# Secular Submissions

## Muslim Europeans, Female Bodies, and Performative Politics

The way people clothe themselves, together with the traditions of
dress and finery that custom implies, constitutes the most distinctive
form of a society's uniqueness, that is to say the one that is the most
immediately perceptible.

—FRANTZ FANON, *Algeria Unveiled*

The body, I believe, has to be theorized in ways that not only describe
the ways in which it is brought into being but also what it does once
it is constituted and the relationship between it and the other bodies
around it. In other words, I desire a rejoinder to performativity that
allows a space for subjectivity, for agency (however momentary and
discursively fraught), and, ultimately, for change.

—PATRICK E. JOHNSON, *Black Queer Studies*

### The Racing of Religion in Secular Northwest Europe

The European ideology of racelessness creates a double bind for racial-
ized populations: an internalist perspective claims European exceptional-
ity by defining the continent's identity as both entirely self-generated and
self-contained, while a universalist narrative simultaneously presents the
European condition as paradigmatically human and other, non-Western
parts of the world as inevitably deviating from this norm. One of the
most striking examples of this dynamic is the discourse around European
Muslim difference, in which, seemingly paradoxically, gender and sexual-
ity take center positions, while religion remains comparatively marginal.
That is, the claim to the "incompatibility" of Islam and Europe is not
framed as a conflict between a Christian majority and a Muslim minority,

both of whom are European, but between European humanism, committed to the protection of rights, namely those of gender equality and sexual freedom, and a hostile, intolerant, foreign culture. Within this unequal dichotomy, Europe invariably stands for the universal, while Muslims represent the particular and thus inferior. As a result, while the European Muslim community as a whole is judged to present the "wrong," (i.e., misogynist and homophobic) type of heterosexuality, feminist and queer Muslims too appear as limited by their culture, deviating from the dominant norm of liberal and progressive cosmopolitanism. Chapter 3 will explore both the particulars of Western universalist discourse and its deconstruction by European queer and feminist Muslim activists.

Despite, or rather because of, this chapter's focus on the politicized use of the "racing of religion" (Bayoumi 2006), its geographical center will be Europe's notoriously secular North West. I argue that the ways in which this region's attitude toward Muslim minorities is shaped by its own submerged but influential Christian identity constitutes another incident of Avery Gordon's haunting, explaining in part the rapid deterioration of relationships between majority and Muslim minority in these nations. Years before tensions erupted internationally after the Danish daily *Jyllands Posten* commissioned a number of cartoons depicting among other things the prophet Mohammed as a terrorist, Denmark had been the first nation in Europe's reputedly progressive North that shifted toward a populist, draconian anti-immigrant stance, pushed by a coalition between an explicitly Christian political right and an equally explicit liberal secularism (Klausen 2006).

Soon after, a similar coalition emerged in the Netherlands, the European nation that more than any other defines itself and is defined through Enlightenment ideals and a laid-back, live-and-let-live mentality. I use the developments in these two nations to deconstruct the European notion of tolerance and secularism, suggesting that the tensions becoming visible in their wake are in fact already built into the (Western) European model of liberal tolerance, including its feminist and queer variations. Following an Enlightenment tradition of internal purging through projection on others (if they have it, we don't), comparative analyses of patriarchal systems and misogynist structures are discouraged by this model; instead the Muslim presence is acknowledged only in order to define against it a new, unified Europe characterized by a tolerant secularism rooted in Christian principles. The French uprisings in the winter of 2005 highlighted both the material consequences of European exclusionary policies and their discursive reconstruction as a fundamental culture clash, framing the growing presence of a marginalized minoritarian population as a permanent moment

of crisis. In this chapter, I propose that Muslim youths—the violent male and the veiled young woman—become the central Other of the unifying Europe, exemplifying everything it is not and cannot be, exactly at a point when the existence of a native European Muslim population has become an undeniable reality.

In order to understand how second- and third-generation Muslim Europeans can be perceived as more foreign and threatening than their parents or grandparents who came to Europe from the Middle East, West Africa, or South Asia, one needs to turn to the role of culture in discourses about identity and assimilation. Contemporary tropes around the Muslim presence in Europe are framed not in the language of race, religion, or nation, but in that of culture and gender. The *hijab* in particular serves as the key symbol of Muslim difference, representing silenced, oppressed women living in parallel societies that are shaped by ancient and primitive rather than modern Western structures. Its presence underlines the perception that Muslims and Europeans are like oil and water, unable to mix and merge; instead archaic Muslim enclaves, separate *qua* space as well as time, are supposedly surviving unchanged within the larger European societies. The ways in which these larger societies constantly work to regulate and reframe "peoples' access to the resources of the nation-state" (McClintock 1995, 353) through the production of national, and increasingly continental, identities, is thus made invisible by the construction of static and exclusive cultures, in which women play a central but completely heteronomous role.

The rise of "Culture" with a capital C applies to a variety of areas, but it may be most notable in the extent to which it has replaced race in discourses directed at migrants and minorities—gender and sexuality on the other hand appear as constants, exemplifying both racial and cultural difference. In the following sections, I trace this process by turning to the scopic politics through which the *hijab* worn by some European Muslimas has become a highly charged symbol of racial, cultural, and gender, as much as religious difference. I am particularly interested in the ways in which feminist positions are invoked in this discourse and in their interaction with tropes of the body and mobility in relation to both time and space, resulting in immobilizing the veiled woman, making her readable while simultaneously silencing her. The implicit perception of the *hijab* as signifying a particular type of cultural(ist) performance becomes explicit in the plays of Dutch feminist writer Adelheid Roosen and in the public persona of Dutch Somali activist and author Ayaan Hirsi Ali. While both figuratively write their performances on the muted Muslim woman's body, ostensibly in order to liberate her, but only further disempowering

her, Danish Muslim socialist feminist Asmaa Abdol-Hamid uses her own body to disrupt normative narratives and suggest alternatives modes of European Muslim identities.

Abdol-Hamid's positionality—practicing Muslim, feminist, socialist—is representative for a substantial number of European Muslimas, in particular those active in the migrant women's movement established since the late 1970s; however, that same positionality stands as an oxymoron in dominant European discourse. Not, as I argue, due to any particular traits of Islam or Muslims, but due to the intersection of cosmopolitanism's Othering of the Global South and nationalism's disciplining of female (and queer) bodies. While using Abdol-Hamid as my focal point, I show her grounding in larger movements working to overcome this dichotomy, namely Euro-Islam and migrant feminist activism.

Combining queer of color critique with new developments in performance studies, I argue that interventions like Abdol-Hamid's (recognizing the body as a site of liberation as well as repression) contribute to an embodied kind of theorizing with the potential of breaking down from within the binary model still structuring dominant European perceptions of (Muslim) minorities. They do so in part by pointing out that these dominant perceptions are so powerful exactly because they do not reflect qualities possessed by the diverse group of Muslim Europeans, who are created as a coherent community only by the discourse about them, but are rooted in larger and older models of universal humanism and its non-European Others, among which Islam held a central position from the beginning. In order to understand the discursive construction of the Muslim Other in contemporary Europe, it is therefore necessary to contextualize it within the larger ideological tension caused by renewed binary notions of West and East constantly undermined by an unprecedented real and virtual mobility.

### Cosmopolitan Humanism, Postsecularity, and Western Bias

In May 2008, the conservative U.S.-based journal *Foreign Policy*, an influential bimonthly with a circulation topping 100,000 copies, cofounded by Samuel Huntington, financed by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and read by academics as well as diplomats, published its second annual list of the world's "100 Top Public Intellectuals" (*Foreign Policy*, July/August 2008 issue). Including "introspective philosophers and rabble-rousing clerics," the list presented "the thinkers who are shaping the tenor of our time" and asked its readers to pick their top five among the journal's suggestions. The latter at first glance offer few surprises: there

are only ten women included, more than two-thirds of the candidates live in the United States, Canada, and Europe, and the list includes many of the usual suspects, Jürgen Habermas, Slavoj Žižek, Noam Chomsky, Salman Rushdie, and Al Gore among them. But the choices also reflect a desire to be globally inclusive and representative of a cosmopolitan intellectual landscape—this is *Foreign Policy*, after all. Thus, the journal listed thinkers whose influence is felt equally or even mainly outside of the West, such as Chinese economist Fan Gang, Egyptian TV preacher Amr Khaled, or Indian environmentalist Sunita Narain.

The response to *Foreign Policy*'s online poll, conducted for the first time, was enormous—more than half a million votes were cast on the journal's Web site within a couple of days—and produced quite unexpected results: of the top ten intellectuals picked by the readers, only four live in the West and among them only one was born there (Swiss Tariq Ramadan, whom I will come back to later), the other three are exiled religious philosophers Abdolkarim Soroush from Iran and Fethullah Gülen from Turkey, and Ugandan-born cultural anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani, all living in the United States. Even more interesting: all of the world's top ten intellectuals according to *Foreign Policy*'s readers are Muslim, though representing a wide selection geographically as well as in religious practices and beliefs: Fethullah Gülen; Bangladeshi microloan pioneer Muhammad Yunus; star of Al Jazeera's popular advice show "Sharia & Life," Egyptian Yusuf Al-Qaradawi; Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk; former president of the Pakistani supreme court Aitzaz Ahsan; Amr Khaled; Abdolkarim Soroush; Tariq Ramadan; Mahmood Mamdani; and Iranian lawyer and human rights activist Shirin Ebadi (in order of their ranking).[1]

Most interesting, however, is the narrative that the journal provides its readers with in order to frame the results within exactly the context challenged by the vote's outcome. The editorial accompanying the list starts by stating authoritatively: "Rankings are an inherently dangerous business," a claim that is then expanded by pointing out that being an influential intellectual necessitates being good at communicating with one's audience, thus some candidates, such as Chomsky, linked to the poll on their Web sites, mentioned it in interviews, and used other strategies to boost their ranking. After insinuating that popularity contests are always open to manipulation, the editors end by stating:

> No one spread the word as effectively as the man who tops the list. In early May, the Top 100 list was mentioned on the front page of *Zaman*, a Turkish daily newspaper closely aligned with Islamic scholar

Fethullah Gülen. Within hours, votes in his favor began to pour in. His supporters—typically educated, upwardly mobile Muslims—were eager to cast ballots not only for their champion, but for other Muslims in the Top 100. Thanks to this groundswell, the top 10 public intellectuals in this year's reader poll are all Muslim. The ideas for which they are known, particularly concerning Islam, differ significantly. It's clear that, in this case, identity politics carried the day. (*Foreign Policy* Sept./Oct. 2008, 1)

The argument put forward in the editorial thus starts out with an assumption, namely, some intellectuals on the Top 100 list have such command over their followers that the latter will do exactly as they are told. While there is no actual evidence provided for this claim, it is nonetheless not implausible.[2] In the last of the three paragraphs, however, this assumption has become fact: Fethullah Gülen won because his supporters hijacked the vote. The editors also seem to know that those who voted for Gülen did so because they are Muslims who in turn voted for the other Muslims on the list because they are Muslims, whether Shiite or Sunni, conservative or liberal, secular or Islamist. The unavoidable conclusion: A list of the world's most influential intellectuals that is topped by ten Muslims is a triumph of "identity politics," a term that has been thoroughly discredited in both liberal and conservative discourse over the last decade, increasingly identified as the main culprit in the failure of Western multiculturalism.

This is a failure in turn that is *the* central theme in current European debates around Muslim minorities' invincible Otherness, often reflecting the belief that Muslims are both more homogeneous and more fanatical in their religious convictions than other groups (even when they are "educated [and] upwardly mobile"). While I do not claim superior knowledge as to why *Foreign Policy*'s readers voted the way they did, "Muslim identity politics" does seem a catchphrase that achieves very little besides providing a negative foil for a Western "universal cosmopolitanism" (even if religion was the prime motivator, there still was a choice between various Muslim candidates, some of which did not make the top ten). And uncertainty about motives aside, the fact remains that nowhere in their reaction do the *Foreign Policy* editors allow for a simple possibility: maybe the ten most influential contemporary intellectuals indeed *are* all Muslims and all non-Westerners (or minority Westerners, in the case of Ramadan, the one exception); maybe there is a transnational, cosmopolitan discourse going on in which the white West is marginal.[3]

Cosmopolitanism, rooted in a European humanist tradition that arguably also justified colonialism, slavery, and the Holocaust, has been challenged fundamentally in the post–World War II era, resulting in a variety of more

or less self-critical attempts at retaining a universally valid set of values allowing for global communication, while acknowledging that cosmopolitan thought has not only produced the concept of universal human rights, but also justified its systematic violation (Kristeva 1993; Gilroy 2000; Honig 2001; Habermas 2003; Benhabib 2006). For many, the strongest argument for cosmopolitanism remains human rights, the need for common basic values and international institutions that enforce them in order to create even a semblance of liberty and equality for all human beings irrespective of their origin or current position. Universalism might be full of problems, the reasoning goes, but it is still better than its opposite, relativism, which lets go of any common moral ground against which state actions need to be justified. As became evident in chapter 1, however, it remains a problem that humanist universalism seems necessarily centered in the West, dividing the world into those who share Western values and those who do not.[4]

Across the political spectrum, the relationship between the West and human rights is more often than not presented as a necessary, natural one. Some months after the *Foreign Policy* poll, the liberal British *Guardian* newspaper published an article decrying the waning Western influence within the United Nations:

> The West's efforts to use the United Nations to promote its values
> and shape the global agenda are failing, according to a detailed study
> published yesterday. A sea change in the balance of power in favor of
> China, India, Russia and other emerging states is wrecking European
> and U.S. efforts to entrench human rights, liberties and multilateralism.
> (Traynor 2008)

The link between the decline in support for human rights and the rising influence of non-Western nations in the UN remains central throughout—the article goes on to describe among other things how the UN Human Rights Council is increasingly used by Muslim states to sanction "blasphemy" rather than promote human rights—but there is no inquiry whatsoever into why those non-Western nations do not support human rights; instead it is implied that they simply have different values. Similarly, the Western commitment to these rights is presented as a given; there are no questions asked, not even obvious ones such as: How much is the international human rights system undermined by centuries of exploitation in the name of a humanist "civilizing mission" and how much is this memory kept alive by the open creation of "extralegal" zones through extraordinary rendition, secret prisons, "harsh interrogation techniques," and antiterrorism laws in the West? How important are successes in institutionalizing international human rights regulations when the very concept of

"rights" is becoming increasingly irrelevant within a neoliberal globalization that privatizes everything from wars to health care to prisons—and from which Western nations profit more than anyone else? Finally, there seems to be neither a sense of non-Western concepts of "cosmopolitics," nor of the effect of slavery and colonialism on the emergence of a modern, wealthy, secular Europe and of continued interventionist policies, from "regime change" to protectionist tariffs, on its survival.[5]

While there can be little doubt that the current non-Western coalition within the United Nations is far from the ideals of Bandung and that governments in the Muslim world have little interest in sincerely pushing for universal human rights (though nothing in the Islamic tradition would prevent them from promoting such an agenda), there is also a strange lack of self-criticism or at least self-awareness among Westerners toward their own supposed value system, a lack evident in the conservative *Foreign Policy* and the liberal *Guardian* as much as in the 2003 Habermas and Derrida piece discussed in chapter 1. Habermas expands his earlier argument in a more recent article, "Die Dialektik der Säkularisierung" (Dialectics of secularism), in which he directly addresses the need for a postsecular European identity that allows for the integration of Muslim minorities. He goes on to define "postsecular" as follows:

> In order to speak of a "postsecular" society, it needs to have been in
> a prior state of "secularism." The contested term thus can only be
> applied to the prosperous European societies or nations like Australia,
> Canada, and New Zealand, where citizen's religious ties have been
> continuously, since the end of World War II even drastically, loosened.
> (Habermas 2008, 3, emphasis in original)

The key question here might not be whether the West alone has gone through a stage of secularism (leaving unaddressed nations like India, China, or postcolonial socialist societies), but whether "secularism" as used by Habermas and others is a concept that is necessarily linked to a Christian heritage and would better be described as "secularized Christianity." If so, the (chrono)logical timeline suggested in the above quote, in which the West already is (post)secular while others still have to follow, would not hold, as in order to become secular and then postsecular one really would have to have been Christian first (this in turn allows for the assumption that there are a variety of secularisms interdependent with the religious systems they define themselves against). If this possibility is considered, the assumption that non-Western and in particular Muslim societies are simply in a presecular state loses credibility—one could even turn the timeline around and claim that the failure of Muslim secularism

in nations like Turkey or Algeria, closely tied to questions of internal equality, is something that Christian secularism is beginning to go through now; and the end of state socialism in Eastern Europe might be considered a case in point then as the revival of Christianity there, Catholicism in Poland, evangelical Protestantism in many other nations, could be linked to the revival of Islam in postsocialist nations like Syria or Egypt.

I am not necessarily advocating this alternative timeline, though its plausibility is certainly worth debating; more important, however, are the ways in which it illustrates how hierarchical constructs linking time and space contribute to the Western bias of universalist thought. In his path-breaking *Time and the Other,* anthropologist Johannes Fabian showed the importance of "political Space [and] political Time" as "ideologically construed instruments of power" (Fabian 1983, 144). That is, politicized spatial and temporal models place the Other not only in a distinctly separate space, but that space is also located in a different time relative to the West (and within a linear model of progressive time this necessarily means the Other lives not only in the past, she or he lives in the West's past). Since the end of World War II, decolonization, and the beginning of large-scale labor migration, "the necessity arose to provide an objective, transcultural temporal medium for theories of *change* that were to dominate Western social science in the decades that followed" (Fabian 1983, 144). The increasing interaction, outside of the strict boundaries of colonialism, of societies placed in different developmental stages was thus framed around the idea of "public time," a kind of Twilight Zone in which different time-space constellations interact, allowing non-Western societies to see their future—and move toward it with the help of organizations regulating international public time and space, such as the United Nations or the World Bank—while simultaneously allowing the West an educational glimpse at its own past.

Interventions into this past, that is, into the internal affairs of nations of the Global South, are increasingly framed as "humanitarian," taking place in the context of a model of universal human rights that depends on the existence of a public space and time in which these rights are negotiated, but often fails to admit to its deeply politicized nature, instead, like French philosopher Pascal Bruckner, assuming the presence of infallible self-regulating mechanisms allowing for constant progress:

> Modernity has been self-critical and suspicious of its own ideals for a long time now, denouncing the sacralisation of an insane reason that was blind to its own zeal. In a word, it acquired a certain wisdom and an understanding of its limits. The Enlightenment, in turn, showed itself capable of reviewing its mistakes. (Bruckner 2007)

Consequently, the exclusion of large parts of humanity from humanist discourses through most of the last three hundred years appears as a regrettable oversight rather than a systemic problem. An oversight in addition that the West is ready to fix as long as there is a reciprocal willingness among the former Others to be included, instead of a stubborn commitment to a premodern, antihumanist belief system.

Over the last decade, Islam became identified with such a system. As sociologist José Casanova argues: "As liberal democratic systems, all European societies respect the private exercise of religion, including Islam, as an individual human right. It is the public and collective free exercise of Islam as an immigrant religion that most European societies find difficult to tolerate precisely on the grounds that Islam is perceived as an 'un–European' religion." (Casanova 2004, 7)

The Othering and marginalization of Muslim minorities is increasingly justified with the supposed threat that intolerant, misogynist, and homophobic Muslims pose to the secular, liberal Europe they want to be part of:

> [T]he West's wealth is in a certain sense a by-product of something else, for it is based on an underlying ideology expressed chiefly in terms of absence: Here there is no censorship, there are no prisons full of dissidents, no powerful network of official corruption, no judicial power operating in the service of a political dictator or party programme, no fear of the authorities, and certainly no fear of a religion of any kind. (de Moor 2007)

Such a skewered comparative perspective hides the Christian bias of the secularism argument evoked in relation to, and increasingly against, the continent's Muslims, reflected for example in the very different reactions to an effective re-Christianization of Europe through the expanded European Union and to the potential inclusion of a majority Muslim nation among its member states, as Casanova observed:

> The widespread public debate in Europe over Turkey's admission showed that Europe was actually the torn country, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European unity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy, and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism. (Casanova 2004, 5)

The notion of Europe as torn between Christian and secular identifications points to an important but usually unspoken source of current tensions

around the supposed "desecularization" of Europe by Muslims, namely the role of Islam in negotiating unresolved internal tensions around religion and its meaning for the continent's identity.

It also brings another, often overlooked fact into focus: the single largest national source of Muslim migration to Europe has for the last century been the most unambiguously, even aggressively, secular among all "culturally Muslim" nations. In other words, the majority of Muslims in Europe, if they were not born there, emigrated from a secular nation. Turks, no matter how religious they are, have as much experience living in a secular society as do Germans, Finns, or Italians.[6] That their presence is seen as a threat to Europe's identity, that Turkey, one of the first nations to apply for EEC membership, has not yet been provided with a definite timeline for its inclusion into the European Union, thus seems to have less to do with secularism and the implied commitment to human rights than with Christianity (and, since race is never far in Europe when religion is the issue, with whiteness). Thus, rather than committing to a linear model of human development, in which Europe not only appears as having passed through a stage that others still have to enter, but in which the rise of secularism in Europe also appears as independent from rather than interdependent with developments in the rest of world, it seems necessary to address the question how much "secular" European societies depend on largely monoreligious and monoracial populations. Put differently: does European universal humanism rely on keeping both internal minorities and the rest of the world in the position of prehumanist Other? And if so, how is this achieved?[7]

## Dutch Liberal Feminism and the Mute Muslima

In chapter 2, I argued that European migration studies could profit greatly from the application of African diasporic theories to the study of European minorities (and from acknowledging the ways in which European activists of color already incorporate them). A theorist central to any such application would be Frantz Fanon, to whom all contemporary scholars of race, nation, and sexuality are indebted. While some of his positions, in particular with regard to female agency and homosexuality, are problematic to say the least (Fuss 1994; McClintock 1995; Muñoz 1999; Wright 2004), he was the first to systematically analyze the centrality of sexuality and gender to racialized power structures within and beyond the nation. This is a perspective that needs to be urgently brought to a discussion that is increasingly used to define the position of Europe's largest religious minority, namely that on the status of the Muslim woman. Incidentally, many of

Fanon's most keen observations on the uses of gender in nationalist and colonial discourses were formulated while he lived in a region that is not only predominantly Muslim, but also provided a major source of postcolonial and labor migration to Europe, that is, North Africa. Fanon's work as a psychiatrist and later FLN activist in Algeria offers one of many examples of interactions of African and Muslim (diasporic) communities—illuminating the potential as well as the pitfalls of these intersections and alliances. [8]

Of particular interest here is his essay "Algeria Unveiled," written in 1958 and published a year later (English translation 1965), which uses the trope of the veiled woman to dissect the inner workings of colonial dominations, their effect on those who dominate as well as those dominated, and the specific gender dynamics of this process. The veil in Fanon's analysis becomes a symbol for Algerian culture to both colonizers and colonized; its bearer, the Algerian woman, thus moves to the center of a symbolic politics that denies her agency exactly because she is positioned as the bearer of an intrinsic culture. Within this constellation, Muslim women faced pressure from both sides without being granted an autonomous voice in the conflict and Fanon implies that this reflects the positioning of women within all nationalisms. As Anne McClintock observes in her revisitation of "Algeria Unveiled": "Fanon perceives . . . that nationalism, as a politics of visibility, implicates women and men in different ways. Because, for male nationalists, women serve as the visible markers of national homogeneity, they become subjected to especially vigilant and violent discipline. Hence the intense emotive politics of dress" (McClintock 1995, 365). The latter are thus a means to contain women's mobility within the nation and to frame both this internal ordering of citizenship rights and discourses between competing nationalisms in the terminology of culture.

Many of the key discursive strategies mobilizing support for humanitarian and educational interventions post–World War II are gendered, often representing a variation of Spivak's "white men are saving brown women from brown men" trope. The use of this trope by the French colonizers in Algeria was dissected by Fanon fifty years ago:

> The dominant administration solemnly undertook to defend this
> woman, pictured as humiliated, sequestered, cloistered . . . It described
> the immense possibilities of woman, unfortunately transformed by the
> Algerian man into an inert, demonetized, indeed dehumanized object.
> The behavior of the Algerian was very firmly denounced and described
> as medieval and barbaric. With infinite science, a blanket indictment

against the "sadistic and vampirish" Algerian attitude toward women
was prepared and drawn up. Around the family life of the Algerian,
the occupier piled up a whole mass of judgments, appraisals, reasons,
accumulated anecdotes and edifying examples, thus attempting to
confine the Algerian within a circle of guilt. (Fanon 1965, 38)

The deployment of similar arguments in recent Western interventions in
the Middle East is obvious; what interests me here, however, are its uses
in the *internal* restructuring and fragmentation of European societies spe-
cifically through the emotive politics of dress. Fanon's analysis seems an
uncannily accurate description of contemporary attitudes toward Muslim
minorities as the most serious threat to Europe's modern identity. These
attitudes are produced via several steps: first, "Muslim culture" is con-
structed as not only fundamentally different from "European culture,"
but as its exact inversion, leaving little to no common ground (and eras-
ing centuries of shared history). Where Europeans are tolerant, Muslims
are intolerant; where the West negotiates, the East attacks; where "we"
progress, "they" are stagnant; where Europe abhors violence, it is the
Middle Eastern way of life. In a second step, this outwardly coherent, ho-
mogeneous community is discovered to be fundamentally divided along
gender lines: Muslim identity is shaped exclusively by men, according to
their own interests, which are directly opposed to the interests of Muslim
women who are disenfranchised in every possible way, violated, immo-
bilized and in need of being saved from the outside, that is, Europe. In a
third step, alliances are built between former enemies who rally around
commonly shared values against the new external threat. These alliances
explain in part the compliance of European queer and feminist move-
ments with mainstream racism in the name of defending universal values
of liberty and equality.

This of course is not a new phenomenon and continues to occur in part
because of a fundamental ignorance toward non-Western and minority
cultures and the intellectual discourses they have produced. There often
seems to be an unspoken agreement that while people of color might create
revolutionary political movements, they are socially conservative (Johnson
2005). This allows liberal discourse to keep intact an imaginary divide
between the progressive West and the rest of the world, demanding of mi-
grants and minorities a fundamental "Westernization" that at the same
time is permanently denied to them by an implicitly racialized notion of
ethnicity and religion. Progressive European discourse in its various incar-
nations thus minimizes the role of non-Westerners and minorities of color
in envisioning radically new forms of agency and identity, instead keeping

alive a world view in which the white Left remains central to change: feminist and queer responses to current European debates around Muslim men as aggressors and Muslim women as victims rarely use the tools provided by Fanon and others and as a result, they often seem engaged in dialogue not with minoritarian positions, but their own prejudices.

Islam's blanket definition as misogynist and homophobic not only erases female agency and homogenizes and stereotypes Muslim cultures, increasingly normalizing the notion that Islam is incompatible with modern societies, but also creates a false unity among European nations, suppressing necessary debates on internal homophobia and sexism. Rather than addressing the competing and often contradictory concepts claiming to be representative of the continent's value system, the model of Europeanness that is evoked in contrast to Muslim intolerance is usually closest to the Dutch one, thought to perfectly embody the Enlightenment tradition of tolerance and progress. This perception was first challenged by the meteoric rise of the charismatic, openly gay and openly Islamophobic right-wing politician Pim Fortuyn, assassinated by a white environmental activist in 2002. Two years later, controversial filmmaker Theo van Gogh (fond among other things of calling Muslims "goat fuckers," see Buruma 2006, 9) was murdered in Amsterdam. His assassin, a Dutch Muslim of Moroccan descent, directly linked his act to van Gogh's cooperation with Somali Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali on the film *Submission*, which attacked Islamic misogyny through drastic images. In the debates that followed the assassinations of Fortuyn and van Gogh, the Dutch "polder model," a society built on the cooperation of largely independent sociocultural subsectors, seemed to unravel at light speed, leaving Dutch and Muslims in opposing, incompatible camps. As a number of authors have argued (Hoving 2005; Ghorashi 2007), the polder model itself represents a commitment to tolerance as a structure rather than a value, resulting in a lack of actual engagement with difference and a perception of change as potentially threatening:

> Traditionally the Dutch seem to have only two main strategies at their disposal to deal with a variety of social, economic, political, and other differences: the passive forms of tolerance and intolerance . . . or evasion . . . Both strategies, tolerance and evasion, are considered to be based on the radical differentiation between self and other, and they both testify to a strong sense of superiority, from which stems the authority to tolerate or evade others. (Hoving 2005, 5)

This is what Halleh Ghorashi calls "liberal Enlightenment fundamentalism," (2007), which, based on the notion of clear cultural differences,

sees assimilation of the Other as the only possible positive outcome of cultural interactions. Accordingly, recently exploding internal criticisms of the famous Dutch tolerance, whether coming from progressives or conservatives, focuses on a perceived inability to ask more aggressively for this assimilation: "in the harsher debates in the wake of 2002, one is struck by a curious consensus in the right-wing and left-wing critiques of the concept. Right-wing speakers, the so-called 'new-realists,' analyse Dutch tolerance as a national silence about the severe problems of migration and as the cowardly, politically correct *evasion* of difference, instead of an *openness* to difference" (Hoving 2005, 5). The new Dutch openness to difference thus follows familiar patterns in avoiding any introspection: the cultural preference for passive relations with the Other creates a desire for mediation, a way to indirectly interact that avoids concrete challenges to one's own way of life. This in turn allows us to see Dutch, or European, culture not as something that is subject to change, to "democratic iterations" of its population, but as an absolute, universalist and at the same time internalist standard, designed to externalize and thus invalidate all potential criticism. This is a liberal model of colorblindness built on the same implicit norms of whiteness reflected in 1970s mainstream feminism—challenged by feminists of color—as well as in contemporary queer theory, assessed by queer of color critique as "invested in protecting the institutional structures that have accommodated it, including, most significantly, white patriarchal structures of knowledge" (Perez 2005, 188).

The link between colorblind liberal discourse and feminist and queer movements' investment in whiteness is relevant in the Dutch context as well. Symptomatic for the mediated engagement with Muslim difference in the new Netherlands are the works of feminist playwright Adelheid Roosen, whose *De Gesluierde Monologen* (The Veiled Monologues, 2003) and *Is.man* (2007) address the mystery of the Muslim woman and Muslim men's violence against her respectively, aiming at explaining both to a Dutch public moving within a completely different cultural framework. The connection between both topics (summarized by a U.S. review of Roosen's plays as "European Muslim women—and the men who murder them" [Sellar 2007]) is increasingly normalized through the "honor killing" trope that has become omnipresent in European discourses on "Muslim culture" in recent years, despite having no agreed-upon definition. One used in a recent study commissioned by the Dutch Social Democrat Party can be considered representative for a commonly held understanding however: "Honor-related violence is each form of mental or physical violence motivated by a collective mentality as a reaction to a (potential) violation of a

man's or woman's honor and thus of his or her family's that is (potentially) known to the outside world" (Gazic et al. 2006, 6).

There are no reliable statistics on the prevalence of honor killings; in the Netherlands, only one county, Hagueland, attempts to keep track and estimated that in 2003, 11 of 119 local cases of deadly domestic violence were "honor-based" (Gazic et al. 2006, 10). Since the police fail to identify any common motivations for the 108 non-honor-based cases, one is left with the assumption that they resulted from individual circumstances rather than the collective mentality assumed to be behind a form of violence that becomes representative for Muslim or Middle Eastern culture (frequently used interchangeably). This culture then is contrasted with a Dutch model of gender and family relations to which this type of violence is incomprehensible ("individual" domestic violence notwithstanding), resulting in a failure of communication across a seemingly unbridgeable gap that in turn becomes the motivation for Roosen's artistic intervention: "Killing your child out of a perception—that is something we do not understand in Holland . . . But, if I can look at someone, starting with the idea that there is no difference between them and me, I can learn" (Roosen, in Sellar 2007).

*Is.man*, loosely based on interviews Roosen conducted with Muslim men in Dutch prisons serving time for so-called honor killings, follows three generations of a Turkish family living in the Netherlands in order to explain how the father ended up killing his daughter to uphold traditional Turkish honor codes. The family's story is largely told through the son who translates the father's Turkish into Dutch, functioning as a mediator between his father's and the audience's culture, physically taking up the in-between space assigned to second-generation immigrants (see Roosen in: Martin 2010). While Roosen portrays all characters as struggling to negotiate contradictory cultural expectations and pressures, her attempt to present them as individuals not fundamentally different from the Dutch audience fails—and, I would argue, not primarily because of wrong perceptions of the Other, but blindness toward her own liberal, Enlightened European culture.

The point obviously is not in any way to defend men who view a threat to their (family's) "honor" as a sufficient reason to murder a female relative, but the claim that they do so because and only because they are Muslims automatically puts every act of misogynist violence committed by a non-Muslim into a different category, one that is by implication less serious, less dangerous, and less systemic. The current honor killing discourse in Europe not only sees merely a gradual difference between those Muslims who commit honor killings and those who do not, but also enables dominant society

to continue to perceive endemic violence against women as a private, personal matter as soon as it happens outside of this politicized—and thus supposedly relevant—context and structural economic gender inequality within European societies remains as unexplored as the systematic exploitation of undocumented migrant women as domestic and sex workers. In short, violence against women is transformed from a global phenomenon fed by interactive structures in which Western nations are centrally involved into a by-product of premodern Muslim culture.

This is a culture that is so different from Europe's that it needs to be literally unveiled through a scopic politics of gender in order to become comprehensible; which is what Roosen does in her earlier, hugely successful play *Veiled Monologues*, whose inspiration is easily identifiable by its title:

> "Vagina Monologues" is beautiful, but it's about Western women. Where are the veiled women? The Arabian world knows so much about eroticism and sensuality and the whole sensitive world. In the West, we are so afraid and cannot accept an image from the Arabian world that is more beautiful than something from the west. We can only see terrorists and people living in holes. (Roosen, in Rathe 2007; English in original)

Roosen's *Veiled Monologues* premiered in 2003, in a post-9/11, post-Pim Fortuyn Netherlands, shortly before the assassination of Theo van Gogh, and clearly hit a nerve. The play successfully toured nationally and internationally (including a performance in the Dutch parliament broadcast nationwide on TV) and was explicitly and frequently used to "explain" Muslims to a largely Christian audience in the context of a growing sense of a culture clash between Islam and the West.

The *Veiled Monologues* also appeared, however, toward the end of a general move away from the Western European social market economy model. While the end of state socialism in the Eastern part of the continent meant a harsh transition to a largely unregulated capitalism for many former Warsaw Pact nations, the West throughout the 1990s slowly moved away from a concept of governance that implied state responsibility in minimizing economic and social inequality. This shift meant a sharp rise in temporary employment, cuts in social programs, unemployment benefits, and health care plans, and a new emphasis on individual responsibility and on the looming destruction of the welfare state by irresponsible and undeserving groups (Balibar 2004; Willenbücher 2007). In the Netherlands as in the rest of Europe, the latter were first identified as migrants in general and then more specifically as the nation's Muslim community.

I argue that the factual dismantling of a system that very much defined Western Europe's, and in particular the Netherlands', identity—capitalist yet socially responsible; guaranteeing individual freedoms yet defined by a sense of shared responsibility for the community; competitive yet caring; noninterventionist yet committed to global human rights—created a crisis that was solved by a discursive scapegoating of the continent's Muslim population onto which a reactionary identity was projected that reaffirmed Western liberal ideals in crisis and at the same time justified their rejection by posing excessive liberalism, multiculturalism, and state support of minorities as having enabled reactionary, antidemocratic, misogynist, homophobic, nonwhite, non-Western Muslim groups threatening the liberal West much more than economic neoliberalism ever could.[9] If one assumes that the newly discovered fundamental "foreignness" not of immigrants but of the already present and established Muslim minority was used to manage this "sacrificial crisis" (Honig 2001, 34) of Dutch liberalism, the reception of the *Veiled Monologues* gains another dimension, one that brings into focus what Bonnie Honig termed "the work that foreignness does, the many ways in which it operates as a way to frame other issues of democratic theory and citizenship" (ibid., 7).

Like *Is.man*, the *Veiled Monologues* are based on interviews, this time with Muslim women asked about their views on and experiences with a variety of issues related to sexuality.[10] Their responses were then condensed into twelve monologues, which in turn are performed by three actors (using index cards to underline the texts' representational nature). The monologues cover a number of positions and perceptions, from the predictable stories of oppression and violence to tales of disappointment about Dutch lovers' shortcomings or an openly lesbian daughter bonding with her father over soccer (Roosen 2007). The exploration of sexuality as something in which Muslim women take an active part is certainly commendable, but the assumption that this can only happen through Western intervention is more than questionable, as is an almost aggressive presentism refusing to acknowledge how the play itself as well as its perception is shaped by a long Orientalist tradition of sexualizing Muslim culture in general and the veil in particular (Alloula 1986). Finally, while the play explicitly aims at representing European Muslim women, the interviewees were all born in the Middle East (or are formerly Christian white Dutch converts). This emphasizes Islam, like the colored bodies representing it, as something that is not native but external to Dutch culture, justifying the introductory claim that the play constitutes "[a] journey as a tourist in your own land" (Roosen 2007, 23), visiting an exterritorial "Islamic" space within a larger Netherlands that is completely separate from it.

Just as the French *cités* appeared as foreign, threatening islands in the European landscape in November 2005, so do Muslim communities remain distinct, separate, and strange territories in liberal European cosmopolitanism. The introduction to the first long monologue, representing the voice of a white Dutch convert, exemplifies this mixture of exoticism and condescension, the desire to understand mixed with a need to clearly distance oneself, the construction of "Dutch" and "Islamic" as mutually exclusive:

> Woman 2: When word got around in the Netherlands that Islamic women were being interviewed *to give them a voice,* a number of Dutch women of Christian background called. They were eager to tell how they had become Muslim and how their sensitive and erotic lives had changed since they were involved with a Kurd, Iraqi, or Turkish man.
>
> We then decided to do a number of joint interviews with these Dutch and Islamic women. It sometimes got very heated. The Islamic women often felt tormented: According to Islam, if you are born Muslim, you're not allowed to renounce your religion. You Dutch women are free to choose. So why become a Muslim? A Dutch woman can embrace and abandon any religion without fear of retaliation; that's the difference. (Roosen 2007, 24–25, emphasis mine. Also note how "Islamic" and "Dutch" not only become exclusive opposites, but also are treated as similar categories, as if a Muslim's (only) nationality was "Islam.")

Despite the author's stated intention to show Muslim women as active (sexual) agents, mobility is again explicitly presented as a prerogative of Western, Christian (or at least non-Muslim) women—more than that, it is Muslim women who state this as a fundamental and invincible difference, thus giving even more credibility to the claim.

In consequence, the attempt at communication represented by *The Veiled Monologues* (as well as *Is.man*) underlines rather than undermines the perception that Muslims and Europeans live in completely different worlds, allowing enlightened liberal Western feminists to take on the role of "translator," explaining the secluded world of Muslim women to white European audiences, mixing exotic thrills with a fuzzy feeling of "we're all not so different after all." Ultimately however, the veiled Muslim woman is not considered capable of engaging in a direct dialogue—in order to do so, to become "not too different," she has to shed her cultural baggage, that is, her veil. The latter is a demand that is made most explicit in the "escape narrative" genre, whose immense popularity played a large part in the shift from a moral panic discourse around male migrant and Muslim youths as delinquent in the 1990s to the current focus

on oppressed women. The genre perfectly illustrates both Fanon's and Fabian's models: tales of women escaping the horrors of medieval Islam, crossing into enlightened Europe and, necessarily, burning all bridges behind them. The idea that there is a clearly marked border between the two worlds, that there is neither an in-between zone, nor the possibility of moving freely between them, that one lives in either one or the other, is at the heart of these narratives, and the women who do the crossing become the crown witness for this binary opposition.

### Escape Narratives from the Muslim Underground

Escape narratives establish the connection between political time and space by explicitly representing the women's journey from Orient to Occident as one that necessarily means a journey from the Middle Ages to modernity. The West is the present (and future); the East is the past. But while these narratives are built around a model that has been in use since the early days of colonialism, their aim is not merely to reinforce it; instead the point is to show how formerly clear separations collapse as the archaic East is, part and parcel, transplanted *into* the West through migrants' "ethnic enclaves." The West thus is forced to travel back in time and reface challenges that it would have already overcome, at least within its borders, had it not been infused with a population arriving not only from a different space, but also a different time. Adelheid Roosen's countrywoman, Somali Dutch politician Ayaan Hirsi Ali—number fifteen on *Foreign Policy*'s list of the world's most influential intellectuals—is the paradigmatic representative of the gendered native informer at the heart of the escape narrative and the most prominent of the Muslim converts testifying to this epic battle in which Europe is faced with various of its past ghosts simultaneously, creating an alarmist mood that is reflected in the hyperbole of many debates, supposedly making this confrontation the most dramatic ever.[11]

Hirsi Ali's life, as it unfolds in her autobiography (2007), presents itself as a linear progression from darkness to light: "I left the world of faith, of genital cutting and marriage for the world of reason and sexual emancipation. After making this voyage I know that one of these two worlds is simply better than the other. Not for its gaudy gadgetry, but for its fundamental values" (Hirsi Ali, in Bruckner 2007). Starting with her childhood in tribal, war-torn Somalia, through the escape to Kenya and teenage conversion to Wahhabism, to an arranged marriage when she was in her twenties, Hirsi Ali's life seemed on an inevitable trajectory that was stopped suddenly, dramatically, by the fact that the husband her

father had picked for her lived in Canada, necessitating a stop-over in Germany on Hirsi Ali's long flight into a future not chosen by her. Seemingly as soon as her feet touched European ground, decades of fundamentalist indoctrination began to fall away and she made the first step toward freedom by running off, eventually applying for and receiving asylum in the Netherlands where she became a parliamentarian and successful campaigner against Islam's oppression of women.[12]

As this brief summary already indicates, Hirsi Ali's story is almost too good to be true; her journey can be, and repeatedly has been made to represent the ideal coming-of-age narrative for the global South "from devout believer to fearless opponent, from a loyal clan member to being renounced by her family, from Africa to Europe, and from blind faith to unbending reason" (Anthony 2007).[13] Her frequent public statements comparing the culture of her origin to that of her chosen home indeed read like complete wish fulfillment for Western societies in postmodern identity crises: Muslims live in the Middle Ages and Western civilization is superior— check; migrants exploit the welfare state and disrespect European values— check; Africans should stop complaining about racism and Europeans should stop feeling guilty for colonialism—check; Islam is misogynist and white men must save brown women from brown men—check. In return for these ego-stroking messages, European media elevate Hirsi Ali to a status similar to that of her intellectual heroes, all of whom can be found in Europe's past. Renowned Dutch novelist Margriet de Moor calls her "a female Islamic Luther, and a black one to boot . . . Or rather, since she isn't a theologian, perhaps a black Voltaire?" (de Moor 2007).[14]

Women like Hirsi Ali, German Neçla Kelek, or Fadela Amara in France, who have not only gained unprecedented media attention, but also are among the first minority women ever to be granted a public voice in European affairs, albeit only when speaking about the threat of Islam, share certain talking points: the authors describe themselves as both secular and culturally Muslim, claiming deep theological knowledge of Islam on which they base statements such as that there is no tradition of textual interpretations, which supposedly explains why all Muslims think alike; a comparison of Christianity and Islam along Weberian lines, that is, rational, Western Christianity versus atavistic, Oriental Islam; a strict binary between Europeans and Muslims, placing themselves firmly in the European camp; the claim that Muslims exploit a European feeling of guilt that leads to an excessive, dangerous tolerance; a characterization of the minority as aggressive and of the majority as too passive; of veiled women as both victimized and as actively intolerant; the use of shocking anecdotes emphasizing the dangerous difference of Islam, replacing facts

and numbers; and the rejection of dialogue with (Muslim) critics by claiming a status of absolute knowledge and absolute uniqueness (Kelek 2005; Hirsi Ali 2007; Ates 2008).

The following dialogue between a TV journalist and Turkish-German lawyer Seyran Ates, legitimized by her own suffering at the hands of her family and hailed as a defender of Muslim women's right by the mainstream press, is quite symptomatic for the interaction of these talking points and the ways new tropes build on older ones, managing to evoke emotional responses without need for factual evidence:

> ATES:   Many Muslim women still live in an archaic parallel world,
>             where structures dominate that are familiar to us from the
>             Middle Ages . . .
>
> Q:       Can you quantify this? How many migrants live in this
>             parallel society?
>
> ATES:   There are no studies. But my feeling is that at least 80 percent
>             of the people coming to Germany from Turkey live in this
>             parallel society. They never really arrived here—and that is
>             transmitted to the next generation. (Bentele 2007)

The use of political time and space in this construct, paired with the intuitive insight of someone who once was part of this secret, scary parallel world, creates a moral imperative for majoritarian Europeans not only to save their own cultural achievements from being destroyed by Muslims, but also to save these Muslims from the culture pinning them down in a time that has passed centuries ago (in fact, within this model, proponents of "traditional Islam" are not only refusing to move forward, they have to run backward in order not to be swept away by Europe's constant progress).

It is not my intention to minimize misogynist violence experienced by Muslim girls and women, but the question simply is whether Hirsi Ali and others' public presentations are the best way, or a way at all, to fight this violence. This question is especially vital since the authors of these narratives as well as the mainstream public persistently ignore the work done by Muslim and minority women who struggle to change structures *within* their communities rather than condemning them wholesale as not up to Western standards, in particular feminist activists pointing to the underlying sexist structures shared by majority and minority cultures. At issue is not whether there is a need to combat sexism in Muslim communities, but the instrumentalization of this aim in order to silence and segregate Muslims, including women, while emphasizing European difference and superiority. Hirsi Ali, Kelek, and others contribute to and depend on this segregation by presenting themselves as brave travelers between

incompatible worlds, as necessarily separate from the mass of the women in whose name they speak—and on whose silence they depend in order to continue to fulfill this function for a white (neo)liberal audience. Muslim women as independent actors have no place in this conversation, in particular if they are critical of it. Dutch politician Fatima Elatik points out that minority women are virtually excluded from debates about them (Anthony 2007, 4). Hirsi Ali's response to this criticism is both predictably in accordance with the rules of the escape narrative and blatantly inaccurate:

> I started off in a position where none of these women were visible anyway except as proxies to be put forward to get subsidies from the government. Just keep singing we're discriminated against. No Muslim women are allowed into this debate by their own groups. So it's way too early. By the time these women are assertive enough, I won't be around. It will be one generation on. (ibid.)

The image of by default disempowered Muslim women is instrumental to her own empowerment, but of course there were many assertive Muslim women already present when Hirsi Ali appeared on the Dutch scene, engaged in long-term feminist activism.[15]

A 1993 portrait on one of these groups, ARGAN, a Moroccan youth center founded by second-generation women, published in the women of color magazine *ZAMI krant*, indicates that not much has changed in media representations of minorities over the last decade and a half: "During our conversation the phone rings. Fatima gets involved in a long discussion. When she returns to the table she is visibly agitated. The woman wanted an item on Moroccan problem youths. This happens frequently lately. They want something and are not interested in what you have to offer" (Weiss 1993, 46). Existing feminist migrant organizations are rarely approached or acknowledged in debates on Muslim women; there is suspiciously little interest in their grassroots perspective, critical of sexism and homophobia in migrant communities, emphasizing that in the "homeland" too these issues are hotly debated, but also verbal about the racism, sexism, and homophobia within the dominant society (the women's movement included). More than that, programs for migrant and minority women and youths have faced devastating cuts throughout the 1990s all across Western Europe, giving a distinct ring of hypocrisy to current laments about the passivity of migrant communities (Gazic et al. 2006, 35).

While feminist migrant organizations point to the structural failure of European governments from the local to the continental level to put their money where their mouth is, namely with the commitment to gender equality, there seems to be little interest in responding to these criticisms.

Instead, the image of a self-isolating, hostile Other, refusing to engage in dialogue, is cherished by conservatives and disillusioned progressives alike. Within the narrative construction of the clash of cultures in Europe, the veiled female can easily shift in position from victim to accomplice, voluntarily wearing the headscarf as an act of aggression against Western society, implicitly condoning all crimes committed in the name of Islam, as happens in a review of Neçla Kelek's *Die Fremde Braut* (The Foreign Bride) by the staunchly leftist German daily *Die Tageszeitung*:[16]

> It is the simultaneous aura of oppression and aggression that makes [us] so helpless. Because the cover does not only hide oneself, it makes the other naked. Naked and sinful. It is a statement, not folklore. These Muslimas "don't want to deal at all with the Germans, the impure. They despise the dishonored life of Western women, they feel strong and morally and intellectually superior to the impure." (Zucker 2005, 22)

Veiling thus becomes a convenient act of self-segregation and simultaneously aggression, the female version of the male youth setting the suburbs on fire; like Baudrillard's angry young men who prefer the burning of cars to owning them, these women have no interest in Western values such as individual freedom and equality. This dichotomy, repeated across the political spectrum, not only presents Islam as inherently illiberal, but also justifies European practices of intolerance through the evocation of Enlightenment traditions, which unselfconsciously affirm tropes of Western superiority, particularly evident in the discussion around headscarf bans in France, Germany, Norway, or Denmark, which assume that a conversation on equal terms is prevented by Muslims' cultural limitations (Rommelspacher 2002; Weber 2004; Benhabib 2006).

   The transnationality implied in cosmopolitan humanism is inseparable from translatability, but translation still is largely a one-way street, preventing a "cosmopolitan conversation" (Appiah 2006) on equal terms. This references a larger problem: in order to take part in discourses in which rights are negotiated, less powerful groups have to represent themselves in a shape that fits the one that is already there. Dialogue with marginalized communities thus often only takes place after they have restructured themselves along existing patterns, expressing themselves in the dominant language, while diverging voices are silenced and ignored. With regard to Muslim communities in Europe, attempts at integration often reinforce rather than weaken patriarchal, undemocratic structures as communities are asked to be represented by the kind of leaders they are expected to have. [17] This contributes to a self-fulfilling prophecy in which a diverse group of Eastern and Southern European, Middle Eastern, South

Asian, North and West African background, with different religious practices and different degrees of religiosity (including a large group of "secular Muslims") is homogenized along the lines of the dominant discourse.[18]

Ali et al., of course, deny that they themselves contribute to enforcing patriarchal structures by denying the presence of diversity and resistance within Muslim communities, instead insisting that they "are a couple of exceptional migrants . . . We also need the average people, workers and cleaning women, who say: it's enough, we don't want that anymore. We need a migrant feminist movement" (Bläser and Oestreich 2008; also see Kelek 2006; Anthony 2007). With this claim to exceptionalism, they enter a strange coalition with those they claim to fight, namely ultraconservative Muslim authorities, both insisting in the necessary link between Islam, patriarchy and antisecularism. Both groups are invested in keeping invisible negotiations of identity within minority communities: internal differences and conflicts already present in the origin societies, urban versus rural, religious versus secular, poor versus upper and middle class, are externalized. Within the dominant perception of Muslim communities as homogeneous, the question of what is part of the culture that supposedly sets minorities apart from the majority becomes increasingly reduced to exclusive binaries and what is perceived as diverging from "traditional" structures becomes identified with Westernization, positively or negatively. Ignoring the histories of Kemalism in Turkey, early twentieth century Egyptian feminism or democratizing projects in Iran, Indonesia and elsewhere, violently aborted by Western intervention, internal conflicts characteristic of all societies come to represent a clash of civilizations. As a consequence, European Muslims' attempts at self-articulation are stifled by seemingly antagonistic groups with supposedly opposing aims who are, however, united in their claim to authenticity, be it authentic European or authentic Muslim values, allowing them to "speak for" rather than with, not to mention listen to, European Muslims who are primarily defined through their lack of authentic claims to either identity or culture.

In his *Murder in Amsterdam*, reflecting on the Netherlands after the assassination of Theo van Gogh, Dutch American writer Ian Buruma describes an encounter with a young Moroccan Dutch woman. "M. L.," who works in a battered women's shelter, is equally critical of the practice of veiling and Hirsi Ali's notion of female liberation, and offers an analysis of gender relations that echoes Fanon's:

> M. L.'s father, like most fathers who came to find work in the
> Netherlands, is religious in a customary way. That is, he tries to stick
> to the traditions of his native place without making a fetish of them,

or even giving them much thought. When M. L. is home and her father comes back from the mosque, she asks him "what nonsense the imam was talking this time." The answer usually comes in a comment about his daughter's habits. It's always about the daughter, said M. L., "the daughter, the daughter, how we dress too provocatively, blah blah blah." (Buruma 2006, 131)

M. L. and her sisters, who wear the *hijab*, negotiate a complicated space in which they are confronted with contradictory expectations and demands. In spite of the messages of dominant discourses however, these contradictions, shaping the daily lives of millions of minority women and girls across Europe, are livable. Rather than "experiencing trauma with one leg in each culture . . . tormenting their hearts" as liberal discourse would have it (Roosen, in Rathe 2007), women of the second and third generations have developed coping mechanism adequate to the complexity of their situations. As various studies have shown, the presence of the *hijab*, prime symbol of the supposed oppression and marginalization of Muslim women by their communities, does not correlate with levels of education or income, marriage age, or other measures of successful "integration" (Rommelspacher 2002; Weber 2004). Rather, it can reflect a number of strategic choices, often geared toward gaining agency in a context in which the women and girls face obstacles from various directions.[19]

I suggest that the current discursive centrality of the *hijab* if anything is an indication that these strategies work. While popular tropes equating headscarf and oppression locate the source of the conflict in isolated, unassimilated communities, the territory over which these cultural battles are actually fought is found right in the heart of society. Not coincidentally, the continent's education system was the primary site of the *affaire(s) du foulard*, the headscarf controversy in France. Key to the naturalization of the nation as inevitable and permanent are institutions reproducing the national narrative, constructing its "fictive ethnicity" (Balibar 1990).[20] Universal schooling plays a central role in this process: it is here that children are turned into subjects of the nation. This process is based on partially deconstructing and subsuming various primary identities—class, region, religion, and family—to the secondary identity of the nation. Islam in contemporary Europe, however, is considered a primary identity that cannot be incorporated into the nation (Balibar 2004). Muslim girls wearing the *hijab* are the visible incarnation of this incompatibility—and as Fanon has shown, politics of the nation are primarily scopic politics, so the way one dresses can and will be read to signify much more than personal choice. But while Muslim students wearing headscarves can

relatively easily be represented as willing or unwilling victims of their culture, requiring the state to protect them (from themselves), this argument is harder to make for teachers. As the (female) protestant provost of the German Rhine province, Helga Trösken, stated in 1998:

> Would a Muslim teacher wearing the headscarf in a public school not have the opportunity to positively use this signal to facilitate an enlightened dialogue, needed especially in our nation's public institutions? Then it might also become obvious in the ideologically neutral state that next to the big Christian churches and the Jewish community the third largest religious community has arrived and become visible but is still discriminated against in the name of neutrality. (Klingst 2003)[21]

Trösken's argument reflects a strain of German public opinion that often seems to fail to register or permanently influence debates, pointing to the discursively erased heterogeneity of not only minoritarian, but also majoritarian positions. Legislative, juridical system and media tend to take a much more hostile stand, interpreting German teachers wearing the *hijab* as a fundamental threat to both the nation's secular foundations *and* its Christian identity (Rommelspacher 2002; Weber 2004). This position leaves not only unresolved the question how Christianity and secularism can coexist in a way that neither of them can with Islam, but also fails to address another key issue of the headscarf debates: while the presence of the *hijab* is taken to represent the continued existence of Muslim enclaves at the margins of European societies as well as the margins of modernity, the explosion of public interest does in fact signify the entry of Muslim women into the European middle-class.

## Danish Socialism, Euro-Islam, and Muslim Feminism

The Muslimas who are under attack for wearing the *hijab* are high school students, teachers, policewomen, and parliamentarians. This indicates that the issue is less their oppressed status than the fact that visibly Muslim women cannot be accepted as representatives of European institutions—in particular, institutions producing citizens and maintaining state power. Headscarf-clad women have long been a massive presence in the hallways of Europe's schools, universities, and court houses, but while they populated these central public spaces only as members of the cleaning force, dismay about their oppression and culture clash scenarios were conspicuously absent from mainstream debates.[22] This indicates that the new centrality of these discourses does not signify marginalization and

insurmountable (cultural) differences between minority and majority, but on the contrary symbolizes class mobility and the arrival of Muslims in the center of European nations. This arrival, rather than being perceived as the success of the oft-demanded "integration" of Muslim minorities, is instead framed as a threatening invasion of foreignness, inviting a reaction like the one satirized by Lille-based Axiom First and multiethnic hip-hop crew Ministère des Affaires Populaires' "Des Youyous Dans Ma Mairie" (Ululations in my Town Hall): "Dans ma mairie ya des fat'mas et des youyous / Des foulards, des babouches et des boubou / Des Voyous, des Zoubida, Des mamadou / Au secours, on est plus chez nous."[23] Scopic politics focused on the *hijab* are thus used to displace and hide the centrality not only of nation, but also of class in current discourses on Muslim women. Importantly, this works both in the sense of blaming economic disparities on cultural difference and as a means to keep the Other in the position of object and victim. Images such as this campaign poster by the conservative Christian Danish People's Party are visual representations of a process in which the fear of being ruled by foreigners is combined with the fear of being ruled by women.

Denmark, of course, has become one of the key sites of the perceived failure of multiculturalism, culminating in the infamous 2005 "cartoon affair," supposedly dividing Danes, Europeans, and Westerners committed to and able to handle free speech and Muslims (in the West and outside of it) who place religion above civil, democratic rights (Klausen 2006). This representation fits the dominant narrative: Denmark appears as a nation in which Christianity peacefully coexisted with a tolerant secular state that granted freedom of religion to all its citizens. The model worked as long as Danish society was largely homogeneous—until the mid-1980s, less than 3 percent of the population were immigrants, a number that had doubled in 2002, primarily due to migration from Turkey, Pakistan, and the former Yugoslavia (Skyt Nielsen et al. 2003, 758). This largely Muslim migrant population, the narrative goes, proved incapable of adapting to the secular-liberal lifestyle of North West Europe, leaving the nation's tolerance overstrained with a population irresponsive to values such as free speech and gender equality. The tension finally exploded through something that should not have been an issue in a democratic society, namely the exercise of the freedom of the press in the form of a depiction of a religious prophet in a way that could be perceived as blasphemous by his followers, leading to an excessively violent reaction from the latter.

There are other narratives hidden beneath this dominant one, of course, some relating to German Protestant provost Trösken's claim of a double-standard expressing itself through "discrimination in the name of neutrality,"

# ALLAH ER LIGE FOR LOVEN



## UNDERKASTELSE

Danish People's Party: "Allah Is Equal before the Law—Submission."

obvious for example in *Jyllands Posten*'s 2003 refusal to print cartoons depicting Jesus, so as not to offend Christian readers ("the editor explained back then, 'I don't think *Jyllands-Posten*'s readers will enjoy the drawings. As a matter of fact, I think that they will provoke an outcry. Therefore, I will not use them,'" quoted in Klausen 2006). Another rarely mentioned aspect of the cartoon affair is the fact that the spokesperson for the eleven Danish Muslim organizations filing claims against the paper based on European Union antidiscrimination regulations was a twenty-three-year-old, second-generation, feminist Danish Muslima named Asmaa Abdol-Hamid.

Before turning to Abdol-Hamid and her embodiment of a European Muslim identity that in dominant discourses is largely presented as a contradiction in terms, it might be useful to contextualize her position through a return to the *Foreign Policy* poll cited earlier, or more specifically, to the sole European represented among the journal's top ten: Tariq Ramadan, the Egyptian-Swiss religious scholar and philosopher. As the leading representative of "Euro-Islam"—which focuses on Muslims as Europeans, aiming at adapting the religion to the needs and circumstances of the continent's practitioners—he has been a central, though highly controversial, figure in many academic and policy debates around Islam in Europe (Bechler 2004a; Sid-Ahmed 2004). While Ramadan is arguably the most influential European Muslim intellectual, and one of the few who relatively regularly appear in mainstream media, his role in dominant discourse, obsessed as it is with the topic of European Islam, is rather marginal; there is an unwillingness to seriously engage him, accept him as an intellectual peer who is a genuinely European intellectual, drawing on a tradition as rich as the Christian or Jewish one, and closely related to both. Instead, there often is an antagonistic approach, driven by an immense sense of suspicion, a desire to "unmask" him, to show the thoroughly foreign radical behind the mask of the Westernized liberal.[24]

Born and raised in Switzerland, fluent in several European languages in addition to Arabic, trained in classical continental philosophy, Ramadan seems to be as "at home" in Europe as possible. But it is exactly because of this that he seems threatening—for dominant European discourse, but also for traditional Muslim hierarchies—through confidently claiming an independent voice for European Muslims. As firmly grounded in Islamic as in European history, he aims at combining both traditions in what could be called a Muslim version of universalism:

> At the level of universality, "Western" and "Islamic" values are
> converging. For me, justice and equality come from my Islamic teach-
> ing: it has reached the level where these universal values are the same

for you as they are for me . . . For example, from the Greek concept of democracy we take at least four principles: state of law; equal citizenship; universal suffrage and accountability—the main universal principles in the western model of democracy. These four principles can also be extracted from Islam, merging at that point with the universality of this system. (Ramadan, in Bechler 2004b)

One of the central and most successful arguments of "ex-Muslims" like Hirsi Ali is the claim that Muslims as a group have been incapable of adapting to modernity, because their beliefs are based on a literal, outdated reading of the Qur'an, since the art of exegesis practiced by Christians and Jews for centuries is still unfamiliar, and sacrilegious, to them.[25] Ramadan directly tackles this claim, advocating increasingly explicitly for a reinterpretation of Islamic sources, including Qur'anic ones (Ramadan 2009), while fulfilling the implicit request to speak the dominant language: "The main focus of my critique is not European societies, where I see no obstacle to Muslims remaining Muslim, but on the way that Muslims' behavior is governed by scriptural sources and a legal inheritance which has to be revisited" (ibid.).[26]

Young Muslims across the continent heed this call to revisit Islam in a contemporary European context, creating positionalities and forming coalitions that defy essentialist notions of European liberalism and conservative Islam alike. Among them are queer Muslims and their straight allies.[27] Stories such as that of twenty-seven-year-old Moroccan Dutch Leyla confirm the inclusive, pragmatic adaptation of religious practices among Muslim Europeans on an everyday basis:

My best friend is a devout Muslim and when I am with her, we pray the official way . . . At first I was terribly at war with Allah. I did not know if I could be both lesbian and Muslim and whether I could praise Allah as a lesbian. This same friend helped me a lot then. She helped me understand that as a lesbian I am not less in the eyes of Allah. (el Kaka and Kurşun 2002, 73)

Nonetheless, an explicitly Muslim identity, especially when accompanied by the charged marker of the *hijab*, is still read as necessarily representing sexist and homophobic beliefs. Enter Asmaa Abdol-Hamid—a feminist, *hijab*-wearing, queer-friendly Muslima of Palestinian descent, who as member of the Danish Socialist Party, parliamentary candidate, social worker, and former TV show host has gained a high public profile, defying the expectations of both the Danish majority and the Muslim minority.

Abdol-Hamid's story in some ways seems as generically representative of European Muslimas as Ayaan Hirsi Ali's is for the supposed fate

of women in majority Muslim nations—one of six children, she is the daughter of Palestinian refugees who came to Denmark in 1986 when she was five years old. What makes Abdol-Hamid unusual is her successful insistence on having her own voice heard. And while she shares this attribute with Hirsi Ali, Abdol-Hamid's perspective does not fit into preexisting narratives, but tends to defy normative expectations, starting with the teenager's active participation in her small town Christian church community in spite (or rather because) of her commitment to Islam, to becoming the only student in her school wearing the *hijab*, to her fight with the authorities about educational opportunities: "At school my siblings and I could clearly see that the teachers didn't have the same high expectations of our academic abilities as they did of the ethnic Danish pupils . . . and I eventually had to threaten legal action before my lower secondary school would enter me for upper secondary school" (Abdol-Hamid 2007).[28] After her family's move to a multiethnic, working-class suburb of Odense in her last year of high school, Abdol-Hamid started a local girls' club, recognizing that female teenagers received little support from either their communities or the state (thus showing exactly the kind of initiative and independence that Hirsi Ali and others claim nonexistent among devout Muslimas):

> I thought there was a need for activities aimed at the girls living in Vollsmose; I had grown up going to recreation and sports clubs, whereas the girls' lives here were: school—home, home—school. In addition, I found it unacceptable that, in Vollsmose at the time, immigrant boys who were troublemakers were getting all the attention. A lot of money was spent on them. There was total disregard for the fact that many immigrant girls also had problems, but reacted in a different way—maybe by staying at home and isolating themselves. (Abdol-Hamid 2007)

Acting in the tradition of women of color feminism, Abdol-Hamid draws strength from her community while simultaneously pushing its limits, the avowed feminist studied to become a social worker and joined the socialist party, motivated by the increasingly hostile tone of the national immigration debate and determined to make herself be heard.

After entering the national stage as the representative of Danish Muslims during the cartoon controversy, Abdol-Hamid made headlines again in 2007 when she became a national candidate for the socialist Enhedslisten (Unity List). Given her explicitly class-focused politics, Abdol-Hamid's candidacy seems logical.[29] Nonetheless, both the party and Abdol-Hamid faced strong criticism, caused not by the latter's political positions, but by the fact that she wears a *hijab* (and displays other public

signs of her religious belief, such as greeting men without shaking their hands). While the presence of the *hijab* itself was enough to feed an extensive campaign by the Danish People's Party, for many members and sympathizers of Enhedslisten, it became a stand-in for Adbol-Hamid's politics, assumed to be necessarily at odds with their own progressive positions. It is worth it to take a closer look at how the controversy played out within the socialist party, since criticism of Abdol-Hamid was based both on the party's identity as a(nti)religious and on supposedly fundamental differences between Protestantism and Islam, again underscoring the seemingly intrinsic link between secularism and Christianity in European discourse (far beyond the political right).

As Signe Kjær Jørgensen points out in her study of Danish "headscarf-wearing Muslims," the socialist Unity List is the only Danish party not aligning itself with the "protestant secularist discourse" that creates a more or less explicit link between political parties and the state's dominant church (Kjær Jørgensen 2008, 3). It is this distance to institutionalized religion that formed the basis for the first strand of internal criticism of Abdol-Hamid, however the *hijab* was immediately introduced into the argument as symbolizing what was wrong with her particular religious practice. As one disgruntled party member stated:

> It is because religious values form the basis for her political identity. Her religious beliefs, among other things, urges [sic] her to accept that women wear headscarves, i.e., to accept some degree of inhibitedness— and a hierarchical, unequal relationship between the sexes. (*Politiken* September 20, 2007, 9, quoted in ibid., 6)

The *hijab* is thus taken to have a static, clearly defined meaning, namely the one dominating European discourse post-9/11, when the NATO invasion of Afghanistan reminded Europe of its concern for the liberation of Muslim women. According to this definition, the presence of the *hijab* manifests the absence of progressive positions on gender and sexuality. The emotive politics of dress at play here reduce Muslim women's consciousness to the symbolic limits provided by the *hijab*, linking culture, ideology, and beliefs in predetermined ways that leave them without agency, therefore offering enough grounds to demand the exclusion of Abdol-Hamid from the socialist party:

> The party ought to be culturally inclusive, according to some of your members, and there ought to be room for someone like Asmaa. No, society as a whole ought to be culturally inclusive, and there ought to be room for Asmaa. It is a fundamental political right to create parties

based on a well-defined and explicit ideological basis, a basis that
excludes people who have different beliefs. (ibid., 7)

In the course of the argument for the exclusion of "someone like Asmaa," the focus thus shifts from "different beliefs" as "religious values" to different beliefs as the inherent gender inequality propagated by Islam. This shift facilitates the inclusion of Christianity into the secular defense of freedom and equality against religion, allowing socialist party member Bente Hansen, feminist and practicing Christian, to deploy a similar line of attack on her Muslim colleague: "This isn't just about religion, but about gender and women as viewed by the different branches of orthodox Islam" (*Information*, September 26, 2007, quoted in ibid., 9). While Abdol-Hamid via the *hijab* is identified with orthodox Islam, Hansen affirms the diversity of Christianity, which allows Christians, and Christian women in particular, an autonomy and independence of thought precluded by Islam:

> Sometimes people ask how I can be a Socialist and a practising Christian, and the only reason why this is possible is that the Danish National Church unlike most other Christian churches allows women to preach. If it did not allow them to do so then I would not be an adherent and would if I so may say "do it in private." I will use the same argument as regards Enhedslisten: If they do not support equal opportunities I will leave. It is that simple. (ibid., 9)

Importantly, the superiority of Christianity is manifest through national differentiation, that is, the enlightened commitment of Danish Christianity to gender equality, which is contrasted to the Muslim cultural coding of gender inequality, superseding national difference and expressed in primitive symbolic politics, that is, veiling. This recalls Bonnie Honig's analysis of Julia Kristeva's assessment of the French Muslim community vis-à-vis their "host country's" universalist tradition, namely the Manichean binary Kristeva constructs of French abstract beliefs and Muslim concrete symbolism of the headscarf, thus assuming a hierarchy of values that precludes dialogue, because it is already clear who is right and who is wrong: "[T]he problem with Kristeva is her failure to engage others in her deliberations about the project, goals, and instruments of a cosmopolitanism she values too much to risk by including it in the conversation as a question rather than as the answer" (Honig 2001, 66). Albeit certainly less refined, Hansen's argument mirrors Kristeva's in using the symbolism of the *hijab* to avoid engaging in a conversation among equals (that is, a conversation whose outcome is not predetermined) and to imply that Abdol-Hamid's intellectual path is predetermined by the way she covers her body: "she has to affiliate herself with a party that promotes hierarchy between the

sexes, as her headgear shows that she does" (*Information* September 26, 2007, quoted in Kjær Jørgensen, 9).

While the invocation of secular and Christian traditions combines to justify the exclusion of Abdol-Hamid from the Unity List, she refuses to accept the conclusiveness of the circular argumentation employed by her white Danish critics and instead intervenes by claiming parity between them and her own feminist, socialist, Muslim positionality, demanding the kind of dialogue denied by Kristeva and other defenders of Christian universalism:

> I am aware that in some countries, for instance Iran, the headscarf is a univocal symbol of the subordination of women in society, and I have disassociated myself clearly from that. Right now, I am witnessing the contrary: people want to force me not to wear a *hijab* at least if I am to "be allowed" to call myself a Socialist . . . And, Bente, in fact we already have female preachers of Islam and I think we ought to have more of them. (*Dagbladet Information*, September 29, 2007, 16–17, quoted in ibid., 11)

With her statement, Abdol-Hamid constructs a conversation on equal terms, calling out the unquestioned certainty that the heirs of the Protestant secularist Danish tradition are to allow or not allow "foreigners" in and forcing them into "deliberations about the project, goals, and instruments of a cosmopolitanism" by decentering Europe as well as breaking up the supposed homogeniety of Islam, introducing a relationship between culture, nation, and religion that is as dynamic for Muslims as it is for Christians and thus deconstructing the latter's discursive hegemony:

> You perceive the headscarf as a symbol of repression and as a symbol of male domination. This is not what the headscarf means to me. Wearing a hijab is a personal choice that only shows my religious affiliation and religious symbols change throughout the ages and have different meanings ascribed to them due to changing circumstances. Wearing the Christian cross does not mean that you are affiliated with the Ku Klux Klan. (ibid.)

Unwilling to fit into predesigned categories, instead creating new ones, Abdol-Hamid works on intersections that represent the potential of a fusionist "Euro-Islam" as suggested by Tariq Ramadan (though she might be a little more than he can take). Key to her approach are coalitional politics between minority, feminist, queer groups, and a grounding in community work.[30] Contrary to Hirsi Ali, Abdol-Hamid does not pit Islam against

Enlightenment and Europe against the Middle East; instead she insists on combining her identities as Muslim, feminist, socialist, and European, affirming that all those identities are legitimately owned by her. Women like Abdol-Hamid represent an image that is unacceptable within European discourse (be it progressive or mainstream), because they show that Islam and commitment to "Western values" such as gender equality are compatible, and because they are representative of a larger group: as seen in the last chapter, feminist activism has been part of migrant and minority communities for decades, and these grassroots activists often face resistance from ethnic communities, dominant feminist organizations, and the state alike; their insistence on addressing simultaneous oppressions not only makes them important and effective, but also prevents them from gaining a prominent place in debates about their fate, exactly because of what they have to say about these intersectionalities.

## The Scopic Politics of Progressive Islamophobia

Contrary to the claims made in popular escape narratives, Abdol-Hamid and others do provide progressive Muslim voices—it is the majority that is unwilling to hear what they have to say. This refutes the popular claim that there are no articulate Muslimas, that only women who have left the repressive culture of Islam are brave enough to speak up, that they need to completely break with their religion and community in order to be liberated: women like Hirsi Ali appear as homeless, outcasts, without community, until they are adopted by the enlightened West, thus leaving them forever indebted. What is problematic about them thus is not their criticism of Islam, but the unquestioned assumption that it is only Muslims who bring religion, intolerance, and inequality to the table—Europe, like whiteness, is the forever unexplored norm, Christianity remains invisible behind a secular cloak—until, that is, it is challenged by the growing presence of non-Christians. This presence in turn will always seem both threatening and illegitimate until the connections between Christianity and the secular state are addressed. The inability to tolerate not to mention engage with difference, characteristic for all heteronormative systems, is covered by a discourse of universalist humanism in which the Other increasingly appears as attacker, enabled by an excessive tolerance borne out of a guilty liberal consciousness, resulting in a naïve multiculturalism leaving Europe incapable of defending itself. Within this increasingly martial logic, the need to "close ranks" combines with the demand to choose sides, making it harder for dissenting voices to be heard and more dangerous to position oneself or to be positioned outside of or between the warring camps.

In dominant discourses on Muslim Europeans' place in the continental community, the scopic politics of (post)nationalism and the emotive politics of dress are successfully combined to justify aggressive demands for assimilation that are based on the assumption that Islam, contrary to Christianity, is incompatible with modern, secular societies. This discourse leaves Muslims with two basic options: in its liberal version, as exemplified in Adelheid Roosen's plays, they bear the responsibility of reforming Islam, making it compatible with twenty-first century realities, exactly because through migration they, as opposed to Muslims in the global South, have become citizens of the modern world. In its conservative variation, represented by Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Pascal Bruckner, and others, the discourse questions Islam's very ability to reform itself, seeing this as a somewhat doubtful, long-term solution at best, in effect demanding of Muslim Europeans to either leave behind their religion or their (European) home countries, confirming Islam as a fundamentally "un-European" religion. The *hijab* has become the dominant visual shorthand for this discourse, continuing a largely unacknowledged colonial use of a similar symbolism (Alloula 1986) and allowing the critics to fit Muslims into a narrow and homogeneous ideological framework, while sharply separating them from other minority communities, their identity supposedly primarily structured around this visual difference and all it implies.

Hirsi Ali's 2004 film *Submission Part I* (Part II was meant to focus on Islam and homosexuality), directed by a rather unenthusiastic Theo van Gogh (who thought the script lacked humor), is singularly illustrative of this strategy. The film's message unambiguously reflects Hirsi Ali's worldview, representing the violence experienced by Muslim women as a direct and necessary outcome of Islam's teachings. The juxtaposition of readings from Qur'anic surahs with women's stories of oppression and violation implies that the problem is not religion, but *this* religion, repeating the by now familiar claim that there is only one possible interpretation of Islam, which thus either has to be rejected completely or accepted in its most extreme fringe versions. Visually, the short film seems to take its clues from the *Veiled Monologues*, which had an immensely successful run in the Netherlands during the months that *Submission* was produced. The posters for the play used the image of a woman completely covered by a burka, made however, of see-through material, revealing her nude body underneath. *Submission* takes this a step further, using the exact same image of a nude woman in a see-through burka (representing the four female characters telling their stories), removing, however, all possibilities for ambiguous interpretations by revealing the women's bodies as literally marked by both Qur'anic surahs and signs of brutal male violence.

The film, first aired on Dutch public television in August 2004, was predictably condemned by conservative Muslim organizations, but it also received little support from the women for whose liberation it advocated. Many white liberal and feminist supporters of Hirsi Ali contributed this to the firm grip that a patriarchal religious indoctrination still had on these women:

> In one of the Dutch shelters for battered women, 80 percent of whose residents are Muslimas, Ayaan held a discussion with four young women following a screening of the film *Submission.* She received no applause. The women, women who had been beaten by their husbands, were deeply offended, angry, hurt by what they saw as the blasphemy of projecting Qur'an texts onto naked women's bodies, never mind whether these texts sanctioned violence against them or not. (de Moor 2007)

The largely negative reactions from Muslim women could of course also, and more convincingly I believe, be attributed to the fact that the film is as committed to denying them any agency as is the ideology it attacks. Hirsi Ali not only rejects any possible female investment in the religion that might exist independently of a strictly heteronormative and heterosexual context, but also completely discounts the possibility that their faith might empower some women to revolt against dominant patriarchal interpretations of Islam. While decrying women's complete submission under the religion's violent, misogynist rule, the film itself represents a completely message-controlled performance, in which Muslimas appear only as bodies and objects.

In stark contrast, women like Abdol-Hamid, who wear the *hijab* while practicing types of agencies supposedly incompatible with its presence, challenge the implicit visual logic of racialized and gendered hierarchies hidden beneath the discourse of colorblindness and contribute to the queering of ethnicity by working on and with contradictions and impossibilities.

Images such as this poster announcing an event with Abdol-Hamid at a Danish queer club violate the visual logic of racelessness, always imagining the Other as external and separate (much as Euro-hip-hop's intervention into discourses of citizenship and language violated racelessness's aural logic). They thus symbolize an alliance that not only continues the tradition of coalitions as an alternative to the mainstreaming of marginalized communities, but also strengthens the position of queer Muslims who, if they resist the binary logic of oppressive Islam versus liberated West, constitute an even more disrupting presence.

Poster for event with Abdol-Hamid at Copenhagen queer club Dunkel Bar, 2007.

The adaptation and interpretation of Islamic texts by average Muslims, denied by Hirsi Ali, Kelek et al., is an everyday practice across the world, including Europe: Islam's positions on women's rights and homosexuality are already vigorously debated in Muslim communities, often invisible to a dominant society still not ready to enter an open dialogue—and to a gay and lesbian community not ready to include Muslim queers. Instead, there is a muted reaction whenever these voices try to enter a mainstream that seems largely preoccupied with Islam's inherent homophobia. Repeating the model described in the last section with regard to Muslim women, homophobia among Muslims is defined as inevitably produced by their culture/religion, Islam itself representing the threat, which in turn, is

present in every Muslim—and every Muslim is held fully responsible for the behavior of the community as a whole. While gay voices such as U.S. journalist Bruce Bawer or politician Pim Fortuyn gain additional credibility when supporting the image of Islam's inherent intolerance, Muslim queers—like women wearing the *hijab*—appear as silenced victims, their only salvation the rejection of Islam and their ethnic community and the embrace of a majoritarian gay identity.

Within this binary discursive formation, the Western LGBT community has the role of civilizer, while queer Muslims have nothing to offer, as they, like all Muslims, are products of a culture that is fundamentally inferior to the secular West.[31] This dichotomy puts all nonwhite, non-Western queers in a similar predicament: communities of color appear as by default homophobic and heterosexual, the queer community as by default white, reflecting a global discourse of progress and human rights in which the white West invariably takes the lead, maybe not always progressively enough, but certainly always more so than anyone else. The trope can be reinforced quickly because it references well-known clichés perceived as truth, since they align with the overarching binary discourse affirming Europe's status as the center of progress and humanism. A successful challenge to this mechanism therefore requires a simultaneous engagement with all of these discursive tropes and their anchoring in European conceptions of public space and time used to subordinate the rest of the world and people of color. The next chapter will explore such challenges and their impact on the European narrative of racelessness, ranging from queer of color groups like the Dutch Strange Fruit to migration activists such as the German Kanak Attak.