BEYOND TOLERANCE: RACIALIZED-GENDERED SECURITIZATION AND MUSLIM COUNTERPUBLIC RESISTANCE IN SARAH MUGHAL RANA'S HOPE ABLAZE

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Abstract

This article examines Rana's Hope Ablaze (2024) as a significant literary representation of contemporary Islamophobia in the United States. It argues that the novel does not depict Islamophobia as isolated prejudice or only as cultural misunderstanding. Rather, it presents Islamophobia as a governing structure that works simultaneously through anti-Muslim racialization, gendered rescue discourse, and the securitization of Muslim citizenship. To address this complexity, the article develops a merged framework called racialized-gendered securitization, synthesizing Sahar F. Aziz's concept of the "Racial Muslim," Sara R. Farris's theory of femonationalism, and Jasmin Zine's work on Muslim youth, security culture, and counterpublic resistance. Through close textual analysis of key scenes, including Nida's public prayer and illegal frisking, the media's fixation on hijab, the school board's surveillance of Muslim student life, Mamou's criminalization, and the final protest performance, the article demonstrates that the novel maps the workings of liberal Islamophobia with unusual sharpness. The article further argues that Hope Ablaze is especially important because it shows how poetry becomes both incriminating evidence and a resistant mode of testimony. By centering a Pakistani American hijabi protagonist whose body, words, and community are repeatedly subjected to scrutiny, Rana's novel reveals the conditionality of Muslim belonging while also imagining Muslim speech, solidarity, and artistic practice as counterpublic forms of survival. The article contributes to scholarship on Islamophobia, Muslim American literature, and Pakistani diasporic writing by offering an integrated model that is directly applicable to literary analysis.

Keywords: Islamophobia; anti-Muslim racism; racial Muslim; femonationalism; securitization; Muslim counterpublics

Introduction

Islamophobia in contemporary public discourse is often reduced to prejudice, misunderstanding, or cultural difference. Such definitions are inadequate for literary criticism because they overlook the institutional and structural processes through which anti-Muslim hostility is organized. Post-9/11 scholarship has shown that Muslims in the West are governed through overlapping regimes of surveillance, suspicion, security discourse, media spectacle, and conditional citizenship (Allen, 2010; Cesari, 2013; Kumar, 2012; Love, 2017; Massoumi et al., 2017). Yet literary studies do not always capture this full complexity. Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* is important because it dramatizes Islamophobia not as a single incident but as an interconnected apparatus. The novel centers Nida Siddiqui, a Pakistani American Muslim

teenager, poet, and hijabi girl whose public prayer near a political rally leads to humiliation, policing, media distortion, educational surveillance, and renewed scrutiny of her family's already criminalized history.

The problem addressed in this article is therefore both political and literary. Politically, *Hope Ablaze* shows how liberal democratic institutions can reproduce anti-Muslim violence while still speaking the language of inclusion, rights, and empowerment. Literarily, the novel belongs to an emergent body of Muslim American and South Asian diasporic writing that refuses the reduction of Muslim subjects to either victims or threats. When Nida is stopped during prayer, her body is read as danger before her words are even heard. The violence is then moralized by Mitchell Wilson, who tells her that America is "a place of values" rather than "barbarism" (Rana, 2024, p. 22). In one scene, Rana condenses the racial, gendered, and civilizational logics that structure the entire narrative.

This article argues that *Hope Ablaze* requires an integrated framework. Said's *Orientalism* (1978) remains foundational, but Rana's novel asks for a more specific account of contemporary anti-Muslim governance. The text shows Muslims as racialized suspects, hijabi women as objects of rescue discourse, and Muslim youth spaces as targets of security regulation. To theorize these dynamics together, the article merges Sahar F. Aziz's concept of the "Racial Muslim" (2021), Sara R. Farris's theory of femonationalism (2017), and Jasmin Zine's work on Muslim youth, security culture, and counterpublic resistance (2006, 2022). The resulting model, which we call racialized-gendered securitization, allows us to read *Hope Ablaze* as a novel about the production of conditional Muslim citizenship and the struggle to reclaim Muslim speech from hostile publics.

The article addresses a clear gap. Existing scholarship has examined Islamophobia as racism, media discourse, imperial culture, and state securitization (Alsultany, 2012; Bayoumi, 2008; Kundnani, 2014; Rana, J., 2011; Selod, 2018), but fewer studies bring these conversations into sustained dialogue with contemporary Pakistani American fiction, especially young adult fiction focused on hijab, poetry, wrongful incarceration, and the afterlives of the War on Terror. Likewise, feminist critiques of the rescue paradigm (Abu-Lughod, 2013; Ahmed, 2011; Mahmood, 2005; Scott, 2007) are not always integrated with analyses of schooling, youth surveillance, and public performance. *Hope Ablaze* brings these domains together.

We argue that *Hope Ablaze* represents Islamophobia as a triadic regime. Muslimness is racialized so that visible markers such as hijab, prayer, kinship, and dissent become signs of danger. Muslim women are then positioned within a gendered rescue script that allows liberal institutions to disavow their own violence. Finally, Muslim citizenship is securitized through institutions that regulate speech, worship, mobility, and education. Against this regime, Rana imagines poetry as testimony, memory, and counterpublic resistance.

This article has four objectives. First, it analyzes how *Hope Ablaze* constructs Islamophobia as anti-Muslim racialization rather than a purely religious disagreement. Second, it examines the novel's critique of gendered rescue discourse, especially the way hijab becomes the site through which liberal authority imagines itself as emancipatory. Third, it investigates how police, media, schools, and prisons securitize Muslim youth, community spaces, and artistic expression. Fourth, it demonstrates how poetry and Al-Rasheed's communal networks function as Muslim counterpublics.

Research Questions

The article is guided by three questions:

1. How does *Hope Ablaze* narrativize Islamophobia as a racialized, gendered, and securitized structure rather than an isolated experience of prejudice?
2. How do the novel's representations of hijab, media interviewing, and "human rights" rhetoric expose the operation of femonationalist power?
3. In what ways do poetry, community memory, and protest create resistant Muslim counterpublics within and against liberal democratic institutions?

This study is limited to a single literary text, Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* (2024). While the analysis draws on broader theoretical frameworks and situates the novel within wider cultural and political contexts, it does not attempt a comprehensive survey of Muslim American literature or a comparative analysis of multiple texts. The focus on a single text enables sustained close reading and detailed attention to the novel's formal and thematic complexities, but it also means that the study's findings are not generalizable to all Muslim American fiction. Future research might extend this analysis through comparative studies examining how different Muslim American authors represent and resist Islamophobia, or through reception studies investigating how readers engage with these representations.

Literature Review

Scholarship on Islamophobia has moved beyond viewing anti-Muslim hostility as mere intolerance. Allen (2010), Cesari (2013), Kumar (2012), Love (2017), and Massoumi et al. (2017) all show that Islamophobia has institutional and political life. Said's (1978) account of Orientalism remains foundational because it explains how Islam becomes an object of Western fear, management, and civilizational judgment. Later work sharpens the point by showing how Muslimness in the post-9/11 West is racialized so that names, bodies, family histories, and public religiosity become signs of danger (Aziz, 2021; Meer, 2013; Selod & Embrick, 2013). Bayoumi (2008), Cainkar (2009), Kundnani (2014), Rana, J. (2011), and Selod (2018) demonstrate that this structure operates through both state surveillance and everyday suspicion.

Media scholarship is equally important. Alsultany (2012) shows that contemporary representations of Arabs and Muslims often appear balanced or sympathetic while still reproducing the legitimacy of War on Terror logics. This insight helps explain why *Hope Ablaze* is not only concerned with crude hostility. Rana's novel is equally interested in polite, liberal, and media-savvy Islamophobia. Naber (2012) likewise highlights the gendered and activist dimensions of Arab and Muslim public life, showing how belonging is negotiated through both family and public institutions.

A second major conversation concerns Muslim women, veiling, and the rescue paradigm. Ahmed (2011), Göle (1996), Mahmood (2005), and Scott (2007) all complicate the assumption that the veil can be transparently read as oppression. Abu-Lughod (2013) critiques the imperial grammar of "saving Muslim women," while Brown (2006) and Mohanty (2003) show how liberal tolerance and transnational feminist discourse can reproduce hierarchy. Farris's (2017) theory of femonationalism is especially useful because it names the appropriation of women's rights discourse by nationalist and xenophobic politics. Bilge (2010) further cautions against reducing veiled Muslim women either to passive victims or heroic symbols of resistance.

A third body of work addresses Muslim youth, education, and artistic life. Maira (2009) shows how Muslim youth encounter citizenship through empire and exclusion. Zine (2006, 2022)

develops this analysis through schooling, security culture, and Muslim counterpublic formation. These interventions are highly relevant to *Hope Ablaze*, where student associations, spoken word spaces, and school governance become central sites of Islamophobic discipline.

Finally, scholarship on testimony, performance, and publics helps explain the novel's formal politics. Fraser (1990) and Warner (2002) show how subordinated groups create counterpublics through alternative circuits of speech. Somers-Willett (2009) demonstrates that spoken word poetry is deeply entangled with race, identity, and public authority. Felman and Laub (1992), Caruth (1996), Butler (2004), Puar and Rai (2002), and Puar (2007) help clarify how trauma, grievability, terror discourse, and national discipline shape the reception of minority speech.

What remains underdeveloped in much of this scholarship is an integrated literary model that brings race, gender, youth securitization, and Muslim artistic resistance into one interpretive frame. *Hope Ablaze* offers precisely that opportunity.

The novel's formal mixture of prose and verse also invites attention to the politics of witnessing. Felman and Laub (1992) and Caruth (1996) show that testimony is never only the delivery of information; it is an event of speaking from injury and toward a witness. Butler's (2004) work on grievability sharpens this problem by asking whose pain becomes publicly intelligible and whose remains politically negligible. In *Hope Ablaze*, Muslim injury is repeatedly doubted, reframed, or converted into spectacle, which makes poetry crucial as a form that insists on witness without depending entirely on institutional legitimacy.

Toward a Model of Racialized-Gendered Securitization

This study proposes a merged framework called racialized-gendered securitization. The framework draws primarily on Sahar F. Aziz, Sara R. Farris, and Jasmin Zine. Together, these theorists explain the processes dramatized in *Hope Ablaze*: anti-Muslim racialization, the gendered rescue of Muslim women, and the securitization of Muslim youth and community life.

Aziz's (2021) concept of the "Racial Muslim" is the first pillar. Her intervention clarifies that contemporary anti-Muslim hostility often treats Muslims as if they were a coherent racial group marked by dangerous essences. One does not need to commit violence to be read as violent. Suspicion attaches itself to names, kinship, travel, clothing, and public religiosity. Aziz's framework helps explain why Nida's prayer is interpreted as precriminal behavior and why Mamou's poetry is treated as evidence of extremism. Religion is read through racial assumptions.

Farris's (2017) theory of femonationalism is the second pillar. Femonationalism names the convergence of nationalist, neoliberal, and selective feminist discourse in the defense of women's rights against supposedly backward Muslim cultures. The Muslim woman becomes an alibi. She is invoked as someone awaiting rescue so that anti-Muslim governance can appear moral and progressive. In *Hope Ablaze*, this dynamic appears whenever hijab is discussed as barbaric, abnormal, or inherently oppressive. Farris allows us to identify not only misogyny but its liberal cover.

Zine's work forms the third pillar. In her studies of veiling and in *Under Siege*, Zine (2006, 2022) shows how Muslim youth experience Islamophobia through school culture, public policy, securitization discourse, and the burden of collective representation. She also emphasizes the importance of Muslim counterpublics, especially cultural and artistic spaces. This is essential for reading Nida, whose life is shaped by student organizations, school oversight, media exposure, and the Poet's Block.

When merged, these theories generate a three-part model. First, Islamophobia works through racialization. Second, it works through gendered moralization. Third, it works through securitization. These processes are mutually reinforcing. Racialization makes securitization believable; femonationalism makes it respectable; institutional securitization gives both administrative force. To explain the resistant side of Rana's novel, this article also draws on Fraser (1990) and Warner (2002). Their work clarifies how alternative Muslim spaces can function as counterpublics where subordinated groups interpret themselves and circulate speech outside the scripts imposed by dominant publics.

This model is particularly suitable for literary analysis because *Hope Ablaze* never separates race, gender, religion, media, and state power into neat categories. A single scene often contains all of them at once. Racialized-gendered securitization makes it possible to read these scenes relationally rather than separately.

This article uses qualitative close reading informed by cultural and political literary analysis. The method is interpretive rather than quantitative. It treats *Hope Ablaze* as a literary text whose narrative structure, scenes, imagery, verse passages, and dialogue produce a theorization of Islamophobia from within the experience of a Pakistani American Muslim protagonist. The analysis focuses on recurring motifs and crisis scenes that condense the novel's ideological structure: public prayer, hijab removal, media interviewing, school regulation, prison memory, communal mourning, and protest performance. These moments are not read as isolated plot events but as sites where larger discourses on race, gender, nation, rights, and security become legible.

Because Rana's novel combines prose with verse letters, the article also attends to form. The switching between narration and poetic address is treated as meaningful. It marks shifts between internal injury and public speech, between what dominant institutions say about Muslims and what Muslim subjects say back. Secondary scholarship is used not as detachable context but as an interpretive grid for reading how the novel constructs Islamophobia as social structure, embodied affect, and institutional discipline.

The goal of the method is not to force the novel into theory. It is to bring theory into dialogue with the novel's own conceptual vocabulary. *Hope Ablaze* already contains terms, metaphors, and scenes that theorize anti-Muslim racism. The analysis therefore proceeds by showing how the text's language and events resonate with, complicate, and extend the chosen theoretical model.

Analysis and Discussion

Prayer, visibility, and the production of the racial Muslim

The novel's pivotal frisking scene demonstrates how Muslim embodiment is racialized before it is interpreted. Nida is not engaged in suspicious behavior. She moves away from the political crowd, lays out a prayer mat, changes into her abaya, and begins worship. Yet public prayer does not register as religious freedom. It registers as threat. The police immediately identify her scarf and bodily covering as suspicious objects rather than devotional practices (Rana, 2024, pp. 19-21). One officer asks, "Why wear it? You're in America now" (p. 21). Another treats the prayer mat as if it "looks like the ISIS flag" (p. 22). These statements reveal that the target is not an act but a racialized religious body. Nida's Muslimness is read through a ready-made chain of associations: hijab, foreignness, terrorism, and disloyalty.

Aziz's (2021) concept of the Racial Muslim clarifies the scene's logic. Nida's prayer does not need to be decoded on its own terms because the security state already "knows" what it sees. Her body arrives preinscribed by suspicion. That is why force precedes interpretation. The officers do not begin by asking what she is doing; they begin by immobilizing, searching, and exposing her. Nida's repeated internal insistence, "I'm a US citizen," changes nothing because formal citizenship is not the criterion by which she is being read (Rana, 2024, p. 22). The novel therefore depicts Muslim citizenship as juridically present but socially unstable.

The scene becomes even more revealing when Mitchell Wilson enters. He is not coded as an obviously extremist politician. He is a liberal Democrat, a veteran, and a man who has visited the mosque. His presence shifts the analysis away from crude bigotry toward liberal complicity. Seeing Nida in prayer attire, he describes her "burka" as resembling "a bank robber," then declares that America is "a place of values" rather than "barbarism" (Rana, 2024, p. 22). Rana thereby exposes a core operation of anti-Muslim racism: humiliation is converted into moral pedagogy. Nida is violated while being instructed about civilization.

The scene also emphasizes bodily affect. Once her hijab is pulled away, Nida feels "bare naked. Violated" (Rana, 2024, p. 21). The assault is not only physical. It is epistemic. The police authorize themselves to decide what Muslim dress means, and their interpretation overrides hers. That is the deeper violence of racialization. It strips the Muslim subject of hermeneutic agency.

Rana also places this episode within a longer genealogy of anti-Muslim management. Nida does not learn fear in the moment of frisking; she has already inherited the bodily script of deference from Mamou's criminalization and from the neighborhood's collective memory. Before the state arrives, the subject has already learned how not to move, how not to speak, and how not to escalate. This historical depth prevents the frisking from becoming a single shocking event detached from the War on Terror. It is instead one iteration of a durable social grammar. Public prayer in the novel is therefore never merely worship. It is also public vulnerability.

Liberal rescue and the femonationalist disciplining of hijab

If the frisking scene reveals racialization, the media scenes reveal the gendered moral grammar through which such racialization is normalized. Farris's (2017) theory of femonationalism is especially productive because Wilson and the television host Michelle do not represent themselves as misogynists. They present themselves as defenders of women and rights. Wilson tells Nida that America is a country of "human rights" and implies that unveiling would complete her liberation (Rana, 2024, p. 22). Later, Michelle repeatedly turns the interview away from Wilson's misconduct and toward the question of whether Muslim women are oppressed by Islam (pp. 197-198). The displacement is crucial. State violence against a Muslim girl is replaced by a civilizational debate about Muslim womanhood.

Rana carefully exposes how this logic operates. Michelle cannot imagine hijab outside the binary of coercion and freedom. Nida resists by insisting, "I choose to submit to the God I believe in by wearing my hijab" (Rana, 2024, p. 203). The sentence refuses the assumption that agency must appear as secular individual choice. Mahmood's (2005) critique of liberal feminist assumptions is helpful here, as is Ahmed's (2011) insistence that the veil's meanings cannot be detached from internal religious and historical frameworks.

Michelle nevertheless translates submission back into oppression. This interpretive foreclosure is precisely what Abu-Lughod (2013) critiques in rescue narratives about Muslim women. Concern is converted into moral spectacle. Nida's body becomes a site through which America can

perform its own virtue. Rana names that violence when Nida tells Michelle, "You dehumanize us and pretend to care by trying to liberate us; the hijab and burqa are your excuses" (Rana, 2024, p. 205). That line is one of the novel's sharpest diagnoses of liberal Islamophobia. Muslim women are made hyper-visible only when that visibility confirms national innocence.

The interview also shows how "good" and "bad" Muslim femininities are produced. Michelle seizes upon the fact that Nida's mother does not wear hijab, as though unveiling proves proper empowerment. Nida rejects the trap, insisting that religion "couldn't be quantified by other humans" (Rana, 2024, p. 198). In this moment the novel refuses the hierarchy through which one Muslim woman is validated against another.

What makes femonationalist power especially effective in the novel is that it recruits comparison and differentiation among Muslim women. Liberal Islamophobia does not simply target the veil. It produces tiers of acceptable Muslim femininity: the covered woman is suspicious, the uncovered woman is assimilable, and the outspoken Muslim woman is dangerous regardless of dress. That is why the interview feels less like journalism than ideological sorting. Gendered Islamophobia in *Hope Ablaze* is not only external. It shapes domestic caution, friendship, and self-regulation. Muslim women are not only told what they should wear; they are taught how much of themselves may safely appear in public.

Securitizing Muslim youth, schooling, and poetic speech

The novel's critique becomes even more expansive once Nida's controversy reaches school institutions. The school board turns media panic into administrative policy. After viral circulation of her poetry, it mandates that Muslim Student Association events, Friday prayers, MIST participation, and poetry activities be "scripted and vetted by the board" and that sermons "must be filmed for transparency" (Rana, 2024, p. 135). Nida immediately grasps the broader implication: "Every Muslim was considered a monolith. If one of us messed up, the rest of us would pay" (p. 135). This is the novel's clearest statement of securitization. Muslim youth do not encounter discipline as individuals. They encounter it as collective liability.

Zine's (2022) work on Muslim youth under siege helps explain this scene. Security culture works pre-emptively. It reorganizes institutional life around the possibility of Muslim threat. The board does not ban Muslim activity outright because that would appear too nakedly discriminatory. Instead, it installs oversight, scripting, and recording. This is how securitization functions in liberal spaces. It speaks the language of neutrality and safety. Yet those demands are imposed asymmetrically. Other student groups are not told that their speech must be preapproved because one member became controversial. Maira (2009) is relevant here because she shows how Muslim youth are trained into citizenship through self-management and political harmlessness.

The school board's reaction also reveals the evidentiary reading of Muslim art. During Michelle's interview, Nida's poetic lineage becomes proof that she is contaminated by her uncle's politics. When she says, "My poetry parallels my uncle's writing because, like him, I'm a victim of Islamophobia" (Rana, 2024, p. 199), she attempts to redirect the comparison away from extremism and toward shared exposure to anti-Muslim violence. The host refuses that reframing. Poetry is not received as expression. It is received as potential confession.

The school's decision to suspend Nida "for your safety" (Rana, 2024, p. 135) deserves special attention because it reveals how liberal institutions manage political embarrassment. The suspension is framed as care, but its effect is exclusion. Nida loses educational normalcy at

precisely the moment when she most needs institutional support. Rana thus shows that securitization works not only through punishment but also through paternalist removal. The Muslim student is kept away from the school body in the name of preserving that body's comfort. What is protected is not Nida's safety but the school's self-image.

This is where the novel deepens the insights of Alsultany (2012) and Selod (2018). Media and institutions do not simply distort Muslim subjects after the fact. They produce the conditions under which Muslim speech becomes suspicious in the first place. The same interpretive structure also governs Mamou's history. He and the Al-Rasheed Five are criminalized through associative logic, prejudicial imagery, and terror discourse, while the imam later calls his death what the state refuses to call it: "the state murdered an innocent soul" (Rana, 2024, p. 256). Federal prosecution, school policy, and media spectacle thus belong to the same broader structure of Islamophobic administration.

Poetry, Al-Rasheed, and the making of a Muslim counterpublic

Although *Hope Ablaze* is unsparing about anti-Muslim violence, it is not a novel of total defeat. Its most important intervention may be its insistence that Muslim communities generate their own publics, memories, and pedagogies. The Poet's Block and the neighborhood of Al-Rasheed function as spaces of counterpublic formation in Fraser's (1990) and Warner's (2002) sense. They are not simply safe spaces. They are sites where Muslims interpret themselves outside dominant scripts.

Poetry is central to this world because it binds personal grief, communal history, and political critique into a shared language. Mamou tells Nida that "The first creation by God was the pen," then later adds, "The writer is simply the conduit for justice" (Rana, 2024, pp. 218-219). This is the novel's ethical proposition. Writing is not merely talent; it is trust. The mosque sermon reinforces the idea when Imam Abdullah says, "Our tongues should not be idle during injustice. Speech is its own power" (p. 256). In *Hope Ablaze*, art is never apolitical. It is testimony.

The Poet's Block is also the opposite of the news studio. In the studio, Nida is framed, interrupted, and pathologized. In the Block, Muslim youth recognize one another through shared risk and aesthetic labor. Somers-Willett (2009) helps explain why spoken word is so politically significant here. Performance poetry creates publics through voice, embodiment, and immediacy. That is why Nida's final protest speech matters more than her earlier media appearances. She is no longer answering hostile questions. She is producing a public on her own terms.

The novel also insists that counterpublic resistance is communal rather than purely individual. When Nida is frisked, the elders gather, donate, pray, and strategize. When Mamou dies, Al-Rasheed fills the family's house with food because, as Nida says, "This was what Muslims did / in times of tragedy. We cooked" (Rana, 2024, p. 251). These scenes refuse the isolation on which securitized governance depends. The state treats Muslims as suspicious clusters; the novel reclaims the cluster as community.

The resistance model is deepened by intergenerational memory. Mamou tells Nida that their family has long histories of poets being arrested, censored, or impoverished under colonial and postcolonial authority (Rana, 2024, pp. 218-219). Muslim poetic resistance in the novel is therefore not spontaneous self-expression. It is inheritance. The blue-string motif condenses this inheritance into a literary image. The string represents inherited silencing, internalized fear, and the bodily afterlife of surveillance. Because it links Nida to Mamou and to earlier persecuted poets, the symbol makes silence itself appear historically transmitted.

Nida's final protest performance synthesizes the novel's resistant politics. She begins, "Assalaamualaykum, I'm Nida Siddiqui," and then publicly recounts how she was labeled "a liar," "a radical," and "an attention-seeker" (Rana, 2024, p. 313). This moment matters not because it solves structural injustice but because it interrupts hostile public framing. Wilson's rally is literally drowned out by her voice. The Muslim girl who was earlier told what her body means now narrates meaning herself. Rana is careful not to romanticize this reversal. The novel ends without full reconciliation. Nida still recognizes that Muslims often vote for "the less evil option" (p. 319). Yet she also concludes, "I didn't have to assimilate" (p. 315). The counterpublic does not promise easy inclusion. It makes survival, testimony, and collective endurance imaginable.

Findings

The analysis yields four major findings. First, *Hope Ablaze* presents Islamophobia as governance rather than attitude. Police, media, schools, and prisons actively produce Muslim suspecthood. Second, the novel shows that liberal discourse is one of Islamophobia's major vehicles. Rights talk, women's empowerment, and civility become rhetorical covers for anti-Muslim discipline. Third, Rana reveals that Muslim youth and Muslim artistic expression occupy a particularly vulnerable place within securitized regimes, where poetry can be treated as evidence and student life as a risk-management problem. Fourth, the novel imagines resistance through Muslim counterpublics. The Poet's Block, the mosque, Al-Rasheed, and the final protest speech all demonstrate that Muslim survival depends upon spaces where Muslims can interpret themselves and speak in their own registers.

Taken together, these findings confirm the usefulness of racialized-gendered securitization as a literary framework. The model clarifies the very structure the novel itself narrates.

Conclusion

Sarah Mughal Rana's *Hope Ablaze* should be recognized as an important intervention in contemporary Muslim American and Pakistani diasporic literature because it captures Islamophobia in its layered modern form. The novel does not ask readers simply to sympathize with a wronged Muslim girl. It asks them to recognize how Muslim life is governed by racialization, gendered rescue, and security management, often under the respectable signs of liberal democracy. By centering a hijabi Pakistani American poet, Rana reveals that the Muslim subject is pressured to become legible in narrow ways: silent, moderate, grateful, assimilable, and disconnected from histories of empire. To refuse that script is to risk being read as dangerous.

The article has argued that racialized-gendered securitization provides a strong framework for reading this dynamic. Aziz helps explain why Muslimness is treated as embodied suspecthood. Farris clarifies how the rhetoric of saving women masks and legitimizes anti-Muslim power. Zine shows how youth, schools, and artistic spaces become central sites of securitization and resistance. Through this merged lens, *Hope Ablaze* emerges as a novel about conditional citizenship and the struggle to reclaim interpretive authority over one's own body and voice.

At the same time, Rana does not end with despair. She stages poetry as a counterpublic practice through which injury can be spoken, shared, and politically reoriented. Nida cannot recover a fantasy of uncomplicated belonging, and the novel wisely refuses that ending. What she does recover is her right to speak without asking permission from hostile institutions. That recovery is the novel's deepest political claim. In a world where Muslim bodies are overread and Muslim

words are weaponized, the act of speaking on one's own terms becomes both aesthetic resistance and a demand for justice.

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