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052148233X - Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism

Meyda Yeğenoğlu

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Colonial fantasies investigates the intersection between post-colonial theory and feminist criticism, focusing on the persistent Western fascination with the veiled women of the Orient. In her original and compelling book, Meyda Yeğenoğlu examines the veil both as a site of fantasy and of nationalist ideologies and discourses of gender identity. Through her analysis of travel literature and anthropological and literary texts, she demonstrates that the very desire to penetrate the veiled surface of “otherness” is constitutive of hegemonic, colonial identity. She also shows how representations of cultural difference are inextricably linked to representations of sexual difference. Recognizing that the figure of the Oriental woman has functioned as the veiled interior of Western identity, she calls into question dualistic conceptions of identity and difference, and of West and East. She draws on recent critical theory to challenge both traditional masculinist assumptions of Orientalism and those Western feminist discourses which seek to “liberate” the veiled woman in the name of progress. Meyda Yeğenoğlu is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology, at the Middle East Technical University, Ankara. She has also taught in North America and published in Turkish and English on Orientalism, and cultural and women’s studies. She is the co-editor, with Mahmut Mutman, of *Orientalism and Cultural Differences*, a special issue of the journal *Inscriptions*.

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