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## Reconfiguring Faith, Redefining Agency: Post 9/11 Muslim Women's Diasporic Dilemmas

### Abstract

In transnational feminist scholarship like Marnia Lazreg's and in Post-Secular feminist anthropological/cultural enquiries like Saba Mahmood and Rosa Vasilaki's, the agency of the Third World woman is theorised in contradistinction to the liberal secular postulations. Agency here is understood as the conscious and continuing reproduction of the terms of one's existence. The Orientalist, neo-Orientalist representations of Muslim women as silent, passive victims of conservative, patriarchal Islam preclude enquiries into the question of the agency of the Muslim woman and the postcolonial and post-secular feminist insights are germane to understanding and conceptualising her agency, inhabiting, as she does, spaces outside the mainstream liberal-secular.

Enquiries about the Muslim woman's subjectivity in the post 9/11 years make it imperative a reconceptualization of religion (Islam) from an ideological structure repressive to women to an enabling space of female self-determination. The Muslim woman's engagement with faith becomes a loaded question in the Islam- West dialectics which largely frames such enquiries, given that religion emerges as the prime determining category in marking the Muslim woman's subjectivity in Western as well as counter (Islamist) discourses/representations. The diasporic location of the Muslim woman makes her engagement with faith all the more problematic. This paper examines how Post 9/11 Muslim women's diasporic narratives go beyond the limiting dichotomies of Islam-West, feminism-faith, tradition-modernity, religion-secularism, politics - spirituality etc.

**Keywords:** Post 9/11 Muslim women, diasporic narratives, dichotomies, Islam-West, feminism-faith, tradition-modernity, religion-secularism, politics-spirituality.

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