

# **To be a Muslim Woman**

by Suhaiymah Manzoor-Khan

To be a Muslim woman is to remain always an object.

An object of fascination,

object of desire,

object of ridicule,

but always an object.

To be a Muslim woman is to be constantly subjected to a gaze.

To be asked questions like what it means to be you.

To always be represented, or representative, but never real.

– even to 'correct' 'misrepresentation', we are reduced to other representations.

To be a Muslim woman is to be picture but never painter, to be surreal, uncanny, not-quite.

To be a Muslim woman is to never speak for oneself,

to never exist for oneself but for everyone else:

to be a political pawn, a justification for invasion, a weapon to strike against Islam.

To be a Muslim woman is to be rhetorically sympathised with as long as your grievances don't expose the violence of state and society.

To be a Muslim woman is to always be already framed

– to know that even when you speak you are not heard unless it fits the narrative.

To be a Muslim woman is to be asked for comment only on being a Muslim woman.

To be a Muslim woman is to exist only to justify your existence,  
to be already known and be of no interest to be known at all.  
To be a Muslim woman is to be an outsider to yourself.  
To be a conversation, a joke, a jibe.  
To be made excruciatingly small and impossibly big at once,  
to be swallowed and vomited out at the same time,  
consumed and rejected.

To be a Muslim woman is to be always fought over but never fought for.