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Rough Draft

Haydar on the Radar: Resisting Orientalism and Global Patriarchy through Hip Hop

Abstract:

The study of Arab hip hop is an emerging field of study within ethnomusicology and Middle Eastern studies alike. Many of these artists, like Omar Offendum and Narcy, address issues faced by Arabs and Muslims such as xenophobia, Islamophobia, and racism. Overall much of today's popular cultural content pertaining to Muslim and Arab Americans are centered on male narratives. These artists have narratives of their own, but they lack a feminist lens for addressing Muslim and Arab American women. Writings such as *Arab-American Women's Writing and Performance: Orientalism, Race and the Idea of the Arabian Nights* and *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing* articulate the experiences, writings, and performances of Arab and Muslim women. This project aims to explore how Muslim Arab American rapper Mona Haydar resists Orientalist ideology through her musical content and imagery by challenging the listener's perspective and reaffirming the experiences of her audience of Muslim and Arab American women. I examine four of her songs, analyzing her lyrics and music videos to better understand how Haydar positions her music within a broader discourse of Muslim and Arab American writers, performers, and musicians. I argue that Mona Haydar is intervening in Western Orientalism and global patriarchy as a way to reclaim her Arab and Muslim identity and assert her personhood in a context where it is under constant surveillance and threat.

Introduction:

“If they’re civilized, I’d rather stay savage” is the opening line to Mona Haydar’s song “Barbarian.” She is a Syrian-American Muslim and defines herself as “a rapper, poet, activist, practitioner of Permaculture, meditator, composting devotee, mountain girl, solar power lover and a tireless God-enthusiast” (Haydar 2015). She started her rap career in 2017 with her single “Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab),” which quickly gained millions of views and *Billboard* recognition as one of 2017’s top protest songs and later named top 25 feminist anthems of all time. In 2018 Haydar released her EP entitled *Barbarian* and continues to release music and stays actively engaged with social justice activism.

Haydar is just one of few Arab hip hop artists, such as Omar Offendum, Narcy, and Tamer Nafar, who use their music as a medium of self-expression, particularly in resisting Orientalist, Islamophobic, and racist rhetoric. Scholarship surrounding Arab hip hop is sparse, and most of the literature is predominately centered on male artists. While these experiences account for commentary on racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia, these scholars fail to address the experiences faced by Arab and Muslim women. Mona Haydar presents a feminist perspective into the world of being both the “Oriental” and the “veiled woman.” Haydar counters these Orientalist narratives of the oppressed hijabi, the terrorist, the barbarian, and the sexual object. This project aims to explore how Mona Haydar resists Orientalism and global patriarchy through her musical content and imagery to decolonize the listener’s mind by challenging their perceptions of Muslim women and reaffirming the experiences of Muslim and Arab American women.

Orientalism:

Edward Said (1978) defines Orientalism in three broad and overlapping definitions: (1) “Anyone who teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient” is defined as an Orientalist, and

what they engage with is Orientalism (Said 1978, 2); (2) “a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” (Said 1978, 2); (3) “a Western style for dominating, restricting, and having authority over the Orient” (Said 1978, 3). Through these definitions Orientalism becomes a multi-dimensional approach as opposed to a catch-all theory to describe Orientalism. Jean-Léon Gérôme’s painting *The Snake Charmer* (1879) depicts a group of men mesmerized by a nude snake charmer while an older man is playing a wooden flute; it is a European fantasy of the Orient world. This is just one of many examples of exoticized depictions of the Orient and the Oriental. These are not accurate portrayals of the diverse peoples residing in the Middle East, but rather imagined histories, cultures, and geographies. This Western gaze paints the Orient as ahistoric, exotic, and backwards.

These stereotypes framing Arabs and Muslims partially carry over into the post-9/11 United States, particularly into the War on Terror. Even before the 9/11 terrorist attack, foreign affairs such as the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and the Gulf War shaped the West’s perception of Arabs. Media coverage of these events increased the U.S. public’s awareness of Arabs and Muslims in the United States, but the intense U.S. media coverage framed these conflicts through Orientalist lenses. Much of today’s harmful stereotypes stem from these two wars and transform Arabs and Muslims from the exotic other to the political aggressor or “the terrorist” (Schmidt 2014). While both of these conflicts take place outside of the United States and employ the term “terrorist,” the attack on September 11, 2001 remains one of the most crucial events in solidifying the Arab/Muslim as the terrorist. The War on Terror that ensued, with the US declaring war in Iran and Afghanistan, implemented Orientalist binaries, particularly noted by

President Bush's address to Congress and the public by stating "Either you are with us or you are with the terrorists."

In Bail's book *Terrified: How Anti-Muslim Fringe Organizations Became Mainstream* (2014) the author explains the ways that Western Islamophobia organizations network and make their way into mainstream media to spread anti-Muslim narratives particularly in the way in which these organizations become Western authorities on Islam or "terrorism experts." Due to the absence of academic work on terrorism this left a vacuum of expertise on the subject matter post-9/11. These self-described experts often times have very little academic background in Islam or the Middle East. For example Frank Gaffney, the leader of the Center for Security Policy, was a congressional aide in the height of the Cold War and held only a master's degree in international studies, but was recognized as an expert on Islamic terrorism. Anti-Muslim organizations would also legitimize their stances by recruiting "ethnic experts" who were from Arab or South Asian backgrounds, but were not Muslim or "former Muslims." Similar to the way that nineteenth-century Orientalists became the base of knowledge on the Orient and Oriental, these "terrorism experts" became the source of American knowledge on Islam and the Middle East and thus controlled the Muslim and Arab narrative (Bail 2014).

These stereotypes and generalizations are not only ideologically harmful to Arabs and Muslims, but are physically harmful, too. These ideologies transform into international and domestic policies against Arabs and Muslims (ex. USA PATRIOT Act and Trump's Muslim Travel Ban). These ideological frames and policies nurture and justify Islamophobia and xenophobia, creating a hostile environment for Muslims and Arab Americans to the point where individuals partake in violence against Muslims and Arab Americans. This can account for the spike in anti-Arab/Muslim hate crimes post-9/11 (Disha 2011). For example in 2015, a hate

crime against three Muslim Americans occurred a few miles away from my own undergraduate institution, when Deah Shaddy Barakat, Yusor Mohammad Abu-Salha, and Razan Mohammad Abu-Salha were brutally murdered by their neighbor in their home in Chapel Hill. Mohammad Abu-Salha, the father of Deah and Razan, told The Charlotte Observer,

“It was execution style, a bullet in every head. This was not a dispute over a parking space; this was a hate crime. This man had picked on my daughter and her husband a couple of times before, and he talked with them with his gun in his belt. And they were uncomfortable with him, but they did not know he would go this far” (Stancill 2015).

These contemporary frames of Orientalism have devastating effects on the public’s perception of Muslims and Arab Americans and can cost lives of the innocent.

Muslims and Arab Americans become the new enemy to the American public. Mona Haydar like many other Muslims and Arab Americans resides in this space of being both an American citizen and “the foreign alien.” This spatial awareness is reflected in her song “American” where she states “They don’t wanna see me as American. See me on the TV as a terrorist. All I wanna do is have some fun by the beach man, but here come I-C-E Ya and that travel ban.”

Resistance Performance:

In her book *Arab-American Women's Writing and Performance: Orientalism, Race and the Idea of the Arabian Nights* (2011) Somaya Sami Sabry focuses on Arab-American women writers and performers resistance against Orientalist fixation on Arab women through Sheherazadian narrative, “which resists stereotypical and exotic representations through reformation of the frame tale *The Thousand and One Nights* or the innovation of its orality” (Sabry 2011, 3). Maysoon Zayid, a Palestinian-Muslim from New Jersey, uses stand-up comedy

to perform Sheherazadian orality to resist racial and cultural tensions experienced by Arab-Americans post 9/11. In Zayid's stand-up routine at the 2006 Arab Festival in Seattle, she states:

“Security does not only see an Arab trying to board a plane. They see a shaking Arab trying to board a plane. And they're like ‘That bitch is nervous’ [...] If God forbid the plane I'm on crashes. They're gonna blame me and all my neighbors are gonna get on the news...’ Like yeah we always knew there was something wrong with her. I think she was trying to become one of those virgins in heaven.” (Sabry 2011, 156)

Zayid is articulating her experience as an Arab-American Muslim navigating airport security racial profiling her and untrusting neighbors. This also intersects with her cerebral palsy as it is seen as a threat alongside her Arab appearance. Performances such as Zayid's resist the Western narrative of Arab and Muslim women being silence, oppressed and other stereotypes by playing and poking fun at them (Sabry 2011). Similarly Mona Haydar's music is resisting the narrative of being silence and oppressed by actively performing against Orientalist framework.

In the preface to *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing*, anthropologist Barbara Nimri Aziz (2004) emphasizes the importance on writing as a way to express writers' personal stories. The book contains different writings of Arab and Arab American women to expose the conflicts they face while also challenging many of the dangerous stereotypes of Arabs: “Writers cannot dispute. But we can locate ourselves at the archaeological site, and build new stories from the little things we claim” (Aziz 2004, xiv). Mona Haydar's music is actively challenging Muslim and Arab stereotypes while centering her narrative on her experiences to which other Muslim and Arab American women can relate.

In the poem “Arab American Reads Poetry” Lisa Suhair Majaj (2004) describes how an Arab American woman is navigating the space to read out a poem to an audience. The audience

gazes upon the woman: exotifying her, questioning her “authenticity”, and critiquing the material her poem discusses. She states:

“Already she can hear the objections:
Do Arab women do things like that?
Don’t they wear long clothes
And stay in the house, cooking?” (Majaj 2004, 33)

The audience has decided to put this Arab American woman in a box of who she is and how they expect to her look, talk, and react. Mona Haydar has stated on numerous occasions the how others have perceived her identity in a similar light. In an interview with *HuffPost*, Mona Haydar states:

“I think people don’t expect it and they sort of want to put me in a box of like oppressed Muslim woman who needs liberating by some white male savior or that I am some overly eroticized sexualized who you know under my hijab and clothes I’m wearing some kind of belly dancer outfit so it’s like one or the other and I don’t think rapper fits into those two.” (HuffPost, 2018)

Haydar articulates the ways in which others employ her into a two boxes: the oppressed veiled woman and the exotic sexual object.

It is important note that Mona Haydar is not just writing words to music, but specifically using hip hop as a medium to resist toxic mainstream narratives of Muslim and Arab women. In “The Global Imaginary of Arab Hip Hop: A Case Study” (2015), Stefania Taviano describes the ways in which Arab hip hop artists in the West use their music as a form of resistance against the global perception of Muslims and Arabs. Through their lyrics, music videos, and humanitarian projects these artists become agents of change to disrupt negative imaginaries. To a similar point in “Counterorienting the War on Terror: Arab Hip Hop and Diasporic Resistance” (2017), Meghan Drury describes the ways Arab hip hop artists navigate their diasporic identities through

their music as a means to confront dominant state rhetoric. Artists such as Omar Offendum, Nancy, and Shadia Mansour use sampling practices, sonic layering, and linguistic play to establish a “sonic Arabness” that establishes a connection with their Arab diasporic audience and intervenes in binary discourse of West vs. East.

In the case of these scholarly works the artists, writers, performers, and musicians are representing themselves instead of being represented. In the same way, Mona Haydar is representing herself through Arab hip hop with a focus on critiquing Orientalism and patriarchy. There is no one true representation of Arab and Muslim women so it is important to uplift multiple Muslim and Arab-American women’s works. The hope with this research project is to continue along the lineage of scholarly work that aims to showcase the perspectives of Muslim and Arab-American women like Mona Haydar. It is not just Mona Haydar’s gender identity that differs from her Arab hip hop peers, but also that a majority of her music is commentary on patriarchy and how it is perpetuated onto Arab and Muslim women (both through the Western gaze and the Arab and Muslim communities). Through analysis of her musical content and imagery I hope to clarify the political and social space Mona Haydar is creating and ways she is resisting contemporary Orientalism. I will be looking at her lyrical content for three of her songs: “Barbarian,” “Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab),” “American.” Alongside her lyrical content I will be analyzing her music videos that accompanies her music.

Lyrical Content and Imagery:

The introduction to “Barbarian” begins with Mona Haydar and two other women. As shown in Figure 1 each of the women are dressed in colorful garments. All three of them are sitting down on a large rug with an array of pillows cascading the floor. At one point or another, the women are pouring and drinking tea and eating fruits or rice with their hand. The location of

this scene is a mystery to the audience, but the greenery and exotic plants in the background alludes to a place of otherness, something distance to the Western viewer. This particular scene elicits a similar exoticism that is portrayed in Orientalist paintings. There are similarities between *Le Harem du Palais* by Gustave Boulanger and Mona Haydar’s first scene: the exotic plants in the backdrop, rugs and pillows, “exotic” women in “exotic” clothing, etc. Boulanger’s painting is coming from the perspective of the Orientalist that is viewing the spectacles of the Oriental. In the case of Haydar’s scene, she and the other women in the video are staring directly at the camera. In these moments, Mona Haydar is addressing the Western gaze that seeks to sexualize and objectify her culture and womanhood. Haydar is asserting her dominance and taking back control of the gaze. She is reversing the gaze unto the audience, claiming ownership of her body, and challenging anyone who dares to objectify her.



Figure 1: The Cover Image of Mona Haydar’s Music Video on Youtube



Le Harem du Palais by Gustave Boulanger

The title of the song “Barbarian” calls to an Orientalist stereotype. In the chorus, she begins by stating “We them barbarians,” referring not only to herself, but the other women in the music video. She is addressing the monolithic view on a vast spectrum of “barbarians” that are represented in the music video. These women are from specific regions, cultures, religions, race and ethnic backgrounds that counter the one-size-fits-all Oriental narrative. All of the women are engaging in a form of “barbarianism” such as doing *zaghrouta*, applying henna, or eating with their hands. Haydar is not only embracing these cultural practices, but also addressing the West’s barbarian actions. In her second verse, Mona Haydar states:

“Barbarian? that’s how you really feel?
Like you didn’t start war over oil fields?
Opium, poppy seed. Money moves, Cardi B.”

Here, she is addressing the U.S. government profiting from oil and opium in the Iraq and Afghan war. The West perceives their own practices as civilized, but to Haydar they are actually engaging in forms of true barbarianism. She states in intro “If they are civilized I’d rather stay savage” and in the 1st verse “If I’m a savage, then you’re a fraud.” Orientalist such as Arthur James Balfour describe the Oriental as irrational, depraved, and “different” and therefore

articulating that Europeans are the opposite – rational, virtuous, and “normal” (Said 1978, 40). In this particular case Mona Haydar is considered irrational and different for engaging in her barbarianism, but the United States is rational, moral, and normal for engaging in war economy. She is addressing the binary ideological vocabulary imposed by Orientalists and the West by redirecting barbarianism onto them.

Haydar also addressed Eurocentric beauty standard and the appropriation of her body, culture, and image. The beginning of her first verse states:

“Lemme think back, I remember days
On these big lips, oh they used to hate
Now the script flipped
Oh, hayy!
They gotta lipkit
Kylie J”

Mona Haydar is speaking to her personal experience of body shaming and how “the script flips” in the dominant narrative of Western beauty. Particularly she is noting Kylie Jenner for her infamous liquid lipstick kit that flooded mainstream media to achieve a “fuller lip look”. She also expresses her experience of body shaming and cultural appropriation in the second verse:

“Tried to make me hate me for my hips and nose
Now they got imposters, on a spread in Vogue
Not a single feature
That they let us own
Oh they packin fillers
Styrofoam”

In this specific section she is addressing Gigi Hadid’s 2018 *Vogue* Arabia cover. The *Vogue* cover features Gigi Hadid wearing a colorful purple-pink hijab – the issue being that Hadid is wearing a hijabi when she is not Muslim. While it is apparent she is indeed an “imposter” for attempting to represent a Muslim woman, it speaks to a larger issue of who is allowed to represent what. While Gigi Hadid is not Muslim, she is half Palestinian and evoked

her “Palestinian pass” when receiving backlash for the *Vogue* cover. Hadid is arguable representing a false acceptance of Arab and Muslim culture into mainstream media; only those who perpetuate Eurocentric standard are considered worthy of being on the cover of *Vogue*.

Haydar also assert her pride in being called a barbarian and reclaims the term. The chorus of Barbarian becomes an anthem to the female barbarian.

“We them barbarians
Beautiful and scaring them
Earth shakin rattling
Be wild out loud again
[...]
Say it again
Beautiful barbarian
A beast before, now, they
wanna be wearin my skin
We don’t let them win
We beautiful barbarians”

Mona Haydar is using terms such as “beast,” “barbarian,” “savage,” and “invading” that evoke negative connotations, but reclaims to describe them as beautiful and something worth of chanting to other women, but also to herself. In the description box of Mona Haydar’s music video on YouTube, she leaves the audience with a letter:

“Western standards of beauty currently dominate our world because we still live in the imperial model which continues to colonize and enslave. We resist white supremacy, “western” superiority and colonized ways of thinking and being by LOVING ourselves, generously, beautifully and joyfully in spite of any active or subliminal efforts to make us feel unworthy of love and life. If drones dropping bombs and a war economy are civilized then we are proudly not that. We are BEAUTIFUL BARBARIANS, selflessly savage and uncivilized. We eat with our hands. We smell like the spices we love to eat. We love the Earth tenderly as part of ourselves, not separate, not a thing to simply profit from. We

love our hair, our noses, our skin and our own ways of thinking and being. We take back terms like barbarian, savage and uncivilized and wear them proudly as we honor our ancestors. We serve Creator by living in harmony with our selves recognizing that we are completely interconnected and in a state of interbeing, always.

Love – always, Mona” (Haydar, 2018)

Haydar’s song “American” speaks to her American identity which is under constantly threat of being socially revoked. The first two lines of the chorus state, “They don't want to see me as American, / See me on your TV as a terrorist” calling attention the mediatization of Muslim and Arab people through television. Documentary films such as *Obsession: Radical Islam's War Against and the West* (2005) and *The Third Jihad: Radical Islam's Vision for America* (2008) depict radical Islam to inform the American public of the threat of radical Islam. Portions of these films were broadcasted on television news networks like CNN and Fox News.

Throughout the music video multiple shots are taken of Mona Haydar at the beach wearing a bright yellow ski mask. Haydar states multiple times throughout the song how “they” (the United States) do not perceive her as an American. In the beginning of her first verse she states “Why they gotta treat me like I'm alien? Why they actin like I'm not American?” She is seen as a terrorist, a threat, and an invader. Her ski mask representing this invader ideology that the United States imposes onto Muslims. Mona Haydar is representing herself as the home invader or burglar invading an American cultural space, but rightfully claims it as her space too.

The beach is considered a cultural site for Americans where quality time is spent with friends and family, but for Muslim American women, the beach becomes a place of cultural dissonance. The problem is not that Islam isn't compatible with women going to the beach, but it is the amount of outrage, harassment, and violence towards visibly Muslim women who wear a

burkini, a long, loose-fitting swimsuit. In the United States, women report harassment and microaggressions from onlookers at the beach or pool (Abdelaziz 2020). In 2016 multiple French towns enacted a burkini ban considering the garment inappropriate and “not respectful of good morals and secularism” (Rubin 2016). For some women, after 9/11 the hijab (or in the case the burkini) becomes a symbol of resistance against Western media and war propaganda and affirming their Muslim and American identity (Haddad 2007).

Mona Haydar mentions throughout the song ways in which the West is trying to control her body such as in the first verse when she says “Why they so obsessed with what I'm wearing, man?” and later in the verse saying “Tryna regulate our bodies, Got these men all in our face.” She is calling to these burkini bans and the obsession with Muslim women’s clothing, which she later articulates in her song “Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab).”

In the second verse of the song, she states:

“This burkini my sunblock
This burkini my slingshot
They Goliath, I'm that rock
Try to stop me, I think not
I'm so high on this sunbeam
I shine bright, they can't run me
Find me where the fun be
Not everything gotta be upstream”

Haydar transforms her burkini from a tool of modesty and sun protection to a weapon that strikes Goliath. In an interview with *Huffpost*, she talks about this particular metaphor:

“You know white supremacy and like unfettered capitalism and like patriarchy and all of that nonsense like they're Goliath and I'm over here with a song and somehow they find that threatening like how you know... like it's just a song dude, like just dance, maybe it'll help you feel better” (HuffPost, 2018)

Haydar is comparing white supremacy, capitalism, and patriarchy to the beast Goliath and her burkini as a tool to kill the creature. She states that she and her song are the rock that strikes Goliath on the forehead to take it down. Her Muslim identity and music become a threatening tool against white supremacist similar to the way a rock and a slingshot is a weapon against Goliath; these weapons do not seem to hold much power until it actually strikes the beast sending it falling to the ground. Regardless of the political nature of her existence Haydar insist she will have fun on at the beach because “not everything gotta be upstream.”

Mona Haydar’s song “Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab),” released in 2017, was her first single that received *Billboard* recognition as one of 2017’s top protest songs and later named top 25 feminist anthems of all time. Within the lyrics of her songs, she explicitly calls for the creation of “feminist planet”. On YouTube her video for this song has acquired more than 7 million views and is by far her most popular song. Similar to her other songs, she begins the first verse by articulating her experience as a hijabi, a hijab-wearing Muslim. In the first verse of the song she states:

“What that hair look like
Bet that hair look nice
Don’t that make you sweat?
Don’t that feel too tight?
Yo what yo hair look like
Bet yo hair look nice
How long your hair is
You need to get yo life
You only see Oriental
You steady working that dental
You poppin off at the lip
And run ya mouth like a treadmill
Not your exotic vacation
I’m bored with your fascination
I need that PayPal, PayPal, PayPal
If you want education”

In the first half of this verse, she is articulating the microaggressions non-Muslims would pose to her and other Muslim women. Even though hijabis are dealing with these invasive questions and Haydar tells them “Keep swaggin my hijabis.”

In the second verse, she states:

“These Mipsters, These hippies
These Prissies, These Sufis
These Dreddies, These Sunnis
These Shii’s, Yemenis
Somalis, Libnanis, Pakistanis
These Soories, Sudanis
Iraqis, Punjabies
Afghanis, Yazeedis
Khaleejis, Indonesians
Egyptians, Canadians
Algerians, Nigerians
Americans, Libyans
Tunisians, Palestinians
Hidden beyond the Mekong in Laos
Senegalese and Burkina Faso”

Similar to her song “Barbarian”, here Haydar is showcasing the diversity of who a hijabi can be. Western media often interchanges “Arab” and “Muslim” and conflates the two. In fact Pew Research Center notes that Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nigeria have the largest population of Muslims (Diamant 2019). Haydar begins listing the different types of hijabis such as Mipsters (Muslim hipsters) or Sunni Muslims. She then continues on to list different nationalities of hijabis ranging across the Asian and African continents and notably mentions Canada and the United States.

All three of these songs articulate the ways in which Mona Haydar is resisting dominant Western narratives by articulating her own experiences and the collective experiences of Arab and Muslim women, breaking stereotypes and binaries, and critically critiquing Western perspectives of her Muslim Arab American identity. Though resistance is more than just

countering narratives; it can also be reaffirming and uplifting the performer's audience. In an interview with Michigan NPR she talks about her EP *Barbarian*, which "Barbarian" and "American" are on:

"[Haydar's EP] is a lot about decolonizing our minds, for me at least as a woman who comes from a colonized background," she said. "It's about resisting standards of beauty that are not affirming of all people, of all body types, of all skin colors, of all shapes and sizes that we come in as people, as humans. *Barbarian* is a love note to the world, that whoever you are, wherever you are, you should love yourself." (Mejia 2018)

Recalling the chorus of her song "Barbarian" she says, "Say it again, Beautiful barbarians." This is not only a chant to repeat, but a friendly reminder to the audience that they are beautiful barbarians and "We don't let them win. We beautiful barbarians." Mona Haydar is reaffirming to her audience of women from colonized backgrounds that who they are and what they do are beautiful.

Conclusion:

Although this paper focuses on filling a gap within the niche subject of Arab hip hop, the issue I am addressing goes beyond the work of Mona Haydar and Arab hip hop. Within academia and activism much of the narrative's focus on cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied men as the objective "true" racial experience of the group. In the particular example of this project, men like Omar Offendum and Narcy can be perceived are more legitimate voices in resistance performance against racism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia. Mona Haydar is the intervention in this particular case, but the search does not stop at her. There are many other women, queer and disabled folks that are articulating their resistance in performance.

The aim of this project was to analyze Mona Haydar's musical content and imagery to grasp the ways she is resisting Orientalism and global patriarchy to fill in a feminist gap within Arab hip hop literature by analyzing three of her songs. Mona Haydar articulates not only her personal experience, but the collective experience of Muslim and Arab American women dealing with the intersection of xenophobia, racism, and sexism. Haydar resists Orientalism in her songs "Barbarian" and "American" by breaking binary terminology such as the moral West and the barbaric East by proudly showcasing her barbarianisms and calling out the ways in which the U.S. has shown its true barbaric colors. She displays a diverse spectrum of "the Oriental" woman in her music videos, but also articulates such in her lyrics in the case for "Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab)." These songs create an experience that reaches out and empowers her audience of Arab and Muslim women. In the words of Mona Haydar in her song "Hijabi (Wrap my Hijab)":

"Make a feminist planet, Women haters get banished, Covered up or not don't ever take us for granted."

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