughtness of such claims. The Muslim figure then comes to occupy the terrain of “the not-quite-human” in which there is an intimate conflation with orientalist representations of *brownness* (Husain 2017; Meer and Modood 2010; Sayyid 2010; Tyrer and Sayyid 2010; Morsi 2016; Abdul Khabeer 2016). However fraught the association, particularly if we consider the case of Black Muslimhoods, *brownness* continues to serve as a key sign in the interpellation of the Muslim in racial terms. One of the most violent consequences of this truth-claim has manifested in the manner turban-wearing Sikh men have been pulled into the drama of Islamophobia and the particularly heightened hysteria that has shrouded Muslim communities in the post 9/11 era (Volpp 2012; Tyrer 2013; Selod 2019; Naber 2006). Consequently, as Tyrer succinctly asserts, in many ways then “racism’s incompetence matches its cruelty” (Tyrer 2013:50-51; Deleuze and Guattari 2004:198). And thus, the aims of anti-racist interventions that seek to uncover and destabilize the “incompetence” and “cruelty” of racism, as Goldberg explains, necessitates more than a counting and recounting of *racist expressions*. Rather for analysis that aims to be better placed to inform anti-racist interventionist efforts, closer examination of the underlying racialized grammar imbuing racist expression with their efficacy is necessary (Goldberg 1993:47).

Moreover, Kobayashi and Peake (2000) tell us that beyond overt racist expressions, “racialization is part of the normal, and normalized landscape and it needs to be analysed as such” (2000:392). A normalized landscape in which “...the prevailing meaning of race at any intersection of time and place is embedded in and influenced by the prevailing conditions within the social milieu in question” (Goldberg 1993:80). Far from a foreclosed and fixed process then, the working of race has been demonstrative of its malleable and adaptive capacity. Referring to the malleability of race, Goldberg writes, “its power [lies]...in its adaptive capacity to define

population groups and by extension, social agents...at various historical moments” (1993:80). Furthermore, race does not only “adopt[e] and extend...prevailing conceptions of social group formation” - as a “medley” of a concept - race also continues to carry its earlier formations (Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 1993: 80). Similarly, Tyrer (2013) contends, it is vital to keep in mind that earlier formations of group differences are not simply left behind, rather race as a method of categorization and differentiation tends to carry as it evolves and transports. For instance, Tyrer explains, even in the era of cultural racism, the corporeal dimension continues to maintain its definitive status in the logic and operation of racialization, writing:

*“although the hollowness of racism's scientific claims is well established, the cultural racism which emerges in the wake of this debunking does not displace modern ideas of phenotype race but supplement them, so that idea of a hardwired difference between groups” persists (Tyrer 2013: 43; see also Hall 2000).*

Though race is arguably - in Goldberg’s words - an “ontologically empty” and slippery concept (Goldberg 1993:80-81, 84; *see also* Omi and Winant 1994), its definitive characteristic lies in its methodological and operational consequences (Goldberg1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Weheliye 2014). As an adaptive medley of a concept, race continues to fix and order difference in terms that perpetually present the order produced as “natural” and “obvious” (Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Weheliye 2014). As a method of ordering and disciplining difference, Weheliye explains, racialization requires certain consistent contingencies, including “...ongoing sets of political relations...perpetuat[ed] via institutions, discourses, practices, desires, infrastructures,



languages, technologies, sciences, economies, dreams, and cultural artifacts”, all convening in the work of “...barring non-white subjects from the category of *the human* as it is performed in the modern west” (Weheliye 2014: 3). While race has proven to be an *adaptive living medley* of a concept - as a method of stratification, it is nonetheless underlined by a persistent overarching operational logic directed to secure a consistent procedural endpoint - i.e. ‘white futurity’ (Weheliye 2014). Put differently, racialization is fielded by a logic that is fundamentally oriented to engineering, stabilizing, and preserving a social order that maintains the referential centrality of whiteness - marked as “the human” - the domain of *full personhood* (Weheliye 2014; Wilderson 2010).

Race then is fundamentally rooted in and emerges from the social engineering ambitions of the Modern (Bauman 1989; Weheliye 2014). And so, although race draws from a wide discursive landscape in its directive of ordering the social, it nonetheless is not a *directionless* force. Race-making is rather continuously invested in the work of engineering *the human* off the Otherization of the *not-quite* and the *nonhuman* (Weheliye 2014; Saucier and Woods 2018). Thus, regardless of the discursive maps/regimes leveraged in disciplining and organizing difference - racialization is grounded by a procedural end-goal of preserving *the Modern, the human* “*by any means necessary*” - borrowing the infamous adage of El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X). This procedural directive is the defining and consistent feature of race across its many faces and adaptations. Similarly, Weheliye continues to explain, race is thus no more than “a set of sociopolitical processes of differentiation and hierarchization” anchored and calibrated via the dual racial poles that have constructed the Modern - *white supremacy* and *anti-blackness* (Weheliye 2014:5; *see also* Hartman 1997; Moten 2003; Wilderson 2010; Wynter 2015; Spillers

1987; Saucier and Woods 2018). And so, as the chapter moves into the racing story of the Muslim of the interior, it will be kept in mind that the aim of uncovering and destabilizing race requires scholarly analysis that attempts to disentangle the methodological working ground of race, while keeping the procedural endpoint in mind.

### **The Muslim of the Interior**

The empire-making work of the ‘menacing provocateur’ imagined to be located in the exterior meets a fundamental challenge when the Muslim figure comes into view as also inhabiting the interior of the metropole. Like other postcolonial populations, the era of decolonization propelled a particular ‘transmigratory Muslim’ subject on the global scene, where migration patterns often following colonial linkages and global market trends (Rana 2011; Selod 2018; Sayyid 2010). Although the migratory postcolonial subject entry into the West has furthered the reach/access of Modernity in renewed ways, it has also been a fraught and contention process, wherein the lines of the ‘out-there’ and ‘in-here’ have been stressed and stretched (Rana 2011; Selod 2018; Sayyid 2010). The geographical demarcations of colonized people located in distant lands, in the frontiers of empire, meets the reality of postcolonial geopolitics in the contemporary transmigratory era (Sayyid 2010; Morsi 2016). However, irrespective of the reductive demarcations of the “West and the Rest” (Ferguson 2011), wherein the Muslim is located in the orientalized distance, the abode of “the Rest”, the socio-material reality is one in which, as Rana writes, “the Muslim [has long been]...a transmigratory, global figure that enters and exits multiple terrains; [allowing us to] speak of the Muslim in Europe, the Americas, Asia, Africa and elsewhere” (Rana 2011:29). And in the aftermath of European

Colonialism, the West comes to meet an exponential rise in the transmigratory energy of postcolonial peoples (Gilroy 1982; Rana 2011; Sayyid 2010; Selod 2018).

The migration of Muslim populations - similar to other racialized demographics - into Europe and North America propelled a push to re-map the subject/citizen relationship, a reorganization and renegotiation of terms of relations. As Mamdani (1996) explains, the movement of populations from the colonies to the metropolises discursively and materially disrupted the internal ordering of empire. Migration of formerly colonized populations at a basic level unsettled senses of security distance allowed - destabilizing the neatly demarcated 'racial' Westphalian order emerging out of the colonial era. Speaking to this point and in reference to the growing Algerian migration into France in the interwar period, MacMaster writes, "for many, Algerian presence on French soil was the ultimate insult: the former colonial subject, perceived as inherently inferior...were now colonising the land of the 'civilized' masters" (MacMaster 1997:2). In short, migration of the colonial subject warps the order of empire - as Bauman explains, the "good society", the "good life" of the Modern requires a weeding process "weeding out [of] waste lives" in order to produce pristine white "garden culture[s]" (Bauman 1989:92). Racism works as a management system primarily concerned with supporting this social engineering project of the Metropole. Race then works as a "measure of human worth...[employed] to redeem boundary-drawing and boundary-guarding concerns under new conditions which made boundary-crossing easier than ever before" (1989:61-62). The ease of border crossing ushered in by European colonial expansion required a parallel development that aimed to protect the 'integrity' of the Metropole. Speaking in this vein, Sayyid asserts, we can perhaps think of racial governmentality as the colonial management system turned inwards:

*All the techniques of social exclusion, segregation and marginalization were already operating under the heading of colonialism...Racism emerges to account for the application of colonial rule in the heartlands of Europe, while still maintaining the difference between West and non-West, which was constitutive of the colonial world order (Sayyid 2014:17).*

In other words, the colonial Other's entry into the interior of the metropole requires a re-negotiation of terms, a re-negotiation that reproduces the center/periphery matrix of the global in the local. This re-negotiation however is not only deeply informed by the context of coloniality - but also fielded and made intelligible in relation to the pre-existing racialized field of the hinterland. A field operating through the more tightly regulated registries of white-supremacy and anti-blackness, instead of the colonizer-and-colonized matrix (Wilderson 2010; Sexton 2016; Hartman 1997; Moten 2003; Patterson 1982; Weddington 2019; Weheliye 2014). All of which is compounded by the violent 'clearing' of settler-colonialism in the case of the Americas (Byrd 2011). And thus, the racing of the "postcolonial arrivants" (Byrd 2011) is simply a requirement of the incorporation of the Other within the interior of the West, while securing the pre-established racialized hierarchy of the metropole as constructed through settler-colonialism and chattel-slavery (Wilderson 2010). And so, the directionality of influence marking the relationship between the metropole's racial governmentality and colonial management architecture could more aptly be thought of as bi-directional (Wilderson 2010; Patterson 1982; Weddington 2019; Weheliye 2014; Sayyid 2014).

Nevertheless, the particularity by which the metropole's racial architecture proceeds in (re)making the colonial Other into a racial subject is very much rooted in the specificity of the particular Other's history in relation to whiteness, coloniality, and pre-existing racial field of the interior. The trajectory of governmentality that follows various postcolonial Others cannot simply be superimposed on one another. In the case of the Muslim subject then, Islamophobia is

what emerges in the process of disciplining the post-colonial global order of transmigration and renegotiation of the metropole-colonial relationship. Defining Islamophobia, Kolankiewicz asserts, “Islamophobia [can be] conceived [then] as a reaction to a loss of ...Western hegemonies as a result of post-colonial transformation in the global order” - transformation that brought with it development that “question[ed] the ideas of modernization and development” as the *end of history* (Kolankiewicz 2019; see also Sayyid 2010:15-17). Moreover, Islamophobia can also be thought of as a ‘*doing*’ that manages Muslimhoods by problematizing Muslimness in doctrine, practice, and as a system of subjectification (Mugabo 2018; Jackson 2011; Sayyid 2010; Morsi 2016). Following this conceptualization of “problematization”, Mugabo (2018) affirms that Islamophobia is about “...the production of Muslims as “problem peoples”” (Mugabo 2018; 164). She then explains, this problematization can manifest through “misrepresentation, harassment, intimidation, physical violence, and continued suspicion from private citizens, government officials, and the many tentacles of the state apparatus” (2018: 164). Similarly, Sayyid asserts, “tak[ing] seriously Islamophobia as a concept and reflect[ing] upon its usage...[means] considering the ways in [which] the Muslim presence is problematised in various contexts” (Sayyid 2010:2).

In the terrain of the interior then proximity to an Other framed as ‘insurmountably oppositional’ comes to be experienced as ‘jarring’ and ‘excessive’ (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012) prone to arouse moral panic – and signaling a danger to national/civilizational integrity and security (Zopf 2017; Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2014; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). As Morsi (2016) explains, the Muslim seems to substantively stress the frameworks of Western “liberal tolerance” - testing the limits of liberal citizenship and incorporation (e.g. legislative bans that seem to seasonally follow Muslim practices). In fact, the Muslim of the interior continues to be laced in

language gesturing to a fundamental ‘alienhood’ and ‘Otherness’, irrespective of citizenship or heritage (Husain 2017; Selod 2015; Chen 2010). As Chen (2010) contends, Muslim populations within the West continue to be cast with a “perpetual foreigner [alien] motif” regardless of geography or history or the specificity of the community in question (Chen 2010: 413). Likewise, Husain simply asserts, “Muslimness signifies foreignness”, this dominant association seemingly unresponsive to the particularities of heritage or origin – consequently, domestication and citizenship come to carry complicated connotations (Husain 2017; *see also* Selod 2015). Similarly, even when looking at historical Black Muslim America, Abdul Khabeer asserts - whether immigrant or not there is “never quite [an] escape [from] the tendency to conflate “Muslim” with “foreigner”” (Abdul Khabeer 2016: 25).

And so, scholars have argued that the threat to national integrity operates as a looming backdrop in the racing of the Muslim of the interior (Razack 2007; Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013). In one-way or another then questions of integration/incorporation of the Muslim subject are often driven by a concern for ‘management’. Thus ‘carefully managing’ *Muslim difference* becomes paramount – as a subject marked as fundamentally “too much”, “too excess” (Sayyid 2010; Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013). As Tyrer explains, Muslim difference tends to be framed as a type of diffused contaminate to Western integrity, requiring close watch and a measured approach (Selod 2015; Morsi 2016). And so, in its most overt form this measured gesture towards ‘inclusion’ of *Muslim difference* is approached by outright ‘bans’ of practices and embodiments marked as “too much”, “too excessive” to the national imaginary of self – from Muslim dress to Mosque architecture (minarets) to availability of halal food, to even public displays of congregated worship (salah) have come to grab state attention and debate (Khemilat 2020). All these efforts to ‘manage’ the “too muchness” of Muslim difference is pre-occupied in protecting the public

sphere from signs that may elicit disintegration, which the mere presence of Muslims seems to signal. Muslimhood unmanaged in public is presented as a type of assault to the nation - whether it be a woman in hijab or niqab utilizing public services (e.g. France) or seeking public employment (e.g. Quebec, Canada) or a Mosque with a protruding minaret (Sweden). The mere presence of *Muslim difference* arouses moral panic, provoking a type of generalized anxiety which brings concerns of ‘insecurity’ and ‘fragmentation’ to the fore of the national imaginary across the West.

The creative collective wherein analytical attention is focused on in this dissertation will demonstrate what is required to negotiate public existence as a subject sitting on the receiving end of this perpetual ‘problem’ frame. A problem frame in which what’s at issue for the multi-tiered racial management structures is - as the political right often crudely repeats - ‘the Islamization of society’, i.e. the dislodge of white futurity. On the receiving end, for the Muslim subject, one’s grammar-of-being, agentic activation, and thus humanity, is what’s at stake. And so, without a measured approach to the presumed *natural excess, contaminatory force* of ‘Muslimness’, then the threat of dis-integrative, dislodge, is ever present from the standpoint of racializing management regimes. Reiterating Bauman’s garden metaphor of racial governmentality here, the ‘natural excess’ and ‘spillage’ of Muslim presence into the public, is akin to a ‘weed’ left unmanaged, eventually its assaultive outgrowth comes to consume the entire “pristine white garden” (Bauman 1989:92). In other words, Muslim difference is made akin to an insidious ever encroaching force, dangerous to leave unbounded, unchecked, unlegislated. And so, incorporation of the Muslim within the terrain of the interior demands keeping an eye on the “insidious” force that is Muslim presence, and thus, requires a pre-emptive, surgical, and

decisive action for incorporation that does not corrupt the ‘good of the garden’, the good of whiteness.

The Muslim of the interior then - irrespective of citizenship - retains the ‘conquering’ ‘provocative’ motif but (re)framed as a cultural disruptor or contaminant that threatens internal integrity of whiteness - it is a difference that necessitates ‘moderation’ and ‘management’ (sobered inclusion practices). Put differently, all difference is not created equal, ‘Muslim Otherness’, irrespective of legal standing, carries a persistent ‘jarring’ provocative-conqueror motif - coming into the field of view through a frame of an expansive faceless swarm challenging the order of whiteness; moving in step, bowing in step, sweeping across borders and impregnating all with “sharia law”. The ‘contaminant’ that is the Muslim of the interior then requires particular and immediate bordering. Speaking to these bordering and management architectures, Tyrer asserts, “The indeterminated status of Muslim within Western racial [maps]: somehow non-racial [but]...within the terms of race, incompletely subjectified” arouses an urgent and decisive response (Tyrer 2013:137-138) This ‘response’ carries the frame of the ‘conquering provocateur’ laced by a dose of ‘insurmountability’ as the discursive backdrop informing the racializing logics and disciplinary architecture that aims to mark and order Muslim bodies and practices in the interior. In Tyrer and Sayyid’s words, “managing this provocative excess” is the work of the exponentially growing surveillance and disciplinary structures of the war on terror, or as more aptly put by Kapadia, in our era of the “forever war” (Kapadia 2019; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012).

Accordingly, race-making and the governmentality that follows, stand as a form of social engineering, operating “...in the service of construct[ing] an artificial social order,



[which]...cut[s] out the elements of the present reality that [does not] fit the visualized perfect reality” of whiteness (Bauman 1989:65). Race and racism, understood as primarily holding a social engineering function, moves discussions of Islamophobia or any other racism(s), away from various notions of ‘prejudice’ and ‘hatred’ to larger discussions concerned with national/civilizational integrity. Moreover, Rana asserts “as a historical pattern and process, the racialization of Muslims reveals important details in the expanding and flexibl[itly] [in the] concept of race” (2011:26). I would also add the investigation of Muslim racialization reveals not only the elasticity of race but also the contingencies, illogics, and uncertainty of “colonial governmentality turned inward” (Tyere and Sayyid 2012; Alcoff 1999). And so, the exploration of Muslim racialization reveals both the expandability and limits of racial governmentality.

Moreover, Muslimness here is understood as “a distinct historical mode of comporting oneself in the world” (Sayyid 2014:5-7) depended on a relational collective orientation orbiting around a particular grammar/language of *being*, i.e. *Islam* (Sayyid 2014). In other words, a move to racialize and fix Muslimness, which references a “grammar of being”, on the ontic-material level - fixating on bodies, practices, performances – comes to be a thorny and uneven process (Tyer and Sayyid 2012). The limits of traditional racial governmentality in the management of Muslim difference also reveals the possibilities of “the lines of flight” and possibilities of resistance that arise and open up in the breaking points of ordering/ subjugating structures. These *lines of flight* and breaking points will be of primary areas of exploration and interest in the proceeding chapters. However, the next section will more closely explore the racial operationalizations invested in *making* the ‘Muslim of the interior’ - appropriately configured and neutralized for domestication. The politics of making ‘the Moderate Muslim’ (Morsi 2016), the ‘Good Muslim’ (Mamdani 2005) - the ‘incorporable Muslim’ will be the subject of

discussions - the appropriately managed, effectively deactivated, with the excesses shaved off and edges manicured (Tyrer 2013; Sayyid 2014).

### **Racialization via Eviction/Interment: Making the ‘Savable Muslim’**

Sherene Razack succinctly explains in *Casting Out* that the ‘Muslim problem’ in the interior of West has fundamentally become a question of management through eviction, writing: “I wish to underline that the eviction of Muslims from political community is a racial process that begins with Muslims being marked as a different level of humanity” (2007:176). For Razack (2007) it is “race thinking...[that] render these evictions invisible or as instances of mere fidelity to the rule of law and [as] legitimate defence” (Razack 2007:176). Comparably, Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) argue that the racialization of Muslim identities and bodies is built according to a logic that concurrently holds ‘Muslimhood’ as a frozen artifactual subjectivity that is ‘out-of-place’ and ‘out-of-time’, while simultaneously slippery, excessive, and forever unknowable, and thus an “incompletely realizable” figure that is not easily managed (2012:354). Likewise, Bayoumi (2006) argues that in the wake of 9/11 a reformulation of crude early 20th century race logics have propagated a common-place "typology of Muslim[hoods]" (2006:288) that reduces the Muslim subject to the “not-yet-modern” ‘savable’ *good Muslim* versus “the anti-modern” ‘dammed’ *bad Muslim* (Bayoumi 2006; Mamdani 2005:28). The politics of eviction then starts its sojourn into producing the ‘domesticatable Muslim’ by ‘weeding’ out the ‘bad Muslim’ from the interior and ejecting to the frontiers of empire, where such a figure belongs (Mamdani 2005; Razack 2007). As Ronak explains, the ‘excesses’ of the ‘bad Muslim’ is meant to exist as a civilizational provocateur *out-there* “rendered distant” - in the “discarded landscapes” of war, carnage and “black-sites” (Ronak 2019: 188-191). However, the repulsive-ejective energy

associated with the ‘bad Muslim’ does not undo the necessity of such a civilizational ‘boogie-man’, as Ronak continues to explain, this ejectable figure in many ways foregrounds the expandability of imperial “logics of global carcerality, security, and warfare” i.e. empire-building (Ronak 2019: 188-191; also see Rana 2011).

And so, however reviled the ‘bad Muslim’, the figure carries a productive empire-building effect when appropriately located in the distant frontiers of empire. On the contrary however, the ‘good Muslim’ of the interior holds a more complicated position (Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013; Sayyid 2014). As both Morsi (2016) and Tyrer (2013) explains, the Muslim figure – irrespective of ideology, practice, performance – is fundamentally experienced as a “jarring” presence, ‘disruptive’ to national integrity and white futurity (Tyrer 2013:112). Consequently, the ‘good Muslim’ is simply not what remains in the aftermath of ejection, rather the ‘good Muslim’ is birthed through a productive social-subjective process of ‘making’ the appropriately configured racialized subject for incorporation (Morsi 2016; Tyrer 2013; Sayyid 2014; Mamdani 2005). Put differently, following the ejection of the ‘bad Muslim’, the making of the ‘good Muslim’ of the interior is a nation-making project of re-bordering an acceptable measure of ‘alterity, i.e. ‘moderated difference’ - fielded by a range of techniques and processes working at both the socio-political and psychic-subjective level (Tyrer 2013:112; Mamdani 2005; Morsi 2016; Sayyid 2010; Tyrer 2013; Razack 2007; Thobani 2007; Selod 2018; El-Sherif 2019). In fact, Mori contends, the socio-subjective production that foregrounds the making of the ‘good Muslim’, among other things, comes to interpellate the Muslim of the interior in the very labour of production. Speaking in this vein, Morsi writes, “perform[ing] our normalcy only after accepting that [insurmountable] Otherness is the stage” of engagement narrowly fields possible

trajectories of belonging and incorporation (2016:57-58). And this performance of normalcy, which arguably survivability within the metropole requires, moves the Muslims of the interior to package and contorted themselves in manners that graduates them from dangerous provocateur to disgusting/tolerable racialized subject equipped for the work of exaltation (Thobani 2007; El-Sherif 2019; Morsi 2016). It is also important to note here that the battleground, laboratory, for the making of this ‘moderate’ has especially centered the bodies and dress of Muslim women – via legislative bans, bills, and of course gendered street violence, speaking to Zine’s notion of “Gendered Islamophobia” (Zine 2014).

Eviction then as a mechanism of making the ‘good Muslim’ operates both at the material (geopolitical level) and symbolic (subjective-psychic) level. Eviction is the ground by which the weeding out of race-work unfolds in making the ‘good Muslim’ - ejecting the ‘unsavable’ ‘bad Muslim’ from the polity, while configuring and shedding off the ‘excesses’ of the ‘disruptive’ “grammar of being” the ‘savable’ Muslim is said to be rooted-in (Sayyid 2014). In Other words, the available subject-positions for the Muslim of the interior can more aptly be thought of as ‘bad Muslim’ and ‘savable Muslim’ - rather than the often quoted “bad Muslim/good Muslim” (Mamdani 2005). Savability is measured against the degree of variance from the “bad Muslim” or in Sayyid’s framing “double/radical Muslim”. Then the ‘good Muslim’ sits as more of aspirational end point of an on-going ‘race-making’ project. And so, incorporation into the interior, into the altar of whiteness, requires an emptying-out, an expunging of a measure of difference – “to make way for...the liberal Apollonian voice” (Morsi 2016:71). And this making of the “liberal Apollonian voice” that Morsi speaks of brings us to the “politics of exaltation” (Thobani 2007) which is the terrain of racialized belonging that the politics of eviction is

attempting to graduate the savable Muslim towards. In fact, as El-Sherif (2019) asserts, leveraging Thobani (2007), Muslim racialization locates Muslims of the Interior “in a precarious and contingent position[s] based on two discursive moves: exaltation and eviction” (El-Sherif 2019). Exaltation here is taken from Thobani work of *Exalted Subject* (2007). Thobani (2007) effectively argues that incorporation in the white national imaginary requires the making of ‘productive’ racialized subjects, appropriately imbued to do the work of “exalting whiteness”. Exaltation can be understood as “a technology [that calls for] the self-elevation of the national as intrinsically lawful, deserving and benevolent, while the other, Aborginal and non-European...is constituted as unlawful, unworthy and forever strange” (Affan 2007: 119; Thobani 2007). Furthermore, speaking to the interlocking operation of racial architectures in the labour of of exaltation, El-Sherif asserts, ““Muslim” exaltation of whiteness, required by the logic of [racial managment], must stand not only on the dispossession of Indigenous people, but centrally on the denigration of Blackness” (El-Sherif 2019).

Moreover, in addition to an appropriate fielding in the existing racial hierarchy, entry into the ‘altar of exaltation’ prerequisites a subject appropriately skilled/configured for the labour of exaltation. In other words, the altar of exaltation not only demands a subject that seemingly ‘knows its place’ - but one that has also undergone secular liberal rites of ‘purification’ ‘configuration’ (Morsi 2016; Shryock 2008). In Muslim verbiage secular rites of ‘Ghuslification’<sup>8</sup> is what is required of the ill-configured subject. – leading back to ‘the politics of eviction’. As Shryock writes, making the moderate involves, “engag[ing] in...corrective,

---

<sup>8</sup> “Ghusl, in *Islām*, the “major ablution” that entails washing the entire body in ritually pure water and is required in specified cases for both the living and the dead...One who is *junub* (impure) cannot perform the daily ritual prayer, circumambulate the Ka’bah in Mecca during the major and lesser pilgrimages, touch the *Qur’ān* or recite its verses, or enter a *mosque*.” (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/ghusl>)

penitential rites of citizenship even when one has no connection to *bad...Islam*”, Shryock continues with “only after these rites of belonging have been performed does minoritized citizenship become possible” (2008:107-8). Constructing this *moderated* figure equipped for the labour of exaltation then requires elaborate subjective evictive procedures. We have witnessed these procedures manifest through the international proliferation of a wide range of de-radicalization programming, surveillance system, legislative and social eviction proceedings (Morsi 2016; Selod 2018; Shryock 2008; Bayoumi 2006; Zine 2014).

Then taking seriously ‘race-making’ as a productive social-subjective engineering project - ‘eviction’ can be thought of in more than material-political terms. Rather, eviction is taken up here as an overarching field of marking and managing the Muslim of the interior. Akin to the manner evictive procedures are concerned with ejecting the ‘bad Muslim’ from the political body, eviction as applied to the ‘savable Muslim’ is preoccupied with evictive reorganizing of the “grammars of being” (i.e. the formulation of Islam) believed to live in the ‘Muslim Body’. It is important to keep in mind that the moral and subjective meanings that underpin Muslim racialization deems the Muslim ‘worldsense’ as not only disruptive to the modern enterprise, but also ill-equipped for entry into the altar of exaltation (Sayyid 2010; 2014). The sense of ‘threat’ elicited by the Muslim figure’s association with an alternative altar, and thus an alternative *discursive universe* (i.e. Islamicate informed one), is at issue for the process of domestication and citizenship (Sayyid 2014). And so, layered on-top of material-political and civilizational histories which conditions the manner the ‘Muslimness’ comes into view, the discursive orbit of Muslimhoods comes to be at issue (Sayyid 2010, 2014). Sayyid (2014) explains, there is nothing essentially or fundamentally antithetical about an *Islamicate-rooted* worldsense relative to any

other non-western “grammar of being”. However, as discussed in the earlier section of this chapter, alternative “worldsenses” - and corresponding grammars - that are imagined to hold possible global horizon prospects come to be constructed as especially antithetical, carrying disruptive energy. As Sayyid (2014) elucidates in *Rethinking the Caliphate*, the *Muslim problem* is “a problem of politics” turned racial – this “turn” is particularly heightened in the context of the interior. Speaking to this subjective-evictive procedure of racing the Muslim of the interior then, Morsi asserts, the ideal moderate/Muslim is “[an Other] on the outside and empty on the inside”, “a silent and hollow object”, an “Other without its Otherness” (2016:71). Thus, in building “the Moderate” - *less is always more* (Sayyid 2014).

Consequently, in the reductionist frame of race-work, *Islam* becomes a type of “pollutant” imbuing and moving ‘the Muslim’ in a disruptive sociability, disruptive *grammar of being*. The one-to-one logic follows - for the ‘bad Muslim’ holds ‘bad Islam’ (Shryock 2008), then the ‘savable’ Muslim’s form of association to this same grammar requires examination and ‘clearance’ before entry becomes a tenable prospect (Shryock 2008; Bazian 2004; Morsi 2016; Beshara 2019). And so, a deeper, more sinister evictive logic underlines the racing, managing, and ‘making’ of the Muslim of the interior. Eviction is not simply a racialized device leveraged against the ‘bad Muslim’ in material evictive terms. Rather eviction is the *ground-zero* of Muslim racing, whether it unfolds through deportation orders, extradition to unknown ‘black sites’ (Ronak 2019) or in the subjective-ontic sense (Morsi 2016). Making the ‘savable Muslim’ appropriately moderated and neutralized for entry – requires an exorcist-like emptying procedure, configuring Muslim difference to a tolerable “degree of deviance” from the hegemonic center (Deleuze and Guattari 2004:197-8). Producing a racialized subject

appropriately skilled/configured for the “altar of exaltation” (El-Sherif 2019) requires a subjective evictive procedure of ‘casting-out’ and ‘ejection’ of *Muslimness* from *the Muslim* (Sayyid 2014; Morsi 2016). The ejective nature of this configuration is captured well by Sayyid’s analysis of Islamophobia:

*The logical extreme of Islamophobia would be the elimination of [the] Muslim. This elimination can occur in two forms: one would be physical destruction of Muslims....The other form would be what would be described as de-Islamization, which would involve the erasure of Muslim identity* (Sayyid 2014:19).

Building on this “emptying-out”, “neutralization” process, Sayyid takes it a step further and likens the making of the “Moderate” to the making of the “Muselmann” (Sayyid 2014; *see also* Rana 2011). “Muselmann” was a label given to a “class or caste of Nazi concentration camp detainees” centrally figured in Agamben’s (1998) political ontology of the modern (Sayyid 2014; Weheliye 2014; Rana 2011). The ‘naming’ of “Muselmann” comes to be applied to this caste of concentration camp detainees located at the extreme zone of life (Weheliye 2014; Rana 2011). Wherein, “the term Muselmann [comes from] an antiquated and now derogatory German language designator for Muslim men that was also applied to Muslim women” (Weheliye 2014:54). Weheliye also notes in his discussion of the “Muselmann” with “most scholars who write about Muselmann do not [in fact] pause to reflect on the nam[ing] of this figure, thereby leaving intact the bonding of an abject process/status to a racio-religious label” (2014:54). However, in the contemporary era of Islamophobia and critical Muslim studies, Rana (2011) and Sayyid (2014) significantly feature “the Muselmann” as an abject subject-position signaling the manner in which the Muslim has long figured in the fantasising and imaginary of whiteness. In fact, Sayyid (2014), analogizes the relationality between the bad-and-good Muslim to a



“distinction between Muselmanner and Double Muslims” which is according to Sayyid “played out in a variety of registers: moderate and extremist Muslims, liberal Muslims and radical Muslims, good Muslims and bad Muslims” (Sayyid 2014:51). Accordingly, Sayyid contends (2014) that the inevitable end-point of disciplining the Muslim figure is the ‘lifeless’ “Muselmann”. Similarly, Weheliye explains in *Racial Assemblage*, that the “Muselmann” represents the most violent demonstration of the locus of the “not-quite-human”: living in the zone of exception “apathetic, withdrawn, animal like, not-quite-human [and] unintelligible” (Weheliye 2014:51). In fact, according to Žižek, the “Muselmann” is particularly defined by “non-thinking” (Žižek, 2003: 157–9; Goldberg, 2006: 336). Weheliye further asserts that the Muselmann “resembl[es] phlegmatic but still a living corpse” (2014:51). And so, the Muselmann is “the guard on the threshold of [...] a form of life that begins where dignity ends” (Weheliye 2014:54). In Other words, the Muselmann “serves as the foundation for policing the borders between bare life and death” (Weheliye 2014:65).

In ontic terms the ‘Moderate’ lives a life very far from the depravities of the camps, and this should not be conflated. However, I would argue analogizing Muselmann as the making of the ‘Moderate’ allows us to hone-in on the centrality of *grammars of being* in imbuing subjectivities with ‘life’ - infusing action with intelligibility and direction – i.e. meaningful agentic life-force. In contrast, the violence assault that produces the Muselmann results in a narrowing of capacity, in which the field of actability available to the subject of “bare-life” is pushed to the realm of the instinctual (Rana 2011). The Muselmann loses the coherence and sustained direction that comes with a rooted and webbed *grammar of being* (Sayyid 2014). As Sayyid contends, making use of Agamben, “a Muselmann was an inmate who had recoiled from

the horrors of the internment and become ‘absolutely apathetic’, able to endure everything not because of courage but as living death” (Sayyid 2014; Agamben 1998: 185). Being disciplined into the Muselmann is a type of violence that includes deprivation thrust on the physical body, but more devastating is the assault on the psychic-subjective level resulting in the severing of the webbed discursive orbits that make possible coherence and intelligibility (Rana 2011; Weheliye 2014).

Understanding counterpublic actions from the ground - which this dissertation is primarily concerned with - requires an appreciation of the racial logics and architectures feilding the Muslim of the interior. And so, the project of disciplining the Muselmann into existence is a violent endeavor of narrowing and contracting coherent actability through a persistent and unrelenting internment – an internment that works to sever all relationality with *grammar of being*, with *community*, with *self*. Sayyid thus asserts, “The War on Terror and its attendant torture and incarceration system can be read as a sustained effort to discipline [us] into becoming a Muselmann” (Sayyid 2014:4). As the Muselmann is the only guarantee in producing a completely neutralized, deactivated subjectivity, extinguishing any threat of dislodge. Put differently, the best neutralizer of association with a contaminating-conquering subjectivity is an ejection of said subjectivity and the corresponding agentic pathways. If we think of the conquering-contaminant frame that follows the Muslim figure as an essentialized ‘core component’ in the racing of Muslim subjects – then consistent countervailing work is required to secure and intern the threat the Moderate carries, however moderated. Unlike the Moderate, the Muselmann no longer requires overt management and consistent countervailing efforts - as it stands as an extinguished subjectivity situated in the precipice of death (Rana 2011; Sayyid

2014) Arguably then the *savable Muslim*, or “the Moderate”, is what is settled for in the work of disciplining the “bad Muslim”. As Morsi exclaims, “the radical” is the starting point for us all, the ‘good’, the bad’, the ‘savable’, the ‘disposable’ (Morsi 2016). The Moderate is perhaps better thought of as a *recovering* “bad Muslim” - neither *Musemann* nor *good Muslim*. The “good Muslim” frame functions more as a signpost, an ever illusive ideal-type to orient toward but truly never arrive.

Fundamentally, this settling for the “Moderate” is particularly amplified in the context of the Muslim of the interior. The contradiction in the racial governmentality marking the Muslim of the interior is the requirement of *exaltation* (Thobani 2007). Put differently, what stands in conflict with the “project” of producing the *Musemann* as the appropriately disciplined subject in relation to the interior is the necessity of also producing a ‘productive’ racialized subject “skilled” for incorporation. The work of being effectively made into the appropriately configured racialized subject not only requires disciplining (evictive-work) but also skilling (filling-in work) for entry into the altar of exaltation (Thobani 2007). The exorcist-type emptying of alternative subjectivities, deemed disruptive – requires a simultaneous and active ‘filling-in’ with, what Morsi refers to as, the “Apollonian voice” (Morsi 2016). The apollonian voiced subject is required for the production of the racialized subject of the interior (Morsi 2016; El-Sherif 2019). And so, I would argue that the requirements of exaltation function as a type of limit to the work of eviction for the ‘savable’ Muslim of the interior. Akin to other racialized subjects, as El-Sherif (2019) explains – ““Muslims” enter into this system of racial capitalism as neoliberal multicultural subjects who can contribute to capitalism—that is, as waged laborers or skilled professionals, integral parts of the capitalist project and its competitiveness” (El-Sherif 2019).

In contrast, the Muselmann is an emptied-out figure without a corresponding filling-in which would imbue the subject of *bare-life* with the ‘appropriate’ grammar of actability-sociability. And so, while the Muselmann is the logical conclusion in the work of producing a completely deactivated subjectivity, the Muselmann is also the definition of “waste lives” (Bauman 1989). Completely rendered unproductive for the requirements of racialized governmentality and the neoliberal nation-state – the very reason stretchability of the national imaginary for the racial Other is required (Thobani 2007; El-Sherif 2019). The Muselmann is not a ‘working’ subject – as coherent action comes to be outside the wheelhouse of possibility for the Muselmann. The Muselmann then may be “good” for the frontiers of empire, but the Muselmann is arguably “bad” for the interior. The incoherence and erraticability of the Muselmann creates new problems for management (Rana 2011). Once produced, the only ‘sensible’ disciplinary recourse for the Muselmann is ejection, discardment. Thus, as a neutralized but unproductive subject, the Muselmann holds little value for the altar of the interior – the most fitting residence of “waste-lives” is among the bad, the contaminatory, the unproductive – i.e. ‘the double Muslim’, ‘the bad Muslim’ – in the frontiers of empire, in the frontiers of life.

Thus, the production of the ‘savable’ Muslim of the interior centrally figures Muslim grammars of being. As the context of the Muselmann demonstrates, grammars-of-being infuse meaning and direction to our agentic capacity, making us ‘acting subjects’. This ‘actability’ is what is problematized with the Muslim figure. Managing Muslim actability means the execution of an onslaught of profiling, securitizing and surveillance architectures meant to map and bound this actability. Consequently, actability and the accompanying grammars of being become

particularly heightened sites of contestation, including by those, sitting on the receiving end of this problematic. The Muslim creative communities I engage with in this dissertation not only speak to this contestation, but also reveal that bounding ‘actability’ is tantamount to disallowing subjectivity; condemned to the abject existence of the *not-quite-human* (Weheliye 2014), always out-of-place and out-of-time. My intervention in this dissertation will demonstrate how the Muslim creatives I engage with continue to resist the structures fielding their lives through actively and collectively cultivating moments of being in-time and in-place. The next chapter will hone-in on grounding the current discussion on producing the Savable/Moderate Muslim by engaging with the operational fields that emerge in this project of managing the Muslim of the interior. The next chapter will focus on the racial machinery that operates to bring the Muslim into racial view, and thus racial management. Chapter 3 will end with a discussion of Muslim “talk-backs”, resistance, and counterpublic formations. The current chapter, in combination with chapter 3, will ground my take up of resistance, subject-formation, and agency moving into the methodological and analysis chapters of this thesis.

## CHAPTER 3: RACING THE MUSLIM PROBLEM AND THE RISE OF COUNTERPUBLICS

---

In the context of the interior, the “Muslim problem” has come to be distilled in racial terms - the dominant ordering grammar of the Euro-Atlantic (the hinterland). The distilling of the Muslim figure within the context of the interior has required a re-centering from Muslimhood primarily marked by a difference in “worldsense” (Oyewumi 1997) and civilizational history (Said 1979, 1981; Sayyid 2014) to an Otherness brought into view and marked through an assemblage of racialized signs and traces (Tyrer and Sayyid 2014; Tyrer 2013). This racial distilling is what has come to insulate the Muslim problem as indicative of an “inbred problem” requiring an entire arsenal of racial management both at the state and street level (Mamdani 2005; Razack 2007; Selod 2019; Bayoumi 2006; Tyrer 2013; Meer and Modood 2010; Rana 2011; Naber 2006).

This chapter will proceed into a more grounded outline and taking up of how the racial machinery comes to bring the Muslim into racial view and management. This discussion will begin with a take up of the ocular-dimension as a cornerstone of race, following with a discussion of how Muslimness comes to be marked through the visual register outlining the illogics and inconsistencies that unfold. Picking up on the language of the “Green Menace” (Tyrer 2013; Abu Sway 2006: 17; Cole 2011: 127; Haddad 2004: 99; Carr 2015) this chapter will also demonstrate the manner Muslimness comes to be taken up as both “invisible” and “terrifyingly hypervisible” to the logics and gaze of hegemony (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:355). Furthermore, in order to ground my engagement with racialized agency and resistance, which

will follow the current chapter, the last section of the current chapter will engage with the field of Muslim responses and counterpublics, while outlining my orientation towards resistance and agency.

## **The Visual Register and the Fictions of Racialization**

Understood as a method rooted in the epistemological tenets of the Modern, race comes to effectively center *the material-the-ocular-and-the-perceptual* in its grammar of operation (Alcoff 1999; Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Buman 1989). This holds despite the “messy [and] contested” nature of the process of marking and ordering subjectivities primarily via ocular-perceptual tenets (Tyrer 2013: 50; Alcoff 1999). Racialization requires material tethers, material vehicles, to effectively order and project its aligning meaning regimes (Weheliye 2014; Omi and Winant 1994; Hall 2000). As Weheliye explains, *Racial Assemblages* “not only obey the procedural tenets” of the *human, not-quite* and *nonhuman*, but these tenets “very often are translated [in]to visual phenomena,” “...project[ing] [said difference] onto the...body” (2014:5). And so, however often the primary meaning-regimes of race shift, as contextual requirements evolve, racialization continues to require bodies/geographies/artefacts to operate, manifest, and meet its procedural end-goal [i.e. white supremacy] (Weheliye 2014; Omi and Winant 1994; Goldberg 1993; Hall 2000; Tyrer 2013).

The “ocular dimension” (Oyewumi 1997) and emerging “perceptual practices” (Alcoff 1999) come to operate as methodological cornerstones of race. Foundational to the work of *identifying, spotting, and managing* Otherized subjecthoods. The ocular-perceptual practices of race have animated bodies, performances, artifacts and geographies to operate as vital material

bases for racialization (Alcoff 1999; Weheliye 2014; Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994; Buman 1989). This expansiveness of racialization in its take-up capacity is what allows an arguably subjective marker such as ‘Muslim’ to be (re)produced through an ocular-perceptual grammar. As Sayyid explains, Muslimness is best thought of as a reference to an association to a particular ‘worldsense’ or in Sayyid’s terms “a distinct historical mode of comporting oneself in the world” (Sayyid 2014). And thus, sociologically the marker of Muslim has across history and societies taken-on wide embodied manifestations. However, in the context of the modern - and particular in reference to the interior - as Meer and Modood (2010) explain, a particular embodied ocular-perceptual reproduction of the Muslim has emerged, allowing for the possibilities of speaking of a “Muslim appearance”. The notion of “Muslim appearance” gaining wide prominence in the popular imaginary speaks to the labour exerted by the racial machinery to bring the Muslim into racial view, however fraught this view. Meer and Modood (2010) explain, like all racializing projects, the racing of the Muslim of the interior has also followed suit by drawing on a pre-existing discursive landscape to call forth specific visual and corporeal frames. For instance, the brown-body comes to be taken up as an overdetermined sign of Muslimhood. Affirming the centrality of brownness to Muslim racialization, Husain succinctly asserts in her study of the Muslim American landscape, “the implicit racial [entanglement]... in Muslimness is brownness” (Husain 2019:602). Similarly speaking on the operation of “racial terror” and surveillance, Rana contends, “Muslims were not the only targets...indeed, racial profiling was done to those who appear to be Muslim [to the hegemonic gaze], including...Sikhs, Hindus, and Christians, as well as Latinos and others with brown skin and “Muslim-like” features” (Rana 2011:51; see also Grewal 2005). Building on this point further but infusing it with a geographic coloring - Sayyid (2010) explains, that “Muslimstan” has been located on the



map by lumping a massively diverse range of peoples from Middle Asia, North Africa, and the Asian subcontinent into a bearded and veiled brown figure. And in Abdul Khabeer more pointed words, “as a racial type, the Muslim is known through specific bodies - those with brown skin and “Middle Eastern” looks” (2016:24). And so, “brownness” has come to be heavily leaned on in bringing the Muslim figure into the field of ‘racial vision’. And in effect, brownness comes to be overdetermined, pigeon-held, as the likely site of *Muslimness* (Husain 2019; Meer and Mood 2010; Sayyid 2010; Tyrer and Sayyid 2010; Morsi 2016; Abdul Khabeer 2016).

Moreover, the reductive fictions that drive racialization - in pursuit of the essential - do not limit themselves by history or consistency. “Brown” here should not be understood as a pre-existing ‘innocent’ category awaiting the classificatory regime of the hegemonic gaze. Like all racial categories, brownness is actively constructed in the process of *naming* and *marking*, leaving it “vacuous” outside of the naming (Goldberg 1993). Consequently, bodies that are located far beyond the geographical boundaries of “Muslimstan” can be made “brown” - under the right conditions and in service to the hegemonic gaze (Mugabo 2016; Husain 2019). As Weheliye explains, Racializing Assemblages “etching abstract forces of power onto human physiology and flesh in order to create the appearance of a naturally expressed relationship between phenotype and sociopolitical status” (Weheliye 2014:50). For instance, Mugabo (2016) offers the story of Ahmed Mohamed, a Sudanese high school student residing in Texas that was falsely accused of building a bomb and bringing it to class in the fall of 2018. Ahmed brought a clock to school which he engineered from spare parts to share with his peers (Bates and Swan 2016). Apprehended by his teacher and reported to state officials, the media frenzy that followed the incident cast Ahmed as a falsely accused “brown” and “Muslim” teen - both markers interchangeably used (Mugabo 2016). Since his Muslimness is what was at issue –

foreignness, and thus brownness was the only legible marker by which Ahmed's story could be understood. Ahmed's Sudanese background and Blackness was illegible to the story of the spotting the "Bad Muslim"/ and making "the Good Muslim" (Mugabo 2016; Walcott 2011; Mamdani 2005; Kazi 2015).

The fictions weaved by racializing architectures purport an obvious association between the body/geography and the racialized subject, whether Muslim or not. However, as relating to Muslim racialization, Tyrer asserts, the body only "...acts as a primary marker of who might be Muslim, but not an ultimate guarantor" (Tyrer 2013:143). I would further add, as Ahmed's story demonstrates, the body in the somatic sense may in fact not necessarily even function as the primary marker - arguably a signifier like the hijab or a thobe may also at times operate as the 'primary' overdetermined sign. And so, the *primacy* or order of signifiers deployed in bringing the Muslim into racial view is arguably also depended on a wide arsenal of intersectional markers including gender, ethnicity, other racial entanglements, nationality...etc. Nonetheless, Tyrer's overarching point stands, the flesh is "not an ultimate guarantor" of Muslimness. Brownness works as a sign, like other imagined or real signs marking the sociogeny of the Muslim figure. The brown flesh is situated and operates as part of an assemblage of signs and traces rhizomatically corralled in service of bringing the Muslim into racial view. As Naber (2008) explains, in effect, the racial architectures employed with bringing the Muslim into racial management come to leverage "a [rather] wide range of signifiers that move beyond the corporeal, such as names (e.g Mohammed) ...particular form[s] of dress (e.g. headscarf) and particular nation[al] origin[s] (e.g. Iraq or Pakistan)" (Naber 2008:278). The flesh does not function as a type of sole/foundational ground by which racial management operates; rather it

holds a more dialogical [transient], interdependent role, offering, as Tyrer asserts, “*no guarantees*” (2013:143).

### **No Guarantees: Marking the “Green Menace”**

Thus, the linking of brownness to Muslimness is made legible only in conversation with a concert of assemblage of signs and traces meant to locate/spot the Muslim figure. Consequently, Tyrer and Sayyid assert, "Muslimhood interrupts the process by which racialized [subjects] are subjectified...within the [usual] logics of racial imaginary" (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:354). The evictive management regimes levied on the Muslim figure is one that "conflates raciality with subjecthood", leaving hegemony an "incompletely racialized" figure (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:354). Tyrer and Sayyid further explain, “Islamophobia racializes Muslims as a jarring presence” wherein the brown body is fixated upon as the likely site of this “excess of alterity” (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:355). At the same time, the Muslim figure is also marshalled as an "incompletely realized” figure, and thus an incompletely grasped and managed subject (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:354). The logic of ‘managing’ the Muslim in the interior is then marshalled by an impetus that simultaneously configures the Muslim as an ever looming, “yet somehow incorporeal alterity” (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012: 355).

Put differently, in operational terms the racial management architecture holds a rather acute awareness of the varying inconsistencies and fraughtness of an ocular-dependent typology attempting to capture the immaterial/the subjective (Tyrer 2013; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). Speaking to the “haunting” and “incorporeal” association placed on Muslim Otherness, many in

the Islamophobia studies literature have leveraged the language of the “Green Menace” to call attention to the subjective presence that subsides beneath the skin, behind the flesh (Tyrer 2013; Abu Sway 2006: 17; Cole 2011: 127; Haddad 2004: 99; Carr 2015). As Tyrer and Sayyid assert, “just as *ghosts* are commonly represented as alternately unreal or terrifyingly hyperreal”, the *Green Menace* is similarly framed as “a ghostly presence” residing beneath the flesh, both unreal and hyperreal to the logic and gaze of hegemony (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:355). Moreover, the coinage of the “Green Menace” also speaks to the prominent frame of ‘ontological excess’ that follows Muslim racialization – underlined by a peculiar racial logic, which Tyrer defines, as a “void without and excess within” (Tyrer 2013: 80). Building on a Fanonian-inspired analysis of the raced subject typifying a construction of “*a void within and excess without*”, Tyrer asserts, “the proposition is reversed in Islamophobic discourse, as Muslims are represented through the logics of a phenotypical *absence/void without*, and a hyperinflated difference within” ((Tyrer 2013:44). In other words, Tyrer writes:

*In contrast to the colonial trope of the [racialized] bodily substance lacking a soul, [the Muslim] is instead manifested as a void without and a soul within, where the soul is figured as an excess; a political surplus that lacks the corporeal substance to transform it into a proper subject (Tyrer 2013:48).*

Weheliye explains that the “...sociogeny always already accompanies the genetic dimension of human action (ontogeny), and it is only in the imbrication of these two registers that we can understand the full scope of our being-in-the-world” (Weheliye 2014:24). And so, as mentioned above, *brownness* in relation to *Muslimness* comes into play not necessarily as the fleshy foundation in which the symbolic register becomes meaningful. Rather there is no guarantees to locating the *Green Menace* - even the materiality of the flesh offers no guarantees.

The flesh operates no more than an overdetermined sign amongst a wide host of signs and traces. And so, managing the Muslim figure calls forth an elaborate system of spotting this boundless *Green Menace* that seems to disrupt the basics of racial management (Tyrer 2013). Consequently, as Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) assert, with an acute awareness of the failures of racial conjurement as relating to the *Green Menace*, an aligning management architecture unfolds that “...make[s] a virtue of Muslim unrecognizability” (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012:359). An assemblage of “signs” and “traces” including the brown flesh, are clumsily enlisting in the labour of locating and spotting the *Green Menace* (Tyrer 2013: 80). And so, the enmeshment of *Muslimness* with *brownness*, *foreignness*, *excessiveness*, *slipperiness* and *un-assimilability* is distilled within an assemblage of signs and traces that are relationally deployed in the work of conjuring the *Green Menace* into the field of view. Considering the wide range of devices of detection that have been operationalized in bringing the Muslim into the field of racial management, the following two sections will delve deeper into other key traces/signs that have emerged in the project of racing the Muslim of the interior. In conjunction with the brown body, *the hijab*, *language (naming)* and *national origin* will be explored as alternative signs of detection.

### **A Sign/Trace Like no Other: The Hijab**

As Bowen (2007) and Abdu-Lughod (2002) contend, very few racialized traces in the public imagination have ignited such strong sentiments and contestations across the Western political spectrum as does the Muslim veil (Bowen 2007; Abu-Lughod 2002; Zine & Taylor 2016; Zine 2006). Amongst other things, it is important to note that the deployment of traces, as

part of an assemblage of racial management techniques, are very much gendered. Speaking on the gendered nature of racialized management in the American case, Selod (2019) asserts the following:

*American men who are Muslim are marked as the true potential terrorist by the state as they are placed on the Selectee List. For Muslim American women who wear the hijab, they are subjected to TSA's STOP programme where they are stopped and searched by TSA agents, even when they passed through the metal detectors without making it go off. The performance of security on their bodies confirms to the public that Muslims are a threat to national security (Selod 2019:562).*

In fact, the hijab arguably works like no other sign/trace in bringing the Muslim into the field of vision and management (Tyrer 2013; Abu-Lughod 2002; Jiwani 2010; Razack 2004; Zine & Taylor 2016; Zine 2006). From the vantage point of the liberal left which claims to speak for the “good” of liberal feminism, the hijab has not only come to denote control, oppression, and digression, but also represents a symbol of either an internalized or coerced signifier of a lifeworld marked “out-of-time” (Mohanty 1988; Zine 2006). And from the standpoint of the conservative right and state-elites, the Muslim veil signifies adherence to a type of political Islam framed as antithetical to modernity and white Judeo-Christian values - i.e. “Out-of-place” (Esposito 2000; Bowen 2007). Moreover, Tyrer asserts, in conjunction with the brown flesh, the hijab has operated as an indispensable “...mode of visualizing the Muslim presence...central to the imagining of Muslim haunting” (Tyrer 2013:47). Speaking on the operation of racial assemblages, Weheliye similarly maintains, although “by and large racial assemblages have relied on permanent fixtures on and in the human body...certain non-biological visual traits have been used in the service of signifying “natural” differences among human populations such as...the hijab” (Weheliye 2014:71). As outlined in the previous section, the process of

essentializing “non-biological visual traits” as natural markers of difference, as relating to Muslim racialization, has worked more as *the rule* rather than the exception. With the racing of the Muslim, symbolic traces of perceived *Muslimness* have risen as naturalized foundations signifying Muslim Otherization.

And so, the veiled Muslim woman of the interior has squarely been pulled into the crosshairs of the Muslim management regime (Selod 2019; Abu-Lughod 2002). Enmeshed in an assemblage of traces and signs tethered to imperialist foreign policy agendas and liberal feminist paternalisms (Abu-Lughod 2002; Puar 2007; Razack 2004). Selod suggests that there is something noteworthy about the theatrics that accompany the manner Muslim women are managed via the hijab. Theatrics that support broader symbolic work of securing/preserving hegemonic consciousness and integrity. More specifically, although Muslim masculinities are more tightly marked as the explosive threat to whiteness - Muslim women come to be picked up as a sort of corrosive/corruptive symbolic figure in which their very presence is seen to disrupt sociocultural fabrics of westernness. In Selod’s words, the veiled Muslim woman is located as “a cultural threat to American values” (Selod 2019:563). Although the Muslim woman may not be framed as an “imminent explosive threat” (Selod 2019), through the hijab she is taken up as holding the potential of propelling a gradual erosion to the integrity of whiteness (Abu-Lughod 2002; Puar 2007; Razack 2004).

The symbolic discursive work that tends to surround the operation of Islamophobia, especially Gendered Islamophobia (Zine 2006), very much shaped the discussions of recognition politics that came out of my field engagement with Muslim creatives. The Muslim women I engaged with particularly took up critical outlooks on the transformative potential available in

labouring to correct the problematic frames of Muslim womanhood in popular circulation. Coming back to the takeup of hijab, the gendered racialized work the hijab has come to be pulled into (or the Gendered Islamophobia that accompanies the hijab) does not simply lie in the purview of border-crossings and airports. The symbolic politics that underlies the veil has also garnered significant state-level legislative attention in the Euro-Atlantic (Bowen 2007). Put differently, in addition to public performances of security, the Muslim veil has also called-forth legislative action aimed at protecting ‘the nation’ and disciplining/containing the cultural contaminant/pollutant signaled in the hijab, in the Muslim women (Selod 2019). Arguably, part of the fixity on the hijab by state-public action is tied to the fact that the veil sits as a relatively stable sign/trace of detection from the vantage point of racialized surveillance. Legislative restrictions and outright bans on the dress of Muslim women have become common place in many parts of the West, including France, Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands (Bowen 2007). Despite dominant and liberal discourses that position Canada as a tolerant and multicultural nation, Canadian politicians and lawmakers have also sought to regulate gendered symbolic traces of Muslimhood. In one example, Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s<sup>9</sup> administration sparked public debate after proposing legislation that would ban public servants and citizenship oath-takers from wearing the Niqab (Abedi 2015) – a legislative move targeting a minuscule proportion of Muslim women who’s adherence to hijab includes the covering of the face (Abedi 2015). Some commentators understood the proposal as a strategic move, designed to fan racist flames during Harper’s bid for re-election (Abedi 2015). In another example, the Quebec “Charter of Rights” and “Religious Neutrality” legislation continues to put the dress of

---

<sup>9</sup> Conservative Canadian politician who served as the 22nd prime minister of Canada (2006–15) and leader of the Conservative Party of Canada



Muslim women up for debate, resulting in the construction of Bill 62 which calls for the removal of any face coverings “pertain[ing] to those giving or receiving public services” (Fitz-Morris, 2015; Shingler 2017; Taylor 1994). Quebec has moved a few steps further with Bill 21<sup>10</sup>, following France's lead, successfully passing a ban on “religious symbols” in public institutions. Arguably then the trope of saving the oppressed Muslim woman is tied up with saving the (white) public and thus saving the integrity of the nation and securing the future of Westerndom from the “contaminant” that is the Muslim Other. As Spivak argues, “white men [and white women] saving brown women from brown men” is an old colonial tactic through which war and domination are rationalized (1988:297). Thus, we have seen amplified in the era of war on terror that the Muslim that is pulled into the field of racial vision - via traces or signs - serves as an important rhetorical device meant to generate support for and justify the work of statecraft and empire (Abu-Lughod 2002; Puar, 2007; Rygiel & Hunt, 2006).

The symbolic discursive and empire-building work that surrounds the operation of Islamophobia, especially Gendered Islamophobia (Zine 2006), very much shaped the discussions of transformative politics that came out of my field engagement with Muslim creatives. A lived understanding overwhelmingly cut-across many conversations I had with Muslim creatives which held that the manner their bodies and practices are taken up are made to serve larger forces, geopolitical and otherwise. In the next section, I will continue the discussion of the key signs/traces taken up in marking and racing the Muslim, the *Green Menace*, while disrupting notions of belief/creed as fundamental to the operation of Islamophobia and Muslim racing.

---

<sup>10</sup> The Quebec provincial legislature passed the Bill 21 June of 2019. “Bill 21 prevents judges, police officers, teachers and public servants holding some other positions from wearing symbols such as the kippah, turban, or hijab while at work” ([Murphy BBC 2019](#)).

## ***Muslimness and 'Muslimstan': Name, National Origin, Borders***

In operation, as outlined above, the emergence of 'Muslim appearance' or 'Muslim looking' into the public consciousness has been accompanied with a diffused 'browning' of the Muslim, pulling-in a wide range of traces and signs. Some signs hold an overdetermining role, while other signifiers are picked up in a supplementary manner further crystallizing the Muslim, the *Green menace*, into the field of view. *Naming* and *national origin* sit as two other key signs that have come to the fore in the politics of spotting the Muslim (Naber 2006; Selod 2019; Volpp 2012; Sayyid 2010; Tyrer 2013). Both naming and national origin have received significant state-level attention in the management of the Muslim Other – most evidently taken-up in border-crossings and immigration regulations (Bayoumi 2006; Selod 2019; Saulnier 2015). Border-crossings and airports have arisen as particularly heightened sites by which the fielding and profiling of the Muslim figure has been (re)produced (Selod 2019; Volpp 2012). Customs and border-crossing represent the in-between of entry and eviction, wherein “detection” and “management” are part of the general logic of political borders. Selod (2019) makes use of the language of “racialized surveillance” to describe the state of perpetual “surveillance Muslim Americans...have had to endure...since September 11” (Selod 2019:557). Selod explains, racialized surveillance refers to a process of continuously “...monitoring select bodies by relying on racial cues” (Selod 2019:557). And so, considering the *Muslim threat factor* – i.e. the *Green menace* – is framed by the hegemonic logic as a *conquering-contaminating threat* refusing bordering, the requirement of specialized surveillance comes to be produced in a particularly

amplified manner at the site of border-crossings and entry (Selod 2019; Volpp 2012; Saulnier 2015).

In the well documented University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Muslim racial profiling law review, entitled *Citizen and Terrorist*, Volpp (2012) illustrates the scale and routineness of the heightened racialized surveillance that has accompanied Muslim or “Muslim-looking” travelers. Speaking to airport surveillance specifically, Volpp explains, beyond the most overt racial profiling practices carried out during TSA-checkpoints, Volpp writes:

*...airport officials, airlines, and passengers have also practiced racial profiling against those appearing Middle Eastern, Arab, or Muslim. Countless men have been kicked off airplanes, because airline staff and fellow passengers have refused to fly with them on board (Volpp 2012:1280).*

Furthermore, the outcry of Muslim communities in the Euro-Atlantic concerning the countless violent incidents of profiling can be gleaned from the viral hashtag *#flyingwhileMuslim* – the phrasing has graduated to becoming part-and-parcel of the Euro-Atlantic Muslim lexicon. This type of routinized racial profiling does much more than simply inconvenience the Muslim traveler (Saulnier 2015; Selod 2019). The convergence of state-based racial surveillance techniques with everyday Islamophobic harassment in sites of crossing and entry, as Saulnier affirms, "encourages notions of hierarchical citizenship that simultaneously grant greater inclusion to some while fostering greater exclusion of others " (Saulnier 2015:228).

Moreover, Selod (2019) argues, examining Muslim border-crossing experiences effectively reveal how belief/faith-based identification has in fact come to be overstated in

studies of profiling and Islamophobia. Selod shares the broader-crossing experience of one of her study participants to illustrate how in operation the profiling tentacles of racial surveillance tend to unfold largely unconcerned with specificities of belief/creed. Selod relays the story of Bilal, a Bengali man who is routinely selected for invasive Islamophobic profiling and surveillance procedures during his travels. When introducing Bilal, Selod writes, “I asked him if he was easily identified as Muslim and he told me that most people are unable to determine his racial or ethnic background based on appearance” (2019:560). However, Selod continues, “...but after hearing his name, some were able to identify him as Muslim” (Selod 2019:560). Selod (2019) further stresses, the nuances of Bilal’s personal convictions carried very little substantive effect in interrupting Bilal’s profiling experience – his “name” was enough.

Bauman’s discussion regarding the racialization of Jewishhood may be helpful in further elucidating Selod’s point on the irrelevance of Bilal’s personal convictions (Bauman 1989). Muslimhood distilled through the logic of racialization arguably follows Bauman’s outline regarding the logic leveraged in racializing the Jewish subject. Bauman explains, in the era of modernity in which race came to be produced as a master organizer, “the distinctiveness of the Jews had to be re-articulated and laid on new foundations” (Bauman 1989:59; *see also* Omi and Winant 1994). Bauman continues with, “Judaism [had] to be replaced with Jewishness: Jews had been able to escape from Judaism into conversion” in the pre-race prosecutive era of Christendom (Bauman 1989:59). However, Bauman exclaims, “from Jewishness there was no escape” (Bauman 1989:59). Similarly, in the Muslim case, we arguably also see a worldsense and history turned *racial*. The requirements of the racial field necessitate a similar shift from *Muslimhood* to *Muslimness* as the site of fixity. In the racial regime of the interior then, *Muslimness* speaks to an ‘inborn quality’, an essentialized marker, much more than it does to a

civilizational-epistemological identifier. And thus, as Selod (2019) explains, Bilal's dis-identification with Islam becomes a footnote in his fielding, not necessarily enough in interrupting the unfolding of racialized surveillance. As Selod asserts, we can hold that "Bilal is not discriminated against because of his beliefs", rather "his 'Muslim name' [was enough in] categoriz[ing] him as a potential terrorist" (2019:560). And thus, the sign comes to carry its own reality outside of the sociogenic it is meant to signify.

Similarly, in *Racing Religion* Bayoumi (2006) draws a fitting comparison between the deployment and operation of Muslim racialization in the contemporary moment and the management techniques employed in the early emergence of race or "pseudo-race" in the era of the Spanish Inquisition (15th-17th century) (Bayoumi 2006:275; *see also* Fredrickson 2002; Sussman 2014; Popkin [1974] 1983). Bayoumi follows Sussman's (2014), Fredrickson's (2002), and Murphy's (2012) work on the genealogy of race and racism - to argue that "the Spanish Inquisition's purity of blood laws" marks the formative grounds for the emergence of full-blown scientific race of the 18th century (Bayoumi 2006: 275). Even though the language of religion was centered, Bayoumi (2006) explains, during the Inquisition it was not *worldview* or one's *professed belief-system* that came under attack. Rather it was inheritance or ancestry that was put on trial. As the primary subjects of the Inquisition were "conversos" or *new Christians*, i.e. individuals that have publicly professed Christianity. Explaining the politics of the Spanish Inquisition further, Sussman writes:

*The Spanish Inquisition was established to ensure that those of Jewish ancestry were kept apart and out of the mainstream of society. Although it was mainly directed at Jews, the inquisition also focused on Christianized Muslims [Moriscos] and Gypsies and later moved to Asia and America, where it targeted*

*indigenous people...Unlike earlier inquisitions, the Spanish Inquisition did not focus on religion alone but expanded to include ethnicity or race, introducing the notion of limpieza de sangre, or "impurity of blood" (Sussman 2014:11-12).*

Moreover, Sussman continues by explaining that *limpieza de sangre* laws meant that "Old Christians were separated from New Christians or conversos...[in which] anyone with Jewish ancestry in the previous five generations was considered a New Christian" (Sussman 2014:11). In effect, as Murphy asserts, the Spanish Inquisition was concerned with marking "classes of people rather than just categories of belief" (Murphy 2012:70). For the work of the Inquisition then the first order of business was identifying "conversos" - who were framed as not easily perceptible, however carrying an insidiously corruptive and corrosive effect on the hegemonic order (Bayoumi 2006; Fedrickson 2002; Sussman 2014). The seemingly incorporeality of the "conversos" required the development of tools of identification attuned to picking up *traces of inheritance* off bodies and performances. This system of trace-reading was required to better direct the work of managing and extracting the corruptive immaterial Other. Consequently, as Bayoumi explains, what marked one as Muslim or Jewish during the Spanish Inquisition were material traces and signs of inheritance - like "changing one's sheets on Friday [made]...one Jewish...just as sitting on the ground proved one was Muslim" (Bayoumi 2006:275). Once again, these categorizations stood irrespective of the subject's professed ideology or belief system (Bayoumi 2006:275).

Consequently, Bayoumi effectively argues that reducing the contemporary management system marking the Muslim of the interior to *religion* - understood as an elected *system of belief* - would be akin to reducing the architecture of management deployed by the Inquisitors to *professed belief*. Moreover, Naber (2006) explains, belief/Ideology, understood as agentic take-

ups, become privileges racialization forecloses for racialized subjects. Racialization is not concerned with elucidating the complex subjecthood of the racialized subject in question. Rather, racialization is in the work - as mentioned earlier - of preserving *the human* through essentializing and bounding the *Other* (Weheliye 2014). And so, belief, identification, historical accuracy is relevant to the extent it is perceived to be relevant to the management needs of the hegemonic order. In effect then, as Naber (2006) affirms, Arabness/Middle Easternness/Muslimness have come to be produced in such reductive manners by which the violence ascribed to the Muslim Other is not primarily understood as ‘political’ or ‘ideological’, rather the ‘Muslim Problem’ comes to be approached as *inbred and inherent* to *Muslimness* – particularly “Muslim Masculinities” (Naber 2006; Razack 2007; Husain 2019).

The ‘special registry’ turned Trump’s 2019 “Muslim/Travel ban”, provides another tangible manifestation of the manner non-corporeal signs and traces have been employed to aid in bringing *Muslimness* into the field of racial management. The special register came into effect in the immediate wake of the post-9/11 period (Bayoumi 2006; Selod 2019). The registry called for certain “nonimmigrant aliens” to undergo a more exhaustive documentation process. Quoting a department of state release, Bayoumi illustrates that the aim of the registry was explained as, “in light of the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001...the Attorney General has determined that certain nonimmigrant aliens require closer monitoring” (Bayoumi 2006:273). Bayoumi continues, this “special monitoring of certain people was based almost exclusively on one single fact: *national origin*” (Bayoumi 2006:273). The goal of the register was to construct more robust boundaries around potentially threatening ‘aliens’ - with the aim of pre-empting slippage and failures in the racial surveillance architecture, and thus compromising

“national integrity”. As expected, the geographies marked for additional processing were heavily comprised of Muslim-majority nations on the global stage (Bayoumi 2006; Sayyid 2010).

Once again coherence is not a hard requirement of racialization, the mapping-and-bounding requirement of race persists regardless of the vast diversity and distinctiveness of the populations and communities in question. As Sayyid asserts, the fact that Muslim populations are found far past the narrowly marked geography of “Muslimstan” (Sayyid 2010) – spanning from Eastern Europe to the Levant region to Southern Africa – does not substantively interrupt the necessity of race to (re)produce Muslim difference in narrow visual/manageable terms (Sayyid 2010; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Tyrer 2013; Morsi 2016; Naber 2006). And so, Tyrer asserts, even an “inconceivable array of difference [akin to Muslim difference] can be organized to create a visible basis of which populations can be administered” (Tyrer 2013:43). And so, in service of statecraft, the *special registry* arguably fulfilled the administrative aim of racial management – deployed to spot and manage a potentially threatening Other prior to entry. Similar to the manner *naming* was operationalized in the story of Bilal, the special registry animated *national origin* as another first order *trace/sign* directed to supporting the politics of spotting the *Green Menace*. And so, Bayoumi succinctly asserts, through the proxy of geography and sign of national origin “the special registration collapses citizenship, ethnicity, and religion into race” (2006:277).

In short, in the domain of the interior, *beingness-in-the-world* of the Otherized subject requires distilling within terms that are intelligible to the sense-regimes of the hegemonic gaze (Alcoff 1999; *see also* Weheliye 2014; Goldberg 1993; Omi and Winant 1994). Learned perceptual devices work to identify and bound a given population in terms that are legible to the



hegemonic gaze. However, *taken-for-granted*, and *natural* they may appear, racial perceptual devices ascribed to any Otherized population, as Alcoff emphasises, are nonetheless devices always constructed and learned. Given the racial constructions of the *Green Menace* as a perpetually excessive, conquering, boundless figure, has meant that the slightest *trace* reading of *Muslimness* is enough to sound the alarm of white anxiety. Therefore, the racial surveillance architecture aimed at detecting and managing the mobility of the *Green Menace* unfolds similar to the manner airport radiation scanners operate - built to alarm by the slightest reading of radioactive substances. Primed to detect *trace* amounts of explosive material, the swab test scans the bodies and belongings of “randomly selected” patrons awaiting TSA security clearance. The smallest *sign* of “contact” with chemicals designated to indicate radioactive material – is followed by processes of further securitized interrogations. In Bilal’s story, his *name* functioned as the *trace material* signaling a need for further investigation. At the very least, Bilal’s name indicated some form of “contact” with the “radioactive material” that is *Muslimness*. In Bayoumi’s discussion of the special register, *national origin* was picked up as the trace material signaling “contact”. Akin to the manner in which trace-level *contact* with radioactive material is enough to direct further examination, trace-level contact with the *Green Menace* is also enough to necessitate further interrogation. And so, the racial operation of “spotting the Muslim” as a means of managing the *Green Menace* is unconcerned with specificity or precision. Rather the operative starting-point is committed to conjuring *Muslimness* into the hegemonic racial view *by any means necessary* – negative externalities and all. In this chapter thus far, the focus has been on outlining the first part of the dictum of ‘*spot first and ask questions later*’ in the work of bringing the Muslim into racial management. The next section will engage with the second portion of this management system (i.e. ‘ask questions later’) as a response to the externalities

and false positives that invariably unfold in the process of racializing the Muslim. In the following sections, it will be argued that the racial management architecture engulfing the Muslim of the interior is fielded through a dual tiered/stepped process; *(1) spot first, (2) ask questions later*.

### **Moving Beyond Biopolitics: The State-of-Exception:**

Thus, as relating to the Muslim of the interior, the first instance of racialization has leveraged a system of signs/trace profiling endogenizing a wide inclusion matrix. An inclusion matrix that makes intelligible the incorporation of Sikh men and individuals like Bilal, with no-to-little affiliation with Muslimhood, into the drama of Islamophobia (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Selod 2019; Volpp 2012; Naber 2006). Thus, the first order of racial surveillance has largely operated by the dictum of *spot first and ask questions later*. The incorporeality of the *Green Menace* within racial terms then has tested the elasticity of racial management regimes – arguably stretching the malleability and outward limits of race (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Tyrer 2013; Rana 2011). Re-engaging with the airport swab test metaphor once again, the surveillance regimes that employ the explosive trace tests are very much aware of the fact that, as a travel review columnist indicates, “some of the chemicals ...test[ed] for, such as glycerin and nitrates, are present in soaps shampoos and hair products, and often cause false positives” (Catherine May 17, 2019). Thus, considering that the swab test’s spectrum of inclusion spans the “false positives” of soap and shampoo readings to actual contact-trace reading of explosive materials requires each-and-every alarm signal undergoing further and closer exploratory attention for

‘clearance’ to ‘manually’ be granted. And thus, a system of accounting for and internalizing the externality of “the false positive reading” accompanies the swab test system. In other words, *false positives* are endogenized within testing rubrics. It is worth reiterating here, as Morsi reminds us, arriving at the *radical*, capturing the *bad Muslim*, spotting the *Green menace*, very much works through and takes the “savable” and “good Muslim” for the ride (Morsi 2016). The constructions and logics underpinning the racing of the Muslim as a ‘threat’ have indeed marked the grounds in such a way that, as Morsi contends, “the radical is the starting point of engagement” (Morsi 2016).

The high stakes ascribed to the ‘civilizational threat’ that is the Muslim Other – situated as a explosive destructive threat according to Mamdani (2005) – sets up the racial grounds of engagement in a manner sensitive to all levels of *contact* with the *Green Menace*. Flipping the popular adage to *guilty until proven innocent*, and thus, calling forth a multi-prong system of racialized surveillance (Selod 2019). Put differently, the endogenization of *false positives* as probable outcomes of the trace-level-surveillance normalizes the *dictum of spot first and ask questions later* as a rather sensible modus operandi. Speaking to this modus operandi fielding Muslim Communities, Naber draws attention to the consequence of the heightened surveillance onslaught Muslim communities have weathered since 9/11 by contending, “a general sentiment among community activists [has arisen]...that a form of internment was gradually under way, yet they argued, it was less noticeable than if it had taken the form of a mass round-up” (2006:253). Naber continues in her study of working-class Arab Americans in the United States, by explaining with each addendum in state management procedures that progressively unfolded in

the war-on-terror era, racialized surveillance quickly came to erode the tenuous ground Muslim communities stood on, Naber writes:

*...first, the Bush administration passed the Patriot Act, then thousands of people were placed on a list; then came the random calls from the FBI to people's homes, followed by missing people who were picked up, often without charges and held indefinitely. Later came deportations and, in many cases, family and friends were denied information regarding whereabouts of detainees or deportees. December 2002 marked a new phase in the backlash with the beginning of special registration—the most egregious period where thousands of men were locked up even though many had valid visas (Naber 2006: 253).*

The endogenization of *false positives* reveals that there is a vital second step to the radioactive *Green Menace* detection system – i.e. ‘ask questions later’. The ‘false positives’ of Muslim racial surveillance is the Sikh turban wearing man; the Italian math professor scribbling equations mistaken for Arabic ([Rampell 2016](#)); the Bilals that have disassociated with Islam but nonetheless continue to signal alarm. Effectively capturing the *Green Menace* requires systems that - at the very least - attempt to tease apart *false positives* from the *positives* that require the full force of state attention. Moving beyond the first order of contact-tracing/profiling, understanding the development of the tiered arsenal of racial detection and management requires an engagement with what Razack refers to as “the state of exception” proceedings of racial ordering (2007:22). The enlisting of *state of exception* proceedings, Razack argues, has very much shaped the state’s response to the Muslim of the interior. Thus, spotting the *Green Menace* in the clean shaved white passing body requires an ordering system that builds on, but effectively moves past standard racial perceptual logics. However wide the assortment of material *traces* and *signs* employed (name, origin, dress, skin...etc) to conjure a figure framed as *void without* and alarmingly *excessive within* calls forth an additional arsenal of “exceptions” superseding the

limited order of biopolitics and crude racial governmentality (Sayyid 2014; Tyrer 2013; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012).

Hence, effectively conjuring the *Green Menace* into the field of management requires techniques of detection that can also ‘see’ ‘read’ and ‘manage’ the immaterial/subjective dimension beyond the liminality of *signs* and *traces*. As the project of managing the Muslim is arguably an enterprise of managing subjectivities (Tyrer 2013; Morsi 2016; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). Unsurprisingly then the managing of the Muslim of the interior has been accompanied by “states-of-exception-measures” (Razack 2007:22) acting like built-in safe-guards filling-in and supplementing the inevitable failures and gaps (i.e. false positives) in a racial surveillance system comprised by an expanding-assemblage of signs and traces (Razack 2007:22; Bayoumi 2006). Defining the rule of exception, Razack writes, “the state of exception is an anomic space in which what is at stake is a force of law without law” (Razack 2007:14). Razack continues with the “logic of the exception ...[creates] the camps of abandoned or ‘rightless’ people” (2017:17). And in Kapadia’s (2019) explanation, *states-of-exception* is a calculus that normalizes outposts, and “black sites” take hold (189-190). Similarly, speaking to the logic underlining this *field of expectation*, Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) in fact assert ‘the incompleteness of Muslim racialization’ comes to work as a fundamental building block of Muslim racial management (Tyrer and Sayyid 2012). Moreover, Tyrer and Sayyid (2012) explain, this underlining logic “...requires us to recognize the nature of this governmental project...[which] makes a virtue of Muslim unrecognizability in order to fix Muslims as incompletely realized” (2012:359). And so, as Tolia-Kelly explains, “although race is unstable, it is continually reconstituted and constituted through the political materialities and strategies at particular coordinates” (2009:5) Similarly,

Razack explains, “paradoxically” what comes to be produced is a system of ordering that “...has determined that the rule of law does not apply” (2007:17). Thus, we end up with, as Bayoumi explains, a system of ‘typologizing Muslimhoods’ – which internalizes the inherent unmanageability of that which is said to urgently call for management (2012:359). Once again bringing-in the example of the Spanish Inquisition and the case of the ‘conversos’ into comparative analysis may be helpful here. Fredrickson (2002) and Kamen (2014) illustrate, in operation, managing the not so perceptible ‘conversos’ produced a cumbersome system of individuated expectations in addition to a wide net of surveillance. Moreover, as a result of the *states-of-exception* system that governed the management of ‘conversos’ a parallel special judiciary and investigatory system of information gathering and testimonial collection emerged feeding into a traveling public tribunal riddled with inconsistencies and corruption (Fredrickson 2002; Kamen 2014).

Border-and-custom secondary screening proceedings emerge as fitting contemporary examples of individuated tribunal-like exception wherein a process of directly *screening* and *manually* clearing *subjects of alarm unfolds*. The state of exception that produces the secondary level screening procedures allows for the exercising of rites of conjurement through direct dissection/interrogation methods, suspended from the rule of law or order of normalcy. For instance, with the recent executive Muslim Ban (Travel Ban 2019) in the United States - numerous reports were made to CAIR (Council on American-Islamic Relations) of instances where travelers affiliated to nations on the travel ban-list (i.e. racial sign), or at times simply ‘read’ as Muslim (racial traces) were enough to pull travelers into secondary-vetting rooms, wherein an interrogation would ensue (Selod 2019; Hamid 2017). Questions covering everything

from everyday religious ritual practice to political affiliation and ideology to identification would undergo investigation (Hamid 2017). As Hamid outlines, questions asked to travelers would include anything from “are you a devout Muslim?”, to “what do you think of the United States?” to “what are your views about jihad?”. Hamid continues, travelers would also be “...asked whether they attend a mosque and what their opinions are about various terrorist groups” (Hussain, Jan 14, 2017). Akin to the tribunal system of the holy office of the Spanish inquisition, the secondary screening rooms move past the order of macro-symbols of traces and signs to a more finely tuned micro ‘reading’ of individuated speech, embodiment, practice, and ideology as a means of conjuring the liminal *Green Menace*, as Ria put’s it, an “unthinkable excess of monstrosity”, into the field of view, and thus capture (Ria 2004:552). Consequently, secondary-vetting proceedings have produced a parallel force field of ‘exceptions’ aimed to supplement the inevitable failures of a system of racialized surveillance dependent on an assemblage of signs, sensitive to trace-level readings.

And thus, racing an aggressively “translocal, transnational, diasporic and mobile” population (Tolia-Kelly 2009:5) into a singular base of administration has resulted in a system riddled with false positives, inconsistencies, and unstable grounds of exceptions (Rai 2004; Razack 2007; Morsi 2016; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Tyrer 2013). The chapter thus far has outlined the context in which Muslim communities in the North Atlantic are fielded within. The next section will turn to Muslim responses given this context of racial management. Thus, in order to ground my engagement with subject-formation, racialized agency, and resistance as I move into the methodological and analytical portions of my dissertation, the last section of this

chapter will engage with the field of Muslim counterpublics, while outlining my orientation towards resistance and agency.

## **Muslim “Talk-Backs”: Context of Emergence**

Amidst the backdrop of racial management and heightened surveillance, Muslim collective responses centering voice, recognition, and restorative justice have witnessed exponential growth, spanning from digital mix-media to community-based artistic collectives (Zine & Taylor 2016; Husain 2000; Abdul Khabeer 2016; Morey and Yaqin 2011). Speaking to this rise in the organizing efforts of Muslim communities in the West, Husain (2000) asserts:

*Muslim Community Organization (MCOs) numbers increased significantly following 9/11 and the war on terror, in response to challenges of extremism and Islamophobia, to fulfil new internal and external demands. Not only do MCOs have to respond to accusations of being sites for isolation and terrorism...but they also have to engender services to respond to the impact of Islamophobia...moreover, MCOs have had to work with the government, engage with the media and the public to educate, respond to accusations and rebuild networks of trust through peacebuilding and cross-cultural engagements (2000:1).*

And surveying the North American Muslim creative-artistic landscape in particular, Morey and Yaqin (2011), in addition to Ahmed (2011), observe that Muslim creative counterpublic formations have especially seen a rise, spanning a wide range of expressions and productions. Similarly, Zine & Taylor (2016) assert, “the post-9/11 years have witnessed a surge of resistant and reconstructive writing by Muslim authors, artists, and scholars, one which builds upon a history of anticolonial and antipatriarchal cultural politics [and] expressions” (2014:14).



Furthermore, Zine and Taylor frame this rise in Muslim organizing efforts, centering voice, recognition, and restorative justice underlined with a sober awareness of the community's subordinate status as "counterpublic formations" (Zine & Taylor 2016; see also Morey & Yaqin 2011; Jiwa 2014; Abdualkhabeer 2016).

Warner tells us that fundamental to counterpublics is "the cultural horizon against which it marks itself off", a cultural horizon that "...is not just a general or wider public, but a dominant [public]...[in which] the discourse that constitutes is not merely a different or alternative idiom, but one that in other contexts would be regarded with hostility" (2002: 86). Warner (2002) continues by noting that an important feature of counterpublics is that they "maintain at some level, conscious...awareness of [their] subordinate status" (Warner 2002: 86; Asen 2000; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992). Consequently, the "cultural horizon" of dominant publics plays an important role in locating and marking the trajectory of counterpublic formations (Warner 2002: 86). Benhabib (1996) however, tells us that it is important not to take up 'dominant public' as a unitary entity. Benhabib explains, the public sphere is best understood as a "plurality of modes of association" that constitute a medium of mutually interlocking and overlapping networks of opinion formation and dissemination. And in Meyre and Moors (2005) words, "'the notion of 'public' is thus not bounded but refers to a continuous process of construction and reconstruction, of negotiation and contestation" (12). The rejection of a singular, overarching 'dominant public' does not however negate the role of power in structuring the formation, negotiation, and contestations of public(s). Thus, the stratification of power remains central to the marking of *hegemonic publics*, *alternative publics* or *counterpublics* ([Asen 2000](#); Warner 2002; Felski 1989). And as Asen explains, "counterpublics signal that some publics develop not

simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants” (2000:425).

Now speaking more specifically to the case of Muslim counterpublics, Zine and Taylor assert, although “the post-9/11 years have witnessed a surge” of Muslim counterpublic developments, they have largely remained under the public and academic radar, even though they have functioned as growing sites of “self-creation” and “public pedagogy” (Zine & Taylor 2016:14; *see also* Morey & Yaqin 2011; Jiwa 2014; Abdulkhabeer 2016). It is however not uncommon for counterpublics to be “enclaved” and made invisible from the vantagepoint of dominant public(s) (Asen 2000; Frasier 1992). This nonetheless does not mean that counterpublics are disconnected from “...the communicative flows of multiple public sphere[s]” (Asen 2000:425). Counterpublics are, in fact, said to be in active dialogue with dominant publics, whether this dialogue is audible or not to hegemonic forces (Frasier 1992; Asen 2000). Again Zine and Taylor emphasize in their work with Muslim Counterpublics “...the importance of reading...counter-hegemonic discourses as politically engaged actions that encourage and enliven critical consciousness and provide the grounding for anticolonial...praxis” (2014:2). Therefore, the ability to actively listen to counterpublics is dependent on a similar close delineation of the context of emergence. And when it comes to Muslim counterpublics, the context of racialization and the operation of racial sites as the backdrop of emergence. My project picks up on the above findings on the rise of Muslim counterpublics, while firmly locating them within the broader macro-analysis outlined in the earlier portions of this chapter. My investigation then moves from a broader survey approach of Muslim counterpublics to a honed-in case-study of the largest creative counterpublic in North America, the Muslim Writers Collective (MWC). The next

section will turn to the transformative praxis of counterpublics and the role of recognition politics in dominant conceptualizations of counterpublics, including Muslim counterpublic.

## **Transformative Thrust and Recognition Politics**

The transformative thrust Zine and Taylor locate in their mention of “anti-colonial praxis” of Muslim counterpublics is an impulse said to propel counterpublic formations more broadly. According to Asen (2000) and Warner (2002), the context of exclusion and marginalization is argued to undergird this transformative thrust of counterpublics. Speaking in this vein, Felski (1992) writes, “in engaging publicity, counterpublics affirm a belief in the transformative power of discourse. Their publicist orientation suggests that the consequences of exclusion-suppression of identities, interests, and needs-can be overcome” (124). This “overcoming” however, tends to be narrowly framed as unfolding through participating in the politics of recognition and labouring for “re-entry” (Asen 2000; Warner 2002). This is particularly apparent in the emphasis on “public-pedagogy” in the analysis of Muslim counterpublics (Zine & Taylor 2016; Morey and Yaqin 2011; Jiwa 2014). Husain (2000) in fact asserts the growing organizing efforts of Muslim collectives tends to be oriented towards “...contributing] to the ongoing ...efforts of stimulat[ing] public and political recognition of the problem...[and thus] inform future anti-Islamophobia efforts by the government and advocacy groups” (2020:2). Markell (2003) and Taylor (1994), two major thinkers in the recognition literature, define recognition politics as a ubiquitous frame of contemporary political and discursive life in which questions of misrecognition and marginalization are tackled both by hegemonic forces and subalternized agents (Coulthard 2014; Markell 2003; Taylor 1989, 1994).

From the standpoint of recognition politics, redistribution of material-and-subjective ‘goods’ across publics requires the circulation of corrective frames trajected to disrupt discourses of misrecognition (Taylor 1994; Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2014; Markell 2003). Counterpublics, as Asen explains, are oriented to do this corrective work of recognition, labouring towards “re-entry into the wider communicative flows of the public sphere” (Asen 2000:429; *see also* Warner 2002; Fraser 1992). Following this trajectory of counterpublic analysis, Zine and Taylor also explicitly state that through their work with Muslim counterpublics they aim to “...present conversations with notable Muslim...cultural producers in order to examine the role their work plays in redefining representational practices, as well as the challenges of working within and against Orientalist imaginaries” (Zine & Taylor 2016:1)

Thus, the transformative thrust of counterpublics comes to be understood as working to produce communicative flows primed to travel into dominant publics. However, as Simpson (2014) and Coulthard (2014) tell us, communicative flows meant to “redefine representational practices” (Zine & Taylor 2016:3) curated for “re-entry” require the subjects of exclusion to reproduce their truths, their selfhoods, in terms legible to dominant publics. In other words, for a politics of re-entry to hold transformative coloring then counterpublics are meant to labour in curating “corrective” frames of self, meant to disrupt discourses of “misrecognition” (Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2014). This orientation towards “re-entry” is located as affirming “counterpublic’s...belief in the transformative power of discourse” (Asen 2000: 429; *see also* Warner 2002). Similarly, Warner (2002) and Felski (1992) also tie the transformative thrust of counterpublics with a similar “re-entry” focused politics. Warner for instance contends, although counterpublics develop out of an awareness of ‘subordinate and exclusionary status’, the

transformative politics does not foreclose “re-entry” into dominant public(s) (Warner 2002). Speaking more specifically around gendered feminist counterpublics, Felski explains, feminist counterpublics “...internally generate a gender-specific identity grounded in a consciousness of community and solidarity among women; externally, it seeks to convince society as a whole of the validity of feminist claims” (Felski 1989:168). This work to “convince society” is akin to what Asen frames as the labour of “re-entry”. And thus, “re-entry”, again, is framed as the aspirational “good” counterpublic orient their transformative impulse towards. Thus, “convincing society” comes to be conceptualized as a largely taken-for-granted orientation of counterpublics. My work with the Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) will more closely explore this “taken-for-granted” frame of counterpublics and the politics of transformation it produces.

In addition to tying the transformative impulse of counterpublics to recognition politics, counterpublics tend to also be linked to conceptualizations of *resistance* understood as “oppositonality” (Fraser 1992, 1997; Asen 2000; Warner 2002). For instance, according to Fraser, counterpublics forge “...parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (1997: 81). Similarly, Felski (1989) locates the “...counterpublic sphere [as] articulat[ing] oppositional needs and values not addressed by this global megaculture” (166). Felski continues, counterpublics operate “...as critical oppositional social forces that assert distinctiveness against homogenizing” forces (1989:166). This sense of oppositionality points to Asen's frame of “withdrawal-and-agitation” as the driving operational logic of counterpublics. Felski continues with, “the experience of discrimination, oppression, and cultural dislocation provides the impetus for the development of

a self-conscious oppositional identity” (1989:167). My work with MWC will also pay analytical attention to this frame of oppositional-antagonism in order to fully engage with the transformative trajectories of counterpublics and the revelations of racialized agency made available.

### **Resistance as a First Order Principle and Refusal**

Borrowing from Black Optimist thought and pushing past a frame of resistance as ‘oppositional-antagonism’, Kline (2017) explains, resistance can be understood as “...the micropolitical force of life that can never be fully confined or contained within a political ontological frame of antagonisms” (Kline 2017:62, *see also* Moten 2003; Chandler 2014). Moreover, Kline continues, now directly leveraging Fred Moten, in this frame of resistance “...Moten taps into something vital that precedes the force of imposition...the force of law, the force of the structure of white supremacy and its sedimented political ontological order” (Kline 2017:64). This Black Optimist frame of resistance offers analytical expansiveness in explorations of resistance, racialized agency, and transformation that will anchor much of the explorations of resistance and agency in the coming chapters. In fact, Moten (2003) contends that ‘deviance’ precedes ‘performance’ or order (Moten 2003). Or in Foucault’s succinct phrasing “resistance comes first” (Foucault 1997: 167). So, resistance is deviance in the sense that it is the “micropolitical force of life” making possible an understanding of agency and subjectivity that precedes/supersedes the confines of imposition, subordination, and racialization. Kline continues to explain, when resistance is taken up as a “first-order” phenomena that is simply not an outcome of subordination and antagonism we “...expand the frame[s] of analysis and praxis so

that a much wider field of resources and possibilities are available in terms of [labouring towards] a project of liberation” (Kline 2017:64).

Furthermore, when resistance is taken up as a first-order principle of subject-making, antagonist-oppositionality is provincialized as only one formation of resistance. On the other side of this provincialization sits “refusal” (Moten 2003; Camp 2012, 2019; Kline 2017). Tina Camp (2019) aptly defines “refusal” as:

*...a rejection of the status quo as livable and the creation of possibility in the face of negation i.e. a refusal to recognize a system that renders you fundamentally illegible and unintelligible; the decision to reject the terms of diminished subjecthood with which one is presented, using negation as a generative and creative source of disorderly power to embrace the possibility of living otherwise (Camp 2019: 3).*

Thus, refusal stands in sharp contrast to “...race thinking [that] reduces the agency of the racialized and denudes them of proper being; as recipients of inherited traits, whether phenotypic or cultural, they are [constructed as] passive bearers of them” (Tyner 2014:46). Moreover, through refusal the politics of transformation and subject-making turns towards “horizontal networks” instead of “re-entry” primed for dominant publics (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014; Willemsse and Bergh 2016). In other words, through a praxis of refusal, “...enactments of agency are...[firmly] established in horizontal networks”, not in the hegemonic gaze or in orders of recognition (Willemsse and Bergh 2016:304). Additionally, in a model of agency that prioritizes “horizontal networks of mutuality”, agency is not taken up as “an object in hidden possession preceding the moment of affiliation” (Bennett 2010:447) – rather affiliation opens up allowances for agency. Furthermore, elaborating on the implication and paradox of “co-extensivity” as relating to subject-formation, Blackman (2011) asserts, “...our individuation is always relational

and therefore plural...our very sense of interiority emerges through our relations with others...in that sense we are always more than one and less than many” (Blackman 2011:184; *see also* [Jean-Luc Nancy](#) 2000). Hence, through a take up of refusal and a turn to “horizontal networks of mutuality” as the site of resistance and transformation, *Campt* contends, pushes an “...urgency of rethinking the time, space, and fundamental vocabulary of what constitutes politics, activism, and theory, as well as what it means to refuse the terms given” (2019: 1)

## Conclusion

In sum, the racing of the Muslim as that which is inherently unknowable, while simultaneously holding destructive “monstrous-capacities” (Rai 2004) has justified an entire arsenal of exceptions that supersede, and compound racialization understood as an ocular-corporeal system of management. Fixing *Muslimness* as that which always and forever carries an excess of unmarked/unmarkable alterity means that in addition to crude racial profiling techniques, a surgical-inquisition-type “state-of-exception” measures - akin to subjective open heart-surgery - become reasonable tools/means of conjuring the dangerous ‘incorporeal’ alterity into fuller hegemonic view (Razack 2007; Tyrer 2013; Rai 2004; Rana 2011; Tyrer and Sayyid 2012; Mamdani 2005). Thus, the management of the Muslim of the interior operates in a multi-pronged manner - (1) screening bodies (*via signs and traces*) as a pathway to (2) managing subjectivities (*via orders of exception*). Consequently, the second tier of racial management, as Morsi (2016) contends, brings together the pseudoscience of scientific race, with the tribunal system of Christian inquisition and the militarized proceedings of Marshall law in a bizarre matrix leaving the Muslim of the interior, as Bazian effectively words it - “in a perpetual state of internment and clearance” (Bazian 2004: 5-6). The responses of Muslim communities to this



multi-tiered disciplinary system have also been layered and expansive. The Muslim Studies and Islamophobia Studies literature has demonstrated that Muslim counterpublic responses have witnessed exponential growth, with creative production experiencing particular saliency. Moving into the analytical portions of my dissertation the macro-structural forces outlined in this and the previous chapter will be taken up as the backdrop grounding the ‘cultural horizons’ through which Muslim counterpublics emerge. My dissertation will pay particular attention to the manner *resistance* and *transformation* are picked up in order to closely explore the analytics of self-making and agency available to subalternized agents fielded within overbearing racializing structures. However, before directly engaging with the empirics of this dissertation, I will begin with a discussion of methodology and the creative counterpublic space this project focuses on.

## CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

---

My study locates the literature that maps the racializing politics of the Muslim subject as a productive overarching backdrop fielding my close investigation of the pathways of resistance, self-making, and transformation deployed in Muslim counterpublics in the North Atlantic. The overarching goal of my project is to investigate the tactics of resistance and self-making available and picked up by those living on the receiving end of overbearing racializing structures. More specifically, the *politics of recognition* serves as a well-placed framework through which I engage with questions of resistance, subject-formation, agency, and transformation. As Markell (2003) and Taylor (1994) put it, recognition politics operates as a ubiquitous frame of contemporary political and discursive life in which questions of marginalization, emancipation, and injustice are taken up both by hegemonic forces and subalternized agents (Coulthard, 2014; Markell, 2003; Taylor, 1989, 1994). Therefore, racialized counterpublic sit as politically conscious developments emerging in close conversation with the politics of recognition and regimes of racial management, and thus well-locating it in the study of resistance, self-making, and transformation (Asen 2000; Warner 2002; Fraser 1992).

Taking seriously the standpoint that racialized margins are located as “fertile grounds” (Lorde 1984:115) for knowledge building and transformative openings means actively listening-in to the ‘talk-backs’, and grounded analysis of the present and potential futures embedded in the very formations and orientations of racialized counterpublics (hooks 1990; Lorde 1984, Hartman 1994; Sharpe 2016; Moten 2003). Actively listening to the ‘talk-backs’ of racialized

counterpublics does not simply mean investigating the explicit communicative flows of agents mobilizing the space, but also examining the *procedures, processes and forms* taken up by racialized counterpublics. In this *process-centered* examination - I broadly ask, *what pathways of resistance, self-making and agentic possibilities are revealed in closely examining the methods deployed in the formation and operation of counterpublics?* Moreover, bell hooks maps racialized margins as the site in which “...we can best become whatever we want to be” (1990:20). And so, *what can “actively listening” to the process, procedures and forms also tell us about the analytics of subject-making and agency available to racialized subjects?* And lastly, I ask, *how is the politics of recognition engaged with, as a ‘ubiquitous frame’ of claim/self-making, for those situated on the receiving end of racializing structures?* My study focuses analytical attention on a creative collective called the *Muslim Writers Collective* (MWC). A translocal counterpublic formation centering Muslim storytelling. I take a narrative-ethnographic approach to my engagement with the collective and spend ten-months in the field in 2018-2019. This chapter will outline my approach to the field study and lay-out the paradigms and theoretical frames informing the research. The current chapter will conclude with a discussion on my location as a Muslim-identifying researcher and the possible limitations of my methodology.

## **Theoretical Frame and Paradigm**

My theoretical orientation is in part shaped by the counterpublic space I have focused my empirical engagement on - the *Muslim Writers Collective*. The Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) defines itself as “a bold initiative aimed at reclaiming the American Muslim

narrative...through storytelling, creativity, and culture” (Chiqet 2014; muslimwriterscollective.com 2014). The Muslim Writers Collective has grown since its 2014 launch to be the largest Muslim artistic collective in North America, with thousands of social media followers and five chapters across the United States – in addition to a Canadian chapter based in Toronto (muslimwriterscollective.com 2014). MWC defines their objective in a manner that picks up the language of recognition, whereby the frame of “reclaiming narrative” consistently comes up in adverts and public messaging. The mere fact that the language of recognition is picked-up by those on the margins experiencing the redistributive failures of recognition politics (Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Simpson 2014), locates ‘recognition’ as a worthy site of exploration irrespective of its conceptual or political merit. Speaking on the production of agentic possibilities, Foucault (1992) explains, that the ground of subjectification and ordering by which power disciplines its subjects also acts as the ground of resistance, asserting “as soon as there is power relation, there is the possibilities of resistance” (Foucault 1996: 153). Thus, my interest in recognition politics is motivated by its social facticity as a field of operation within which subjects in the margins have exercised in positioning claims of agency, resistance, and self-making (Markell 2004; Taylor 1994; Coulthard 2014).

#### **A. Racialized Counterpublics and Recognition Politics**

For many critical scholars, the politics of recognition is fundamentally about the making of Liberal citizens out of subjects who exist in the racialized margins (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson 2014; Taylor 1994; Williams 2014). Arguably, this ‘making’ speaks to a “redistributive mechanism” reallocating psychological and material wages to the subjects of misrecognition

who are deemed “problematic,” “difficult,” or “perplexing” by the hegemonic order (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson, 2014). And from the standpoint of recognition, it is vital for the Liberal political project to include these “perplexing” subjects existing outside of the hegemonic center through a deliberate and purposeful act of seeing, thereby intentionally shifting the optics of power (Simpson, 2014; Taylor, 1994). More specifically, Simpson (2014) explains that from a state-centered standpoint, recognition implies attaining official access to power through “rights that protect from harm...that provide access to resources...that protect certain resources” (23). In a similar vein, Markell (2003) explains that the politics of recognition is “conventionally approached” as a type of “distributive injustice” involving “the exten[sion] to people the respect or esteem they deserve” in virtue of their humanity (18). Recognition, in other words, becomes a “public good” that makes possible an effectual capacity within the hegemonic regime (Markell, 2003).

If the politics of recognition is about an equitable distributive extension of rights and protections through a desirable or esteemed seeing of subalternized subjects, then misrecognition is the negation of this distributive “good” (Markell 2003; Taylor 1994). According to Taylor (1994), “Out of “malice or ignorance” “rights and protections” are not what are extended to the misrecognized subject, rather harm and dispossession come to be disproportionately overextended (Coulthard, 2014; Markell, 2004; Taylor, 1994). Consequently, as Fanon (1954, 1961) vividly illustrates through his own encounters in Europe, misrecognition can leave the subalternized subject feeling thwarted, carrying substantive consequences for the agentic and emancipatory possibilities of the misrecognized. Thus, proponents of politics of recognition seek ‘recognition’ in order to ameliorate the thwarting effects that come with misrecognition. The

politics of recognition is positioned as the mechanism by which mutual respect and acknowledgement can be redistributed (Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Taylor 1989, 1994; William, 2014). This redistribution or extension of ‘mutuality’ will not only serve as the necessary fuel to run an inclusive and democratic society, but proponents argue that it will also aid in the process of producing emancipated subjectivities (Coulthard 2014; Taylor 1989, 1994; William 2014).

In the last few decades, the politics of recognition has come to mean a field and language through which questions of marginalization, resistance, belonging, and difference have increasingly been understood (Markell 2003; Taylor 1994). However, recognition politics has also been subject to a diverse range of critiques levied on both its discourses and consequential impact during the same period of time; complicating and challenging the links made between recognition-redistribution-emancipation (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Simpson 2014; Fraser and Honneth 2003; Markell 2003). Critics argue that the politics of recognition has largely failed to resolve redistributive issues at any substantive level, and thus caution against a wholehearted plunge into the “goods” of recognition (Coulthard 2007, 2014; Fraser & Honneth 2003; Simpson 2014). In fact, Coulthard (2014) borrows from Fanon to understand both the material and subjective dimensions of decoloniality and argues that recognition politics has carried very little consequence beyond the “gestural and symbolic.” Coulthard (2014) continues with, recognition politics has been unable to extend social-political grounds in addition to psychological wages that would open up the possibilities of subaltern subjective emancipation (Coulthard, 2014).

I find the criticisms levied against recognition politics convincing. However, as a mechanism of languaging and operationalizing claims of resistance, self-making, and transformation,

recognition persists as a ubiquitous field of articulation (Coulthard, 2014; Markell, 2003; Taylor, 1989, 1994). In this vein, Taylor writes:

*A number of strands in contemporary politics turn on the need ... the demand, for recognition ... The demand comes to the fore in a number of ways in today's politics, on behalf of minority or "subaltern" groups, in some forms of feminism and in what is today called the politics of "multiculturalism." The demand for recognition ... is given urgency by the supposed links between recognition and identity ... The thesis is that our identity is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves (Taylor 1994:25).*

Racialized counterpublics then can analytically be taken up as one manifestation of recognition politics. Primarily distinguished from other publics by the exclusionary impetus of their emergence, a general operational trajectory or 'character' of counterpublics are said to revolve around *withdrawal* and *antagonism* underlined with a *transformationist/reformist* thrust (Asen 2000; Fraser 1997; Felski 1989). Fraser (1987) further explains "subalternized" counterpublic as "parallel discursive arena where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (81). Similarly, Felski (1989) tells us that "...the experience of discrimination, oppression, and cultural dislocation provides the impetus for the development of...[subordinated] counterpublics" (167). And speaking to the exclusionary impetus of subalternized/racialized counterpublics more explicitly, Asen asserts, "Counterpublics signal that some publics develop not simply as one among a constellation of discursive entities, but as explicitly articulated alternatives to wider publics that exclude the interests of potential participants" (2000:425). Thus, the corrective work recognition politics demands of misrecognized agents holds fertile grounds of operation in a racialized counterpublic. As Felski

reminds us that counterpublics center the dual-work of “...constructing fertile ground for particularistic community-sense to be nurtured, and an externalist aim of convincing society...the validity of their...claims” (1989:168). This work of “convincing” is the work of recognition politics, the re-entry of communicative flows centering *corrective frames* of the misrecognized is said to be required for the machinery of recognition to re-distribute the “good” of recognition (Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2007, 2014; Markell 2003; Taylor 1994).

## **B. Affect and Subject-formation and Critical Muslim Studies**

Moreover, the current dissertation gives primacy to the affective dimension in the formation of boundaries, subjecthoods, and collectives. According to Blackman, the affective dimension allows us to peel back and see the process of entanglement formed among a collective, Blackman writes, honing in on “the affective basis of practices...[reveal]...how they mobilize, connect up and distribute relations of entanglement amongst people, places, entities and objects producing particular situated responses to trauma” (2011:185). And so, the affective dimension opens up the ground by which to engage with the ‘co-extensivit[ies]’ (Bell 2007) that constructs our sense of subjecthood and production of agency. Blackman further elaborates on the implication and paradox of “co-extensivity” as relating to subject formation, leveraging Jean-Luc Nancy theorizing “that our individuation is always relational and therefore plural. In other words, our very sense of interiority emerges through our relations with others; human and nonhuman and in that sense we are always more than one and less than many” (Blackman 2011:184).



Additionally, I would like to bring the theorizing around recognition and counterpublic formations - into conversation with Critical Muslim Studies (CMS), a paradigm offering a more nuanced understanding of racialization and marginalization as relating to my demographic and landscape of study (ReOrient 2015; Mamdani 2004; Zine & Taylor 2016; Sayyid 2015; Abdul Khabeer 2016; Sijwa from qubec). This is not withstanding my sustained utilization of critical race theory and the sociology of race and racism – which takes up *race* as a “social fact” of the modern (Omi & Winant 1994), seeking to order and manage the *Other* in service of sustaining “the human” (Weheliye 2014) by naturalizing and marking *Otherhood* through the corporeal/ocular-perceptual dimension (Goldberg 1993, 2001; Alcoff 1999; Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1993; Thobani, 2007; Razack 2002, 2006, 2007; Smith & Thobani, 2010; Back & Solomos 2000; Gilroy 1987, 1992).

**CMS Paradigm:** Guba and Lincoln (1994) define the paradigm of Critical Muslim Studies, “as a set of basic beliefs that deals with ultimate or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world” [and] the individuals’ place in it” (Guba and Lincoln 1994:3). In *ReOrient*, the flagship CMS journal, the editors explain “...that [a] series of orientations and commitments...make possible the emergence of Critical Muslim Studies,” (2015:6) as a paradigm of inquiry that pushes past cosmological and “disciplinary caging” of eurocentrism “in order to focus...conceptual and analytic attention on ontological rather than merely ontic questions of Muslim subjectivity and agency” (ReOrient 2015:9). The editors of *ReOrient* continue with, “Critical Muslim Studies is then characterized by a series of epistemological orientations, rather than by substantive properties, permanent categories, or persistent methodologies” (ReOrient 2015:6). To better position a paradigmatic approach that

primes *Muslimhood* – as an ontological viewpoint in addition to a social property – CMS locates decoloniality as a key commitment that works to deconstruct eurocentrism or more broadly whiteness - held to be a central fielding force that continues to be “deployed as a master referent, in relation to which all things are measured and understood” (ReOrient 2015: 6). Consequently, a core commitment of CMS is in the work of “epistemic delinking” understandings of agency and subjectivity from a eurocentric referential “as a means of delivering on the [liberatory] promise of critical theory” and opening productive grounds for more substantive engagements with questions of subjectivity and agency rooted in noneurocentric “worldsenses” (Oyewumi 1997) and meaning regimes (ReOrient 2015:7; Mignolo 2007; Sayyid 2014). Furthermore, my uptake of CMS also takes seriously “the critical” components of the paradigm - anchored in a type of *historical realism* which holds that inequality and marginality are historically assembled realities carrying consequence both at the material and subjective level (Kincheloe & McLaren 1994; Guba & Lincoln 1994; Sayer 1995, 2000; Morgan & Sayer 1988). Furthermore, “Critical Muslim Studies is informed by an ongoing ... suspicion of positivism”, in which there is greater alignment with an interpretive-constructivist orientation (ReOrient 2015:6; Denzin 1996, 2003; Madision 2005; Lincoln & Guba 2013; Foley and Valenzuela 2005). What is key in the study of the ‘social’ from an interpretive standpoint is that the ‘meaning-making’ process becomes a central node of analytical work, and in this the subjective and experiential become important sites of inquiry and investigation, as that which is “constituted by larger meaning-making system[s]” (Bischoping and Gazso 2016: 4; Schwandt 2000; Gubrium & Holstein 2000; Lincoln & Guba 2013; Grondin, 1994; Aylesworth, 1991).

## Field and Methodology

**Field of Investigation:** The Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) is comprised of predominantly millennial membership, who are university-age/young professional, diasporic children of Brown and Black immigrant parents. Although no comprehensive background information was collected or available for MWC, interviewees tended to describe their ethnic composition as South Asian, Middle Eastern, African, or Afro-Caribbean, and socioeconomic status as of working-middle-class backgrounds. The Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) recurring keynote event is their themed monthly open-mic. The open-mics have been organized around a range of topical-prompts, spanning from engaging with the “meaning of authenticity” to exploring “new beginnings” to speaking on “love and friendship”. Furthermore, the community-based stage MWC organizes is not genre specific, as performances include anything from short-stories, poetry, spoken-word, comedy to open storytelling. Nonetheless, irrespective of the genre of narration, the MWC open-mic stage calls for a first-person voice, centering the personal and testimonial (Chiqet 2014). And so, the MWC stage is essentially a stage that brings to life “story-as-performance”, working rather similarly to what Denzin refers to as “writer-as-performer”, Denzin explains;

*As reflexive performance narrative forms [writer-as-performer]...include not only performance autoethnography but also short story conversation, fiction creative nonfiction...personal narrative of self...and performance writing which blurs the boundaries separating text, representation, and criticism. In each of these forms the writer-as-performer is self-consciously present, morally and politically self-aware (Denzin 2003:14).*

In this “writer-as-performer” setup, Denzin continues, the performer uses his or her own experience to “reflexively bend back on self and look more deeply at self-other interaction” (Denzin 14-15; *see also* Ellis & Bochner 2000; Kincheloe and McLaren 2000; Alexander 1999:309)]. Moreover, Elman explains for marginal/marginalized agents in the Euro-North Atlantic ‘the stage’ has had a long history of being located “as [a] site for pedagogical performance” in which “social and cultural agency” is declared and (re)made by agents living in the margins (Elman 2001:6). Further elaborating on this point, Elman emphasizes the liminality of the performance of the everyday with the performance of the ‘stage’, writing “from the arrival of first African slaves on American soil...the definition and meanings of [identity]...have been intricately linked to issues of theatre and performance” (Elman 2001:4). In a similar vein, speaking on W.E.B. Du Bois’s work on radical Black theater (Du Bois 1926), Denzin writes, Du Bois’s “radical theater...[was] a political theater about black [folks], written by black [folks], for black [folks], performed by black [folks] on local stages” (Denzin 2003:5). And so, as a space that centers Muslim narratives, written by Muslim folks, performed for Muslim folks, firmly locates MWC efforts within the rich racialized counterpublic community-art tradition in the North Atlantic; bringing the personal, sociopolitical and performative into tight conversation. And thus, I identify the MWC stage as a productive site of analytical concentration for a study concerned with the agentic pathways and subjective (re)making of Muslim agents in the North Atlantic.

**Multi-Sited Instrumental Case Study:** Although the MWC site carries intrinsic value in its formation and practice, my focus on the Muslim Writers Collective as the site of investigation is motivated by its *instrumentality* in “provid[ing] insight into [broader] issues” at play (Stake 2005:445). Stake refers to this “broader insight” driven case study approach as an “instrumental

case study”, in which the case selection is guided by a sense that “it [would] play a supportive role...in facilitate[ing] [an] understanding of something else” (Stake 2005:445). And so, there are broader phenomena of interest guiding my *instrumental* case study selection of MWC (Patton 1990; Vaughan 1992). My focus on the Muslim artistic scene, and specific selection of MWC as the case of study, is motivated by a larger aim of investigating the negotiation patterns/pathways taken up by subalternized subjects situated in a broader oppressive order at play. Furthermore, my selection of a multi-sited approach to my ethnographic case study is informed by an understanding of the local-and-global in relation to cultural production that takes seriously the transnationality and the liminality of borders in the process of cultural production and subjective-remaking in our current era (Marcus 1995; Clifford & Marcus 1986; Appadurai 1990; Grossberg et al, 1992; Feld 1994; Martin 1994; Boyarin 1994). Marcus writing on the emergence of multi-sited ethnographies, explains that the multi-sited ethnographer “examine[s] the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space...take[ing] unexpected trajectories in tracing cultural formation[s] across and within multiple sites of activity that destabilize” the boundaries of the “local” and “global” (Marcus 1995: 96). Furthermore, in terms of analytical work a multi-sited approach arguably enhances the *instrumentality* of an “instrumental case study” approach, in which the points of convergence and divergence in the sites of study are better prime for sociological concept building work (Nadai & Maeder 2005; Falzon 2016). In this vein, Nadai and Maeder (2005) assert in their take of sociological ethnography that the *fuzziness* of the boundaries in multi-sited ethnographic work “can be an important contribution to qualitative sociological research in general” (2005:5). Furthermore, they continue to explain that within sociology “ethnography has never been restricted to the classical “single tribe approach” (Nadai & Maeder 2005:5). Similarly, Marcus asserts a multi-

sited “mode defines for itself an object of study that cannot be accounted for ethnographically by remaining focused on a single site of intensive investigation. It develops instead a strategy or design of research that acknowledges macrotheoretical concepts and narratives” (Marcus 1995: 96).

Considering the size and proliferation of MWC chapters - in addition to the minimally curated open-mic stage format - I see the MWC stage as providing a ripe site for a close exploration of agentic possibilities and subjective (re)makings. More specifically, the MWC’s Toronto and New York City chapters are the focus of my multi-sited selection. This sampling decision is partly guided by practical considerations, as Toronto is the site of my residence and thus provides ease of access at multiple levels. While the NYC chapter is the founding chapter, the headquarters of MWC, and thus the most consistently organized and widely attended chapter. However, at a more substantive level the selection of Toronto and NYC, as mega-cities located within differing national-architectures, will arguably provide a fruitful site of teasing out productive points of convergence and divergence better priming grounded concept building work. On the point of convergence and divergence, Marcus explains, “...in projects of multi-sited ethnographic research, de facto comparative dimensions develop instead as a function of the fractured, discontinuous plane of movement and discovery among sites as one maps an object of study and needs to posit logics of relationship, translation, and association among these sites” (Marcus 1995:102). Moving forward with the logic of “comparative” offered by Marcus – even from a cursory reading Toronto and NYC are arguably sites of investigation that are well primed to reveal productive points of convergence and divergence. Firstly, the successful transport of MWC across the border into Canada points to a level of sociocultural proximity between Toronto

and NYC's Muslim creative scene. Nonetheless, the very crossing of borders and corresponding national-architecture carry the potential of highlighting a range of possible points of divergences and (dis)continuities. And thus, exploring the fields in adjacency to each other carries the potentiality of offering rich grounds for analytical work, creating the possibility of what Martin refers to as arriving at "clarity of implosion[s]" "when elements from different research contexts seemed to collapse into one another with great force" providing fruitful grounds of theory building work (Martin 1994:64).

**Methodology:** My study follows a *Narrative Ethnography (NE)* methodology, which Gubrium and Holstein define as "the ethnograph[ic] study of narrativity" (Gubrium & Holstein 2008: 250; *see also* Gubrium & Holstein 1999, 2007, Weinberg 2005; Miller 1997; Chase 1995; Marvast 2003). Narrative ethnography takes seriously "the myriad of social contexts that conditions narrative production" and thus allows research to approach "narrativity in social context" (Gubrium & Holstein 2008:251). Therefore, from a narrative ethnography standpoint, narratives *do* much more than simply "recount" a past happening or experience (Gubrium & Holstein 2007, 2008; Hyvarinen 2008:456; Chase 1996). In fact, as Bauman asserts, narratives can also work as "an instrument for obscuring, hedging, confusing, exploring or questioning" (Bauman 1986:5). This study follows a framework that takes up "narrative" to be a dynamic "sense-making" device that not only works to recount, but also "question, clarif[y], challenge and speculat[e]" (Ochs and Capps 2001:18-19; Hyvarinen 2008:456). And so, the investigatory emphasis turns to what Gubrium and Holstein (2007) refer to as "narrative practice". On the point of sense-making, Chase (2005) asserts, narratives essentially involve a *doubleness* of consciousness, a distancing of *self* from experience, followed with an active construction of a

protagonist-voice as ‘the self’ as a means of articulation. Chase (2005) continues with, “narrative[s] [are] retrospective [acts of] meaning making—the shaping or ordering of past experiences,” wherein “narratives [are] a way of understanding one's own and other's actions [...] into [a] meaningful whole” (2005:656). In other words, narrativity is the instrument that makes “the flux of experience comprehensible”, as it works to order and make intelligible a wide range of experiences, affects, events and imaginations (Mink 1978:131; Bauman 1986:5). From this perspective, a narrative becomes a wilful means of articulation/engagement where an audience is always present. This can mean ‘audience’ in the traditional sense or the self in the mirror, or even the audience built in one’s own frame of thoughts (Bauman 1986; Carlson 1996; Chase 2005; Holstein & Gubrium 2000).

Furthermore, my approach to narrative ethnography (NE) roughly follows the breakdown provided by Gubrium and Holstein’s contribution to the *Handbook of Emergent Methods* (Gubrium & Holstein 2008). Gubrium and Holstein explain, NE follows a stream of narrative studies that have emerged which takes up the “storying process” as serious “grounds for thinking about narrativity as something interesting on its own” (2008:1). Hyvarinen explains, Gubrium and Holstein’s development of NE aligns with broader shifts in narrative studies wherein the “textual and structuralist models of analysis are giving way to more contextual approaches that focus on narrative practices and storytelling” (Hyvarinen 2008:457). Thus, the investigatory interest in “narratives” is much more holistic, encompassing narrative structure and content, in addition to the “narrative environment” - i.e. “the complex and overlapping context of the storying process” (Gubrium & Holstein 2008:257). Consequently, in a NE approach the “working condition of narrative occasions” draws significant investigatory attention, as Gubrium



and Holstein argue, the narrative environment intimately mediates the structure-and-content of the narrative-making process (Gubrium & Holstein 2008:247). Gubrium and Holstein continue with, “storytelling and its occasions then are as important as the content of what is communicated” (2008:248). Consequently, an ethnographic lens is placed on the “narrative occasion” and broader “narrative environment” (Gubrium & Holstein 2007, 2008; *see also* Plummer 2001; Shaw 1966). Further elaborating on the above point, Gubrium and Holstein (2008) write;

“Narratives are not simply reflections of experience[...]rather, narratives comprise the interplay between experience, storying practices, descriptive resources, purposes at hand, audiences, and the environments that condition storytelling. Narrative ethnography provides the analytical platform, tools, and sensibilities for capturing the rich and variegated contours of everyday narrative practice (Gubrium & Holstein 2008:250-51).

More specifically, NE “is a method of procedure and analysis aimed at close scrutiny of social situation[s], their actors, and action in relation to narratives” (Gubrium and Holstein 2008:250). Gubrium and Holstein continue with - this close scrutiny “involves direct, intensive observation of the [...] multifaceted field of narrative practice” (2008:250). This more holistic approach to narrative studies draws attention much more squarely to the broader social fields of operation narratives speak to and draw meaning from. From a NE perspective then, “stories are viewed [and investigated] as windows into distinctive social worlds” (Gubrium & Holstein 2008:244; *see also* Riessman 1993; Gubrium & Holstein 2007; also see Plummer 2001; Shaw 1966). Similarly, Hyvarinen writes, when “interest moves from narratives as [...] texts into storytelling

and narrative practice within social institutions, the social functions of narrativity can be theorized in new way[s]” (Hyvarinen 2008:453).

In light of the above literature, the MWC open-mic stage, as a site of storytelling can then be understood as constituting a “narrative environment” that aims to “reclaim narratives”. Moreover, this narrative environment centers “autobiographical staged personal narratives” (Park-Fuller 2000:21) as the means of doing this work of “reclaiming”. These personal narratives come in a range of forms and genres, but all function as storytelling acts. Park-Fuller explains, “*personal narratives [have] been celebrated for [their] potential to: 1) enable a re-appropriation of voice and reconstitution of self; 2) reveal experience of marginalized peoples and promote civic change; and 3) constitute liberatory epistemolog[ies]*” (2000:21). What’s more, in the case of MWC, the staged format of this sharing of personal narratives produces a *narrative environment* in which a sense of ‘bearing witness’ carries saliency, calling forth a testimonial fervor (Park-Fuller 2000). I follow Park-Fuller’s definition of testimony here, as “a declaration of personal experience in the absence of that experience,” in which the underlining work of the testimonial is this sense of “uncovering hidden truths” (Park-Fuller 2000:22). Moreover, Park-Fuller employs the case of legal testimony to explain the contestationality of testimonials, writing: “in the courtroom, testimony is given “for” or “against” an allegation. Testimony is part of a struggle. It ‘takes sides’” (Park-Fuller 2000:22). Park-Fuller demonstrates that this “contestationality” of the testimonial account extends to the performed autobiographical personal narrative, as a declarative “transgressive political act performed without repentance” (Park-Fuller 2000:22).

Additionally, this moves away from investigating *narratives* as simply “text” to one encompassing “practice” and “environment”, according to Gubrium and Holstein, also

encompasses a taking-up of *narrative* as “performance” (Gubrium & Holstein 2008; *see also* Denzin 2003). On the point of performance, Denzin writes "performance is an act of intervention, a method of resistance, a form of criticism, a way of revealing agency" (2003:9). Continuing with, in performance we have "the intersection of politics, institutional...and embodied experience...in this way performance is a form of agency, a way of bringing culture and the person into play " (Denzin 2003:9). And according to Schechner (1998) performance "mark[s] and bend[s] identities, remake[s] time and adorn and reshape the body, tell stories and allow people to play with behavior that is restored or twice-behaved" (Schechner 1998:361). The MWC stage brings together narrativity and the performative in a manner primed for the exploration of agentic possibilities, boundary making and (re)making. Additionally, in order to be well placed to engage/capture the potential of the performative moment, my ethnographic lens will move away “from a view of performance as imitation, or dramaturgical staging [Goffman 1959]...to a view of performance as struggle, as intervention, as breaking and remaking, as kinesis, as sociopolitical act” (Conquergood 1998:32; *also see* Denzin 2003:4). The next section will outline the research design that will be deployed in my narrative ethnographic study of MWC open mic stage.

## **Research Design & Analysis**

***Participant-Observation:*** My research design centered a Participant-Observation (P-O) approach in which a *full participation, select observation, and semi-structured conversational interview* method was incorporated. I employed a two-sited P-O focused narrative analysis of open-mic events held by *The Muslim Writers Collective* (MWC) in their Toronto and New York chapters. I attended and engaged in participant-observations of 5 open-mic events in each city

with a total of 10 open-mic attendance. Marshall and Rossman (1989) define *observation* as "the systematic description of events, behaviors, and artifacts in the social setting chosen for study" (1989:79). Similarly, DeWalt and DeWalt (2002) believe that "the goal for design of research using participant observation as a method [aims] to develop a holistic understanding of the phenomena under study" (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002:92; *see also* Chase 2005; Boellstorff et. al. 2012). P-O arguably allows access to "backstage culture", "it allows for richly detailed description[s]" and is well placed for a study interested in gaining a *thick* sense of the environment or field of study (DeMunck & Sobo 1998:43). More specifically, Stocking (1983) explains, a P-O approach as an ethnographic method of data collection can be divided into three components - *participation, observation, and interrogation* (Stocking 1983; *see also* DeWalt and DeWalt 2002). Stocking (1983) cites the need for each subcomponent of the participant-observation method to undergo close delineation. Thus, my P-O research design respectively followed the following breakdown; (a) *Full Participation*, (b) *Select Observation* and (c) *on-going* interrogation.

- a) ***Full Participation*** within a P-O framework involves, as Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999) explain, "the process of learning through exposure or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting" (1999:91). Furthermore, "one is expected to become a part of the group being studied to the extent that the members themselves include the observer in the activity and turn to the observer for information about how the group is operating" (2). I took on a *Full Participant* approach in order to solidify my acculturation process as a researcher and secure a trust relationship with my participants. Although MWC events are public - in that events are publicly advertised, and attendance is not regulated - however considering the backdrop

of securitization of spaces marked *Muslim*, “trust” in institutions and figures attached to institutions is increasingly fraught (Zine & Taylor 2016). Aware of this backdrop and conscious of my ethical responsibility to the community of study (of which I see myself to share a considerable degree of affinity), I moved away from an ethnographic approach that is not critical of the broader social forces at play and thus, the power relations between researcher (institutional representative) and community. Furthermore, my *Full* participation approach included taking on the open-mic stage, and thus placing myself in the vulnerable and exposed position as the community of study. I was not only gaining a *deeper* understanding of the stage in my own ‘stage-taking act’, but this was done as another means of taking seriously the ‘critical’ aspect of my ethnographic approach and working towards a more egalitarian engagement. Additionally, my ability to access MWC-space in such an intimate manner was primarily made possible by the fact that I share multiple markers with my demographic of study, as I too identify as Muslim and also of the post-9/11 generation. And thus, I was well-placed in conducting grounded *full* participatory ethnographic research (Denzin 1993; 2003; Chavez 2008). Lastly, as a researcher I was also conscious of not developing a parasitic relationship with an already marginalized volunteer-based community group in which I am simply extracting from the resource and labour that goes into making the space possible, without contributing labour and capacity. Therefore, I made a point of supporting the Toronto space organizational needs, including but not limited to supporting with securing venues, sharing event ads, event setup-and-takedown. Since I held pre-existing relationships with some MWC organizers/performers in the Toronto scene - through my own organizing work - I knew this type of organizational support was welcomed by the group.

b) *Select Observation* is a subtype of observation considered “to be the most systematic [...] in which the researcher focuses on different types of activities to help delineate the differences in those activities” (Angrosino & DePerez 2000:677). As mentioned already, the observational concentration was the *open-mic stage* as the site of select and systematic observation of the MWC space. Moreover, my observation of the open-mic stage as a narrative-performative field/environment was viewed as encompassing multiple *narrative events*: each open mic night includes roughly 7-10 performances, and thus 7-10 *narrative events*. I define the *open-mic stage* as a *narrative-performative environment/field*, and each performance as a *narrative event*, defined as “action structures, organized by relationship[s] of causality, temporality, [interchange]...and discourse” (Bauman 1986:5). An open-mic *narrative event*, as instances of storytelling, fuses “the narrated event” with “the narrative environment” in a performative manner that speaks to the social sensibilities of the space at play (Bauman 1986). I classify each of the 10 open-mic nights I attend as a distinct *narrative environment/field* with specific aims and objectives as outlined by the promotional material. Then within each open mic night there is a medium number of about 8 performances (8 *narrative events*). Therefore, in total I conducted observations of 10 *narrative environments/fields*, and thus an average of about 80 *narrative events*. Furthermore, the open-mic stage was taken-up as a site of “narrativity” in which the narratives performed were not only thought of as “text” recounting events and experiences - whether actual or imagined - but also as embodied and dialogical site of orality “doubly anchored in [...] both the events in which they are told and to the event that they recount” (Bauman 1986:2). Similarly, Benjamin (1969)

writes, “the storyteller takes what he tells from experience – his own or that reported by others. And [S]/he [in] turn makes it the experience of those listening to his tale” (1969:87). Similarly, Langellier writes, performative text “intervenes between experience and story told” (Langellier 1999:128). Participating in an open-mic stage brings together narrative and narrativity, performance and performativity in a manner that “becomes [about] the everyday practice of doing the done” (Pollock 1998b:43). The stage thus could be understood as a “space where the doing and done collide” (Denzin 2003:11). The *narrative-event* then is in many ways about “connecting the biographical, the pedagogical and the political” (Denzin 2003: 14; *see also* Giroux 2000a: 134-35). In the MWC stage this connection between the *biographical, the pedagogical and the political* is done through storytelling acts that center the testimonial and personal deployed as a means of “reclaiming” - in these moments of narrativity the investigatory aim is to gain glimpses into the pathways of agentic (re)makings in these acts of “reclaiming” (Dezin 2003; Hardt and Negri 2000). More specifically, the select observational structure deployed was focused on capturing the structure or scene of the stage [narrative field] and each specific performance [narrative event]. Followed with attention given to the “aboutness” of the narrative event focusing on how “the biographical, the pedagogical and the political” come into play. Finally, audience reception of each narrative event was also attended to, noting interventions and appraisal. In sum, my *select observation* of MWC’s open mic stage was focused on documenting the “scene-aboutness-reception” of each of the 80 narrative events [see Appendix I for observational chart].

c) ***Interrogation – Conversational Interviews:*** In addition to employing *full* participation and *select* observation methods, fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted *per* city with MWC leadership and membership, including performers and attendees - totaling 30 interviews. A snowball sampling strategy for selecting individuals within MWC for interviews was deployed (Dvorah & Peregrine 2006; Creswell 2009; Marcus 1998; Boellstorff et. al. 2012). Interview as a research method was not approached as a mechanism of “gathering objective data to be used neutrally” (Fontana & Frey 2005). As Scheurich asserts, “the conventional, positivist view of interviewing vastly underestimates the complex, uniqueness, and indeterminateness of each one-to-one human interaction” (1995:241; *see also* Fontana & Frey 2005 from). Rather I align with an approach that takes up interviewing as “conversation[al] or dialogic[al] comprising of a to-ing and for-ing of utterance [and] response” (Rapport 2012:53). Thus, the interview will be deployed as a form of “empathetic” (Fontana & Frey 2005) “talking-partnerships” (Rapport 2012) centering “*reciprocity, complementary, collaboration and emergence*”, and thus taking on a conversational approach (Rapport 2012:54). As Fontana and Frey explain, what is key in a conversational approach “is the “active” nature of [the] process that leads to a contextually bound and mutually created story” (2005:696). In this conversational approach to interviewing, the interview question function as prompts guiding dialogue to a jointly created *arrival* (Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Fontana and Frey 2005). Moreover, an “empathetic” and “conversational” standpoint to interviewing - once again - boosts the ‘critical’ standpoint of my study, functioning as another means of employing efforts to further egalitize the power differential between researcher and participant. Furthermore, an empathetic standpoint to interviewing “proceeds from [a]



belief that neutrality is not possible, then taking a stance becomes unavoidable,” and so an emphasis is made for researchers to “interact as persons with the interviewees” sharing and revealing in a conversational manner (Fontana and Frey 2005:696; *see also* Scheurich 1995). Fontana and Frey further explain, from this reciprocity vantagepoint: “empathetic approaches take an ethical stance in favor of individuals or groups being studied. The interviewer becomes an advocate and partner in the study, hoping to be able to use the results... [to] ameliorate conditions” (Fontana and Frey 2005:696). An emphatical conversational approach moves the interview into, as Kong and colleagues (2002) assert, “a methodology of friendship” – an approach that has especially been deployed by studies focused on groups in the margins of power (*see also* Hertz and Ferguson 1997 on *queer single mothers*; Collins 1990 on *black women*; Denzin 2003a, 2003b). In terms of the lines of questioning, the MWC stage was the jumping off point for the interview conversations. The overall focus of the conversations were concentrated on the work and relevance of MWC’s overarching objective of “reclaiming narratives”. In addition to this broader line of questioning, an emphasis on the “aboutness” of the narratives they themselves have performed on the MWC stage and/or performances that stood out to them were also points of concentration. Put differently, interviews revolved around the “production, distribution, and circulation of stories” (Holstein & Gubrium 1995: 250) shared on the MWC stage, in addition to the relevance of MWC more broadly [see Appendix II for Guiding Interview Questions].

**Analysis – Thematic Analysis, grounded theory approach:** Lastly, the analytical framework employed to make sense of the data collected from the above outlined methods followed a

thematic analysis approach located in a broader grounded theory orientation (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001; Ezzy 2002; Annells 1996; Wilson & Hutchinson 1996; Charmaz 1990). Borrowing from the work of Charmaz and Mitchell (2001), grounded theory involves the: 1) “*simultaneous data-collection and analysis*”; 2) “*discovery of basic social processes within the data*”; 3) “*inductive construction of abstract [thematic] categories that explain and synthesize these processes*”; and, 4) “*integration of categories into a theoretical framework that specifies causes, conditions and consequences of the process(es)*” (2001:160). The goal of the grounded theorist is to “fill-in,” “saturate,” “enrich,” and “stretch” theoretical constructs with contextual specificities and empirical weight (Charmaz & Mitchell 2001:161). The core of a grounded theory approach, as explained by Kellehear (1993), is the inductive category development and thematic analysis that follows. What’s more, a thematic analysis approach is well placed to engage with the divergent voices of the open-mic stage (i.e. the range of narrative events) in a dialogical manner with the broader aims of the event (i.e. narrative environment). Hence, a thematic method allows an analytical organization of the research material wherein each narrative event is framed as speaking to the overarching concerns of the narrative field as expressed through the overarching topical-prompts as relayed by the MWC organizers. More specifically, the focus of analysis will be concentrated on teasing out thematic arrangements as relating to the narrative deployment of the stories shared, in addition to audience reception (Charmaz and Mitchell 2001; Chase 2000; Giroux 2000a; Bischooping and Gazso 2015). In other words, the “so what?” & “reception” of the stories will be key for the work of thematic organization. Furthermore, the *problem-orientation-complication-and-resolution* of the narrative events will also be important elements for category development and thus, thematic analysis (Riessman 1993; Giroux 2000a).

## Reflexivity, Ethical Considerations, & Limitations

My ability to access MWC-space in such an intimate manner was primarily made possible by the fact that I share the markers of “Muslim”, a North Atlantic location, and roughly a generational alignment, i.e. I am part of what Zine (2014) calls “the post-9/11 generation”. Moreover, I have come to develop a poetic-performative skillset through my informal community-based engagement with the Toronto-Muslim art scene. And so, I understand my standpoint as providing a level of “immediacy” (Prus 1996) to my site and demographic of investigation. Moreover, I hold this “immediacy” to be conducive to producing *thick* analysis and nuanced engagements. Chavez writes, a *relative-insider positionality* allows for an understanding of “the cognitive, emotional, and/or psychological precepts of participants as well as possess a more profound knowledge of the historical and practical happenings of the field” (Chavez 2008: 481). I see my relative shared place as lending itself well to this project, arguably affording me relative “intersubjective intimacy” with the artistic works and aims of the MWC stage (Charmaz & Mitchell 2001; Denzin 2003). I am consequently well-placed in conducting grounded *full* participatory ethnographic research. My relative *insider* positionality made-possible the incorporation of collaborative, performative, and autoethnographic methods to further support the interpretive depth of my study (Denzin 1993, 2003; Naples, 2003; Chavez 2008; Loxley and Seery 2008; Merton 1972).

Furthermore, my *critical interpretive constructivist* standpoint disavows any claims of neutrality or impartiality on my research efforts (Denzin, 2003; Fontana and Frey 2005; Charmaz

& Mitchell, 2001). Rather my epistemic and ethical lens moves away from hard “subject/object dichotomy[ies]” (Code 1991: 27), and concentrates efforts on cultivating as much constitutive space as possible for the stories and insight shared from the field, taking on an “active-listener” role and positioning research as a co-constitutive platform that can work to amplify voices often invisibilized (Min-ha 1987; see also Christians 2005). My ethical standpoint is thus captured well by Denzin’s writing in “cultivating reflexivity”, as an active-listener, he writes, “I will attempt to function as an empowering collaborator. I will use [material gathered] as a tool of intervention[...] uncovering structures of oppression in the life worlds” of my demographic of study (Denzin 2003:75; see also Burawoy 1998; Breen 2007; DeLyser 2001). I would also add that my ethical aim centers an active listening that places emphasis on drawing attention to the agentic life worlds of subalternized spaces; highlighting the ingenuity, fortitude and generative possibilities of racialized subjects in the margins. Through this work of showcasing the agentic life worlds of subalternized agents the aim is to contribute to amplifying voices and insights that rarely make it to institutional stages, working to further equalize the “marketplace” of ideas and *ways of doing/being*. And in a small way ameliorate what Min-ha refers to as the subaltern “humiliation of being said for” (Min-ha 1987:6), or of being “said” for in flat, reductive - and in the case of Muslimhood - veiled and bearded frames. Caricatures and frames that arguably fuel the discursive and structural arrangements that provide the firewood for contemporary xenophobia, racisms and Islamophobic architectures (Morey & Yaqin 2011). Moreover, considering the sociological diversity marking my demographic of study it will be important for me to continuously take note of this diversity in question, while also marking the play of other ordering systems in the presentation and performance of Muslimness present and active in the sites of investigation (i.e. anti-blackness, classism, ethnocentrism...etc). This attention on the

point of diversity is also meant to move away from further reinforcing an aggregative singular construction/discussion of Muslimhood. Furthermore, across my methodological selection I have attempted to be reflexive and conscious about the power differential between myself as a researcher and the community I am studying in the aim of taking on an “active listener” role (Denzin 2003). I nonetheless hold an institutional position that cannot completely be accounted for or flattened, and even with deployments of “methodologies of friendship and collaboration” (Fontana & Frey 2005), as Chase asserts, “I am the one that will be cutting and pasting the result[s]” and thus hold the final “interpretive authority” (Chase 2005:664).

As a researcher I am also conscious of not developing a parasitic relationship with an already marginalized volunteer-based community group in which I am simply extracting from the resource and labour that goes into making the space possible, without contributing labour and capacity. Thus, as mentioned earlier, my *full* participatory methodological approach included a capacity support role within the Toronto space. This organizational support included but was not limited to assisting with securing venues, sharing event ads, open-mic setup-and-takedowns. I have developed relationships with Toronto MWC organizers, and organizational type of capacity support is more than welcomed by the group. In addition to the aforementioned social ethics guiding my project, I am also conscious of the traditional ethical codes organized around *informed consent*, *privacy* and *accuracy* (Christians 2005). Although I locate “intersubjective intimacy” to be productive for *thick* research work, I am cognizant of the potential risk to *privacy* and *accuracy* that could arise with sharing proximity with both the actors and the field of study (Christians 2005; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Bell 2005; Merriam et al., 2001; Aguilier 1981). The *ease* of interactive access as a relative insider could mean, among other things, that the boundaries between the ‘research-friendship’ and ‘friendship-friendship’ may at times be blurred

(Merriam et al. 2001; Aguiler 1981). I do not read this ‘blurring’ as problematic in itself - but I was cognizant that an “expediency of access” may lead to an inadvertent overexposure of an already vulnerable demographic (Chavez 2008). Therefore, my orientation towards a *select observational* method was partly motivated by this realization - meant to draw somewhat of a boundary between ‘research disclosure time’ and ‘non-research sharing time’ - and thus, ameliorating the risk of overexposure (Chavez 2008; Greene 2014). I especially was cognizant of the potential risk to inform-consent and privacy in the Toronto MWC space - wherein I had prolonged relationships with many members - thus making it known when I am in *research-friendship* and *friendship-friendship* mode in a much more overt and on-going manner was necessary (Chavez 2008). In this way, disclosures that are not meant for an institutional gaze are protected (*see Simpsons 2014 on ‘ethnographic refusal’*).

Moreover, carrying prior knowledge of the challenges and opportunities of the community of study by the mere fact of my relative membership also “increase [the] risk of[...]making assumptions based on [my] prior knowledge and/or experience” with the group (Fontana and Frey 2005). In order to orient my prior subjective knowledge as a mechanism of enhancing my listening skills rather than compromising my aim of providing as much constitutive space as possible for the diverse voices I encounter, I incorporated the conversation-interview component as a means of not only collecting further material, but also as a type of peer-check, “peer-debriefing” mechanism (Chavez 2008). In this “peer-debriefing” other members of MWC are provided the space to share their reading/take of the MWC stage and respond to my readings as developed by that point (Chavez 2008). Furthermore, as Chavez explains, in opposition to a relative-outsider researcher in which the “shock” or “lag” factor of gradual acculturation is the emphasis of reflexive work, an insider-researcher reflexive orientation is better spent

“reflect[ing] on [one’s] relationship to the research project, the native researcher is grounded implicitly and situated at all moments in the dual and mutual status of subject-object; she is both the subject of her study and the participant object of her study” (Kanuhu 2000:441). After each open-mic event I made a point to engage in open reflection writing, or as Van Heugten (2004) puts it “stream of consciousness writing,” reflecting on the tensions, appraisals and happenings that struck me during each open-mic. And through this reflective writing, the aim was to better locate my standpoint in relation to the documentation type of observational notes I conducted of the stage (Mauthner & Doucet 2003; Watt 2007). Thus, demarcating my fieldnotes into *documentation* and *reflection*, I hoped to better manage, as Greene writes, the inevitable duality of the “researcher and the researched” for the insider researcher, “without causing a noticeable disturbance to the research setting” (Greene 2014:7).

Moreover, in terms of *privacy and confidentiality*, I am also conscious of the racialized securitization architecture (Selod 2019; Morsi 2016) ‘Muslim’ marked spaces have undergone wherein ‘speech acts’ have witnessed considerable scrutiny, and thus research can open the community up to particular ‘vulnerabilities’ (Beydoun 2018; Zine 2012; Zine & Taylor 2016). Thus, in my documentation of MWC open mic events, the identities of the performers on the stage were anonymized from the moment of observational documentation, omitting the names and introductory biographies of performers from my notes (Sieber 1992; Baez 2002; Crow et al. 2006). My field-notes were recorded electronically and uploaded into a password-secure third-party iCloud software, after which notes on any electronic hard drive were removed (Jensen & Laurie 2016). However, it is worth noting that considering MWC open-mics are publicly open events “deductive disclosure” is still possible from my notes on the “aboutness” of the performed pieces (Tolich 2004; Kaiser 2009). However, in this instance, I follow Baez’s (2002) emphasis

on protecting “critical agency” in addition to “secrecy”, as further removal of descriptors from performances will arguably compromise the agentic action of performers (*see also*, Berkhout 2013; Allen & Wiles 2016). Additionally, as relating to interview conversation all audio recordings were also immediately uploaded into a password-secure third-party iCloud server, and once again all hard drive copies deleted. What’s more, for the sake of consistency and further “democratizing” the interviewing process (Salmon 2007), interviewees were also invited to select the naming associated with their transcripts (Allen & Wiles 2016; Nespor 2000).

And a final limitation worth noting here is the distinction between “cultural member” and “social member” (Greene 2014). Even if I locate myself as a relative-insider to the field and subject matter in broad terms, as Greene (2014) explains, “cultural members” can nonetheless also be “social strangers” to the sub-community in question (*see also* Aguiler 1981). My access to the NYC and Toronto space were differentiated by my location as a “cultural member” vs. “social member” arrangement. Considering my residence and community-work has been in Toronto, I am in many ways both a *cultural* and *social member* to the Muslim art scene and MWC space in Toronto. However, in the case of MWC-NYC I mostly only held the former role, i.e. cultural membership. My social membership lied in the strength of my proxy to Toronto MWC networks, in addition to my own taking-up of the stage as a performer. And thus, mobility and accessibility in both fields were not evenly distributed at the start of the fieldwork and thus carried consequences to both data collection and analysis.

In conclusion, this study does not aim to speak for MWC or the Muslim creative community - the research does not carry the representative robustness necessary to make any comprehensive claims. Rather a *thick* ethnographic approach is well-placed for the work of carefully disentangling and bringing to light the dynamics of emerging social processes, and this



close exploration for the sake of grounded concept development work is the objective of my project. Considering my study focuses on a creative collective, I center storytelling in the manner I distill my findings and analysis moving forward. The next portion of my dissertation will move into my analytical chapters which were informed by thick data consisting of 30 conversational interviews, 10 narrative environments (open mic events), 80 narrative events (performances) spanning a 10-month fieldwork period. The observational notes collected during the P-O phase of the study will be intermarried with the conversations recorded during the interviews in order to offer as comprehensive a picture as possible of the field of study and the agents at play.

## CHAPTER 5: PRODUCING “PRODUCERS”: THE GENERATIVE FLIGHT OF JAMA’AH

---

In this chapter, I open with distilling my findings and analysis through a first-person autoethnographic format without bracketing the affective and cognitive voices of my own and my interlocutors. The chapter will move from my ethnographic narrative of the night of April 27th, and transition into reading the responses of those that found MWC, as a creative formation, most *uninspiring* and most *transformative*. Through this comparative approach, I aim to delineate what MWC is *not*, to arrive at what MWC offers as a counterpublic formation. This comparative approach is then oriented to speak to the more substantive question of the agentic tactics and pathways available for racialized and problematized subjects? My field engagement with MWC renewed my methodological commitment to lived knowledge, affirming a conviction that liberatory possibilities are made intersubjectively and collectively. I found that I initially could not analytically capture or effectively articulate the affective and emotional impact I experienced during the participant-observation portion of my field study. The limited nature of the academic frames I entered the field with revealed themselves with each night I attended an MWC open-mic. Eventually, I submitted to the field and came to hone in on the affective currents and emotional life cultivated and aroused by the space. So, my analytical questioning firmly centered the *how of the space*. Wherein my own affective responses on *how the space left me feeling* was situated in relation to how my interlocutors framed *what the space provided them*. I also take a long-form approach in the way I present excerpts from interview transcripts, with

the intention of providing as much space as possible for the words of my interlocutors, or as Su'ad Abdul Khabeer puts it, “teachers” (Abdul Khabeer 2016).

### **The Night of April 27<sup>th</sup>**

The crowd that filled the Ethiopian-owned coffee shop on the night of April 27th was markedly different from the millennial hipster patrons that frequent the cafe during working hours. Located in a slowly gentrifying part of the city, during the day the shop comes to life as the stomping grounds of wayward students and colorful artists. Tonight, however, the space was lent out to MWC. The Muslim Writers Collective (MWC), like many other grassroots organizations, makes do with shifting venues and revolving membership, depending on resource availability and network constraints. In fact, arranging tonight’s event at this particular venue transpired through the lending out of my own personal networks.<sup>11</sup> At this point - a year and a half into my ethnographic work - my relationship with the MWC-Toronto regulars has significantly evolved. My conversations have now become anchored in general life catch-ups and community happenings, with research-talk largely taking a backseat.

I arrived at this particular MWC night later than planned, expecting everyone else to also run-on Muslim-Standard-Time (MST). This time, however, my barometer was off, it seemed I was the only one on MST. The cafe was brimming with energy with nearly all seating real estate called for. Scanning the room for a corner to park myself for the night, I walked over bags and

---

<sup>11</sup> As outlined in Chapter 4, I took on a Full-Participant approach in order to solidify my acculturation process as a researcher and secure a trust relationship with my participants. My Full-Participation approach included supporting the Toronto space organizational needs, including but not limited to supporting with securing venues, sharing event ads, event setup-and-takedown. Since I held pre-existing relationships with some MWC organizers/performers in the Toronto scene - through my own organizing work - I knew this type of organizational support was welcomed by the group.

legs stretched out – with “I’m sorry” and “excuse me”, smiling at familiar faces and nodding at community acquaintances. My seemingly sole tardiness produced some anxiety; nonetheless, the commotion I caused was dwarfed by the chatter and raucous that revolved around transforming the borrowed cafe space into MWC “place” (Glass 2012:704).

The anticipatory atmosphere and bustling commotion that filled the room at this particular MWC night was however the rule, not the exception. In fact, as one of the founding organizers of the Toronto chapter, Asiyah B explains that even the very first MWC-TO event captured the attention and energy of the community. In Asiyah B’s words;

*The first time we had like 70 people come. It was packed...there was no room for people to sit! I just made a Facebook group...But I think that people had already started to see the Muslim Writer Collective....because people were like, "Oh, a Muslim Writers Collective in Toronto?" And then everybody came.*

(Asiyah B MWC-TO, 2018)

MWC had already gained some prominence in the United States, which resulted in the founding of local chapters across the country (Chicago IL, Washington D.C., Houston TX, Seattle WA, San Francisco CA., etc), before expanding into Canada. Asiyah B contends the robust virtual presence and the popularity of MWC’s NYC headquarters particularly carried a definite spillover effect. However, the type of traction and brand recognition MWC came to quickly enjoy among millennial urban multicultural Muslims was to a great extent unanticipated. MWC tapped into an appetite that was much larger than the initial modest intentions of its early leadership. Narrating

the impetus behind the formation of MWC, the founding architect, HA, vividly shares the collective's origin story, HA explains;

*So I think the origin of the story goes, for me, at least goes back to late 2013. So I grew up in New York. I went away for college, for grad school. I lived in California for a bit. So around the summer of 2013, I finally moved back to New York. I hadn't really lived here as an adult before, so I had to set out the process of making friends and just meeting people for almost the first time because I'd always lived with my family, so I wasn't going around socializing... So I started going to different Muslim events, meeting people. I was a data scientist, I also thought of myself as a writer... I dabbled in journalism, and I just wanted to meet other cool, young Muslims who were into the same things I was.*

*And what I found is that New York has a very vibrant, young Muslim professional community, but it's very career and professional oriented. So almost everyone I was meeting were bankers or they were doctors or they were lawyers or they were people who were incredibly career focused.*

*I was having a hard time meeting creative people. And I felt like I needed that type of community around me, to motivate me, to encourage me, to inspire me, so I could be inspired to produce my own work. And I wasn't really finding that.*

(HA MWC-NYC, 2018)

As HA continues to explain, the drive that eventually led to the formation of MWC was not motivated by a general lack of Muslim community spaces he could identify with and plug into. Rather, this drive was a byproduct of his own need for a Muslim-identifying community that

could “inspire” and “motivate” creativity. A *generative* space was what was desired, and from HA’s standpoint, that was what was missing in the pre-existing spaces and communities he engaged with. HA continues by outlining the steps and validation sought out before truly arriving at MWC as a viable investment, HA explains;

*So I sort of had this idea, I was talking with my sister who luckily happened to be a youth organizer, so she does a lot of work organizing people and getting them together. So I was telling her about this dilemma and she said why don't you just have an event, put out a call for Muslim creative people, writers, performers, and have them come together and that's how you'll meet people. If you're not meeting people going to other people's events then you might as well do your own event.*

*And that idea was so crazy to me because I was like, "I just moved here. I have no friends, and you want me to not only put myself out there but organize a whole event." What if no one shows up to it? It's going to be so embarrassing or what if it sucks?" And she was like, "No, you can do it, blah, blah, blah." She hyped me up, [but] it still took many months of conversation and motivation.*

*And finally, we took our first step. We made a Google doc, a Google form. So it was a survey saying we want to start a New York Muslim Writers Collective. If you're interested, is this something you want to be part of? Are you a writer? Are you a performer? What genre do you associate with? What would you like to see from this community? Just sort of seeing...doing some initial testing to see if anyone was interested in this.*

*I sent this to all the 10 Muslims I knew in New York. And my sister sent it to her friends, and we just sort of sat back and saw what would happen. And, I don't know, within a week we had 200 responses from all over the country!*

*And even though we had called it 'New York Muslim Writers Collective', people were like, "I'm in Chicago, but I still want to be part of this. I'm in London, and I heard about this from a friend of a friend of a friend. Can we Skype into your meetings?" And we were like, "We don't have any meeting. This is not really a real thing. It's just a Google doc!"*

(HA MWC-NYC, 2018)

HA frames the unanticipated whirlwind that followed the simple google survey as demonstrative of an untapped need that went far beyond his expectations, surpassing his viability test. HA continues to explain:

*And I think I took a leap of faith one day, and I just removed the New York from the name I think that was really a transformative moment because it...it just felt very arrogant to me to call something "Muslim Writers Collective" when I was barely a writer [laughter].*

*But I think I felt like, " Why not just try it?" Because if so many people outside of New York were interested in it, why keep it wedded to New York when we were tapping into something much greater than New York...So, I think, [since] March 2014...it sort of snowballed on its own.*

*We have monthly open mics in, I think, maybe six or maybe eight cities. It's hard to keep track of it. It's become pretty decentralized. It's grassroots.*

*I travel a lot. My sister travels a lot. We get inquiries from all over ...saying, "We heard about what you're doing. How do we do this in our city? How do we bring you guys to our city?"*

*And we say, "We're not really a traveling group of performers." We have an idea. It adds a lot of value to our community. And we have certain values and principles. And if you're on board with this, you're welcome to do this in your own city. And we'll support you.*

*And that's sort of the model we've been playing around with. And it's been almost, I think, almost five years now that we've been doing this.*

(HA MWC-NYC, 2018)

The local collective's accelerated growth into a national organization served as the backdrop from which Asiyah B's MWC-Toronto chapter was launched. And so, Asiyah B, like other franchising chapter leaders, gained the cosign needed to adapt MWC to the Toronto landscape and transport it across the border, effectively marking the collective as a "trans-local" development (Glass 2012; Bennett 2002a; Harris 2000; Hodkinson 2002; Kruse 1993). Although the founding of MWC was motivated by HA's very personal desire for a generative creative community, by 2014 this need for Muslim-identifying non-mosque spaces or "third-spaces" was well understood by North Atlantic Muslim communities (Zine 2016; Abdul Khabeer 2016; Selod 2019; Morey & Yaqin 2011; Husain 2020).<sup>12</sup> And so, prior to my involvement with MWC, I

---

<sup>12</sup> The Muslim Studies literature surveying Muslim responses to the post-9/11 moment in the West demonstrates that the exponential rise in Muslim organizing efforts have particularly centered the formation of 'third-spaces'. These third-spaces are non-mosque spaces of community-making that are not confined to the same racial, ethnic, generational, and sectarian divides that the politics of Mosque-centered organizing tends to be enmeshed in. This is however not to say that there is no significant overlap between Mosque communities and communities organizing third-spaces. Additionally, this also does not negate the growth of organizing efforts within the confines of Mosques, which have also seen a growth in the same period (see Abdul Khabeer 2016; Selod 2019; Morey & Yaqin 2011; Husain 2020; Zine 2016)



engaged in and attended a range of Muslim-centred salons, artistic showcases, curated visual art events, consciousness-raising political collectives, and of course the good old networking/professional meet-and-greets. While the development of MWC fits this moment of growth in Muslim counterpublics, MWC nonetheless seemed to approach the project of community/space-making rather differently. Through a convergence of resource constraints, outsider status to the mainstream creative arts world, and some intentionality around ‘openness’ and ‘accessibility’ from early leadership, there was a persistent centering of play, experimentation, and improvisation in the “scene-space” MWC produced. A “scene” can be defined, according to Bennett (2002a), as “a shared connection with a locally created...style...through which people articulate their sense of togetherness” (2002a:224). By the time my fieldwork began in late 2018, the particular style, network of chapters, and sense of “togetherness” that came out of the modest intentions of HA’s google survey resulted in a *trans-local* creative scene “link[ing] networks of people, resources, and spaces through long-distance flows of products, people, and information” (Glass 2012:697). For instance, Saltysister, a regular performer in the MWC-TO space, explains what directed her attention to MWC in general, Saltysister asserts;

*Okay, so the first time I ever went to an MWC, it was actually in the New York one. Toronto had started up, but I think it was in a weird, just starting stage. It wasn't cool yet [laughter]...So my first MWC event and knowing about it was in New York, and I think the reason I went, honestly, I was already going to New York, and I was told it's just a really chill place [and]...really good way to meet Muslims in a context that isn't weird.*

(Saltysister MWC-TO, 2018)

Saltysister's explanation of her involvement with the Toronto space was an introductory story that captured the manner many of my interlocutors came into contact with MWC-Toronto. Both Asiyah B and Caffeinator, forthcoming Toronto chapter leaders, would share how their attendance or online following of the NY or D.C or San Francisco chapter would shape their decision of organizing the Toronto MWC outpost. Eickelman and Salvators remind us that counterpublics with "shared standards of anticipation must still be based on ties that are perceived as local, even if these 'localities' take advantage of modern communications [and] are not local [at all] in a geographical sense" (Eickelman & Salvatore 2002:107; Willemse & Bergh 2016:301). Thus, although the Toronto and NYC chapters I engaged with during my fieldwork are shaped by the context of their location, my interlocutors spoke about the MWC space in a "trans-local" sense. Their stories of what happened in Toronto would weave into what happened in NYC then come back to Toronto. Thus, MWC sat as a trans-local formation destabilizing the bordering of Muslimhoods at multiple levels. Although this seamless crossborder perspective of the "MWC-scene" was the dominant framework of engagement, MWC-NYC did play a type of central node role in style and tone, continuing to be the most visible and well-organized collective in the MWC stratosphere. Moreover, considering the backdrop of Muslim racing is one that operates to manage the slippage of *Muslimness* by deploying bordering techniques, MWC as a counterpublic formation in contrast provides fertile ground of disrupting hard demarcations of here-and-there, of local-and-trans-local, expanding the landscape of agentic action and self-making.

### **Doing Scene: "Not an Art space"**

Getting back to the night of April 27th, 2019, five years since HA's google survey, the brimming energy I experienced as I moved through the crowded cafe was not simply a result of the number of bodies crammed in the space. Although the packed atmosphere did add to the energy of the room, a similar feeling of anticipatory energy also filled the more intimate MWC open-mic nights. At each event, before the host officially kicked off the showcase, an MWC night felt nothing short of an improv-like ensemble production where order seemed to be persistently fleeting and the programming evolved as the night progressed. An active process of transforming the borrowed space into "scene space" tended to routinely lead to the emergence of a makeshift staff and crew, enveloping nearly the entire room into "behind the scenes" action. Glass explains, the collective "doing" of grassroots creative scenes tends to leave members with a sense of tangible "accomplishment" each time the scene comes to be (re)produced (Glass 2012:699). The thinner the guiding blueprint the greater sense of collective accomplishment felt. At the same time, this also means the risk of failure is also experienced to be very tangible and ever-present. And so, the echoing screeches of shuffling borrowed-space furniture magnified by organizational directives moving across one another was a consistent staple of the MWC pre-kickoff atmosphere.

On this particular night, as I tried to navigate through the pre-production commotion, my attention was split between scanning the space for a spare seat and struggling to maintain the warm gaze of a leading organizer across the room. The largely non-hierarchical grassroots structure of MWC tended to result in a revolving door of members and organizers. I was nearly always introduced to a new organizer or volunteer at each open-mic night. It is worth noting that the blurring of 'traditional' showcase demarcations and the take-up of a level of improvisation is part and parcel of the amateur-led open-mic scene. Open mics by design rework the boundaries

between the audience/performer and insider/outsider. The MWC open mic stage was no different in this regard. The unsettling anticipation for the eventual pin drop silence and lukewarm applause that inevitably follows a performance that falls flat persistently hovers each time another audience-member turned performer takes their chance with an open-mic stage. However, the MWC scene-space seemed to extend the liminal and improvisatory logic of the open mic stage to the organizing principles of the collective at large. Consequently, while the basic ingredients of each MWC event remained consistent (stage + mic + host + performers + audience) the atmosphere, flow, and interaction of the audience tended to leave an idiosyncratic effect. And so, beyond turning the casual attendee into a performer, an attendee could play multiple showrunner and organizational roles during the course of the same MWC event. By the end of the night, the same first-time attendee can easily find themselves pulled into brainstorming organizational direction while packing up for the night. The tendency then for an MWC event was to galvanize the entire room into action, from first-time attendees to seasoned regulars, diffusing the necessary investment and corresponding responsibility required for the successful reproduction of the space. And as Glass (2012) explains, this pull to invest is a common feature of grassroots creative collectives. Glass continues to explain, “doing scene” in grassroots creative spaces often require a sustained dynamic interaction of participants in which the “spatial building blocks” of the scene are readily manipulated and reordered...[by which] the scene becomes a collective dynamic accomplishment” (Glass 2012:699). This collective agentic exercise was central to the generative energy cultivated and offered up by MWC, speaking to the role of collective action in opening up renewed agentic possibilities for subalternized agents.

On the flip side, however, one of the key criticisms levied by those that did not jive with MWC was this same liminality, improvisatory energy, and the corresponding investment the

space seemed to demand. Even when folks appreciated the impact of the collective, attendees on several occasions would relay that they felt jolted in all sorts of directions. Further asserting that the entire thing seemed to move with *thin* organizational planning, thus perpetually reproducing the “scene-space” as embryonic and emerging. This embryonic fluidity of MWC in fact became such a flashpoint for the NYC chapter that they underwent a split in 2018. The split led to the formation of another collective called the Performing Arts Mosaic (PAM). One of the leading organizers of PAM explains the drive to start the new collective and part ways from MWC with the following;

*The impetus for PAM was to create professional level production. The quality level in Muslim spaces tend to hinge on the lower side - this cut across restaurants, events...etc. PAM aims to provide a holistic experience - from the point you enter the venue [you are greeted and ushered in] to the drink quality [e.g. hot chocolate] to the live on-stage jazz drumming. To the photographer and videographer. A type of Jimmy Fallon high-energy feel. The drummer, for instance, is from Julliard which once again speaks to the level of professionalism.*

(AD MWC-NY, 2018)

AD continues to explain that his time and involvement with MWC was pivotal in shaping his performance life and comfort with taking the stage. When AD first started attending MWC events, he explained that he did not necessarily think of himself as a writer/performer/artist. But after a few years steeped in MWC organizing, and other community arts spaces, he came to develop a creative voice. Eventually, however, AD felt it was time to direct his attention elsewhere. The formation of PAM emerged out of AD’s own organic growth as a creative and organizer. And so, AD and his team framed the new organization as signaling a type of

“graduation point”, graduating past the embryonic, fluid, and perpetually emerging atmosphere of MWC. There was also an emphasis on the *illegibility* of the MWC space beyond the MWC-stratosphere. AD pointed to the importance of garnering visibility outside of the world of MWC, which to PAM required a very different type of organizing and orientation, i.e. a level of “professionalism”.

Much of my conversation with AD and the other members that parted ways from MWC reminded me of my own early concerns. At the beginning of my fieldwork, I was particularly fixated on grasping the direction and type of intervention possible for a loosely coordinated and curated creative collective, like MWC. But I quickly came to realize the sense of limbo I experienced with the collective was more than “growing pains”. This liminality came to quickly reveal itself as rather endemic to the space. Creating an atmosphere where one is repeatedly grappling with a constant sense of emergence without ever really reaching a clear arrival.

This realization, however, did not come to full fruition until I attended one of PAM’s early shows. Like AD, others in the organizing team repeatedly shared that PAM was “NO MWC”. It was explained to me that PAM was less of a community ensemble production, where attendees - first-timers or not - could regularly be turned into showrunners, or where open-mic novices could spontaneously decide to take the stage and cap off the night. And as soon as I walked into the outdoor concert venue of the early PAM event I attended in late 2018, it was glaringly evident that nothing was done haphazardly. The layout was pre-planned with audience seating, performance stage, and organizational setup clearly designated. Attendees were not scrummaging for seating, no settling with standing real estate here. The organizers all wore matching tops and were geared with mic earpieces and radio communication. Designated ushers guided attendees to their seats and answered any queries. The stage was elevated, large enough

for a sitting band. In contrast, the staging was not always evident at an MWC event until a mic came to be placed in one corner of the venue and attendees pulled and huddled around. Furthermore, even when a performance space was used there was a tendency to repurpose the “stage” as needed. For instance, the stage could spontaneously become a temporary makeshift prayer space or a site to set up a community potluck (both of which particularly happened regularly in the MWC-TO space).

With a live band playing between acts, PAM events included an impressive array of rotating performances. Open-mic sets were strategically dispersed in between feature performers, warming the audience for the next feature. PAM was clearly running an artistic production in the fullest sense, with all the bells and whistles of a planned and curated show, offering everything from Juilliard artists to full-time performing arts crews. Although the ten dollars or so I paid for a PAM show ticket - in NYC of all places - was nothing short of a steal, at the end of it all however the anticipatory urgency for the next event I consistently experienced with MWC did not follow. With clear peaks and troughs, there was a clear start, middle, and end to the PAM showcase. The anticipatory energy of the start of the night was successfully carried through. And so, by the end, I felt satisfied, complete and a bit exhausted - as you would after a full day of amusement park escapades, where you let yourself go and the “professionals” take you for a ride. Consequently, my PAM attendance led to the realization that the early frustrations I experienced with MWC’s always emerging and never truly arriving atmosphere kept me strangely connected to the space. In other words, the lack of completeness and legibility, although unsettling, also effectively produced an unexpected investment and thus anticipatory pull to the space. By the time I sat down with AD, I grew accustomed to and even developed a fondness for this persistent

uncertainty, weightiness, and tension evoked by the liminality, or in Hartman's (2019) word "waywardness", of the MWC scene-space.

This anticipatory pull, even urgency, I experienced with MWC was corroborated by many of the MWC regulars. Although it seemed difficult to language this pull, it was generally agreed upon that it was not primarily the level of artistry or quality of performance that kept us invested and engaged. In fact, one of the MWC-TO regular performers unabashedly shares her first impressions of MWC with the following;

*[I mean my] first impression [of mwc] was that there's a lot more people here than I thought were going to be here [laughter]...I just was like...This doesn't seem right[laughter].*

*But a bunch of people told me to go to it, so I was like, 'People think this is cool. This is weird'[laughter]. But then, yeah, there were so many people there, and I'm like, 'So obviously, it's filling a gap that people wanted this'.*

*[And] not to be rude, but some of the performances, it was good, but..I [was] not threatened by it [laughter]. I'm like, all right, I can give this a whirl then [laughter].*

*I'm just like, these are just regular people [laughter], performing. There's a bar, obviously. There are some really, really amazing ones, and they're just doing it for fun.*

(Saltysister MWC-TO, 2018)



And JH, a NYC-based trained poet, also shares her first impressions of the MWC space with the following;

*I'm very critical of, eh, of open mike spaces ... [though] I haven't attended them recently...I've found that like, eh, [they] have a different effect than like the poetry spaces.*

*I performed at one of the MWC [open-mics and] it...just fell flat. So I'm involved in [MWC] for now more as a spectator.*

(JH MWC-NY, 2018)

JH continues to explain where she finds her artistic production to fit better, followed with a much sobered take of what MWC offers;

*They have these salons around the city like once a month or once every two months of Arab artists, and you could share any kind of artwork you want. A lot of people read. So I read some of my poetry there. [But] it's like, it's a secular space. So it's not so much centering Muslim voices. But...because I'm an artist, and because I really do drive off inspiration...in my leisure time and my free time, I [rather share] ...in a space that is more critical.*

(JH MWC-NY, 2018)

JH continues to explain although she appreciated MWC centering of Muslim-identifying voices, from an artistic standpoint she experienced the MWC open-mic showcase as lacking technical depth and the developed political consciousness she is accustomed. JH continues with;

*...talking about your ex-boyfriend...[and] like this whole identity reclaiming aspect...[it] typically like very surface level things...like why are we still talking about..whether Muslims should stay or leave?*

*Of course like...it's important to have these spaces...being able to talk [about]...some really private stuff onstage. There really is nowhere else to do it. You can't do this in your mosque. You can't do this with your friends. They'll judge you, you know.*

*[But I also] think we're being distracted, distracted with like very basic issues.*

(JH MWC-NY, 2018)

As someone serious about her artistry, JH continues to explain that the MWC scene is not the ideal space for her artistic production or a site of critical engagement. The mundane ‘everyday’ nature of what is shared on stage from her standpoint will not be moving the needle further in any substantive socio-political sense, and thus the space fails to generally inspire her art or activism. However, she repeatedly did affirm during the course of our conversation the necessity of accessible communal spaces of voice and belonging, even if they are not a great fit for her art. Similarly, BM, another seasoned artist, shares his longer experience with MWC. BM took up the MWC-stage both as a novice and as a published poet. He explains the difference in his experience with the following:

*So MWC was the first place that I recited a poem out loud back in, I think, 2014.*

*That was the first poem that I really put my heart into...It went really well. People really liked it. And I think that's what made me want to write more.*

*That's how I started. So when I wrote it...I was like, 'This is a nice place to go and share it'. So I just went up and shared it. Then after that, I'm like, 'You know what? Let me try to publish this'.*

*[But] it didn't get published anywhere. It wasn't getting published. And then one person, an editor from a local journal based in Queens, she actually reached out to me and said like, 'You know what? Your poem has a lot of potential, but there's too many themes in it'.*

*So she told me to cut it down to two themes...then the poem went from four pages to two. I sent it back. And then she responded back and cut it down to one page.*

*I [eventually] published it. And then I went to other spaces. And I read both versions. I read the four-page one and the condensed version. And I realized I got a fully different response from both."*

(BM MWC-NY, 2018)

BM continues to explain that the form that does well on an MWC-stage is a style that is not necessarily interested in format or structure in the technical sense, BM explains;

*Now, looking back...It's not [that] the shorter piece is better, it's more professional. [But] most of MWC are not really poets, right? It's just everyone. So the shorter piece doesn't go well with that [kind of space] because I feel like all of the performances there are like, very raw...It's like, 'I wrote this piece yesterday. And I'm sharing it'. Everyone loves it because it's raw. [When] the audience are mostly poets, the shorter piece does better. So I realized that it has to do more with the audience.*

(BM MWC-NY, 2018)

BM's divergent audience reaction speaks to what is legible and appreciated in the external "professional" art world is not necessarily what translates most effectively on the MWC stage. Further elaborating on his experience in regards to his formatted published piece and his initial "raw" draft, he points to a similar reservedness as JH in performing on the MWC stage currently as a full-time artist;

*"So recently I don't perform with MWC [much]...like I've published 14 poems...[But] every time I perform one of my pieces it just doesn't land, and it's because it is not raw, it's too extremely formatted. But when I publish it, I have like a lot of poetry places contacting me to read my poetry...people who are specifically going out to hear poetry will get it more and will enjoy it more than people going out there to listen to stories."*

(BM MWC-NY, 2018)

BM makes an important distinction between labour that produces "poetry/artistry" and the improvised storytelling that MWC has come to be known for;

*It's a lot of things off the cuff [at MWC]. Off the cuff storytelling.*

*Yeah, and I don't enjoy those. As a writer, you tend to love the people who put their time and effort into it, and if you just went up there and winged it, it's like you don't respect my time.*

*[But] I think the audience enjoys that...And the best stories are the ones that everyone can relate to. So I feel like that's why everyone enjoys it. And I think, for*

*them, everyone just goes out there to hear each other's stories. And the bravery it takes you to just get up there and tell a story.*

*And I suck at improvising just randomly. Like if you tell me to go up there and speak, I would just go off topic and make no sense. So for me, when I hear someone just winging it, I'm like....I wonder 'what it could have been like if you had just rehearsed it.*

(BM MWC-NY, 2018)

Both JH and BM held mixed feelings concerning the raw, improvised, “off-the-cuff” everydayness that dominated the MWC stage. A refusal to be rehearsed, coherent, efficient, profound or even “make sense” was experienced by JH and BM as lacking in the space when examined from their artistic standpoint. It was a space of uncut raw-inspired storytelling, where the crafted pieces largely took a backseat in terms of audience engagement. And similar to JH, BM explains that with entry into a Master of Fine Arts (MFA) program and growing exposure to the tools of his craft, his artistic voice crystallized and came to orient towards speaking to the broader socio-political and historical context of the day. BM outlines that the general thematic orientation of his poetry, in contrast to the off-the-cuff everyday-orientation of the MWC stage, by the following:

*I think at this point, the themes in my poems are mostly [about]immigration, colonialism, post-colonialism, inferiority complex kind of.*

(BM MWC-NY, 2018)

Like JH and BM, many seasoned capital ‘A’ artists took up the MWC stage as featured invites of the night, but the prototype for an MWC performer was an engineer or a nurse or a corporate

project manager by day, and an amateur comedian, poet, spoken word artist, storyteller by night. All volunteering to share their subway scribbles with an audience they have come to build community with. So an impromptu and at times improvised performance culture was commonplace to the MWC scene-space. Sometimes this impromptu sharing invited affirmative snaps and warm cheers, while at other times it would lead to an eerie and intolerable silence. Once again, as BM and JH explain, leveraging their own MWC performance experience, the pieces that may end up garnering the chilling silence of an unimpressed audience or warm embrace of an elevated one was not always determined by the technical “artistic quality” of the pieces shared. Rather, as BM effectively outlined, it was mutuality and vulnerability that were more appropriate predictors for what would resonate in the space. This is not to say BM did not find relatability as a ‘good’ he would pursue as a professional artist, but the type of relatability MWC oriented towards was much more unmanicured and riddled with risk.

For any particular night what filled the room with “awe” could easily be an improvised testimonial that may leave the “artists” thinking a few rounds of “rehearsals” would do the piece some good, while the rest of the audience is effectively pulled into the micro-world of the storyteller by the raw affective energy conveyed. And so, the type of attunement and subsequent investment demanded by the signature open-form storytelling of the MWC stage was of a different kind. The audience is invited into a maze where the entire room journeys with the storyteller through the pauses, gaps, blocks, and visceral discomforts to collectively arrive at the story. Gubrium and Holstein, remind us that “narratives are not simply reflections of experience[...]rather, narratives comprise the interplay between experience, storying practices, descriptive resources, purposes at hand, audiences, and the environments that condition storytelling” (2008:250-51). The story, in a sense, comes to life through the congregational

bearing witness of the audience, i.e. through Jama'ah. The audience's snaps, appraising remarks, and willingness to *bear witness* seemed to operate as the birthing canal for the micro-worlds that the stories reveal/release.

Jama'ah in the Islamicate tradition refers to the congregational canonical prayers, where the collective bearing witness of the congregants is said to yield a multiplication effect in the act of opening up entry to 'otherwise worlds', worlds beyond the here-and-now (Nicholson 2008;14). And Fred Moten tells us in his theorizing around anti-black violence that there is an important distinction to be had "between [the] witness and spectator" (2003:3). Moten explains the spectator's relationship to the stage as a consumptive one and an object-making relationship (Moten 2003). Whereas the relationship of the witness to the witnessed is not a "looking" that is object-making and consumptive, rather it is a "gaze" that entangles and pulls the witness into the scene of the witnessed, holding different positions but nonetheless co-producing the scene in a state of radical mutuality (Moten 2003). The same offering, i.e. invitation for investment, is not typically demanded or expected of a polished, rehearsed performance. Trained poets and storytellers iron out the gaps, inconsistencies, imperfections, and abstract nuggets of meaning for the audience. And so, JH and BM assessment of MWC as neither a space for artistic inspiration nor a critical space of resistance geared at tackling the big political questions of the day was a sentiment shared by many of the experienced artists and activists I spoke to. Additionally, this sentiment was also well understood by the MWC leadership, there was clarity amongst regulars and MWC diehards that the goals of the collective were elsewhere, not necessarily in "artistic development" in the traditional sense. For instance, an MWC regular asserts;

*I'm not worried about [MWC] being revolutionary or becoming famous or being part of a tagline or making it to the Ellen show [laughter].*

(Sensabeel MWC-TO, 2018)

And a lead organizer of the MWC-TO space plainly states;

*I don't give two shits about the 'quality thing' ... people want everything to be super polished and professional, [but] then you're just coming to consume, again!...like we are always consuming this and that. I want us to be producers! I want us to produce!*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO, 2018)

Caffeinator continues with;

*I would say first, [MWC] is a community space.*

*[Because] it's not just the act of creation itself that makes you an artist. I think it's a little more than that... yeah, I mean, it's probably a little bit more intentional. But you know, in art there's a sense of artifice, right? There's this kind of perfecting your art and beautifying it and building on it, right? I think when you're an artist you're probably always trying to get better as an artist. Better in that skill that you're doing.*

*I think that there's power to people writing their own narratives, right?...not a lot of people call themselves artists, but I think that there's so much power in just writing [laughter], and which-- we've lost that ability. I personally have lost that ability, right? Even just journaling, right?[laughter].*



*It's so important. Basic reflection, reflective writing is so important. So, we don't do it. That's what I want to encourage. I don't think that necessarily makes someone an artist, if they don't have no intention of being an artist.*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO, 2018)

In short, Caffeinator explains that the priority for her organizing efforts is not necessarily in developing the memberships role identity as “artists”, rather for her the more pressing priority is to allow people to “create, connect, share, and reflect”, and in this mutuality disrupt what she considers our regular engagement with space, as “consumers”, as spectators. Rather the interest here is in organizing a space where we move past the ‘passive spectator’ role to becoming active agents in the *making* of space.

Caffeinator then continues with outlining;

*[So] our primary goal is not to [simply] entertain people. I mean and if you're entertained, that's great, like that's good. It's not bad to be entertained but that's not the primary goal, you know. [Our] primary goal is to, you know - I mean this – this is very lofty - but like to inspire people! To encourage people to come out, be inspired, create, share and connect! That's it.*

*I like [it] when things are raw. Like, I like when things are unscripted. I like when things are, I don't know, off-the-cuff. I kind of like a little bit of chaos [laughter].*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO, 2018)

Caffeinator continues by describing her favorite MWC night she organized with her team;

*...I mean, you were at the event in August that we did, right? I think this didn't happen in any other open mic. This only happened that time. And I really, really, appreciated it, and I wanted to replicate that in other open mics.*

*What I'm talking about is that most of the performances weren't planned [laughter]. We didn't really have many people sign up, right? [laughter] Almost all of them, especially in the second half, they were all impromptu, just people speaking out [volunteering] on the spot.*

*And it was because the prompts that we had, we prompted people, tell us a story in your life or whatever. And it was such a snowball effect. You saw one person do it, then another, and...it was raw...It wasn't scripted. It wasn't very manicured [laughter].*

*It was just off-the-cuff, and then somebody else got inspired. They wanted to do it. And then somebody else got inspired. It was just such a snowball effect, and the entire night ended up being all these people who didn't come prepared to perform and didn't plan on it [laughter]. But they had a story to share, and they just went and shared it, and they felt amazing afterwards, right?*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO, 2018)

There is an implicit appreciation in Caffeinator's description of her favorite MWC night that the generative moment does not precede the moment of the congregation. Producing the producer requires the congregation, the Jama'ah. And thus, as Bennett (2010) tells us, agency is

not then an object in “hidden possession” preceding the moment of affiliation – rather affiliation opens up allowances for “agency proper”. Without the Jama'ah we are arguably imbued with flows of agentic capacity, but the capacity is simply a charge. The snowball effect Caffeinator speaks off comes about once the charge catches flight. Speaking to this point Bennett asserts, “...each member-actant maintains an energetic pulse slightly ‘off’” it is the assemblage of affiliation that creates the grid by which the context/possibility of the spark is ignited (2010: 447). It’s worth noting that Bennett theorizing around agency and the subject moves us to de-link/dislodge our understanding of efficacy/agency from the intentionality of the moral subject. And thus, the subject does not possess the power to generate change as an individual actant, but rather has the capacity to vibrate the surrounding web of assemblages to direct towards the desired outcome. In effect, the storying act of the MWC stage can be thought of as a push towards a desired outcome. It is however the bearing witness of the audience that creates the grid that is the Jama'ah. The grid then operates as the conduit through which the story comes to life, ‘worlds otherwise’ are revealed.

In sum, the work of “creating, connecting, sharing, and reflecting” through storytelling is meant to activate different pathways of subject formation and agentic possibilities - more specifically activating the subject-position of “producer”. The producer in the MWC scene-space is made through both on stage and off-stage activities, occupying the position of storyteller on stage and the position of witness off stage. More importantly, the producer is a subject-position activated through the congregational act (Jama'ah). The next chapter will further engage with this MWC priority of producing “producers”. A closer engagement with the experiences of MWC regulars and organizers will take center stage, while conceptually developing *Jama'ah*, as a

means of deciphering the generative and libertory potentiality of collectively journeying through 'worlds otherwise' and daring to reach for subject-positions denied to racialized and problematized agents

## CHAPTER 6: The Regulars: Reinscribing Vitality, Reclaiming Subjectivity

---

*“Come, come, whoever you are,  
wanderer, worshiper, lover of leaving, it doesn't matter.  
Ours is not a caravan of despair.  
Come, even if you have broken your vow a hundred times.  
Come, come again, come.”*  
— *Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī*

In this chapter I will outline how the MWC scene-space congregational orientation towards *Improvisation, experimentation and play* allowed participants to enter the hazardous arena of “self-transformation and social formation” (Davidson 2010; Lewis and Piekut 2016). For the MWC-regulars the site of embrace and celebration was not particularly concerned with the ‘artistic quality’ of the products offered-up on stage, rather primacy was given to the willingness of performers to enter the raw and risky terrain of self and community making (Davidson 2010; Lewis and Piekut 2016). Thus, improvisation shows up as an important scene-making device of MWC, laying the groundwork for an analytics of transformation, agency, and self-making oriented to “producing ‘producers’”, and interrupting the calculus and prescriptions managing an interned and quarantined subject. Improvisation in the MWC scene-space should not be understood as implying a completely unmediated ‘adhocracy’ but rather a style of

improvisation that imbues a level of plasticity into the habitual dimensions of the scene-space, and thus allowing for members an expansiveness in the manner they come into themselves and community. Therefore, my take up of improvisation in this chapter follows George Lewis's insistence that the composed-and-improvised are far from binary formations (Lewis and Piekut 2016:5). Moreover, the manner in which those I mark MWC-regulars<sup>13</sup> cultivate the scene-space also calls to mind what Gioia refers to as, an "aesthetics of imperfection" (Gioia 1987; Hamilton 2000:168–185; Lewis & Piekut 2016:8; see also Merriam 1964; Born 2012). Gioia explains, an "aesthetics of imperfection" is what makes spaces come to life, allowing for unforetold generative possibilities. Thus, improvisation, experimentation, and play collide into an "aesthetic of imperfection" taken-up as the key form sustaining the generative orientation of the MWC space. This generative orientation is held as the *modus operandi*, consistently positioned by MWC regulars as pivotal to cultivating the transformative possibilities of the space. We'll begin by turning our attention back to the night of April 27th. However, my ethnographic engagement with the April 27th open-mic night will also be supplemented with interview excerpts of MWC regulars from both the Toronto and NYC space in order to more fully illustrate the manner improvisation takes hold and creates possibilities for renewed becomings. Furthermore, my engagement with the interviews of MWC-regulars hone-in on the comparative insights that consistently came up in conversation. MWC-regulars tended to compare the MWC scene-space to their experiences at other venues and engagements to more clearly delineate what MWC provided.

---

<sup>13</sup> MWC regulars are a subset of MWC participants that were consistently involved in the production of the MWC scene-space. This regular involvement showed up in organizing efforts and/or a regularity in the take up of the MWC stage. These individuals were often present in the majority of the open-mics I attended in the participant-observation portion of my study, and thus their interviews also played an effective member-check role.

## **April 27th: Continued**

Back to the night of April 27th. Nearly thirty minutes into my late arrival the pre-showcase commotion began to settle down with attendees wrapping up their small talk and taking their seats. The night as usual kicked off with the host's introduction, quieting the chatter in the room. These introductions were usually laced with a comical tone whereby the host would remark on the audience, broader happenings, or simply sharing a lighthearted personal story. The MC role generally alternated between a few consistent performers and organizers. So, an event night regularly started with a familiar face where comedy and laughter were expected.

During this particular night the host also made an additional plug about the performance slots still up for grabs. A significant difference between the Toronto and NYC stage was that a performance slot for an MWC-NY night was usually filled during the pre-showcase period. A few spots may become available as a result of cold feet or an early departure, but by-and-large the organizers could guarantee a packed showcase from the start of the night. Whereas in Toronto, signups were more often than not taken up until the very end of the night, with the host continuously nudging the audience to take their shot at the stage. Nonetheless, irrespective of this difference between the two cities, improvisation was a pivotal device for space-making. Story prompts were particularly vital to the way improvisation was sustained even in the much more developed NYC stage. The host in both spaces would break up the showcase by pulling a piece of paper with a question out of a hat and read it at random to the audience. The questions gearing the 'story-ask' could be open-ended and general, where the host asks something along the lines

of, “Tell us an unexpected story from this week?” Or something specific, like “share the worst interview experience you ever had?” The prompts usually led to an eruption of laughter after an audience member nervously tumbles onto the stage, cheered by a group of friends. The story prompts kept a generative and dynamic energy moving across the night, maintaining improvisation as a vital scene-making device.

Therefore, however long the waitlist for stage slots, the MWC-NY space still allocated a good portion of time for improvised and spontaneous sharing. And in the MWC-TO space, story prompts became an even more prominent tool shaping the Toronto space. Thus, improvised sharing was a fixture of the MWC style in general, warming the night and breaking up the showcase. In short, the prompts were the bread-and-butter of a successful night, and the April 27th showcase was no different. The night filled-up as performers and audience members took their chances on the stage one after another.

## **The Performances**

### **A. The Hazard of Difference**

The performances begin with a well-crafted “poetic” piece on overcoming the limitation of self-doubt and the agony of “not feeling enough”. This sober piece was followed with a local singer/songwriter, caveating his performance with his outsider status. As a white man that does not identify as Muslim, the performer went into a short biography explaining his proximity to Muslimhoods. The biography seemed like an attempt to buffer his whiteness which definitely



stood out like a sore thumb. He then moves into his first performance and quickly follows it up with a second song on guitar. Clearly an experienced musician, his voice filled the room and at this point the audience definitely warmed up, even asking for an encore at the end of his second song. The encore request was quickly checked by the MC of the night, jumping in front of the audience, and indicating that it is time to break for Maghrib (sunset) prayer. The performer still in place with his guitar ready calmly follows the MC's direction with, "I do have a tight schedule tonight". The crowd cheers for the performer to get one quick set-in before break. The MC capitulates. The performer moves into a Cat Steven (Yusuf Islam) classic, a classic most of the audience seemed to know. Clearly tapping into his Muslim proximity knowledge base, the audience collectively hums the chorus with the performer. He thanks the audience and organizers, and hands the microphone back to the host. The host also thanks the performer but says "Mike"<sup>14</sup> instead of the performer's actual name during his thanks - then quickly apologizes with a smirk. The audience laughs and the performer appears thrown off but goes along with the joke. The MC finally announces a break for Maghrib. With the room reshuffled once again, the MC requested that everyone place their jackets on the ground in order to construct a makeshift prayer rug. Attendees begin to line up. The owners of the cafe also do their part by providing scrap cardboard boxes from the back. Now ready, with a prayer area filled with coats, scarves and flattened cardboard boxes, a regular performer jumps into the role of Imam and leads the communal (Jama'ah) Maghrib prayer. Those that did not join the Jama'ah were scattered all along the corners of the room, speaking in hushed tones as the recitation reverberated across the space. Another device of cultivating space that persisted in MWC is an insistence on expansiveness that

---

<sup>14</sup> The "Mike" reference operated as a placeholder for "non-Muslim white guy". This reference worked to both pull the performer into the fold of community by breaking the distance between him and the audience, while also clearly pinpointing the performer's outsider status. Even though "Mike" can take on the stage and there is something to be gained in that interchange, the stage is not meant for "mike". Mike is welcomed, but Mike is a visitor.

comes with a thinly ‘managed’ stage. ‘Difference’ was approached as a necessary hazard of constructing generative spaces. Difference allows for expansiveness but also can be hazardous and unsafe, and this tension was well understood. Conversations near the close of an open-mic night usually picked up on the unexpected performances by an individual that explicitly identified their outsider status or by Muslim-identifying performers that spoke on tense touchpoints. Often the conclusion of those conversations was one in which the obvious tools of curation and pre-screening were framed as tradeoffs that would undermine the generative goal of the space.

When the prayer came to an end and folks began picking up their belongings, the space reverted back to the pre-break setup. The MC picks up the mic again and moves into introducing the next performer. The host this time, however, adds a comical twist to his introduction. Instead of simply reading off the names listed on the signup sheet, he decides to build on the warm reception of the previous “Mike” remark to spontaneously invent introductory biographies. The first performer was introduced as a postgraduate fellow from Oxford. The second was the Uber founder’s daughter who spends her time globetrotting. And another, a former circus soleil star. The audience is rather responsive to these improvised biographies, snapping and cheering even harder to match the fictional introductions. Many performers worked off their introduction and would try to tie whatever shared into their stories. For instance, the performer that was introduced as the daughter of the Uber mogul remarks, before starting her piece, that the poem was inspired by her last trip across the Kalahari Desert. The audience laughing and snapping for the smooth takeup by the performer, the performance moves into an introspective piece on the meaning of time, bringing the audience into a reflective calm.

The theme for the night as usual functioned more like a loose springboard than actual parameters for the stories and pieces shared. Members performed what they needed to share or what they had ready enough on hand. In fact, during the current night, one performer buffers her off-theme sharing as a response to the preceding performer's call to "unapologetically take up space" and "speak their truth". And so, the atmosphere shifted and swayed as members performed pieces moving from comedy to tragedy and back to comedy. Moving from spiritual centered pieces, to dating stories, to sharings that speak to the state of global affairs to stories about unexpected everyday interactions. A friend of mine that accompanied me to this particular event ended up shifting the room yet again to another affective terrain. Inspired by the other performances to also share, she decided to read a reflection she recently drafted about the New Zealand Mosque attack<sup>15</sup>, which transpired less than a month prior. She starts her performance with describing the insomnia and helplessness that has taken hold of her body, leaving her with an unshakable feeling that, "we [continue to be] the consumable, and the consumed" on the global stage. The room fills with a somber energy as my friend steps off the makeshift stage and reclaims her seat in the audience.

## **B. Experimentation and Play**

The night eventually came to a close by an improvised musical ensemble. Ending the night with a musical piece had become a crowd favorite in the MWC-TO space. This time two members of

---

<sup>15</sup> New Zealand Mosque attacks refers to the Christchurch, New Zealand mass shooting taking place March 15, 2019. "Worshippers were attending Friday prayers at two separate mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, when dozens were gunned down in a mass shooting. At least 49 people have been killed" (Frazee 2019, March 15).

the audience, one with a guitar and another with a mini drum set, took the stage. Tuning their instruments, they share with the audience that they have not performed together for over a year. The pair was definitely comfortable on stage, taking their time figuring out arrangements. The audience also in no hurry engaged in light socializing, while others shouted setup and song suggestions. Still experimenting with their alignment, the pair started playing part of a song, stopped and whispered a few words to one another, and then picked up where they left off. The audience hummed along to the song, encouraging the pair with snaps and shouts of support. Not completely satisfied with their pairing, however, they stop again, and this time consider a suggestion from the audience. Someone points out that a local rapper was in the room, indicating perhaps he could join the pair and fill what seemed missing. The rapper, with some encouragement, jumps on the stage, gives some instruction concerning the piece he could perform. He begins his verse, and the musicians attempt to follow. Near the second verse, alignment develops as the musicians are better able to follow the rhythm of the rapper, but suddenly the rapper stops, laughs, and says “yo this is not working”. Then his newly formed bandmates and the audience burst out laughing. He decides to continue with his piece without the background music. The rapper finishes what he started, apologizes to the musician and steps down. The pairing still on stage are encouraged to try again. With this encouragement, another armature rapper/songwriter comes up confident that he has something that may work. This time the alignment starts off strong, the crowd grows excited as the verses move one after another, synchronizing with the band. Leaving the audience nearly on their feet, the production ends with an eruption of claps and shouts.

### C. An Aesthetics of Imperfection

Hamilton asserts, building on Gioia's work, improvisation is not only an "imperfect art" but also an "'haphazard art' [as]...improvisation fails more often than [composed] art" (Gioia 1987; Hamilton 2000:168–185). The many MWC members I would mark "regulars" of the scene-space, whether organizers, performers, or regular attendees, intuitively understood that creating a space primed to produce "creatives", to produce "producers", not necessarily artists, requires collectively taking ownership of the "risks of failure" as part-and-parcel the work of the space. Speaking to this point, Saltysister, a regular performer of MWC-TO, who in fact was awarded the playful "Most Valuable Player" (MVP) award at the end of 2018, states the following about the stage;

*"...it doesn't seem like there's an expectation to perform really well [laughter] or anything like that...It really does help. It really does help. [And] not to be rude, but some of the performances, it was good, but..I [was] not threatened by it [laughter]. I'm like, all right, I can give this a whirl then [laughter].*

*I'm just like, these are just regular people [laughter], performing. There's a bar, obviously.*

*There are some really, really amazing ones, [but most] are just doing it for fun."*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)

In a lighter tone Saltysister continues by speaking to the openings and possibilities created by the allowance of 'imperfection' and 'play' of the MWC-scene and stage;

*“I feel like everyone is just like, ‘Oh, there is a microphone here, and I'm going to do something with it today man’ [laughter]. Yeah, and to me, it obviously means that people have things to say and don't know where to say them. It's not like people don't have these thoughts. They're just like,*

*‘I don't know who to tell, but I'm here now’.”*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)

Another regular to the MWC-scene, now in the NYC space, ZL also pushes the conversation of risk of failure further and points to the generative contribution of a piece that even “bombs”, ZL explains;

*“...to be able to be in a space where, one, you can talk about controversial things...you can talk about love, you can talk about abuse, or you can bomb - you can literally bomb and be horrible at it - but people will still clap, they will still love you, they will still care for you”*

*“And even if you bomb, it might reach that one person, [or] maybe the act of you bombing even did something to somebody.”*

*“You shared something. There was something transmitted from the stage to the audience. There was a moment of transmission when you're speaking your words.”*

(ZL MWC-NY)

Similarly, another regular of the MWC-NY space, LH, asserts the following in reference to her own previous performance experience in comparison to MWC;

*“I’ve performed before in other spaces and, obviously, non-Muslim spaces or mixed spaces, and people would be like, ‘Oh, you’re good. You’re good’. But at [MWC] ...Everybody around me was giving me hugs and saying, ‘Wow. You’re so funny.’ And yeah, it boosted my ego a little bit [laughter]. But it also in a sense, I was like, ‘Wow, this community actually loves me.’ Not because of my work but because of just me...I don’t have to be a perfectionist. I don’t need a masterpiece. I don’t have to be this genius. I can just say whatever and everybody’s supportive. I’ve seen some performances that were not the best but that crowd is still so supportive.”*

(LH MWC-NY)

Like ZL and LH, many regulars pointed to the embrace of the audience *no-matter-what policy* as making possible their willingness to experiment and fail. And so, many of the regulars would explain that they would not share the same work elsewhere, even if they were comfortable performing. In fact, many of my interlocutors resisted labeling or categorizing the pieces they chose to perform - rather they would speak about their performance on stage as reflective, private, and intimate. Speaking about her first MWC performance experience and her writing style, Saltysister explains;

*“...the second time I went to the New York space I did [perform], but the first one I didn’t...honestly, yeah, it was just, it feels like a really safe space. Like at the beginning, you’re like, I don’t know, I don’t know if I should do this. None of these people know me. But then you realize that it’s a really welcoming environment...I had performed before but not alot...I don’t even think I perform a lot right now, to be honest. I only perform either at MWC, or at one other weird random event. So I don’t perform regularly or anything like that.”*

*“[And] even then, my [performance] wasn't poetry. I wasn't writing poetry. I was just writing. And I think writing in this way, I don't know, it makes you want to share it more. I don't know if that makes sense.”*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)

ZL, also speaks to her writing style and performance in a similar way as Saltysister with the following;

*“I mean, I used to write, but even now, I don't call my writing poetry, right? They're just thoughts that I've been able to kind of perform...But I never in a million years thought that it could be an occupation.”*

(ZL MWC-NY)

Even Caffienator, who boldly asserts that MWC is about “producing producers”, speaks about her early engagement with MWC as carrying a casual, improvised impetus. This casual-improvised atmosphere is what pulled her into MWC organizing, and explains that it is something she intentionally attempts to build into her own organizing efforts with MWC-TO. Caffienator shares;

*“I just felt like a community member sharing something that I wrote, and that's really how I want the space to feel. I don't want people to think it's like, I just have to be a “performer” or whatever. So if I was, for instance, if I was an aspiring writer, if I was trying to publish something or whatever then maybe I might have felt differently. I would have taken something different out of it, but because I was, literally, just somebody passing through the city...you know*



*what I mean? And I happened to have something written on my phone, the feeling was just, I think it was really just this adrenaline of just sharing something being so vulnerable in front of a group of total strangers, and then having them sort of embrace me afterwards.”*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO)

Continuing on to explain her very first piece of writing she performed on stage, Caffeinator asserts:

*“So yeah, it was a reflection. It was kind of a story. Yeah, it was just a reflection that I wrote. I started wearing hijab in October 2012. So every year on my hijab anniversary is actually a really significant time for me, every year. I like to reflect on that, just because starting to wear the hijab was such a significant moment in my life, and it was just that I went through such a transformation when I did it, not just because the hijab, the way it happened as well.”*

*“So every year during that time I like to write a reflection. And so, I had written that reflection, which was a little bit different than what I had written before, and so I had become a little bit ambivalent about it. It was kind of all over the place, sharing my very confused views, complicated views about it.”*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO)

Similarly, MH, another regular, tethering the role of organizer and performer asserts;

*“For me, writing was a way of making sense of things and making sense of the world around me and dealing with questions and even just developing questions, like what to ask in terms of*

*spiritual questions and otherwise, right? So it's a very self formative process. I think this theme of self identity is huge for people from migrant communities and diaspora...[so]I wasn't exposed to spoken word and poetry really, truly, ...[then later] I realised, 'Oh wow, a lot of the stuff that I've written about or thought about and put down in writing could be interpreted as spoken word'. It was literally just me speaking words [laughter]."*

*"So the core interest in the space is to tell stories and...trying to come together...we understood the importance of telling our stories and listening to [our] stories. To make sense of our spiritual journeys, to make sense of ourselves and in some ways to feel like a community"*

(MH MWC-TO)

Like MH and Caffeinator, many MWC regulars spoke about not necessarily intending the stories and pieces shared for an external audience. Rather it was the collective mitigation of the *risks* and *hazards* of sharing that galvanized their unexpected performances of private writings and reflections. And thus, making possible communication flows, and revelations of *self*, generally dis-allowed and unsuited for the "publics" they normally navigate. For instance, LH speaks about what comes to be made allowable, possible, through a congregation's (Jama'ah's) willingness to collectively bear the hazards and risks of voice and revelation of self.

*"And so for me, in the beginning, I didn't know. I was like, 'Man, I'm going to tell this story. It's going to be very butchered. Who knows what it's going to sound like to other people? But what the hell'. But for me, it was also a healing process because I had never opened up about that stuff. And I was never comfortable enough to talk about that stuff. But I was happy that I was able to laugh about something that was very traumatic or a sad time in my life and make kind of fun of it, make laughs of it. It makes me happy that I've moved past that, and I can live."*

(LH MWC-NY)

Coming back to the notion of *Jama'ah* from Chapter 5, the congregation co-constituted the scene-space not only by *bearing witness*, but also by co-negotiating the “hazards”, “risks”, and “failures” that occupy the labour of turning towards improvisation as a method of exploring new ways of orienting towards the *self and community* (Hamilton 2000; Lewis & Piekut 2016). And so, LH continues with;

*“Yeah...[so] in the beginning, I got a performance high [laughter]. So after that first show, I was like, ‘I want to perform every time’. Every week I wanted to perform, every month, and I did.*

*For the first three months, I performed...back to back [laughter].”*

(LH MWC-NY)

In studies of improvisation “...it is frequently asserted that improvisers are more interested in the *process of creation* than in its *products*” (Lewis & Piekut 2016:5). Speaking to this orientation towards “process” and “flow” Saltysister offers up a distinction between spaces that may at first glance appear to do similar work to MWC. Starting her line of thought with a comparison between the MWC’s reflective storytelling style with community-based group therapy circles, she asserts;

*“I think people are afraid of events where it's formalized like that. I don't know. I think I am. When you said, sit in a circle, I was like, "I'm not going!"[laughter]...you couldn't pay me to go that circle [laughter].”*

*“I think there's something about choosing to participate. I don't know. There's just a little bit more of a trust thing and you can choose to participate versus not choose to participate, whereas being in a circle you kind of have to do something...with MWC you can go knowing you want to*

*present, and you can go knowing that you don't want to...And you can change your mind. That's the best part!"*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)

Moving on from a comparison with therapeutic talk circles, Saltysister further develops her line of thought by bringing up professional networking events as another example that may seem similar to MWC-scene space but operates rather differently from her experiential standpoint. Regardless if even the exact same people filled both gatherings, she asserts;

*"I swear, if they even made [networking] a part of it [MWC] I would stop going! I would be like, "That's weird.' Can you just let us live?"*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)

Saltysister ends her statement with an exacerbated "can you just let us live?", pointing to the demands and expectations of these heavily curated spaces. In contrast the perpetual uncertainty that marked MWC situates it as a place where, as Sensabeel succinctly puts it,

*...it's like you don't have to be here, you don't have to be there, it's kind of a middle space in some ways. I think some people could consider it like a third space.*

(Sensabeel MWC-TO)

Whether it is therapeutic talk circles or networking events, or 'professional artist' showcases, there is a prescribed expected end-point, a "product" the space is meant to orient towards. Consequently, one enters these spaces with a pre-planned persona - i.e. *the professional, the patient*. And in many ways the product up for production is one's very subjectivity. As Moten

reminds us, “the call to subjectivity is...[always] also a call to subjection and subjugation” (Moten 2003:2). And so the lack of expectations, persistent uncertainty, the inability to fully predict where the night will journey, produced an emphasis on *process* over *product* as a fundamental formulation that made the MWC scene-space standout for the MWC regulars.

### **Reclaiming Vitality, Reclaiming Subjecthood**

In this *process-oriented* space where “*you don’t have to be here or there*”, the site of embrace and celebration is not primarily the product offered-up on stage, rather recognition and worth is tied to the willingness of performers to enter the raw and hazardous terrain of “self transformation and social formation” through reclaiming one’s subjecthood (Davidson 2013; Lewis 2016). Speaking to this orientation of social/self transformation through stepping into the subject-position of “producer” and “witness”, Sensabeel and Asiyah B, both regulars of the MWC space, assert;

*...For me, personally, I feel like having MWC or spaces like that is really, really, really about being vulnerable and like reclaiming, to quote Yasmin Maghad, literally reclaiming your heart. Like, find it again, make sure it works.*

(Sensabeel MWC-TO)

Another organizer and performer, Asiyah B, similar to Sensabeel, explains the role of the scene-space in “texturing” and expanding her sense of self and community. Referring to both her experience as an audience member and performer she asserts;

*“It textures you...it's like adding layers to what it truly means to be you...We think we know, like, we think we know [who we are]...but it's like...maybe just listen...and move them boundaries or those margins that you've defined for yourself, like maybe you need to move them a bit. Maybe you need to adjust them.”*

(Asiyah B MWC-TO)

Asiyah B continues to speak about how the sharing of the MWC scene-space pushes members to rethink, explore, and rework the boundaries of self and community. In the language of improvisation, destabilize the common melodies or scripts ascribed to what it is to be ‘Muslim’ both within community and in popular culture. Asiyah B continues with;

*I've learned a million things. A million things...[it's been] expansive...yes, there are rights and there are wrongs, but there's also a whole slew of exceptions and conditions to the rule...I just feel like I really appreciate that it's multi-faceted to be Muslim...It's like adding layers to what it truly means to be Muslim. And again, [the stories] deepen my own understanding and the understanding of others...like, it [feels like] an ocean.*

(Asiyah B MWC-TO)

Similarly, Caffeinator adds to her earlier assertion regarding the simple call to “produce producers” by rhetorically asking herself - “what are we doing here?”;

*[well] we're disrupting our own comfort zones [that's what we're doing here].  
We're disrupting [...] the very tiny, tiny bubbles that we've come to put ourselves  
in.*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO)

Caffeinator, Asiyah, and Sensabeel point to how, as racialized and Otherized subjects, they have been pulled into the labour of *interning* and *quarantining* themselves, coming to make life “in very tiny tiny bubbles” (Caffeinator). Racialization means that the Otherized subject is pulled into the disciplinary labour of marking, fixing and regulating Otherhood. And so, the stretching of a subjecthood, meant to perpetually remain in quarantine, becomes a liberatory act. Asiyah, Caffeinator and Sensabeel also locate themselves as individuals that are guided by their faith-tradition, which has been an important component of their sense of self and community. They all shared that they have enjoyed attending spaces meant to galvanize faith-based knowledge or spiritual connections; however, they locate MWC as serving a different purpose. In the MWC scene-space, opportunities to reclaim one’s very subjectivity emerges in the purposeful intersubjective work of (re)making boundaries and quarters of existence. Sensabeel continues her point on the space and its relation to one’s “Muslimhood” by the following;

*...if your time here [MWC] leads [you] back to Islam? That's so lovely. Like if it can lead back to you finding a renewed path in your faith? That's dope. But for me, personally, I feel like having MWC or spaces like that is really, really, really about being vulnerable and like reclaiming, to quote Yasmin Maghad, literally reclaiming your heart. Like, find it again, make sure it works.*

(Sensabeel MWC-TO)

The conversations I had with the regulars regarding reworking boundaries were less about fixing new value claims or norms. As Asiyah B and others made a point to emphasize it is not that MWC as a community space is displacing their sense of “right” and “wrong” but reinscribing *vitality* through the active practice of allowing themselves to collectively expand, be present and open to receiving, bearing witness to *difference* in all its contradictions, incoherencies, and divergences without a need to order and fix. In contrast, professional arts spaces, therapeutic circles, everyday racializing publics all work to order and fix the contours of engagement, and thus the contours of subjecthood. And so, when the regulars spoke about what the space provided them, statements like; a place that “textures you”, a place where you can be vulnerable, raw, complicated and incoherent allowing you to reveal what you have relegated to hidden corners of the self, where overwhelming. Speaking to this point of simply “*being*” without a need to fix and reconcile, Saltysister asserts;

*And there's not as much pressures or norms being pushed on you. You can just kind of exist...So that's a really big reason apart from, obviously, I enjoy writing and sharing...I also was pretty shocked at how diverse it was. I didn't expect to see so many different types of Muslims and colors and faces. yeah, I find that most [other] events are, generally, highly concentrated in either ethnicity or something. There's always a lean, and I feel like MWC is usually pretty broad...Yeah. I mean, I'm sure there's definitely going to be communities with things, so not say it's perfect, but when I go, I'm not like, this doesn't feel like an Arab event. It doesn't feel like a Pakistani event, you know what I mean?*

(Saltysister MWC-TO)



And this sentiment of an allowance to “just exist” in all your multiplicity was often followed with associations of *vitality, liveliness, renewal*. ZL captures the vitality that emerges through the pull of the moment and journeys offered up in the space by the following;

*...I wanted to be a part of that energy. And I call it energy because I literally could feel it [...]Right? Because I'm looking at them [on stage], and I could see them...feeling what they're saying. And I see the audience members just staring and then this thunderous clap at the end. And I thought, "Wow". And some of the things that they were saying were controversial. There were cuss words. There was attitude, and people didn't flinch, and they accepted it, and they loved it. And I thought, 'Wow.' How amazing must that feel to be able to just speak what's on your mind without a filter? Without thinking, 'Oh, shit, someone's going to see this later, and someone's going to judge me'...seeing that rawness on that stage, it did something to me...just that comradery, that love.*

(ZL MWC-NYC)

And thus by allowing oneself to be pulled into the work of collectively bearing witness without fixing emerges a *refusal* to exist as an always marked, composed and scripted subject in which “...life [is made to] devolve into a mechanism without vitality” (Davidson 2010, June 3).

## **The Hazard of Revelation**

Many of the regulars pointed to the exhausting calculus that guides much of their engagement in dominant publics. Made to concentrate considerable bandwidth on how much,

when, and to whom one can safely reveal/share of oneself in any given situation. Speaking to a sober awareness of the politics of misrecognition in addition to geopolitical/political backdrop feilding “Muslim everything” - as one of my interviewees put it - making revelations of self particular hazardous acts, Caffeinator asserts the following;

*[what] I really like about [the space] is that there are conversations that you want to have but you can't have in broader society, right? That's just reality, right? But those things are near and dear to you, they're so important to you, but you just can't go and have them, even just with your normal circle of friends, you may not be able to talk about those things...So that's something [...]I think the space provides, an outlet for that, an outlet for certain conversations that you can't have, that you feel like you can't have elsewhere. They wouldn't be understood.*

(Caffeinator MWC-TO)

Similarly, ZL continues to explain how the sense of “shush” has been a consistent fixture that shaped most of her interactions and experiences since childhood. Through “shush” she has been made both invisible and hypervisible, whether it was personified in the Otherization she experienced during her adolescence reckoning with her identity as a child of immigrant parents, or as an adult finding her way in the world with children of her own. Irrespective of the stage in life she found herself in, a looming sense of “shush” followed, ZL explains;

*But Why? But How? Those are four words that, I think, can capture my essence since I was a kid. And then the answer to that would always be, “Shush”. Literally, in a nutshell, if someone just said to me, "What are the words you have heard the most?" that would be my answer, “But why? But how? And shush.*

*[But now] I was able to talk about a little bit of abuse and a little bit about maybe liking someone or something. And not only could I let it out, not only was I being able to express myself, but I was impacting people. This, I think, is what kind of made me veer to the right. I took that road. I took that exit. And I started going, every month when I could I was going.*

(ZL MWC-NY)

And so, the politics of misrecognition was an overarching subtext underlining much of the conversations I had with my interlocutors. In Naber's studies of Islamophobia, she defines the notion of 'Psychic Internment' by stating:

“I use the term ‘internment of the psyche’ to name the process by which the state and media’s branding of Arab, South Asian, and/or Muslim[s]...as ‘terrorists’ brings into play dualistic mechanisms of exclusion (either you are with us or you are against us), inducing within individuals ‘a state of consciousness that assures the automatic functioning of power’ (Foucault, 1979: 201). Building on Foucault’s notion of ‘panopticism’ (1979: 209) or the disciplinary mechanism of generalized surveillance, the term ‘internment of the psyche’ refers to the covert and unspoken medium that linked sociopolitical institutions and the individual psyche together, ‘making it possible to bring the effects of power to the most intimate and distant elements’ (Foucault, 1979) of everyday life” (2006:254).

ZL makes a point to emphasize the feeling of a constant sense of “shush” was not necessarily about someone or something directly telling her to stay silent, although sometimes that was the case. Rather it was a silencing of misrecognition, erasure, invisibility. Where you’re normal is to make life in geographies that were not constructed for you, even hostile to your very existence. Moreover, it was a disciplining that conditioned her to normalize her marginality, her Otherhood - but also came to interpellate her into the work of alienating and interning parts of herself, her story, i.e. pulled into the work of ‘Psychic Internment’ . And so, survival required, in Du Boisian terms, the “Doubling of Consciousness”, the contorting and hiding of the self. ZL shares a very specific childhood story to illustrate this early ‘soft’ disciplining of “shush”;

*“So I had a friend - her name was Christine, and she lived really close. She lived a couple of blocks away from me. And I was normally never allowed to go over to people's houses or anything, but my parents met her and liked her, and said, "Okay, You can hang out for like half an hour to an hour.*

*...So I went to her house for the first time, and her father was home first, her brothers were there too. Her father was cooking, and we were hungry and the food wasn't ready, so he was like "Christine...go ahead and fix something from the pantry."*

*We go into the pantry and there was Chef Boyardee. I never had Chef Boyardee in my life before, but let me tell you, I used to see the commercials, [and] I would crave it from the commercials! But we had Turkish food only at home...[But that day] I had me some Chef Boyardee, and I loved it! I love that shit! It was epic, girl [laughter]. It was awesome. It was amazing. And I remember, she doesn't know this, and we're not really friends anymore, I've lost contact with her, but I used to go to her house just for Chef Boyardee! [laughter].”*

ZL emphasised the commercials as an important backdrop to her “Chef Boyardee moment”. The commercials mirrored the very best of Christine’s life. ZL explains that the Christine(s) in the commercial were always happy and effervescent with the world on one hand and Chef Boyardee on the other. ZL marks her “Chef Boyardee moment” as a significant turning point during her teenage years, leading her to distance herself from her own cultural-religious background in an attempt to accumulate more Chef Boyardee moments, where she is the “Christine” in her story. It is worth noting here that becoming “Christine” was more than a simple desire to acculturate into whiteness. The point with ZL’s “Chef Boyardee moment” was the subject-position Christine(s) held, a subject-position imbued with vitality and actability - where Christine(s) can ‘just exist’ as the normative order envelopes and lifts.

Many of my interlocutors spoke about putting parts of themselves, their inheritance, their stories away at one point of their life or another in order to further mitigate Otherization. A few months before I sat down with ZL and officially started interviewing MWC-members, I was in New York City looking to get a better sense of the groundwork. As I began connecting with MWC regulars, I ended up attending a day symposium organized by some key players in the MWC-NY scene. The closing event of the symposium was actually hosted by the then regular MWC MC. The symposium was called “Muslim Protagonist: Authenticity?” and the keynote event featured a panel of Muslim creatives, podcaster, and influencers. The panel exchanged stories of misrecognition and the power of “writing your own narrative”. Near the end of the keynote session one of the speakers, reflecting on her struggles with navigating her multiple inheritances and identities as an Iranian-American woman, plainly asserts the following;

“When I was growing up I pretended to be a white girl...and while living with my parents I felt distant from them...then I went to college, and I was also physically far away. In college I had a white therapist that kept saying ‘to separate myself from my family, to separate myself from my family’, and try to break free, and become my own person.”

(Panelist, Muslim Protagonist: Authenticity, 2018, 32:52)

Now speaking back to the experience she had with the therapist, the Panelist asserts:

“But actually, No, I was trying to find my [way back] to my parents...looking back, what I was really looking for...was ‘who I am’, I didn’t know who I was...when your family is constantly under attack it’s really scary, so my whole life I felt distance.”

(Panelist, Muslim Protagonist: Authenticity, 2018, 32:52)

The statement clearly captured the attention of the audience, it captured a sentiment that was skirted around throughout the day. Similarly, ZL explains, it took her a while before she felt ready to find “her way back” to her story, to herself. It was in fact a traumatic life event that jarred her into reckoning with the reality that she is not ‘Christine’ nor will ever be. And so ZL continues to explain, finding a place like MWC where you are able to bear your “Chef Boyardee moments”, your “pretending to be a white girl moments”, however humiliating and imperfect,

and still be seen, lifted and embraced is transformative. ZL contends MWC was the first space that afforded her the opportunity to reveal and step into herself in a manner that allowed for complications, multiplicities, and imperfections she long believed was relegated to the Christine(s) of the world, ZL asserts;

*...I think a lot of these people that sit with me at these shows, or that perform at these shows, they might not have a 'Chef Boyardee moment', but they have their own Chef Boyardee moments, that kind of define things for them or set them off. And to be able to say, "Shit. Me too. Me too". "Yo, that happened to me, too." And, then feeling "Oh my God, I'm not alone." That's everything.*

(ZL MWC-NY)

Although ZL's, and the Panliest's strategy of navigating Otherization by mimicking whiteness was not an avenue necessarily available or sought after all my interlocutors - particularly my Black Muslim interlocutors - there was nonetheless a consistent heightened sense that revealing oneself carried the risk of misrecongton. A substantive risk that called forth regular calculations of how much, where, and to whom to reveal. Speaking to the calculations, and the risk of misrecognition, LH explains;

*...I mean, you saw me perform that one night. If I had told that story to another audience, to a non-Muslim audience, I don't think they would understand any bit of it. And this doesn't apply for everyone. For example, not all Muslim scenes are going to be Muslim-related stories or Muslimy or whatever, but when you're in a space like that, you can talk about anything. It doesn't limit you. I feel like if I'm in a space where it is open to everybody, I might have to limit myself to stories that*

*might be relatable. Like, "Oh, what are my dating stories?" I don't have that much. I have to make something up, and it's frustrating."*

(LH MWC-NY)

LH continues to elaborate on the risk of slipping intelligibility, and subsequently opening her up to misrecognition as a regular threat to her everyday life. For a hijab-wearing Black Muslim woman like LH, navigating dominant public(s) necessitates a constant translation process regularly benchmarking one's presentation, comportment, and embodiment to the sensibilities of whiteness/Westernness. Persistently calculating the risks of non-intelligibility slipping into misrecognition, and potentially leading to another humiliating/dangerous moment of ejection. An overarching sense that cut across the interviews was that in dominant publics there was no escaping the altar of whiteness and the required labour of exaltation (Thobani 2007; Morsi 2016; Razack 2007). A sober awareness that whiteness was consumptive and demanding, requiring regular sacrifices of self as the price of making life in the liminal grounds of the *not-quite-human* (Weheliye 2014). A type of inclusion marked with precarity and insecurity. These sacrifices of self for the *not-quite-human* are performed through constantly interning bits and pieces of one's subjecthood through the labour of cultural comportment (i.e. *"Oh, what are my dating stories?" I don't have that much. I have to make something up"*), and corporeal presentation (i.e. *"pretending to be a white girl"*). MWC in many ways is then a refusal to partake in the humiliating labour of de-subjectification, where one is pushed to produce oneself for another, and thus relegated to make life in the "zone of the abject", the "zone of non-being" (Fanon 1952). In revelations of "Chef Boyardee moments" there is expansion. An expansion that binds, remakes, and collectively proclaims "a yes that vibrates to cosmic harmonies" (Fanon 1952 [2008: 2]). An expansion that deploys an aesthetics of imperfection to open up generative



terrains that refuse internment/comportment and affirm that even when fielded in an everyday that works to de-subjectify and consume, “the micropolitical force of life” (Kline 2017:62) cannot be extinguished or contained.

### **Refusing ‘Internment’ and turning to ‘Enchantment’**

In contrast to the everyday racialized calculus of an *interned subject*, my respondents spoke about MWC as allowing them to collectively refuse the bondage of a *beingness* ruled by constant prescriptions and calculations. Prescription and calculation is the contour of an everyday life pulled into the disciplinary work of ‘Psychic Internment’ (Naber 2006). MWC as a counterpublic formation refused to reproduce this contour. This refusal in many ways situates the ambivalence of MWC regulars towards the ‘professional arts’ space. Although the professional art space, like PAM, did not call for the same violent calculus required in surviving the racial management structures of the everyday, they nonetheless still called for curation and composure, and thus, a manicured presentation made through prescription and calculation. In contrast, the turn for MWC regulars was towards a labour of revealing, expanding, stretching, and texturing *the self* by journeying through the departures of the stories told. Inviting one another to grab hold of the grid of the Jama'ah and immerse themselves in the present. As Alcoff tells us, temporal alienation makes objects out of subjects. The colonial project, Alcoff explains, was effective in alienating the Other from “...their own temporal reality, [whereby] they imagine the real present as occurring somewhere else than where they live. The temporal displacement or alienation of space...causes the colonized person to be unable to experience their own time as the now and instead to see that "now" as occurring in another space” (Alcoff 2007:85; Ramos 1962). The

MWC scene space leveraged improvisation and an aesthetics of imperfection to very much center the here-and-now, and thus, making possible “...opening[s] or breaking through the closure(s) of lines of flight” (Kline 2017: 61).

And so, the stage was less of a place of doubling or abstractions, as performance generally demands, rather the pull of the stage and the space was explained as a whole body experience that warped both the *producer's* and the *witness's* sense of time-space. Thus, this sits in contrast to the professional arts space where composed and curated abstractions are normative. George Lewis explains, when improvisation succeeds as a creative methodology, what emerges on the other side is a flow that leaves a sense of ‘enchantment’ (Lewis 2016; Bennett 2001). Jane Bennett defines “enchantment” as involving “the idea...of human *bodies* as an active, and potentially disruptive force” (Bennett 2001:111). Bennett continues with “enchantment is a mood of lively and intense engagement with the world [that] ...consists in a mixed bodily state of joy and disturbance, a transitory sensuous condition dense and intense enough to stop you in your tracks and toss you onto new terrain[s]” (Bennett 2001:111). ZL, in fact, explains the atmosphere of the MWC-scene from her standpoint was doing just that, “stopping her in her tracks” and “tossing her into new terrains”, using the metaphor of an “energy freeway”, ZL asserts;

*If you can imagine an energy freeway. You just kind of flow with it. You go fast, you slow down, you stop, you pick up again. Sometimes you stall. It pushed me to the right [...] It [also] stopped me in my tracks.*

(ZL MWC-NY)

This “flow of energy”, as ZL puts it, traverses through the “freeway” that is the collective via their practice of nowness and improvisation. The congregation, the Jama'ah, played the role of an energy grid by which the leap of faith that made the collective unraveling of the private, the intimate, possible. Consequently, opening up allowances in which new forms of congregating and assembling both at the collective and the subjective level can emerge. Thus, the MWC scene-space reinforces the standpoint that the composed-and-the-improvised should not be understood as dialectical forces (Lewis and Piekut 2016; Davidson 2010). As Lewis and Piekut assert, “the line between improvised and nonimprovised activities may not be as bright as we suppose” (Lewis and Piekut 2016:5; Bruce 2003). Moreover, Butler draws our attention to the fact that “...practice[s] of improvisation [always unfold] within a scene of constraint” (Butler 2004:1). And so, improvisation is not devoid of melody or outside structure, rather the structure, the grid, becomes the jumping off point for the “surplus” improvisation introduces. This surplus is experienced as enchantment. Sarah Ahmed (2014) speaks of the “surplus” that accompanies all circulation, and it is this surplus that creates the value added. This surplus then acts as the spark that revitalizes, renews the grid, making possible new melodies of *being* and *doing* to emerge. The composed then arguably constructs the navigation grid by which the surplus can take flight. The collective bearing witness of the Jama'ah then operates as the grid that makes way for “openings and flights” of the surplus. Consequently, the habitual exercises of being in communion with one another makes the hazardous work of dreaming up and experimenting with new ways of orienting towards the self and the world not only thinkable but also doable.

## Conclusion

“Actively listening” to the formation and operation of MWC as a racialized creative counterpublic has demonstrated that improvisation, experimentation and an “aesthetic of imperfection” (Gioia 1987; Hamilton 2000) were honed in as the means of sustaining the generative goal of the space, and refusing the de-subjectification of an interned existence. The goal of carving out a space for generative renewal, inspiration, and creativity, as a congregation, was positioned as the necessary precursors to the hazardous work of “self transformation and social formation” (Davidson 2013; Lewis 2016). Thus the analytics of subject-making, agency and resistance available to MWC regulars was one that centered on an analytics that re-inscribed vitality and expansiveness, rejecting subalternity and objecthood in the fullest sense. In many ways then the call to “produce, ‘producers’” was meant to open up agentic possibilities to an actant largely constructed as static, unidimensional, and problematic, and thus making allowable “...literally infinite creation[s] without determinate limits” (Davidson 2016:526). Therefore, the regulars in the MWC scene-space were fully engaged in the risky work of resisting the contours of racial management by *refusing* internment and turning to the labour of revelation in order to activate subjectivity. In the next chapter, I’ll directly engage with the blaring backdrop behind the formation and operation of MWC, the politics of recognition, misrecognition and legibility. Furthermore, I’ll illustrate how “self-recognition” (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014), instead of the corrective politics of recognition, was turned to as the site of transformative renewal.

## CHAPTER 7: Refusal, Mundanification, and Self-recognition as counter to the Spectacle of Racism

---

*“a bold initiative aimed at reclaiming the American Muslim narrative...through storytelling, creativity, and culture”*

(Chiqet 2014; muslimwriterscollective.com 2014)

The above sentence is an excerpt from the *Muslim Writers Collective* mission statement located in their website and promotional material. “Reclaiming” is key here. Reclaiming carries the meaning of corrective recognition work, at the very least gesturing towards the politics of recognition in locating or legitimizing the existence of MWC as a racialized counterpublic site. Defining the politics of recognition, Markell (2003) explains that recognition politics is “conventionally approached” as a type of “distributive justice” involving “the exten[sion] to people the respect or esteem they deserve” in virtue of their humanity (2003:18). Recognition, in other words, becomes a ‘public good’ “...that makes possible an effectual capacity within the hegemonic regime” (Markell 2003; *see also* Simpson 2014; Coultard 2014). Similarly, Simpson (2014) explains, recognition implies attaining official access to power through “rights that

protect from harm...that provide access to resources” (23). This extension of “effectual capacity” is argued to open up allowances for mobility, identity and livability broadly understood for the misrecognized agent. As with the ‘misrecognized’ subject it is harm and dispossession that come to be disproportionately overextended (Coulthard 2014; Markell 2004; Taylor 1994). And thus the bargain of recognition is one that pulls the misrecognized into the labour of offering up ‘corrective’ frames of *seeing* so to be included within the logics and optics of power, and thus receive the ‘goods of recognition’. (Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2014; Taylor 1994). In this chapter, I’ll engage with the blaring backdrop behind the formation and operation of MWC, i.e. *the politics of recognition, misrecognition and legibility*. Building on the discussions in the previous chapters on the analytics of *revelation, vitality and expansiveness* carved out in the MWC space for the generative work of subject-making and agentic openings. The current chapter will continue that discussion by further honing in on how curation, composition and fixity continue to be rejected as sites of transformation. I’ll illustrate through extended excerpts that my interlocutors took-up the bargain of recognition as necessary and unavoidable. The work of recognition was understood as providing grounds for relative security and survivability. However, recognition was also framed as labour that was far from liberatory/transformatory. In fact, the corrective work of “speaking back” recognition politics demands was particularly framed as labour mired in exaltative work that pulls the misrecognized back into the disciplinary terrain of *internment* and *subalternity*. While disrupting the generative goal of MWC as a creative counterpublic space. Again, the site of liberatory renewal was located in practices of self/community creation that can be adequately captured by the concepts of mutuality and self-recognition as theorized by critical Black and Indigenous scholarship (Moten 2003; Harney & Moten 2013; Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014; Moten 2012; Hartman 2010; Sharpe 2016). In

contrast to the politics of “speaking-back” as a means of mitigating misrecognition and racist violence, MWC-regulars centered *mundanefication* as a socio-psychic distance-making technique, deployed as another tool of operationalizing the refusal to objecthood, to interment, to subalternity.

### **Necessary, not Transformative**

The MWC regulars I engaged with during my fieldwork consistently relayed an acute awareness of their positionality and standpoint in the racial and social order. Fully aware that racism is the bedrock of Muslim misrecognition, their experience of such provided the backdrop in which counterpublic cultural production emerges in the MWC artistic space. The form that the discussion takes with reference to racism and misrecognition is, however, distinctive. Discussions of misrecognition and racism with MWC regulars were largely couched in a sober matter-of-fact tone underlined with thin moral-normative expectations of the social. Framed as a mundane matter-of-fact reality of Muslim life, there was nothing remarkable about the context of misrecognition per say. According to my interviewees the contours of Muslim misrecognition were tried and self-evident; plainly apparent even in the most casual perusing of media headlines and political rhetoric. Rather the site of greater debate, energy, and interest was the corrective labour and pathways of response available to the misrecognized. For instance, speaking to Muslim misrecognition, Youssef, a performer in the NYC chapter, asserts;

*“Think about all the typecasting and the stereotyping that happens [in the media] and nobody's objecting to it. I'm not mad at the actors because if they don't do it somebody else will. I mean, you got to put food on the table, but at the same time if no one is in there saying like, "Hey, come*

*on man ... let's do something else. Let's have another angle. Let's add depth to it," it's not going to happen. If there is no reason or nobody doing it, it's just not going to happen."*

(Youssef, MWC-NYC 2018)

Youssef frames the context of misrecognition as nearly inevitable, asserting again he is “not mad at the actors” for perpetuating “typecasts and stereotypes”. In contrast to the thin moral-normative expectation of the external order, Youssef places considerable attention on the corrective labour required of the misrecognized subject. Continuing with Youssef we will see that an emphatic placement of an internal “we” - irrespective of marginality - is located as the primary driver of social transformation. If we take Markell’s (2003) framing of recognition as a distributive public good, according to Youssef then a more equitable distributive order is not something that will simply be granted by a hegemonic force out of an abstract ethical stand. Rather social transformation requires an understanding of the self-preservatory role of power (i.e. “I mean, [they] got to put food on the table”) and thus, calls for directed and strategic action from the misrecognized. Similarly, Caffeinator asserts;

*“we know that the mainstream Muslim narrative, for people like us, it's extremely anemic, right? It's so anemic. It's misrepresentative. It's just caricatures, caricatures, right? It's all of that. So, we all know that...we deserve to start from zero, which I don't know if any community has had that privilege of starting from zero [...] But our community, we're starting from negative. Right? First, we have to get to zero. We have to address all these misconceptions and whatever. We have to fix a lot of things in the narrative, and then we start to build our own narrative, right? [...] but there's a lot of renovation that needs to be done before you can start building...without you asserting your own story, there's already a story about you.”*



(Caffienator MWC-TO 2018)

And so, according to Caffienator, the “anemic narrative” surrounding the Muslim figure is a matter-of-fact reality that does not necessitate much elaboration or illustration (i.e. “*we all know it*”). Rather the site of interest and examination is the possibility of social transformation, i.e. moving the discursive needle closer to “zero”. And for Caffienator, like Youssef, the potentiality of transformation is again squarely placed on the internal “we”. Caffienator repeatedly asserts that the labour of “fixing the narrative”, or in Youssef’s words “adding depth”, is a pull to fortify more secure ground which could only be done by an internal “we”. There is no external arbiter or benefactor here. Recognition politics was consistently taken up as a matter-of-fact bargain accompanied with material-social-psychic gains and losses. This standpoint rang true irrespective of where interviewees landed on how to respond to the pull of recognition. For instance, Shooze, a performer in the NYC space, describes the operational work of counteractive cultural production with the following;

*“I mean, at a very base level...when things do bubble up, because I think that’s what ends up happening, right? People only hear about ‘X group’ when something [bad] happens. And at that point, they don’t have the context to understand what is happening, and their responses are very different because of that. So if you have the [cultural] production out there, if you have the work out there, for people to start understanding the context, then the next time that there is an event, or an incident, or your specific group is suddenly highlighted, people are not coming at it from total ignorance and can actually sort of make sense of what’s going on. Or try to make sense, or at least begin making sense of what’s going on. As opposed to just being like, “Well, it’s those people, they’re just nuts”.*

(Shooze MWC-NYC 2018)

The social-political and material consequences of misrecognition both at the level of the everyday and societal were well understood to be far from negligible by MWC regulars. And as Shooze outlines, there was a clear understanding that the bargain of recognition required legibility within hegemonic terms in order to counteract the discursive regimes of “*they’re just nuts*”. There was also an overwhelming sense that performing the corrective work of “renovating”, “building” and “adding depth” was a requirement of positionality and a response to subalternity and racialization. Thus, the corrective labour of *clearing out* and *cleaning up* of recognition politics was understood to be much less about liberatory potential and more about carving out basic grounds of security, wherein the everyday violence and humiliation of subalternity could be buffered against (Simpson 2014; Coulthard 2014). Consequently, what remained consistent across my interlocutors was that the corrective work of “clearing out” and “cleaning up” was framed as representing a type of unfortunate janitorial work - a type of work that did not galvanize generative energy. And so, the landscape of “speaking back” and “taking back the narrative” was repeatedly described as depleting and uninspiring.

### **Depleting and Uninspiring**

Although Youssef emphasizes the necessity of partaking in corrective work, he also makes the point to indicate that the labour is far from desirable or empowering. In fact, there is an embedded trade-off in which a double humiliation is suffered, i.e. the humiliation of racial violence in addition to the humiliation of contorting yourself to respond to the violence. And the precarity of it all means this double humiliation is suffered in the present for an uneven and

uncertain pay-off in an unknown future. Youssef leverages an example of an everyday exchange with a friend to demonstrate his disdain in finding himself in a position where he is made to assert a corrective voice.

*“On a personal basis, I don't want anyone to ever speak for me. I'm saying in general. The other day it happened and this was a good friend. And she's like, "Oh, he doesn't speak Arabic." I'm like, "Yo." And other times like, "Oh, he doesn't drink." And this is other people speaking on my behalf and I'm like, "Yo, don't do that." In front of everybody in a very stern voice. I'm like, "Don't do that. Don't speak for me. I like to talk and I have no issue sharing" ...Why do you feel like you have to tell them on my behalf? Let me do that...So that's like the micro component.*

*The macro component becomes when it becomes an entire community. And if you don't speak up, somebody's going to speak for you. And you know what I'm saying? If you don't say what you want, somebody's going to order for you. And so far, that hasn't been going too well. All the dishes we've been getting served aren't that great.*

(Youssef MWC-NYC 2018)

Youssef's excerpt speaks well to what Minh-ha outlines as the subaltern humiliation of being “spoken for” (Minh-ha 1987:6). Minh-ha asserts, being “spoken-for” firmly reinforces the humiliation of Otherhood and alienation. Minh-ha continues with the humiliation of being “spoken-for” cannot be fully articulated, however “you try to keep on trying...for if you don't, they will not fail to fill in the blanks on your behalf, and you will be said for” (Minh-ha 1987:6). Interestingly, Youssef makes the point of providing examples of “being spoken for” that were not necessarily false or problematic. As he explains, the statements made by others concerning his Arabic skills or alcohol consumption were not misrepresentations per say, but there was an

underlying issue he was attempting to speak to by asserting a corrective voice. Moving beyond the binaries of misrecognition and recognition, Youssef points our attention to the field that propels action, the contours of speech. The terms of assertion can produce a similar humiliation in that the act of corrective assertion pulls one back into the very field of resistance. An agentic diminishment and subjective erasure takes place when the contours of speech and engagement are prefixed, when participation requires adoption of a prearranged role/script that affirms your subalternity. Harney and Moten (2013) explain that racializing structures do not only field a terrain of *being* for the racialized agent, but also the field of *opposition*, as they write - power “...tells us [both] what to do and how we shall be moved, [in addition to]...where we [can] dance the war of apposition” (Harney & Moten 2013:19). And so, even in resistance, or in Harney and Moten’s words, “critique”, one is fielded into a terrain where the formations of the dance have been marked in terms that are legible to hegemony. And so, there was a general wariness about the intensity or stock placed in the dance of oppositionality even by the likes of Caffeinator and Youssef, who still held that a strategic and sober engagement was necessary. Others however were largely unwilling to partake in the dance of power.

### **How long/How much: Protecting Precious Real Estate**

Harney and Moten rhetorically ask in *Undercommons*, “...it matters how long we have to do it, how long [do] we have to be exposed to the lethal effects of [hegemony's] anti-social energy.” (Harney and Moten 2013:19). In many ways MWC-regulars engaged with misrecognition and the corrective work it demanded through this lens of *how long* and *how much*. This marked both the careful delineation of the likes of Caffeinator and Youssef, and the

ambivalence of those that more fully took on a stance of refusal. And so, situated as part of the latter group, Saltysister centers this concern of *how long and how much* in her takeup of the question of partaking in anti-racist corrective work in her creative practice. Saltysister asserts;

*“Yeah. It's hard to find the middle ground...I mean, on any day in Toronto, someone calls you dirt and tells you to go back home, that happens still. But I don't know. shitty assholes exist...I don't know. Yeah. So just like what I said. It's like how long can you talk about the same thing before you're like, I'm done with it. I'm done with this. Not that you're done with Islamophobia. But you're just like, I don't know.”*

*“I don't know. I just think if you keep telling yourself the story of being a victim, then that will always be your truth. And that's not to say that you can't be a victim. I don't know, because it's not that it doesn't exist. It's not that there isn't a thing there and things are not good.”*

(Saltysister MWC-TO 2018)

Saltysister affirms that her statement should not be misconstrued as a denial of Islamophobia or the contours of misrecognition that field Muslimhoods, it is simply that she is wary that in centering corrective anti-racist work she is reinscribing herself into the very terrain she is attempting to combat. Saltysister explains, when it comes to the stories you craft of yourself and your community it is not simply a matter of empirical reality, but just as important is the lens or point of view you field those “realities” through, stating;

*“Even in the news I feel that way, like there is an overtelling of certain stories, and I think that severely skews our reality, and obviously skews the world's reality of what Muslims are capable of [laughter]. So I think that, even on a microlevel it has the same impact in a space like MWC, where you just keep telling those same stories and then those stories continue to be the truth that*

*you tell yourself, whether it's true or not, that's what you take away from it. So yeah, it's not that we shouldn't thoughtfully think through things or be critical or anything like that. It's being mindful of how you tell the story and who has control over the narrative that's being told"*

(Saltysister MWC-TO 2018)

Again, the facticity of these stories are not what is at issue, but the stories we tell ourselves shape our present and future. This was something deeply understood by MWC-regulars. Saltysister continues with deploying a metaphor to push her point further. Saltysister explains;

*"If you think about anything in your life. I'm trying to put it into an example that makes sense. Like sometimes if I really focus on something, like let's say for example I bought a new car. For the next month, I see that car everywhere, because that took up so much of my time, I saw that car, so everywhere I go I see that car because that's the car that occupied so much of my time. And this might be a really stupid example, but I feel like that is kind of how like those stories get perpetuated is so-- you're focusing so much on that story, and so when you go out into the world, that's going to be what you see"*

(Saltysister MWC-TO 2018)

Bringing in Harney and Moten from *Undercommons* again, they explain the irony embedded in resistance politics is that it threatens "...to endanger the sociality it is supposed to defend" (Harney & Moten 2013:19). They further explain, an unwary participation in counteractive corrective action, or "critique", invariably furthers the "sociopoetic forces" surrounding the

racialized agent, wherein even in the act of critique the tentacles of power come to be (re)inscribed anew (Harney & Moten 2013:19). And so, Saltysister's refusal to center stories of racist violence, misrecognition, and humiliation speaks to this concern around *how much* space and thus self, one grants to corrective work. What's at stake is (re)inscription into the disciplinary terrain of racial management and internment. (Re)inscription by "sociopoetic forces" operating to remake the terrain of subalternity. And so, concerns around how much oxygen to allocate to stories of subalternity persistently shaped discussions of counteractive work. Thus while the political work of recognition was a strategic concern, the threat of further (re)inscription was held to be far more pressing and urgent. Speaking to this prioritized concern of subject-making over social-location, Saltysister explains her primary priority lies in protecting her creative energies and subjecthood from being subsumed by counteractive work that invariably privileges stories of loss, violence, and humiliation, asserting;

*"...If you're asking if I would want Islamophobia centered in my art? No, I don't think it is right now, as it stands...I feel like it's partially intentional, and partially perhaps I've compartmentalized it, and I'm like, "This isn't affecting me"...but you do experience it. So it's not like it doesn't ever impact you, but it's never the thing that I want to write about."*

(Saltysister MWC-TO 2018)

Speaking about Islamophobia, Saltysister jumps into a third person voice to assert "this isn't affecting me", as a type of mantra to repeat to herself. However, she quickly follows her mantra with, "...but you do experience it". Saltysister makes a delineation between her grounded social-political location, i.e. "you do experience it", and the social-psychic environment she chooses to carve out for herself through a repetition of "*this isn't affecting me*". And thus, constructing affectual distance through refusal. Saltysister continues with;

*“...I can't keep just letting that affect me. There are other things in my life and other places I can add value that's not just talking about that...What does [focusing on it] do to me if I can't really change that thing...I'm of the opinion, that it's good to see less of it, so you can move through things, otherwise I don't know how we'd keep going.”*

(Saltysister MWC-TO 2018)

The ability to *“be done with it”* , *“see less of it”* are responses of refusal that aim to de-center the tentacles of power in the intimate operations of subject-making.

And so, irrespective of where my respondents landed on the necessity of partaking in recognition politics, the context of misrecognition/racism was presented in a matter-a-fact, nonchalant, and unremarkable tone. In other words, a stoic realist frame (*“shity assholes exist”*) juxtaposed with a strong sense of subjective capacity (*“I can't let it affect me”*) was a pattern of response that cut across many of my interviews. Thus, the social-psychic field was firmly placed as the primary site of refusal and generative transformation. Glen Coulthard's notion of “self-recognition” is a productive insertion here. In *Red Skin White Masks* (2014), Coulthard introduces self-recognition as an alternative to recognition politics (Coulthard, 2014). Coulthard's self-recognition stands as follows: a self-directed (re)making of self and community that aims to reposition, rearrange, and recast available practices, discourses, and artifacts rooted in a given sociohistorical field in a manner that would serve the most “enabling” potential for the subjects in question. Shooze, another performer in the NYC space with much more artistic performance experience, follows this orientation of concentrating energy on the most “enabling” potential by also refusing to dedicate too much energy to recounting the violence that the context of racism and misrecognition produce, especially with an external audience, simply asserting;



*"I'm not having a conversation with a casual acquaintance about, like," Let me tell you about how this one time this homeless guy spat at me [laughter]."*

(Shooze MWC-NYC 2018).

Shooze cushions her mention of racist street violence in laughter followed by a shrug, explaining she rather talk about the mundane occurrences in her everyday life than the spectacle that is racism. And as Moten (2003) tells us, spectacles make objects of subjects. Describing what it means to lean on the mundane for her creative inspiration, Shooze explains;

*"...I really like the idea of the mundane. I like writing to, or writing about, the mundane, the everyday, like literally my biggest problem this morning was how long I had to wait to get my coffee... [like] "Oh my God, I waited forty-five minutes to get my coffee this morning. That was so irritating." And they're having this conversation with me in hijab."*

(Shooze MWC-NYC 2018)

Shooze is both (1) *a woman in love with her morning coffee routine*; and (2) *a hijab wearing woman that was spat on by a homeless man*. Both stories are equally true, but the site of agentic exercise for Shooze focuses on delineating the stories she chooses to actively turn towards. In other words, Shooze's refusal to be marked by incidents of racist humiliation speaks to a refusal to be subsumed and defined by subalternity. This refusal was operationalized by actively directing her attention to a terrain (i.e. "the mundane") in which the humiliation of subalternity ("*homeless guy spat at me*") comes to be outside the immediate field of view - i.e. living Saltysister's mantra of "this isn't affecting me".

Mundanification was a tactic of negotiation and mitigation consistently taken up by my interlocutors. Mundanification of violence and racism operated as a tactic in which the strategy of

rehearsing “*this isn’t affecting me*” could be honored as a means of protecting precious social-psychic real estate. Speaking on Mundanefication as a socio-psychic technique of negotiating and managing our social world, Sabien explains, for “outcomes that feel infinitely bad to our system ... it can be helpful to stare directly at the worst imaginable possibility [and] defuse the flinch reflex by “mundanifying” the outcome.” Sabien continues with;

“...putting the worst case into the realm of the thinkable can help reduce the stress [anxiety of]...the moment. It’s not that it makes that worst case good, it’s just that it prevents it from looming infinitely large. And by contrast, it makes the present situation suddenly feel a lot more hopeful—because you still have time to influence the future.”  
(Sabien 2021:225)

And thus, through a strategic turn to the mundane, Shooze comes to foreground herself and her voice in a narrative field in which she is the only active agent of note. Similarly, Saltysister also explains, turning to the mundane does not mean that one is denying the “reality” of context or power, but rather serves as a tactic of actively diversifying the stories we tell ourselves, in order not to privilege moments of dehumanization. And so, the act of mundanifying and minimizing racist encounters with systemic discussions shrouded in stoic realism was arguably a means of resisting the capture of subalternity, while preserving hope for a future that is yet to be written.

## **Conclusion**

The assumed bargain of anti-racist work centering recognition politics asks for a “corrective” representation to be offered-up for the distributive justice of recognition to expand and include the misrecognized. My ethnographic engagement and conversations with MWC

organizers, performers, and community members demonstrates that the standard grounds of recognition were recast. MWC thus seemed to gesture towards this bargain in the languaging and promotional framing of the collective. Nonetheless, in practice recognition politics operated as little more than window dressing, acting as a jumping off point making possible grounds for more substantive, formative, and intersubjective explorations. And so, the standard recognition bargain was largely presented as strategically necessary and inevitable – supported by an acute awareness of their positionality and the politicized framing of Muslimness in the current post-9/11 era. However, this was coupled with a deep-seated reluctance, aversion and apprehension towards the labour recognition politics demands of the misrecognized. Recognition work was in fact framed as depleting and uninspiring, contradicting the generative goal of the space and threatening a reinscription into the racializing politics of internment. Building on the previous chapters, it came to be clear once again that my interlocutors placed the work of transformation *elsewhere*. A place refusing curation, composition, order, or legibility. Rather *mundenfication* is picked up by MWC regulars as a tactic of negotiating the realities of racist violence and misrecognition in order to allow for affectual-psychic distance necessary to continue in the generative work of the scene-space. Thus, MWC as a racialized creative counterpublic locates the hazardous work of transformation in the intimate everyday social-psychic terrain of congregational/mutual self/community (re)making - what Coultard (2014) refers to as “self-recognition”. Sitting in clear contrast to the antagonist politics of “speaking back” that is generally assumed to mark the work of racialized counterpublics.

## CHAPTER 8: Concluding Remarks

---

The study of race and racism has increasingly drawn attention to the racialization of Muslim communities. The emergence of Critical Muslim Studies has forcefully created a space wherein the interplay between the multiplicity of Muslim lives and the role of racial management can be more fully elaborated. This thesis attempts to expand upon this elaboration. Situating Muslim lives within a historical context of racialization, I engage with the pathways of racialized action deployed by agents located on the receiving end of disciplinary structures. In turn, this approach makes a contribution to both Critical Muslim Studies and the Sociology of Race and Racism. The racialized reduction of Muslimhoods to a homogenized ever-conquering pollutant is countered by attending to racialized agency and the analytics of subject-making. Moreover, an attempt is made to center voices that currently receive limited space in academic endeavours, a limited space bordered by the politics of recognition. I argue that the politics of recognition holds a particularly insidious role in (re)producing the contours of racial discipline for an 'interned' subject, managed through evictive logics. Thus, the public recognition of Muslim subjecthoods not only curtails and reproduces Muslim voices according to the racist dichotomy of savable-good/bad Muslim, but more importantly reduces Muslim life in the interior into a "mechanism without vitality" (Davidson & Lewis 2010). This thesis offers Muslim counterpublics as a useful way in challenging the prescriptions of racialized public(s) and investigating the analytics of transformation available to subalternized agents. The preceding chapters demonstrated that the politics of resistance and transformation deployed by racialized agents moves in accordance to a wide response map closely speaking to the contextual specificities of the system of racial management at play. Thus, amid the backdrop of internment and evictive proceedings fielding

Muslim racial management, expansion, revelation and mundanification emerge as devices of refusal operating to ignite subjective vitality and transformative futures. In the subsequent sections of this chapter the overarching findings will be discussed in relation to the contribution it makes to our understanding of racialized agency, resistance, and of Muslim life in the interior.

## **Counterpublics and Refusal**

The major areas of contribution are made through my engagement with the Muslim Writers Collective (MWC) as a racialized counterpublic site. An “active listening” narrative ethnographic methodology was employed in order to pay close attention to the forms, methods, and operational dynamics taken up by MWC as a racialized counterpublic formation. Taking seriously bell hooks’s assertion that racialized margins sit as sites where “...we can best become whatever we want to be” (1990:20), I asked *what can “actively listening” to the process, procedures and forms tell us about the analytics of “being whatever we want”, i.e. the analytics of subject-making and agency available for racialized actors?* The goal of engaging with the ‘living’ narrative environment collectively constructed by MWC organizers, members, and performers was meant to provide a thick and layered presentation of the MWC scene-space in order to glean at the politics of resistance, transformation, and agency employed in a post 9/11 context of racial management and surveillance.

This thesis takes up Muslim counterpublics springing into the public stage in the post 9/11 moment as a useful way of investigating racialized agency given the field of heightened racial management. Considering that counterpublics are said to emerge from contexts of

exclusion and otherization, an *antagonist-politics* of resistance prioritizing *recognition* is overwhelmingly emphasized in discussions of the transformative impulse of counterpublics. However, my exploration of MWC as a case-study illustrates that the frame of ‘withdrawal-and-antagonism’ coupled with a politics of ‘re-entry/recognition’ is insufficient in its ability to meet the post 9/11 moment. The post-9/11 moment ushered in a particular *shrinkage* of Muslim life in the interior, a shrinkage made through a multi-tiered arsenal of racial management including “psychic internment” levied on Muslim life. The rise of Muslim public(s) thus cannot be effectively understood without this backdrop of *shrinkage* and *internment*. Moreover, engaging with racialized action or *the analytics of self/social transformation of the margins* requires scholarship to move past an uncritical focus on antagonist frames of resistance married with recognition politics as the lens through which racialized agency becomes intelligible. Rather, scholarship concerned with racialized agency and resistance should commence from the everyday existence of said actors that continue to dynamically navigate racializing systems.

In the case of MWC, the professionalized and politicized structures of resistance were located to be far from transformative and largely understood as ‘janitorial’ in effect. Given that what is at issue with the Muslim problem is *subjectivity and actability*, a politics of action that once again requires the ‘interned subject’ to contort and further intern bits and pieces of the self comes to be experienced as humiliating work, a humiliation of being pulled into the disciplinary regime of making the ‘savable/good’ Muslim and thus perpetuating one’s own marginality and abjecthood. In contrast, the findings of this thesis draw our attention to *refusal* as a key device picked up in mitigating the field of racialized exclusion, a field marked by a racialized politics of misrecognition, internment, quarantine, and eviction. Thus, instead of employing recognition

politics to open up grounds of transformation, MWC located their transformative work in a politics of refusal and self-recognition (Coulthard 2014), opening up generative grounds of creativity and subjectivity. Furthermore, paying close attention to the forms, methods, and operational dynamics of the MWC scene-space demonstrated that *improvisation, revelation, expansion, and mundanification* emerged as key methods through which resistance was mapped, a mapping collectively deployed to “*refuse what has been refused*”(Hartman & Moten 2018).

### **Improvisation and ‘Producing Producers’**

Improvisation came up as an important device of scene-space making wherefrom generative openings of creativity and subject-making emerged. This is elaborated upon in the active-listening section of this dissertation. Speaking to what improvisation makes allowable as a methodology, Cynthia Novack (1988) asserts,

“The experience of the movement style in improvisational process itself were thought to teach people how to live (to trust, to be spontaneous and “free,” to “center” oneself, and to “go with the flow”)...to use Clifford Geertz’s phrase, a “model of” and a “model for” an egalitarian, spontaneous way of life” (1988:105).

Thus, improvisation stands as a refusal to order, composition, composure, and curation, all markers of shrinkage and internment arguably shaping the everyday field of Muslim racial management. In contrast, the risky work of spontaneous sharing and raw uncut storytelling culminates into an “aesthetics of imperfection” (Gioia 1987), inviting a wide medley of first-

person testimonials to enter the narrative environment. MWC prioritized space-making acts that carved out *grounds for expansion* (i.e. challenging the racial politics of *shrinkage/internment*) as well as *stretching/texturing* of the self and community in ways largely unavailable in everyday racializing public(s) of the post-9/11 moment. Put differently, letting go as a Jama'ah and holding space for the hazardous work of revelation and exploration of self/community emerged as a critical element of the transformative impulse of MWC. Collectively bearing the risk of revelation and making space for uncut difference to collide means opening up “...horizontal inexhaustibility...moments of his infinite creativity...[where] there is the exercise of dilation, of the expansion of the self into the cosmos, the exercise of becoming aware of being[ness] within the All, as a minuscule point of brief duration, but capable of dilating into the immense field of infinite space and of seizing the whole of reality in a single intuition” (Davidson 2016:529). And through this congregational dilation and expansion generative openings of self/social transformation, collectively galvanized, to disrupt the racializing reduction of the post-9/11 moment emerge.

Furthermore, the play and experimentation improvisation makes way for the “patient labour” of “...grasp[ing] the points where change is possible and desirable, and to determine the precise form this change should take” (Foucault 1997: 316). When improvisation succeeds then, as George Lewis explains, what emerges on the other side is a flow that leaves a sense of *enchantment* (Lewis & Piekut 2016; Bennett 2001). Bennett continues with “enchantment is a mood of lively and intense engagement with the world [that] ...consists in a mixed bodily state of joy and disturbance, a transitory sensuous condition dense and intense enough to stop you in your tracks and toss you onto new terrain[s]” (Bennett 2001:111). The collective bearing witness



of the Jama'ah then operates as the grid that “tosses you onto new terrain[s]” making way for renewed “openings and flights”, openings and flights where “...literally infinite creation[s] without determinate limits” become imaginable (Davidson 2016:526). This space of creativity and imagination, unconcerned with curated productions for the consumption of the hegemonic gaze, become revolutionary acts of self/community-making largely disallowed for racialized subjects. As Fanon (1954) tells us, the raced subject is fielded to exist for the sake of an *Other*. This disallowance of *vitality* sits at the core of racializing systems. And for the *always conquering* “Green Menace”/“bad Muslim” it is mobility and presumed erratic actability that prompt racializing and securitizing regimes to call for systems of interment, quarantine and eviction.

Hence, making life in the racial terrain of the “not-quite-human” (Weheliye 2014) means that the requirements of composure, curation, and presentation become a matter of leaning on the side of life for just another moment for a subject tethering the thin zone of life and death. Consequently, *vitality* is lost and without *vitality* objects are made of subjects or in Davidson’s words “...life [is made to] devolve into a mechanism without vitality” (Davidson & Lewis 2010). MWC in turn serves as a counterpublic space operated to reinscribe *vitality* through the active practice of collectively expanding, being present, and open to bearing witness to revelations of selves in all their contradictions, incoherencies, and divergences without a need to compose, order, or fix, and *thus be fixed*. Through this activation of space for inspiration, creativity, and enchantment there is a collective cultivation of what MWC regulars call “producers”, a subject-position of creative-activated agents resisting an existence “...devolving into a mechanism without vitality” (Davidson & Lewis 2010). In contrast, a space that operates to “produce

‘producers’” is collectively labouring to (re)ignite *vitality* and to spark *subjectivity*, and thereby disrupting a public life “devolved into a mechanism without vitality” (Davidson & Lewis 2010). Thus, to “just exist” in all your multiplicity becomes a bold act of refusal for a racialized agent perpetually under scrutiny and surveillance wherein presentations and revelations of self become especially hazardous undertakings requiring regular calculus (e.g. “*should I wear my black hijab today*”, “*should I shorten my name for this interview*”, “*let me put my Arabic language assignment away on this flight*”). My interlocutors would consistently speak about similar everyday calculus to survive racial violence. These calculations were meant to subvert incidents of illegibility slipping into misrecognition and thereby leading to another incidence of humiliation, ejection, and violent rage. Therefore, in this work of “producing ‘producers’” the MWC scene-space arguably disrupts the fundamental work of racial management, work that operates to leave the racialized subject “barely on” as an actant (Bennett 2010), and thus easily produced as an object for another. In general, the labour of “producing producers” tends to decenter subalternity and objecthood.

### **Vitality, Subjectivity and the Jama'ah**

MWC was not meant for the unfortunate [humiliating] labour of making one self legible to the very politics and systems that are perpetuating marginality and racial abjection. However, the Muslim Studies literature (Zine & Taylor 2016; Ahmed 2010; Abdul Khabeer 2016; Morey & Yaqin 2011) picks up on the rise of Muslim space/place-making efforts in a manner largely in line with dominant frames of resistance/transformation that give primacy to antagonist-recognition politics. My engagement with MWC illustrates that understanding the rise

of Muslim space/place-making efforts in the North Atlantic requires a closer delineation of the wide range of formations, methods, and strategies that have emerged in the post-9/11 moment. The broad surveying approach, one which reflects much of the scholarly engagement with Muslim counterpublics, easily misses the nuances in racialized agentic efforts, nuances arguably better revealed through particularistic explorations. Speaking on creative counterpublic formations driven by improvisation, Gibson-Graham explain that the space/stage, "...begins to take on reality from the energies of a community that forms around each of the participants...it's almost as though the performance is a promise, an unreality to all of them until these moments of community are enacted" (Gibson-Graham 2006:17). "The demand for a performance, the desire and anticipation of pleasure" (Gibson-Graham 2006:17), or better yet, anticipation of an "enchanted rise" comes to galvanize the space, re-making boundaries of community and activating a congregation, a Jama'ah. For the night then, "...power relations are frozen or blocked, into mobile sites for the conscious practice of freedom" (Lewis & Piekut 2016: 8). This contrasts with the affective energy often associated with subaltern spaces of resistance, energy that often centre, as Gibson-Graham assert, "The affects associated with ...outrage and anger that cluster around heroic struggles" (2006:18-20). Rather, the affective grounds of MWC and its outgrowth is captured well by Gibson-Graham's quote below:

*"[An] enticing quality of wonder as awareness of and delight in otherness take hold...[whereby] connection across all sorts of divides and differences; and experimentation with a communal class process in which interdependence and incompleteness are accepted as enabling aspects of individual subjectivity...in this atmosphere, distrust, misrecognition, and judgment are temporarily suspended and a solidarity develops that is based not on sameness, but on a growing recognition that the other is what makes self possible—climaxing in the moment when audience and performers come together and make possible both the performance and each other's roles within it" (Gibson-Graham 2006:18-20).*

In the language of improvisation, MWC destabilizes the common melodies ascribed to what it is to be 'Muslim', and what it is to resist racist ascriptions. However, this destabilization is not done through a politics of reordering difference, galvanizing outrage, or offering up a particular 'corrective frame', but by opening up to the risky terrain of uncurated difference, and allowing for moments of disjunction, discomfort, and inspiration to overcome the scripted/comfortable/routinized. The congregation, the Jama'ah, is then galvanized to disrupt the "barely on" of racialization and offer allowances wherein new forms of congregating and assembling, both at the collective and the subjective level, can emerge. Thus, the Jama'ah allows for the leap of faith that makes collective expansions/revelations, via the unraveling of the private/intimate, possible. In other words, taking up a standpoint of "No" (Sharpe 2016) to the "barely on"/"slightly off" of racialization and immersing in a "mode of reflective relation[s] to the present" (Foucault 1997: 313) becomes the work of transformation. Thus, the MWC scene-space operated as an energy grid entering the raw and hazardous terrain of "self transformation and social formation" in order to reclaim *vitality*, and thus *subjectivity* (Davidson 2016; Lewis 2016). In the next section, we will directly engage with the politics of recognition and the dominant strategies of offering up corrective frames of mitigating misrecognition and aligning racist violence in relation to the work of MWC.

### **Recognition, Racialized Counterpublics, and Mundanification**

The labour demanded of the misrecognized by recognition politics was overwhelmingly framed as depleting, exhaustive, and 'janitorial' by MWC regulars. The corrective work 'speaking back' requires was seen as providing some grounds for survival, while at the same

time understood as a labour mired in “exaltation” (Thobina 2007), which in many ways returns the misrecognized to the disciplinary terrain of internment and subalternity. In other words, to speak on what it is to be Muslim in language and contortments defined by hegemonic scripts carry the very real risk of reinscription into the very terrain of subalternity that one is arguably attempting to subvert/resist. Given that the terms of assertion and voice are prescribed by hegemonic logics, speaking oneself into these logics is submitting to the humiliation of being fixed, ordered, and made into an object curated for the altar of whiteness/Westernness. Thus, transformation was not located in “re-entry” into dominant publics for MWC as a counterpublic formation. Transformation was not located in recognition-centered communication flows aimed outwards into broader publics. In fact, acts of offering up corrective frames crafted for “re-entry” was argued to potentially lead to a rehearsal of the tired bad/good Muslim dichotomy in order to present oneself as the savable/moderate Muslim.

Thus, (re)inscription into the disciplinary terrain of racialization and internment was the primary site of refusal. At the same time however, recognition politics was not framed as a zero-sum game wherein *participation* (Taylor 1994) or *turning away* (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014) were understood to be the only effectual responses. Rather MWC regulars took up a more nuanced engagement, in which the extent of investment and divestment in recognition politics was the point of entry. Thus, some strategic engagement in recognition work was largely framed as inevitable for racialized communities, the caveat and point of discussion being how much oxygen, and thus self, to allocate to the corrective work which necessitates stories of subalternity and racial humiliation. Put differently, anti-racist recognition work focused on an antagonistic “speaking-back” politics was understood to be *necessary* but far from liberatory.

Thus, although my findings support much of the critique that has been levied by Indigenous and Black Studies scholars on the manner anti-racist recognition politics reproduces the same systems it presumes to disrupt (Coulthard 2014; Simpson 2014). My findings also offer up another dimension to the discussion of recognition politics. Although recognition was framed as depleting and at the end of the day re-making subalternity, it was nonetheless also framed as ‘unfortunately necessary’. This perspective nuances the critiques of recognition which tend to center a politics of *turning away* as the only critical response, revealing the very real tensions and nuances in the mitigation efforts deployed by racialized agents. The sobering ‘reality’ my interlocutors presented was one in which the *here-and-now* continues to be fielded by the altar of whiteness. And so, making life as a racialized agent means engaging in the tight rope of carving out space/time to partake in recognition work, without the demands of recognition coming to consume the stories we tell of ourselves. In fact, a strategic engagement in the *non-transformative “janitorial”* work of recognition was tied with the *transformative labour of self-recognition* as the *janitorial* work takes us to “ground zero” but *flight* only happens in the terrain of ‘self-recognition’.

Mundanification also played a rather salient role in discussions of recognition politics and the balancing act it demands. Mundanification was positioned as a device of refusal, making possible the social-psychic distance necessary to resist an everyday terrain marked by misrecognition and racist violence. Put differently, the work of de-centering the tentacles of power in the intimate operations of subject-making was overwhelmingly operationalized by an affectual distant-making act of mundanification. Mundanification thus was picked up as a means of creating the affectual distance to stories of racial humiliation that allowed for sober matter-of-fact engagements with recognition to unfold, while intentionally shaping the type of stories we

tell ourselves. Consequently, mundanification is employed as a tool to disrupt the *spectacle of racism* and its ability to subsume the subject of management, while also reorienting attention to the *mundane* and *everyday* as the drivers for the stories placed in the immediate field of view. Mundanification then emerges as a device of mitigation meant to protect precious social-psychic real estate, as the social-psychic field, in addition to the congregation, is firmly placed as the site of generative transformation. Mundanification and refusal taken together then operate as tactics of carving out space both in subjective and collective-creative terms wherein the “patient labour” of imagining transformation, activating exercises in liberation, and nowness become possible. By allowing for affectual-psychic distance through mundanification space is carved out for a congregational turn towards “self-recognition” (Coulthard 2014) while also tending to the *janitorial* necessity of recognition.

### **Refusing Finality/ Reclaiming Subjectivity**

My engagement with MWC illustrates that understanding the rise of Muslim space/place-making efforts in the North Atlantic requires a closer examination of the wide range of formations, methods and strategies that have emerged in the post-9/11 moment. The broad surveying approach, a popular lens through which much of the scholarly work on the rise of Muslim counterpublics is approached, easily misses the nuances in racialized agentic efforts, nuances arguably better revealed through more particularistic explorations. MWC, the largest creative formation centering storytelling and narrative work in North America, sits as one manifestation of the wide range of politics and tools deployed in resisting, making life, and mitigating an existence marked by regimes of racial management that constructs the Muslim

figure as a conquering-pollutant in need of multi-tiered disciplinary responses. My engagement with MWC illustrates that the strategies of negotiation picked up by racialized agents are layered and equally multi-tiered. With MWC regulars, there is a clear delinking and intentional bracketing of “material” and “subjective” dimensions of resistance wherein the work of material ground-making that recognition was located within was understood to be necessary for survivability, but transformation lay in the horizontal/congregational subject-making domain.

The work of activating subjectivity was the work of MWC. My interlocutors consistently resisted any sense of finality or enclosure in the order of things, while maintaining a grounded soberness concerning the structuring powers at play. MWC demonstrates that the space for creative renewal and agentic exercise is “inextinctable”, as Hartman and Moten contend, the spirit of *beingness* is a spirit of renewal. Thus, MWC comes to reclaim the public outside of the terms expected of racialized counterpublics. It is an unstructured space, unsettling the public/private delineation and pushing against attempts at curation, composition, and order (i.e. or professionalisms), so as to carve out grounds for vitality and subjectivity. This exercise of subjectivity is reclaimed as the primary work of the counterpublic. In effect, a refusal to be rehearsed, coherent, efficient, profound or even “make-sense” is presented by MWC regulars as an orientation towards freedom both a freedom from as well as a freedom to “*being for an Other*” (Fanon 1952). As a space of uncut raw-inspired storytelling, MWC affirms that the generative moment does not precede the moment of congregation. Producing the subject-position of “producer” is interlinked with the formation of the congregation, the Jama'ah. And this affiliation opens up allowances for “agency proper” (Bennett 2010). Thus, the congregational exercise is central to transformative work, as it is the exercise of collectively expanding through



improvisation and play while also leveraging mundanification to open up windows of *flight* in the everyday. In turn, resisting the tentacles of subjectification marked by an existence conscripted by rehearsals and calculus.

Thus, going back to the overarching impetus of this dissertation, i.e. *understanding the manner racialized agents respond to overbearing structures*, what blaringly comes through is that “resistance comes first”. Moten (2003) tells us resistance is the *precursor to inscription*; it is a force that can never be permanently contained, however expansive the tentacles of power. And understanding how resistance shows up as a fundamental “micropolitics of life” (Kline 2017) requires the deployment of active listening methodologies that takes seriously that the margins sit as a ripe ground of knowledge-making (Lorde 1984; hooks 1990). Turning our analytical lens to the dynamic pathways of negotiation deployed by racialized communities disrupts the regular muting and flattening of the subjective capacity of racialized actors. Furthermore, paying attention to the diverse pathways of negotiation deployed also allows us to approach intervention and anti-racism in a manner that prioritizes the labour and knowledge of those living the everyday of racial management.

## Appendix I: List of Guiding Interview Questions

### Preliminary/Positionality

- For organizers: what is MWC's origin story?
- What sparked your interest in MWC? How did you become involved/begin attending MWC events? What do you think makes MWC unique or worthwhile?
- How long have you been attending/organizing/performing at MWC?
- Have you attended chapters in other cities?
- Would you say you are primarily an attendee, organizer or performer?
- And what would you say is the audience make-up, ethnically, age, occupation...etc?
- For organizers: what is this demographic make-up for organizers?
- What would you say is the size of the audience on any given night?
- For organizers: how do you select overarching themes for MWC events? Do you feel people generally stay on theme? What type of energy/vibe would you ideally like for an MWC night? How do you want people to feel as the head out?
- How long have you lived in NYC/TO? And how do you like the city?

### MWC open-mic stage

- How do you generally feel when you leave MWC events?
- What do you think is the overarching aim of MWC? What need does it serve?
- What do you think sparked the multi-chapter growth of MWC? What gap do you think it was filling? And do you think the timing of its growth is relevant?
- And *who* is the MWC space for?
- Why do you think the open-mic set-up is important for MWC?
- Why an open-mic setup vs. a curated show? What do you think are the pros/cons of both setup?
- Would you say that the MWC stage caters to professional artists/writers or novices?
- Would you say the MWC stage is exclusively Muslim? Why is that important or not important?
- The literature tends to describe the growing Muslim art space as a "counter-public" space, do you think that is an apt conceptualization of the scene? What does "counter-public" mean to you?
- In general, what themes do you feel the MWC stage tackles? And what are the predominant genre of performance (spoken-work/comedy/open storytelling/reading)?
- What genre on stage do you find most engaging?
- What have been the most reoccurring themes shared on stage?
- Do you think this speaks to a broader context?
- What performances or themes have you found most interesting during the times you have attended?
- For performers: Have you performed over the past year? What pieces [and performative genre] did you select and why did you select those pieces? What was the audience's reception? And how did you feel on stage and/or as you were leaving the stage?

- Can you recall particular performances/stories that really stood out to you from the past year? And why?
- What would you say is the overarching “story” being told in the MWC stage?

### **Muslimness and Performance**

- What does *being* Muslim mean to you?
- Do you think the stage or the artistic scene is a site in which the question of what it means to be Muslim can be dealt with? Do you think the artistic space is a productive space to do this reckoning?
- Do you think the MWC space speaks to what it means to be Muslim in the West?
- What do you think are the key tensions Muslims face in this side of the world?
- Do you think the artistic space or the stage has a part to play in speaking to these tensions?

### **Freedom and Creative Production**

- What do you think of “freedom” or “emancipation”?
- Is this a point of concern or focus for you?
- What do you think are the necessary tools/conditions needed to achieve this freedom you describe?
- Is freedom something that is ascribed, handed-out or achieved to you? And why?
- And what role do you think art plays when it comes to freedom and emancipation?
- What does home mean to you? How is freedom and home connected to you, if at all?
- Do you think “home” can actively/intentionally be “made”? What does home-making mean to you?
- Do you think Muslims have comfortably found/made home in the North Atlantic? What would it take/require for Muslims to comfortably finding home in the North Atlantic?
- How do you think the art scene comes to play when it comes to making-home?
- How do you think the MWC-stage speaks to the manner we are thinking of ourselves and building community?

### **Context of Muslim Racialization and Belonging**

- What does belonging mean to you? How would you define it?
- And do you feel like your everyday aligns with this definition?
- Where/when do you feel the greatest sense of belonging?
- What do you think can deepen one’s sense of belonging in a given place? [How do you think grounds of belonging can be secured, if at all?]
- Do you think creative works are a productive or effective means of securing home or deepening one’s sense of belonging?
- What role do you feel the post 9/11 moment has had in the manner you think of belonging? Was there a stark difference for you in the manner you thought of belonging and home pre/post 9/11?
- Do you think the artistic rise in Muslim spaces speaks to this issue of belonging? Or lack thereof?

- Do you think as individuals we have the power/ability to secure our sense of belonging given the rising Islamophobia we experience and hear about?

### **MWC Overarching Aim of “reclaiming narratives” and Recognition**

- MWC defines itself online as a space to “reclaim narratives” - What does this mean to you?
- What exactly do you think MWC is attempting to “reclaim”?
- Why is there a need to “reclaim narratives”? Who/where is it being reclaimed from?
- Why do you think “narratives” are the site of emphasis – the thing that needs reclaiming?
- Why do you think narratives matter? Why should we as Muslims care about narratives?
- Who is the audience our narrative-work is intended for? Do you think it is important to make a distinction between narratives we make for ourselves, our communities and broader context?
- What does it mean to be recognized to you? Who’s recognition or gaze matters from your standpoint?
- What would you say is the relationship between storytelling and recognition?
- Do you think recognition is important for Muslims in our context?
- Do you think Muslims are racialized, otherized, problematized? What does these framings of the issue mean to you?

### **Creative Production and Islamophobia**

- Studies and reports that have come out over the past few years showing a rise in Islamophobia, do you feel Islamophobia is something that impacts a Muslims-identifying person’s day-to-day life?
- Has it impacted your day-to-day experience?
- Where do you think Islamophobia is most ever present/pronounced?
- Where are you most conscious of it?
- How does Islamophobia feel to you and how do you deal with these feelings?
- Do you catch yourself consciously trying to mitigate its effects?
- Given this context, do you feel limits or barriers to your ability to act and move in the world? And if so, where and when do you feel these limits most intensely?
- What do you think a turn to creative efforts despite the unfavorable broader context says about people living in a context of exclusion and/or marginalization?
- Do you feel the arts [or more specifically the MWC space] is a productive space to work-out and speak on these feelings and experiences of exclusion?
- Do you think the MWC space and the Muslim art scene more generally speaks to the agency we possess or that is available to us? If so, how?
- How often do you feel issues of marginalization and Islamophobia come up on the MWC stage? And do you feel the audience is receptive to it?
- Do you think speaking/sharing with each other in a Muslim-centered space like MWC works to mitigate Islamophobia or reifies and amplifies it?

**Appendix II: Select Observation Field Notes Format**

**FIELD NOTE: OPEN MIC EVENT NOTES CHART**

**NARRATIVE ENVIRONMENT:**

<b>[1] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>			<b>[2] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>		
Scene	Aboutness	Reception	scene	aboutness	Reception
<b>[3] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>			<b>[4] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>		
Scene	Aboutness	Reception	scene	aboutness	reception
<b>[5] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>			<b>[6] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>		
Scene	aboutness	Reception	scene	aboutness	reception
<b>[7] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>			<b>[8] NARRATIVE EVENT</b>		
Scene	aboutness	Reception	scene	aboutness	reception

--	--	--	--	--	--

**Table 1: “select observation” field notes format**

- Narrative environment: is the open mic stage for a particular event - the themes, aims and setup of the stage is what important here.
- Narrative events: each performance on the stage is a documented as a separate piece of data

## Bibliography

- Abdul Khabeer, S. (2016). *Muslim Cool: Race, religion, and hip-hop in the United States*. New York, N.Y.: NYU Press.
- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), 783–790.
- Abu Sway, M. (2006). The Concept of Hudna (Truce) in Islamic Sources. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, 13(3), 20–.
- Affan, S. (2010). Review: Exalted Subjects: studies in the making of race and nation in Canada By Sunera Thobani (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2007), 240 pp. *Race & Class*, 52(1), 119–121.
- Agamben, G. (1998). *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford University Press.
- Aguilar, J. L. (1981). Insider research: An ethnography of a debate. In D. A. Messerschmidt (Ed.), *Anthropologists at home in North America* (pp. 133–149). London: Cambridge University Press.
- Ahmed, A. (2010). *Journey into America: The challenge of Islam*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.
- Ahmed, A. (2011). *Suspended somewhere in between: A book of verse*. Washington, D.C.: Busboys and Poets Press.
- Ahmed, L. (2011). *A quiet revolution : the veil's resurgence, from the Middle East to America*. Yale University Press.
- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The cultural politics of emotion* (Second edition.). Edinburgh University.
- Alcoff, L. M. (1999). Towards a Phenomenology of Racial Embodiment. *Radical Philosophy*, 95, 15-26.
- Alcoff, L.M. (2007). Epistemologies of Ignorance: Three Types. In Shannon, S. and Nancy, T (Eds.), *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance* (pp. 39-58). State University of New York Press.
- Alexander, B. K. (1999). Performing Culture in the Classroom: An Instructional (Auto) Ethnography. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 19, 307–331.
- Allen, R. E., & Wiles, J. L. (2016). A rose by any other name: participants choosing research pseudonyms. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 13(2), 149–165.

- Appadurai, A. (1990). Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 7(2–3), 295–310.
- Angrosino, M.V. & Mays de Perez, K.A. (2000). Rethinking Observation: From Method to Context. In Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2nd ed., pp. 673-702). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Annells, M. (1996). Grounded Theory Method: Philosophical Perspectives, Paradigm of Inquiry, and Postmodernism. *Qualitative Health Research*, 6(3), 379–393.
- Anthias, F., & Yuval-Davis, N. (1993). *Racialized boundaries: Race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Asen, R. (2000). Seeking the “counter,” in counterpublics. *Communication Theory*, 2000-11, (10)4, 424-446.
- Aylesworth, T. G. (1991). *World Guide to Film Stars*. Tormont Publishers.
- Babha, H.K. (1984). Of mimicry and man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse. *October - Discipleship, A Special Issue on Psychoanalysis*, 28, 125-133.
- Babha, H.K. (1994). *The location of culture*. New York, N.Y.: Routledge.
- Back, L. Solomos, J. (2000). *Theories of Race and Racism: a Reader*. London: Routledge.
- Baez, B. (2002). Confidentiality in qualitative research: reflections on secrets, power and agency. *Qualitative Research*, 2(1), 35–58.
- Bates, K. A., & Swan, R. S. (2016). *Juvenile delinquency in a diverse society*. SAGE.
- Bauman, R. (1986). *Story, performance, and event contextual studies of oral narrative: Cambridge studies in oral and literate culture*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.
- Bauman, Z. (1989). *Modernity and the Holocaust*. Polity Press.
- Bayoumi, M. (2006). Racing Religion. *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 6(2), 267–293.
- Bayoumi, M. (2012, June 12) *Fear and Loathing of Islam*. The Nation.  
<https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/fear-and-loathing-islam/>
- Bazian, H. (2004). Virtual internment: Arabs, Muslims, Asians and the war on terror. *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture*, (9)1, 1-26.
- Bell, J. (2005). *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-Time Researchers in Education, Health and Social Science* (4th ed.). Berkshire: Open University Press.



- Benhabib, S. (1996). *Democracy and difference : contesting the boundaries of the political*. Princeton University Press.
- Benjamin, L. (1969). *Semantics and Language Analysis*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill
- Bennett, A. (2002). Researching youth culture and popular music: a methodological critique. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 53(3), 451–466.
- Bennett, C. T. (2001). Genres of research in multicultural education. *Review of Educational Research*, 71(2), 171–217.
- Bennett, J. (2001). Commodity Fetishism and Commodity Enchantment. *Theory & Event*, 5(1), 0–0.
- Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter: a political ecology of things*. Duke University Press.
- Berkhout, J. (2013). Why interest organizations do what they do: Assessing the explanatory potential of ‘exchange’ approaches. *Interest Groups & Advocacy*, 2, 227–250.
- Beshara, R. K. (2019). From Virtual Internment to Actual Liberation: The Epistemic and Ontic Resistance of US Muslims to the Ideology of (Counter)terrorism–Islamophobia/Islamophilia. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 5(1), 76–84.
- Beydoun, K. A. (2018). *American Islamophobia: understanding the roots and rise of fear* (1st ed.). University of California Press.
- Bischoping, K., & Gazso, A. (2016). *Analyzing talk in the social sciences: Narrative, conversation and discourse strategies*. London, UK: SAGE.
- Blackman, S. J. (2011). ‘Hidden Ethnography’: Crossing Emotional Borders in Qualitative Accounts of Young People’s Lives. *Sociology (Oxford)*, 41(4), 699–716.
- Boellstroff, T., Nardi, B., Pearce, C., & Taylor, T. L. (2012). *Ethnography and Virtual Worlds: A Handbook of Method*. Princeton University Press.
- Born, P. (2012). *Community conversations: mobilizing the ideas, skills, and passion of community organizations, governments, businesses, and people*. Toronto: BPS Books
- Bowen, J. R. (2007). *Why the French don’t like headscarves : Islam, the State, and public space*. Princeton University Press.
- Boyarin, J. (1994). *Remapping memory the politics of timespace*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Benson, B. (2003). *The Improvisation of Musical Dialogue: A Phenomenology of Music*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, J. (2004). *Undoing Gender* (1st ed.). Routledge Press.

- Byrd, J.A. (2011). *The transit of empire: Indigenous critiques of colonialism*. Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press.
- Campt, T. M. (2012). *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe*. Duke University Press.
- Campt, T. M. (2019). Black visibility and the practice of refusal. *Women & Performance*, 29(1), 79–87.
- Carlson, A. M. (1996/2004). *Performance: a critical introduction*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Carr, J. (2015) *Experiences of Islamophobia: Living with racism in the neoliberal era*. London, U.K.: Routledge.
- CBC News. (2015, September 16). *Niqab ban at citizenship ceremonies unlawful, as Ottawa loses appeal*. CBC. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/niqab-ruling-federal-court-government-challenge-citizenship-ceremonies-1.3229206>
- Chakrabarty, D. (2000). *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton University Press.
- Chandler, N, D. (2014). *X-- the problem of the Negro as a problem for thought* . Fordham University Press.
- Charmaz, K. (1990) Discovering chronic illness: Using grounded theory. *Social Science & Medicine*, 30(11), 1161-1172.
- Charmaz, K., & Mitchell, R. G. (2001). An invitation to grounded theory in ethnography. In P. A., Atkinson et al. (Eds.), *Handbook of Ethnography* (pp. 160-174). London UK: Sage.
- Chase, S. E. (1996). Personal Vulnerability and Interpretive Authority in Narrative Research. In R. Josselson (Ed.), *Ethics and process in the narrative study of lives* (pp. 45-59). SAGE Publications.
- Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative Inquiry: Multiple Lenses, Approaches, Voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 651–679). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Chavez, C. (2008). Conceptualizing from the Inside: Advantages, Complications, and Demands on Insider Positionality. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(3), 474-494.
- Chen, M. H. (2010). Alienated: a reworking of the racialization thesis after September 11. *The American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, 18(3), 411–.

- Chiqet, J. (2014). "Defying Stereotypes, Young Muslim Writers Find Community Onstage." *The Daily Beast*. Retrieved Sept 2015
- Chiqet, J. (2014, October 12). *Defying Stereotypes, Young Muslim Writers Find Community Onstage*. *The Daily Beast*. <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/10/12/defying-stereotypes-....young-muslim-writers-find-community-onstage.html>
- Christians, C. G. (2005). Ethics and Politics in Qualitative Research. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 139-164). London, Thousand Oaks, CA, and New Delhi: Sage.
- Clifford, J. & Marcus, G. (Eds.) (1986). *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. University of California Press.
- Code, L. (1991). *What can she know?: feminist theory and the construction of knowledge*. Ithaca, N.Y. : Cornell University Press.
- Cole, J. (2011) Islamophobia and American Foreign Policy Rhetoric: The Bush Years and After. In J.L. Esposito & I. Kalin (Eds.), *Islamophobia: The challenge of pluralism in the 21st century* (pp. 127-142). Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Collins, P. H. (1990). *Black feminist thought : knowledge, consciousness, and the politics of empowerment* . Unwin Hyman.
- Conquergood, D. (1998). Beyond the text: Toward a performative cultural politics. *The Future of Performative Studies*, 25-36. Annandale, Va.: National Communication Association.
- Coulthard, G. (2007). Subjects of empire: Indigenous peoples and the 'politics of recognition' in Canada. *Contemporary Political Theory*, (6)4, 437-460.
- Coulthard, G. (2014). *Red skin, white masks: rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2006). Research Ethics and Data Quality: The Implications of Informed Consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(2), 83–95.
- Davidson, A. & Lewis, G. [Buzzarian]. (2010, June 30). *At the AAR, Arnold Davidson and George Lewis on "improvisation as a way of life* [Video]. Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NYPIPlQzyc>

- Davidson, A. (2016). Spiritual Exercises, Improvisation, and Moral Perfectionism: With Special Reference to Sonny Rollins. In Lewis, G. E & Piekut, B (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Vol. 1*.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (2004). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. Continuum.
- DeMunck, V. C., & Sobo, E. J. (1998). *Using Methods in the Field: A Practical Introduction and Casebook*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Denzin, N. K. (1993). New Ethnographies. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 21(4), 487–491.
- Denzin, N. (1996). Post-pragmatism. *Symbolic interaction*, 19(1), 61-75.
- Denzin, N. (2003). *Performance Ethnography: Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Culture*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication, Inc.
- Denzin, N. K. (2003). The Call to Performance. *Symbolic Interaction*, 26(1), 187–207.
- DeWalt, K. M., & DeWalt, B. R. (2002). *Participant observation: A guide for fieldworkers*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira.
- Du Bois, W. E. B. (1926). The Shape of Fear. *The North American Review*, 223(831), 291–304.
- Du Bois, W.E.B. (1926). *Criteria of Negro art*. New York, N.Y.: Crisis Publishing Co.
- Dussel, E. (1993). Eurocentrism and Modernity (Introduction to the Frankfurt Lectures). *Boundary 2*, 20(3), 65–76.
- Dussel, E. D., & Barber, M. D. (1995). *The invention of the Americas : eclipse of “the other” and the myth of modernity*.
- Dwyer, S. C., & Buckle, J. L. (2009). The Space between: On Being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Eickelman, D. F. & Salvatore, A. (2002). The public sphere and Muslim identities. *European Journal of Sociology*, 43(1), 92-115.
- Ellis, C., Bochner, A. P. (2000). Autoethnography, personal narrative, reflexivity. In Denzin, N. K. & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2nd ed., pp. 733–768). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Elam, H. J. (2001). The Device of Race: An Introduction. In H. J. Elam Jr. & D. Krasner (Ed.), *African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader* (pp. 3–16). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- El-Sherif, L. (2019). Webs of Relationships: Pedagogies of Citizenship and Modalities of Settlement for “Muslims” in Canada.
- Esposito, J. L., & Voll, J. O. (2000). Islam and the West: Muslim Voices of Dialogue. *Millennium*, 29(3), 613–639.
- Ezzy, D. (2002). *Qualitative analysis, practice and innovation*. London: Routledge.
- Falzon, M.-A. (Ed.). (2016). *Multi-Sited Ethnography: Theory, Praxis and Locality in Contemporary Research*. Routledge.
- Fanon, F. (1952). *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
- Fanon, F. (1954). Social therapy in a ward of Muslim men: Methodological difficulties. *L'Information psychiatrique*, (30)9, 349-361.
- Fanon, F. (1961). *The wretched of the earth*. New York, N.Y.C.: Grove Press.
- Feld, S., & Fox, A. A. (1994). Music and Language. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23(1), 25–53.
- Felski, R. (1989). Feminist Theory and Social change. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 6(2), 219-240.
- Felski, R. (1989). *Beyond feminist aesthetics : feminist literature and social change*. Harvard University Press.
- Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermas and the public sphere* (pp. 109-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Ferguson, N. (2011). *Civilization : the west and the rest*. London: Allen Lane.
- Fitz-Morris, J. (2015, October, 4). *Charter of Rights and the niqab collide in views on ‘Canadian values’*. CBC News. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/canada-election-2015-charter-and-niqab-analysis-1.3254167>
- Foley, D. & Valenzuela, A. (2005). Critical Ethnography: The Politics of Collaboration. In Norman K. Denzin and Tyonna S. Lincoln, (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 217-234) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The Interview: From Neutral Stance to Political Involvement. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 695–727). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Foucault, M. (1992). *The use of pleasure: The history of sexuality 2*. London: Penguin.
- Foucault, M., & Lotringer, S. (1996). *Foucault live: (interviews, 1961-1984)*. New York, N.Y: Semiotext(e).
- Foucault, M. (1997). *Ethics : subjectivity and truth*. New Press.
- Fraser, N. (1987). Women, Welfare and The Politics of Need Interpretation. *Hypathia*, 2(1), 103-121.
- Fraser, N. (1992). Rethinking the public sphere: A contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. In C. Calhoun (Ed.), *Habermans and the public sphere* (pp. 109-142). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Fraser, N. (1997). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. New York: Routledge.
- Fraser, N. & Honneth A. (2003). *Redistribution or recognition?: A political-philosophical debate*. London, U.K.: Verso.
- Fraze, G. (2019, March 15). *What we know about the New Zealand mosque shootings*. PBS. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/what-we-know-about-the-new-zealand-mosque-shootings>
- Fredrickson, G. M. (2002). *Racism : A Short History*. Princeton University Press
- Gibson-Graham, J. K. (2006). *A Postcapitalist Politics*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Glass, P. (2012). Doing Scene: Identity, Space, and the Interactional Accomplishment of Youth Culture. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 41(6), 695-716.
- Gilroy, P. (1982). *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in '70s Britain*. London: Hutchinson/Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies.
- Gilroy, P. (1987). Class politics and black nationalism. *New Statesman*, 113(2934), 29-.
- Gilroy, P. (1993). *The Black Atlantic*. Harvard University Press.
- Gioia, T. (1987). Jazz: The Aesthetics of Imperfection. *The Hudson Review*, 39(4), 585–600.
- Giroux, H. (2000). *Impure Acts: The Practical Politics of Cultural Studies*. Routledge.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Doubleday.

- Goldberg, T. D. (1993). *Racist culture: Philosophy and the politics of meaning*. London, UK:Blackwell.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2001). *The Racial State*. Wiley-Blackwell.
- Goldberg, D. T. (2006). Racial Europeanization. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 29(2), 331–364.
- Greene, M. J. (2014). On the Inside Looking In: Methodological Insights and Challenges in Conducting Qualitative Insider Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(29), 1-13.
- Grewal, I. (2005). *Transnational America : feminisms, diasporas, neoliberalisms*. Duke University Press.
- Grondin, J. (1994). *Introduction to Philosophical Hermeneutics*. Yale University Press.
- Grossberg, L., Nelson, C., & Treichler, P. A. (1992). *Cultural studies*. Routledge.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105-117). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Guba, E. G. & Lincoln, Y. S. (2013). *The Constructivist Credo*. (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (1999). At the Border of Narrative and Ethnography. *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*, 28(5), 561–573.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2000). The Self in a World of Going Concerns. *Symbolic Interaction*, 23(2), 95-115.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2007). Constructionist Perspectives on the Life Course. *Sociology Compass*, 1(1), 335-352.
- Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (2008). *Handbook of constructionist research* (2nd ed.). Guilford Press.
- Haddad, S. (2004). The Origins of Popular Opposition to Palestinian Resettlement in Lebanon. *The International Migration Review*, 38(2), 470–492.
- Haddad, Y.Y. (2004). *Not quite American? The shaping of Arab and Muslim identity in the United States*. Waco, T.X.: Baylor University Press.
- Hall, S. (2001). Foucault: Power, Knowledge and Discourse. In M. Wetherell, S. Taylor, & S. Yates (Eds.), *Discourse, Theory and Practice* (pp. 72-81). London: Sage publications.
- Hall, S. (2000). Conclusion: The Multicultural Question. In B. Hesse (Ed.), *Unsettled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements, Transruptions* (pp. 209-241). London: Zed Books.

- Hamid, S. (2017, January 28). *Opinion: Will we be forced into a religious test? The dangerous questions Muslims are facing*. Washington Post.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/01/28/will-we-be-forced-into-a-religious-test-the-dangerous-questions-muslims-are-facing/>
- Hamilton, A. (2000). The Art of Improvisation and the Aesthetics of Imperfection. *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 40(1), 168–185.
- Hardt, M. & Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Harvard University Press.
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons : fugitive planning & black study*. Minor Compositions.
- Harris, K. (2000). “Roots”? The relationship between the global and local within the extreme metal scene. *Popular Music*, 19, 13-30.
- Hartman, S. V. (1997). *Scenes of subjection : terror, slavery, and self-making in nineteenth-century America*. Oxford University Press.
- Hartman, S. (1994). The territory between us: A report on “Black women in the academy: Defending our name: 1894-1994” *Callaloo*, (17)2, 439-449.
- Hartman, R. J. (2010). Involuntary belief and the command to have faith. *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 69(3), 181–192.
- Hartman, S. (2019). *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Riotous Black Girls, Troublesome Women, and Queer Radicals*. Penguin Random House Canada.
- Hertz, R., & Ferguson, F.I. (1997). Kinship Strategies and Self-Sufficiency Among Single Mothers by Choice: Post Modern Family Ties. *Qualitative Sociology*, 20, 187-209.
- Hodkinson, P. (2002). *Goth: Identity, style, and subculture*. Oxford: Berg.
- Holstein, J. A., & Gubrium, J. F. (1995). *The active interview*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- hooks, b. (1990). *Postmodern Blackness*. Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- hooks, b. (1990). *Yearning: race, gender, and cultural politics*. South End Press.
- Hunt, K. & Rygiel, K. (2006). *(En)gendering the war on terror : war stories and camouflaged politics*. London: Ashgate Publishing Company.
- Husain, S. C. (2020). Muslim Community Organizations’ Perceptions of Islamophobia: Towards an Informed Countering Response. *Religions (Basel, Switzerland)*, 11(10), 485–.



- Husain, A. (2019). Moving beyond (and back to) the black-white binary: a study of black and white Muslims' racial positioning in the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 42(4), 589–606.
- Husain, M. (2017, January 14). *Complaints Describe Border Agents Interrogating Muslim Americans, Asking for Social Media Accounts*. The Intercept. <https://theintercept.com/2017/01/14/complaints-describes-border-agents-interrogating-muslim-americans-asking-for-social-media-accounts/>
- Hyvärinen, M. (2008). Analyzing narratives and story-telling. In P. Alasuutari, L. Bickman, & J. Brannen (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of social research methods*. 447-460. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Jackson, S. A. (2011, November 8). 9/11 A Decade Later: The Ironic Impact of Islamophobia. *Huffpost*. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/911-a-decade-later-islamophobia\\_b\\_952154](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/911-a-decade-later-islamophobia_b_952154)
- Jamal, A.A. & Naber, N. (2008). *Race and Arab-Americans before and after 9/11: from invisible citizens to visible subjects*. Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press.
- Jensen, E., & Laurie, C. (2016). *Doing Real Research: A Practical Guide to Social Research*. Sage.
- Jiwa, M. (2014). Muslim artists in America. In Y.Y. Haddad & J.I. Smith (Eds.), *The Oxford handbook of American Islam* (pp. 389-403). Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press.
- Jiwani, N. & Rail, G. (2010). Islam, Hijab and Young Shia Muslim Canadian Women's Discursive Constructions of Physical Activity. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 27(3), 251–267.
- Kamen, H. (2014). *Spanish Inquisition: A Historical Revision*. Yale University Press.
- Kanuha V. K. (2000). "Being" native versus "going native": conducting social work research as an insider. *Social Work*, 45(5):439-447.
- Kapadia, R. K. (2019). *Insurgent aesthetics : security and the queer life of the forever war*. Duke University Press.
- Kazi, N. (2015). Ahmed Mohamed and the Imperial Necessity of Islamophilia. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, 3(1), 115–126.
- Kellehear, A. (1993). *The unobtrusive researcher: A guide to methods*. Saint Leonards, AUS: Allen & Unwin.

- Khemilat, F. (2020). Excluding veiled women from French public space: the emergence of a 'respectable' segregation?. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 30, 1-13.
- Kincheole, J. L. & McLaren, P. L. (1994). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 138-157). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kincheloe, J. L., & McLaren, P. (2000). Rethinking critical theory and qualitative research. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 279–314). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Kline, D. (2017). The pragmatics of resistance: Framing anti-Blackness and the limits of political ontology. *Critical Philosophy of Race*, (5)1, 51-69.
- Kobayashi, A., & Peake, L. (2000). Racism out of Place: Thoughts on Whiteness and an Antiracist Geography in the New Millennium. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 90(2), 392–403.
- Kolankiewicz, M. (2019). *Anti-Muslim Racism on Trial: Muslims, the Swedish Judiciary and the Possibility of Justice* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- Kong, T., Mahoney, D. & Plummer, K. (2001). Queering the interview. In Gubrium, J. F., & Holstein, J. A. (Eds.), *Handbook of interview research* (pp. 239-258). SAGE Publications, Inc.,
- Kruse, D. (1993). *Profit sharing : does it make a difference? : the productivity and stability effects of employee profit-sharing plans* . W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.
- Lewis, G. E., & Piekut, B. (2016). *The Oxford Handbook of Critical Improvisation Studies, Volume 1*. Oxford University Press USA - OSO.
- Lorde, A. (1984). *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press
- Loxley, A. & Seery, A. (2008). Some philosophical and other related issues of insider research. In Sikes, P., & Potts, A. (Eds.), *Researching Education from the Inside* (pp. 23–40). Routledge.
- MacMaster, N. (1997). *Colonial migrants and racism : Algerians in France, 1900-62*. MacMillan Press.
- Madison, D. S. (2005). *Critical Ethnography: Method, Ethics, and Performance*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Majozi, N. (2018). Theorising the Islamic State: A Decolonial Perspective. *ReOrient*, 3(2), 163–184.
- Maldonado-Torres, N. (2008). *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity*. Duke University Press.
- Mamdani, M. (1996). *Citizen and subject : contemporary Africa and the legacy of late colonialism*. Princeton University Press.
- Mamdani, M. (2005). *Good Muslim, bad Muslim: America, the cold war, and the roots of terror*. New York, N.Y.: Three Leaves Press, Doubleday.
- Mamdani, M. (2010). Responsibility to Protect or Right to Punish? *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 4(1), 53–67.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24(1), 95–117.
- Marcus, G. E. (1998). *Ethnography through Thick and Thin*. Princeton University Press.
- Marcus, G. E. (1995). Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 95–117.
- Markell, P. (2003). Tragic recognition: Action and identity in *Antigone* and Aristotle. *Political Theory*, (31)1, 6-38.
- Markell, P. (2004). The rule of the people: Arendt, *Archê*, and democracy. *American Political Science Review*, (100)1, 1-14.
- Markell, P. (2003). *Bound by Recognition*. Princeton University Press.
- Marshall, C., & Rossman, G. B. (1989). *Designing Qualitative Research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Martin, E. (1994). *Flexible bodies: Tracking immunity in American culture from the days of polio to the age of AIDS*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Mauthner, N. S., & Doucet, A. (2003). Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Data Analysis. *Sociology*, 37(3), 413–431.
- McKittrick, K. (Ed.). (2015). *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*. Duke University Press.
- Meer, N., & Modood, T. (2009). Refutations of racism in the “Muslim question.” *Patterns of Prejudice*, 43(3-4), 335–354.
- Merriam, A. P. (1964). *The anthropology of music*. Northwestern University Press.

- Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M.-Y., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and positionality: negotiating insider/outsider status within and across cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405–416.
- Merton, R. K. (1972). Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge. *American Journal of Sociology*, 78(1): 9-47.
- Meyer, B. & Moors, A. (2006). *Religion, media, and the public sphere*. Indiana University Press.
- Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories/global designs coloniality, subaltern knowledges, and border thinking*. Princeton University Press.
- Mignolo, W. D. (2007). Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural studies*, 21(2-3), 449-514.
- Mignolo, W. (2011). *The darker side of Western modernity global futures, decolonial options*. Duke University Press.
- Minh-Ha, T. T. (1987). Difference: A special third world women issue. *Feminist Review*, 25(1), 5-22.
- Mink, L. O. (1978). Learning and the higher relativism. *Soundings (Nashville, Tenn.)*, 61(4), 449–455.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, 30(1), 61–88.
- Morey, P. & Yaqin A. (2011). *Framing Muslims: Stereotyping and representation after 9/11*. Cambridge, M.A.: Harvard University Press.
- Morgan, K. & Sayer, A. (1988). *Microcircuits of capital: 'Sunrise' industry and uneven development*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Morrissey, F. (2021, July 29). The Venture of the Islamicate: The History of a Key Concept in Islamic Intellectual History. *Center for Intellectual History - Oxford university Press*.
- Morsi, Y. (2017). *Radical skin, moderate masks: De-radicalising the Muslim and racism in post-racial societies*. London, U.K.: Rowman & Littlefield International Ltd.
- Moten, F. (2003). *In the break: The aesthetics of the Black radical tradition*. Minneapolis, M.N.: University of Minnesota Press.
- Moten, F. (2003). Magic of Objects. *Callaloo*, 26(1), 109-111.
- Moten, F. (2012). from Block Chapel. *Callaloo*, 35(3), 567–577.

- Mugabo, D. (2016). On Rocks and Hard Places: A Reflection on Antiblackness in Organizing against Islamophobia. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 2(2), 159–183.
- Mugabo, D. (2019). Black in the city: on the ruse of ethnicity and language in an antiblack landscape. *Identities (Yverdon, Switzerland)*, 26(6), 631–648.
- Murphy, M. (2012). *Oxford bibliographies. Political science. Transitional justice*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Muslim Protagonist. (2018, March). *Muslims & Podcasts // Muslim Protagonist 2018: Authenticity?* [Video]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYmAOQgNgh0>
- Murphy, J. (2019, Jun 17). Quebec Bill 21: Is it OK for public servants to wear religious symbols? BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-48588604>
- Naber, N. (2006). The rules of forced engagement: Race, gender, and the culture of fear among Arab immigrants in San Francisco post-9/11. *Cultural Dynamics*, (18)3, 235-267.
- Nadai, E., & Maeder, C. (2005). Fuzzy Fields. Multi-Sited Ethnography in Sociological Research. *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6(3).
- Nancy, J-L. (2000). *Being singular plural*. Stanford University Press.
- Naples, N. A. (2003). *Feminism and Method: Ethnography, Discourse Analysis, and Activist Research*. Routledge.
- Nespor, J. (2000). Anonymity and Place in Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 6(4), 546–569.
- Nicholson, N. (2008). Evolutionary Psychology and Family Business: A New Synthesis for Theory, Research, and Practice. *Family Business Review*, 21(1), 103–118.
- Novack, C. J. (1988). Looking at Movement as Culture: Contact Improvisation to Disco. *TDR : Drama Review*, 32(4), 102–119.
- Ochs, E., & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative: Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Harvard University Press.
- Omi, M. & Winant, H. (1994). *Racial formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Oyewumi, O. (1997). *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Park-Fuller, L. M. (2000). Performing absence: The staged personal narrative as testimony. *Text and Performance Quarterly*, 20(1), 20–42.
- Paterson, O. (1982). *Slavery and Death: A Comparative Study*. Harvard University Press.
- Patton, M. Q. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications, Inc.
- Plummer, D. C. (2001). The quest for modern manhood: masculine stereotypes, peer culture and the social significance of homophobia. *Journal of Adolescence (London, England.)*, 24(1), 15–23.
- Pollock, D. (1998b). A Response to Dwight Conquergood’s Essay: ‘Beyond the Text: Towards a Performative Cultural Politics. In S. J. Dailey (Ed.), *The Future of Performance Studies: Visions and Revisions* (pp 37-46). Washington, DC: National Communication Association.
- Popkin, R. H. (1974). The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth-Century Racism. *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 3 (pp. 245-262)
- Puar, J. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages : homonationalism in queer times* . Duke University Press.
- Prus, C. R. (1996). *Symbolic interaction and ethnographic research: Intersubjectivity and the study human lived experience*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Rai, A. (2004). Of monsters: Biopower, terrorism and excess in genealogies of monstrosity. *Cultural Studies (London, England)*, 18(4), 538–570.
- Ramos, S. (1962). *Profile of Man and Culture in Mexico* (P. G. Earle, Trans). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.
- Rampell, C. (2016, May 7). *Opinion: Ivy League economist ethnically profiled, interrogated for doing math on American Airlines flight*. The Washington Post.  
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/rampage/wp/2016/05/07/ivy-league-economist-interrogated-for-doing-math-on-american-airlines-flight/>
- Rana, J. (2011). *Terrifying Muslims: Race and labour in the South Asian diaspora*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Rapport, N. (2012). *Anyone: The Cosmopolitan Subject of Anthropology*. Berghahn Books.
- Razack, S. (2002). *Race, space, and the law: unmapping a white settler society*. Toronto: Between the Lines.

- Razack, S. (2004). Imperilled Muslim Women, Dangerous Muslim Men and Civilised Europeans: Legal and Social Responses to Forced Marriages. *Feminist Legal Studies*, 12(2), 129–174.
- Razack, S. (2007). Your client has a profile: Race and national security in Canada After 9/11. *Studies in Law, Politics and Society*, 40, 3-40.
- Razack, S. (2007). *Casting out : the eviction of Muslims from western law and politics*. University of Toronto Press.
- Razack, S., Smith, M., Thobani, S. (2010). *States of Race: Critical Race Feminism for the 21st Century*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- ReOrient. (2015). A Forum for Critical Muslim Studies Source. *ReOrient*, 1(1), 5-10.
- Riessman, C. K. (1993). *Narrative analysis*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Said, E. W. (1981). *Covering Islam : how the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*. Pantheon Books.
- Salmon, A. (2007). Walking the Talk: How Participatory Interview Methods Can Democratize Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 17(7), 982–993.
- Saucier, P. K & Woods, T. P. (2016). *Conceptual aphasia in black : displacing racial formation*. Lexington Books.
- Saulnier, A. (2015). Racialized Borders: Hypothesizing the Diasporic Implications of Discriminatory Surveillance at Canadian Borders. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 30(2), 227–245.
- Sayer, A. (1995). *Radical political economy: a critique*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Sayer, A. (2000). System, Lifeworld and Gender: Associational Versus Counterfactual Thinking. *Sociology (Oxford)*, 34(4): 707-25.
- Sayyid, S. (1997). *A fundamental fear : Eurocentrism and the emergence of Islamism*. Zed Books.
- Sayyid, S. & Vakil, AbdoolKarim. (2010). *Thinking through Islamophobia*. London: C. Hurst.
- Sayyid, S. (2014). A measure of Islamophobia. *Islamophobia Studies Journal*, (2)1, 10-25.
- Schechner, R. (1998). What Is Performance Studies Anyway?. In P. Phelan & J. Lane (Eds.), *The Ends of Performance* (pp. 357-362). New York: New York University.

- Schensul, S. L., Schensul, J. J., & LeCompte, M. D. (1999). *Essential ethnographic methods : observations, interviews, and questionnaires*. AltaMira Press.
- Scheurich, J. J. (1995). A postmodernist critique of research interviewing. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 8(3), 239-252.
- Selod, S. (2015). Citizenship Denied: The Racialization of Muslim American Men and Women post-9/11. *Critical Sociology*, 41(1), 77–95.
- Selod, S. (2018). *Forever Suspect: Racialized Surveillance of Muslim Americans in the War on Terror*. Rutgers University Press.
- Selod, S. (2019). Gendered racialization: Muslim American men’s and women’s encounters with racialized surveillance. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, (42)4, 552-569.
- Sexton, J. (2016). Afro-Pessimism: The Unclear Word. *Rhizomes: Cultural Studies in Emerging Knowledge* (29).
- Sharpe, C. (2016). *In the wake: On Blackness and being*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press.
- Shingler, B. (2017, Nov 07). *Quebec's face-covering law heads for constitutional challenge*. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/quebec-niqab-bill-62-legal-challenge-face-covering-1.4390962>
- Sieber, J. E. (1992). *Planning ethically responsible research: A guide for students and internal review boards*. Sage Publications, Inc.
- Sharpe, C. (2016). *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*. Duke University Press.
- Shaw, C. R. (1966). *The jack-roller: A delinquent boy's own story*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Shryock, A (ed.) (2008). *Islamophobia/Islamophilia: Beyond the Politics of Enemy and Friend*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Shwandt, T. A. (2000). Three epistemological stances for qualitative inquiry: Interpretivism, hermeneutics, and social constructionism. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2 ed., pp. 189-213). Sage Publishing.
- Simpson, A. (2014). *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Duke University Press.
- Simpson, L.B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, (3)3, 1-25.



- Spillers, H. (1987). Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book. *Diacritics*, 17(2), 65–81.
- Spivak, G. C. (1988). Can the Subaltern Speak? In C. Nelson & L. Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (pp. 271–313). University of Illinois Press.
- Stake, R. E. (2005). Qualitative Case Studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 443–466). Sage Publications Ltd.
- Stocking, G. W. (1983). *Observers observed: essays on ethnographic fieldwork*. University of Wisconsin Press.
- Sussman, R. W. (2014). *The Myth of Race: The Troubling Persistence of an Unscientific Idea*. Harvard University Press.
- Sway, M. A. (2005). Islamophobia: Meaning, manifestations, causes. *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture*, (12)2-3, 15-23.
- Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Cambridge, MA:Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1989). Taylor and Foucault on power and freedom: A reply. *Political Studies*, 1989-06, (37)2, 277-281.
- Taylor, C. (1994). The politics of recognition. In A. Gutmann (Ed.), *Multiculturalism: Examining the politics of recognition* (pp. 25-74). Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.
- Thobani, S. (2007). *Exalted subjects: Studies in the making of race and nation in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Tolia-Kelly, D. P. (2009). The geographies of cultural geography I: identities, bodies and race. *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(3), 358–367.
- Tolich, M. (2004). Internal Confidentiality: When Confidentiality Assurances Fail Relational Informants. *Qualitative Sociology*, 27(1), 101–106.
- Tyrer, D & Sayyid S. (2012). Governing ghosts: race, incorporeality and difference in post-political times. *Current Sociology*, (60)3, 353-367.
- Tyrer, D. (2013). *The politics of Islamophobia: Race, power and fantasy*. London, U.K.: Pluto Press.

- Tyrer, D. L. (2014). Racial grammar and the green menace. In: Samuel M. Behloul/Susanne Leuenberger/Andreas Tunger-Zanetti (Eds.), *Debating Islam* (43-62). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.
- Van Heugten, K. (2004). Managing Insider Research: Learning from Experience. *Qualitative Social Work*, 3(2), 203–219.
- Vaughan, D. (1992). Theory Elaboration: The Heuristics of Case Analysis. In What is a case?. In C.C. Ragin, & H.S. Becker (Eds.), *Exploring the foundations of social inquiry* (pp. 173–202). Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Volpp, L. (2012). Imaginings of Space in Immigration Law. *Law, Culture and the Humanities*, 9(3), 456–474.
- Walcott, R. (2011). Disgraceful: Intellectual dishonesty, White anxieties, and multicultural critique thirty-six years later. *Home and native land: Unsettling multiculturalism in Canada*, 15-30.
- Warner, M. (2002). Publics and counterpublics. *Public Culture*, (14)1, 49-90.
- Watt, D. (2007). On Becoming a Qualitative Researcher: The Value of Reflexivity. *The Qualitative Report*, 12(1), 82-101.
- Weddington, G. (2019). Political Ontology and Race Research: A Response to “Critical Race Theory, Afro-pessimism, and Racial Progress Narratives.” *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.), 5(2), 278–288.
- Weheliye, A. G. (2014). *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Weinberg, M. (2005). A Case for an Expanded Framework of Ethics in Practice. *Ethics & Behavior*, 15(4), 327–338.
- Wilderson, F. B. (2010). *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U.S. Antagonisms*. Duke University Press.
- Willaims, M. (2014). Introduction: On the use and abuse of recognition in politics. In A. Eisenberg, J. Webber, G. Coulthard, and A. Boisselle (Eds.), *Recognition versus self-determination: Dilemmas of emancipatory politics*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Willemse, K. & Bergh, S. I. (2016). Struggles over access to the Muslim public sphere: Multiple publics and discourses on agency, belonging and citizenship (Introduction to the Themed Section). *Contemporary Islam*, 10(3), 297–309.

- Williams, M.S. (2014). Introduction: On the use and abuse of recognition in politics. In A. Eisenberg, J. Webber, G. Coulthard, & A. Boisselle, (Eds.), *Recognition versus self-determination: Dilemmas of emancipatory politics* (pp. 3-20). Vancouver, B.C.: UBC Press.
- Wilson, H. S., & Hutchinson, S. A. (1996). Methodologic mistakes in grounded theory. *Nursing Research*, 45(2), 122–124.
- Yanow, D., & Schwartz-Shea, P. (2006). *Interpretation and Method: Empirical Research Methods and the Interpretive Turn*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Zine, J. (2012). *Islam in the Hinterlands: Muslim Cultural Politics in Canada*. University of British Columbia Press.
- Zine, J. (2014). *Transnational Feminism and the Ethics of Pedagogy: Contested Imaginaries in the post-9/11 Cultural Practice*. Routledge.
- Zine, J. (2006). Unveiled Sentiments: Gendered Islamophobia and Experiences of Veiling among Muslim Girls in a Canadian Islamic School. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 39(3), 239–252.
- Zine & Taylor. (2016). Introduction: The Contested Imaginaries of Reading Muslim Women and Muslim Women Reading Back. In L. K. Taylor, & J. Zine (Eds). *Muslim women, transnational feminism and the ethics of pedagogy: Contested imaginaries in post-9/11 cultural practice* (pp. 1-22). New York, N.Y.: Routledge.
- Žižek. (2003). A Symptom: Of What? *Critical Inquiry*, 29(3), 486–503.
- Zopf, B. J. (2017). A Different Kind of Brown: Arabs and Middle Easterners as Anti-American Muslims. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, 4(2), 178–191.