

## ORIENTALISM AND MIDDLE EAST FEMINIST STUDIES

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The events marking the twentieth anniversary of the publication of Edward Said's 1978 *Orientalism* provide an excellent occasion to reflect on the book's impact on Middle East gender and women's studies. In some ways *Orientalism* and feminist studies have, in Marilyn Strathern's memorable phrase, an awkward relationship.<sup>1</sup> Despite the fact that the book is attuned, perhaps surprising for its time, to issues of gender and sexuality, its main focus lies elsewhere: the way in which the Orient has been represented in Europe through an imaginative geography that divides East and West, confirming Western superiority and enabling, if not actually constituting, European domination of those negatively portrayed regions known as "East."<sup>2</sup> *Orientalism* was not meant to be a work of feminist scholarship or theory. Yet it has engendered feminist scholarship and debate in Middle East studies as well as far beyond the field.

In this essay I consider four ways in which Said's work has had an impact. First, *Orientalism* opened up the possibility for others to go further than Said had in exploring the gender and sexuality of Orientalist discourse itself. Second, the book provided a strong rationale for the burgeoning historical and anthropological research that claimed to be going beyond stereotypes of the Muslim or Middle Eastern woman and gender relations in general. Third, the historical recovery of feminism in the Middle East, emerging from this new abundance of research has, in turn, stimulated a reexamination of that central issue in *Orientalism*: East/West politics. Finally, Said's stance, that one cannot divorce political engagement from scholarship, has presented Middle East gender studies and debates about feminism with some especially knotty problems, highlighting the peculiar ways that feminist critique is situated in a global context.

## CORRECTIVES

The first studies inspired by *Orientalism* augmented Said's work with a closer focus on gender. One might point to works of the mid-1980s like Rana Kabbani's *Europe's Myths of Orient* that examined literature and Malek Alloula's *The Colonial Harem* that turned back the gaze of French photographic postcards of Algerian women. After the initial wave of corrective projects, with books like Billie Melman's 1992 historical study, *Women's Orients*:

### BOOKS DISCUSSED IN THIS ARTICLE

*Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism.* By Meyda Yegenoglu. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

*Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman."* Edited by Zehra Arat. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998.

*Between Marriage and the Market: Intimate Politics and Survival in Cairo.* By Homa Hoodfar. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997.

*In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Ottoman Syria and Palestine.* By Judith Tucker. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998.

*Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis.* By Haideh Moghissi. London and New York: Zed Books, 1999.

*Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran.* By Ziba Mir-Hosseini. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

*Engendering Middle East Studies:* Edited by Deniz Kandiyoti. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

*Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Childhood.* By Fatima Mernissi; Photographs by Ruth V. Ward. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1994.

*English Women and the Middle East, 1718-1918: Sexuality, Religion, and Work;* Judith Mabro's 1991 edited collection, *Veiled Half-Truths;* and a theoretically sophisticated analysis by a scholar not working specifically within Middle East studies, Lisa Lowe's 1991 *Critical Terrains: French and British Orientalisms,* scholars examined the way that gender inflected Western discourses on the Orient. These books asked specifically how European colonial women,

mostly travelers, writers, and missionaries, represented "the Orient." A few essays in Zehra Arat's 1998 published collection, *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman,"* also take up this intriguing theme.

However, a 1998 book by Meyda Yegenoglu, a Turkish scholar trained in the United States, entitled *Colonial Fantasies: Toward a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, takes to a new level the underexamined question of the gender and sexuality of Orientalism. Written with sometimes numbing sophistication, the book explores the neglected term in Said's important distinction between "latent" and "manifest" Orientalism. Yegenoglu suggests that "latent" Orientalism, which refers to "the nature and extent of the sexual implications of the unconscious site of Orientalism," should be at the core of our analysis. Drawing on psychoanalysis, especially in its Lacanian and feminist versions, as well as a range of poststructuralist theories on the constitution of the subject, she faults Said for treating "images of woman and images of sexuality in orientalist discourse" simply as "a trope limited to the representation of Oriental woman and of sexuality" (p. 25). In other words, she challenges the way Said and others relegate gender and sexuality to a subfield in their analysis of colonial discourse. Taking a more radical position, she sets out to analyze instead "how representations of cultural and sexual difference are constitutive of each other" (p. 1). This is exciting thinking, although much of the rest of the book, which is an extended meditation on that powerful and complex, but clichéd, symbol, the veil, as it figures in fantasies of the Orient and the self, in Orientalist discourse, Middle Eastern nationalisms, or Western feminism, does not quite make the point.

### THE "REAL" ORIENT

If works such as these are meant as correctives to Said's relative "neglect" of gender and sexuality, the bulk of work within Middle East gender studies has seen *Orientalism* instead as providing a strong rationale for careful and sympathetic research. Recognizing that stereotypes of the Middle Eastern woman have been crucial to negative depictions of the region and its culture(s), many scholars have sought through ethnographic or social historical research to reveal the complex "realities" of gender and women in

the Middle East or, through literary study, to explore how Middle Eastern women represent themselves. In books like the 1965 *Guests of the Sheik*, Elizabeth Warnock Fernea pioneered the sympathetic portrayal of women behind the veil. Further, Fernea's work to translate and publish Middle Eastern women's writings, in books beginning with *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (with Basima Berzigan), published around the same time as *Orientalism*, has made available to new audiences the many voices of Middle Eastern women.

Whereas in the 1960s and early 1970s, research and scholarly writing on Middle Eastern women focused on questions of role and status, the late 1970s marked an important shift, as Cynthia Nelson pointed out in a review of the field. In recent decades, an enormous body of scholarship (mostly in anthropology, sociology, and history) has enhanced our knowledge of women and gender relations in various parts of the Middle East. Two exemplary new books allow us to reflect both on the achievements and limitations of this sensitive, theoretically informed, post-Orientalist empirical work.

As we have come to expect, the promotional copy justifying the importance of Homa Hoodfar's 1997 *Between Marriage and the Market: Politics and Survival in Cairo* claims that "Hoodfar overturns stereotypes about women, Islam, and the Middle East and North Africa in general." And indeed, this extraordinarily rich book shows the resourcefulness of lower-class women in Cairo. Documenting with insight the strategies people use, whether in work or marriage, to cope with the economic shifts entailed by the structural adjustment policies the government has adopted, the author offers perceptive analyses of the manipulations of gender ideologies and religious beliefs. The anthropologist, of Iranian origin, writes with wonderful honesty, clarity, and generosity about the subjects she clearly came to like and respect.

Judith Tucker's 1998 *In the House of the Law: Gender and Islamic Law in Syria and Palestine* is a detailed and lively study based on jurists' legal opinions and the Islamic court records of Damascus, Nablus, and Jerusalem. Written by one of the pioneers of Middle East women's social history, the book subtly argues that although Islamic legal doctrines were based on female/male differences, judges opted in practice for broader and more flexible interpretations based on a desire for justice and for the stability of the com-

munity. Arguing against an essential and rigid association of Islamic law with patriarchy, Tucker concludes that it is only in recent times, when law became codified and linked to the state, that there developed "the enshrinement of gendered right and privilege without the accompanying flexibility and judicial activism that had been the hallmark of Islamic justice" (p. 186).

It must be recalled, however, that *Orientalism* was not just about representations or stereotypes of the Orient but about how these were linked and integral to projects of domination that were ongoing. This raises an uncomfortable question about all our work of the combating-stereotype sort—and I would include here not just these books but many others that show how active, practical, powerful, and resourceful (as opposed to passive, silent, and oppressed) Middle Eastern women are or how complex gender relations are, including my own ethnography of the Awlad 'Ali, *Writing Women's Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. First, we have to ask what Western liberal values we may be unreflectively validating in proving that "Eastern" women have agency, too. Second, and more importantly, we have to remind ourselves that although negative images of women or gender relations in the region are certainly to be deplored, offering positive images or "nondistorted" images will not solve the basic problem posed by Said's analysis of Orientalism. The problem is about the production of knowledge in and for the West. As Yegenoglu puts it, following Said's more Foucauldian point, the power of Orientalism comes from its power to construct the very object it speaks about and from its power to produce a regime of truth about the other and thereby establish the identity and the power of the subject that speaks about it" (pp. 90-91). As long as we are writing for the West about "the other," we are implicated in projects that establish Western authority and cultural difference.

## MIDDLE EASTERN FEMINISMS

This particular dilemma has underscored the often quite polarized debates in the last decade among scholars who have turned to the study of feminist organizations, journals, and more generally, the modernizing projects of remaking women and gender relations. The richest historical work has been on Egypt, with such studies as Leila Ahmed's 1992 *Women and Gender in Islam*;

Margot Badran's 1995 *Feminists, Islam, and Nation: Gender and the Making of Modern Egypt*; Beth Baron's 1994 *The Women's Awakening in Egypt*; Marilyn Booth's forthcoming *May Her Likes Be Multiplied*; and Cynthia Nelson's 1996 *Doria Shafik, Egyptian Feminist*. The parallels for Turkey are described by contributors to Zehra Arat's *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"* and by scholars writing mostly in Turkish. For Iran, Parvin Paidar's 1995 *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* and Afsaneh Najmabadi's series of articles, soon to be part of a book, stand out. One central question is whether local feminisms, especially those of the early decades of this century, should be considered "indigenous" or imported, liberating or disciplinary. This debate has consequences for current discussions about what kind of feminism is appropriate for the Middle East.

In a collection of essays I recently brought together under the title *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (1998), some scholars took up these questions, showing indeed that colonial constructions of women as the locus of Eastern backwardness shaped anticolonial nationalisms and that feminist projects relied on Western discourses on women's public roles, marriage, domesticity, and scientific childrearing. But these essays also explored the selectiveness with which Western ideas and models were appropriated; the significant changes that were introduced when European ideas were translated into local contexts; and the very ways that middle-class women themselves were able to make positive use of what seemed like new systems of discipline and regulation. Following one of the most productive lines of thought made possible by *Orientalism*, with the division between East and West (and representation of each) to be understood *not* as a natural geographic or cultural fact but as a product of the political and historical encounter of imperialism, we argued that condemning "feminism" as an inauthentic Western import is just as inaccurate as celebrating it as a local or indigenous project. The first position assumes such a thing as cultural purity; the second underestimates the formative power of colonialism in the development of the region.

This takes me to the fourth way in which Said's work has been—or perhaps could be—crucial to Middle East gender studies: sorting out the politics of contemporary Middle East feminisms. The issues raised here are relevant for many other Third World femi-

nisms. Said's greatest intellectual contribution has been to reveal the "worldliness" of all cultural production, even academic. I have always understood the tensions in *Orientalism* between a humanism that looks beyond cultural difference and the Foucauldian project of tracking the relationship between power and knowledge as arising from Said's need to grasp and expose what many of us have experienced: the pain of identifying with a community (the Palestinians) regarded with antipathy in the West and treated brutally on the ground.

Feminist scholarship too is, by definition, an engaged scholarship because it is premised on a concern about the condition of women and usually involves a critique of the structures that oppress them. It too is linked to personal experience. A good deal of the most interesting feminist theorizing inside and outside of Middle East studies has been about the importance of positionality (the social location from which one analyzes the world), related to the insights of *Orientalism*. However, as the work of a number of outspoken feminists from the Middle East reveals, and I will just take some examples from the Arab world here, to launch feminist critiques in a context of continuing Western hegemony is to risk playing into the hands of Orientalist discourse. There are analogies to be made with what happens when Edward Said goes beyond criticizing Israel or the United States and instead denounces authoritarian Arab regimes or deplors the lack of democracy in Arafat's Palestine National Authority.

Feminists from the Middle East, especially those who write in English or French, are inevitably caught between the sometimes incompatible projects of representing Middle East women as complex agents (that is, not as passive victims of Islamic or "traditional" culture), mostly to the West, and advocating their rights at home, which usually involves a critique of local patriarchal structures. The problem with the latter is that it can easily be appropriated as native confirmation of already negative and simplistic images, as when American missionary women at the turn of the century cited Qasim Amin for evidence of the lovelessness, and therefore inferiority, of marriage under Islam.<sup>4</sup> Qasim Amin, author of the controversial *The Liberation of Women* in 1899, is often credited in the Middle East with being a champion of women's emancipation.

Let me try to give some examples of the tricky situations in

which Arab feminists find themselves. Moroccan sociologist Fatima Mernissi is a good example because her sophistication, creativity, and political courage are stunning; and yet her work, when it moves between her home in the Arab world and the Western context in which it is so well received, can be troubling. Her 1994 memoir of coming of age is called *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*. Instead of refusing to reproduce the old Orientalist stereotype of women in harems, she brings to life the world of women and patriarchal authority in the enclosed household of her wealthy Fez family. Conjuring up a rich emotional world and capturing exquisitely family dynamics and women's experiences, she nevertheless anchors the memoir in her "innocent" interrogation of the meaning of boundaries, the invisible rules of space, and sexual difference. In the end, despite her celebration of women's traditional powers of beauty, she unambivalently pits her mother's strong wish for modernity—for a little girl dressed in Western clothes who will attend school, learn French, and become liberated—against all the restricting forces of tradition and the harem. Tradition and Modernity. Harems and Freedom. Veiling and Unveiling. These are the familiar terms by which the East has long been apprehended (and devalued) and the West has constructed itself as superior. These are some of what Said calls the dogmas of Orientalism, and they are the very terms that feminist scholars like Lata Mani, in her belatedly published book on colonial India, *Contentious Traditions*, have brilliantly called into question.

For many feminists from the region, not just "tradition" but Islamism is also seen as a threat to women. Again, one has to ask what the class politics and ideological assumptions of a local opposition to this might be and what views of the incompatibility of Islam with women's rights such opposition unwittingly affirms. Can one both recognize that organizations such as Women against Fundamentalism and Women Living under Islamic Laws are working against some serious abuses of women and yet be open to the many women activists working from within the Islamic tradition to bring out new interpretations of religious texts or the many nonelite women searching for an alternative modernity that is not secular? Feminists in the context of the Islamic Republic of Iran, in many ways like Islamic modernists earlier in the century and feminist Islamist contemporaries in Egypt, Jordan, and Turkey, are themselves arguing for a more dynamic and his-



torically sensitive vision of what Islam is or could be for women. They are publishing journals and magazines in Persian, Arabic, and Turkish—work that is not directed to the West and is largely unknown here except through scattered studies published in English, including the work of Afsaneh Najmabadi ("Feminisms in an Islamic Republic," in Yvonne Haddad and John Esposito's 1998 *Islam, Gender, and Social Change*), Nilufer Gole (*The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, 1996), and Aynur Ilyasoglu ("Islamist Women in Turkey: Their Identity and Self-Image," in Arat's *Deconstructing Images of "The Turkish Woman"*). Some of their voices are recorded by Elizabeth Fernea in her wide-ranging exploration, *In Search of Islamic Feminism: One Woman's Global Journey*, a 1998 book that never quite clarifies what "Islamic feminism" might mean.

In her 1997 address to the Middle East Women's Studies Association at the Middle East Studies Association annual meetings, the Cairo-based anthropologist Soraya Altorki spoke with great eloquence about the problems confronted by women who work in three Arab women's groups in Egypt—the Women and Memory Forum, the New Woman, and Nour—devoted to "feminist" research and advocacy.<sup>5</sup> Her remarks on these groups could be paralleled by discussion of other groups, such as the Women's Studies Program at Birzeit University in Palestine, where feminists are working within national contexts for the study and advocacy of women, not only teaching, running for office, and organizing women's centers but also publishing studies that might shape policymaking by the national governing authorities.<sup>6</sup> They are all put on the defensive by some activities of feminists abroad and by the Western media's sensationalism when presenting Islam and women. They must also reckon with international funding agencies with their own priorities regarding women's issues, priorities that often differ from those working in what Altorki calls a "nationalist context." As a number of the participants in the first Arab regional women's/gender studies workshop noted (proceedings of which were published in a volume edited by Cynthia Nelson and Soraya Altorki for *Cairo Papers in Social Science*), their projects and stances are inevitably read, and undertaken, in relation to these outside constructions and interventions that they admit are linked, in Altorki's words, to "the legacy of colonial rule and present hegemony."

The dilemmas are sharp because of this global context. As the Women and Memory Forum, a group in Egypt, puts it, "identifying exclusively with the west means rejecting the Arab heritage, while rejecting the west and cleaving to 'tradition' means accepting patriarchal structures of subordination and inferiorization."<sup>8</sup> The solution is to refuse the tradition/Western modernity divide, but how sophisticated do you have to be to manage this?

One strategy seems to be to publish in regional languages as well as English or French, and to initiate local projects, both academic and activist. The recently established Women and Memory Forum in Egypt holds conferences, publishes a newsletter called *Letters from Memory* (as of the January 1999 issue, in both English and Arabic), and has published a few books in Arabic. The editors creatively rewrite Arab folktales from "a gender-sensitive perspective," recover the writings and activities of forgotten women from the past (whether feminists like Malak Hifni Nassef or an eighteenth-century aristocrat who forced the invading French to respect her while standing up for the rights of others), and rewrite Arab history from a gendered perspective.<sup>9</sup>

Nour, a research and publishing house for work on and by Arab women, has commissioned and published books, including some translations; organized the first Arab women's book fair; and regularly publishes a book review journal by the name *Nour*. The journal, now in its fourteenth issue (with recent special issues devoted to Palestinian and Lebanese women), cover a wide range of books, some in English but most in Arabic, in the social sciences and literature. These organizations are run by academic or professional women and, like the Women's Studies Programs at universities in Palestine and Yemen, have been partially supported by European (especially Dutch) funds, opening them up to occasional suspicion.

The work of the New Woman Research Center in Egypt is perhaps more controversial, however, because it concentrates on the problem of violence against women.<sup>10</sup> The center's field research has shown how widespread the problems are; but one can also imagine what uses publicity about this issue might be put to in the wider world, a world already primed to think of the Middle East as a place of violence against women, especially because of the highly publicized issue of female circumcision. And what accusations will be leveled against these feminists by government authorities and other defenders of Egypt's image?

The problems faced by feminists in various countries of the Middle East vary because such groups work in such different political contexts, both internally and vis-à-vis the West. For example, feminists in Turkey have similarly taken up the question of violence against women, opening the Purple Roof Women's Shelter in Istanbul, and a similar one in Ankara, along with taking on less controversial projects such as founding the Women's Library and Information Center. Each national context is configured differently. Turkish feminists are subject to less criticism in the name of Turkey's image abroad. Instead they must confront not just the growing presence of Islamists (whom they, as secularists, find threatening) but also the challenge they represent to the state which, based on Kemalist ideology and reforms, sees itself as having solved "the woman question" long ago. In Iran under the Islamic Republic, feminism in its various guises and expressed through various media, including a number of women's journals, faces yet other alignments and minefields.

Some feminist scholars in the field have worried that the influence of Said's *Orientalism*, and the broader approaches known variously as postcolonial and postmodern, have led us away from criticism of local institutions and political forces. Haideh Moghissi, a Canadian-based Iranian feminist scholar, goes so far as to accuse Middle East intellectuals of undertaking "a costly intellectual experiment" when they are so anxious to be anti-Orientalist that they develop an "uncritical fascination with Western postmodernism." In her 1999 *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism: The Limits of Postmodern Analysis*, she asserts that this inclines them to celebrate difference and local voices. She fears that in recognizing and respecting what they call Islamic feminisms in Iran, they "inadvertently lend support to the most effectively cloaked repressive movement in the region: Islamic fundamentalism" (p. 63). Her targets are other European-based Iranian feminist scholars such as Haleh Afshar (*Islam and Feminisms: An Iranian Case Study*, 1998) and Afsaneh Najmabadi, who no longer see Islamic feminism as an oxymoron, and even Ziba Mir-Hosseini, whose detailed 1999 study of the internal religio-legal debates about gender and women in the Islamic Republic in the 1990s (*Islam and Gender: The Religious Debate in Contemporary Iran*) makes a case for a lively range of opinion among clerics and laypeople and whose argument is that the processes of social change set in motion by

the Islamic Revolution in 1979 have "nurtured not only a new school of jurisprudence, which is slowly trying to respond to social realities, but also a new gender consciousness" (p. 179).

Deniz Kandiyoti, whose earlier groundbreaking *Women, Islam, and the State* had brought to the fore issues of nationalism and state policy, moving discussion away from essentialist cultural arguments about "women and Islam," also worries about the impact of Said's *Orientalism*. In a sweeping review in the introduction to her recent edited volume, *Engendering Middle East Studies*, she argues that the field of Middle East gender studies has been negatively affected by the arguments of *Orientalism* in three ways: social analysis has been devalued in favor of analysis of representations; binary thinking about East and West has trained us to focus too much on the West and not enough on the internal heterogeneity of Middle Eastern societies; and, finally, it has also deflected attention away from "local institutions and cultural processes that are implicated in the production of gender hierarchies and in forms of subordination based on gender" (p. 18). Kandiyoti argues for the necessity of internal critique of gendered power in Middle Eastern societies.

Said, I believe, would not disagree. I even think he offers Middle East feminists and feminist scholars a model for the kinds of entangled political engagements they inevitably face. He has braved accusations and condemnations coming from many sides as he both criticizes the various forms and instruments of Western domination *and* the failures of Middle Eastern societies and political systems. What enables him to steer a clear course is the integrity of his position. He is a critic who is consistent in his advocacy of justice on a global scale, and of democratic principles, wherever. As feminists we would do well to be similarly consistent, aware of the complex ground we tread and criticizing the multiple forms of injustice we find.

## NOTES

An essay like this is perhaps more of a collective project than most. I am grateful to all those discussed in the essay, as well as all those working in Middle East gender studies, for giving me so much to think about. Edward Said provided the inspiration, of course, because an early version of the essay was presented in the president's plenary session on "Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Twenty Years Later" at the 1998 Middle East Studies

Association Meetings in Chicago I am grateful to Philip Khouri for inviting me to participate. Colleagues and friends in Cairo, such as Cynthia Nelson, Soraya Altorki, Huda Lutfi, and Hoda Elsadda, were generous with work and invitations to participate in discussions of gender studies. To Rema Hammami I am grateful for material from Birzeit University, Palestine I owe debts to Deniz Kandiyoti, Ayse Parla, and Berna Yazıcı for teaching me about feminism in Turkey, to Afsaneh Najmabadi for helping me think about Iran, and to Chris Walley for discussions that sharpened my awareness of the tricky stances feminists must take Finally, Tim Mitchell and the *Feminist Studies* editors gave this essay fine critical readings and made enormously helpful suggestions for revisions

1. Marilyn Strathern, "An Awkward Relationship: The Case of Feminism and Anthropology," *Signs* 12 (winter 1987): 276-93
2. Some have charged that Said had relatively little to say about women and gender in his book, although he was to correct for this slightly in his 1985 article, "Orientalism Reconsidered," *Race and Class* 27, no. 2 (1985) 1-15, and in his *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Knopf, 1993) It must be recalled that *Orientalism* was published as feminist scholarship was beginning to take off in the United States and at just the same moment that the first major readers on women in the Middle East came out Lois Beck and Nikki Keddie, eds., *Women in the Muslim World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), and Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan's *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1977)
3. Cynthia Nelson, "Old Wine in New Bottles: Reflections and Projections Concerning Research on 'Women in Middle Eastern Studies,'" in *The Contemporary Study of the Arab World*, ed. Earl Sullivan and Jacqueline Ismael (Edmonton, Alberta: Alberta University Press, 1991), 127-52
4. I discuss this in "The Marriage of Islamism and Feminism in Egypt. Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Postcolonial Cultural Politics," in my *Remaking Women. Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 243-69
5. Soraya Altorki, "Feminist Groups in Contemporary Egypt," *The Review of the Association for Middle East Women's Studies* 7, no. 4 (1998): 16
6. Lisa Taraki, Rita Giacaman, Penny Johnson, and Rema Hammami, *Palestinian Women: A Status Report* (Birzeit, Palestine: Women's Studies Program, Birzeit University, 1997).
7. Altorki, 16
8. Quoted in Altorki, 16.
9. See Hoda Elsadda, Somaya Ramadan, and Amina Abu-Bakr, eds., *Women's Time and Alternative Memory* (Zaman al-nisa' w al-dhakira al-badila) (Cairo: Women and Memory Forum, 1998).
10. The New Woman Research and Study Center has many projects besides this one on violence against women. For example, they commissioned and published, in Arabic and English, a comparative study, *The Feminist Movement in the Arab World: Intervention and Studies from Four Countries* (Cairo: Dar El-Mostaqbal Al Arabi, 1996)

As a result, Orientalism has engendered feminist scholarship and debate in Middle East studies. For Said, many Western scholars, orientalists, colonial authorities and writers systematically created the orientalist discourse and the misrepresentation of the Orient. George Orwell as a Western writer experienced imperialism at first hand while serving as an Assistant Superintendent of Imperial Police in Burma from 1922 to 1927. Orientalism Edward Said's signature contribution to academic life is the book Orientalism. It has been influential in about half a dozen established disciplines, especially literary studies (English, comparative literature), history, anthropology, sociology, area studies (especially middle east studies), and comparative religion. However, as big as Orientalism was to academia, Said's thoughts on literature and art continued to evolve over time, and were encapsulated in Culture and Imperialism (1993), a book which appeared nearly 15 years after Orientalism (1978). Put highly reductively, for Said, religion is the central factor that differentiates his modern Orientalism from whatever representations of the East were deployed during the Middle Ages. Modern Orientalism is indeed a set of structures inherited from the past, but these structures have been secularized, rationalized, and given a scientific terminology. [5]. Said, Orientalism, p. 121; William D. Hart, Edward Said and the Religious Effects of Culture (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 63; and Darren E. Dahl, "Criticizing 'Secular Criticism': Reading Religion in Edward Said and Kathryn Tanner," Studies in Religion/Sciences Religieuses, Vol. 31 (2002), pp. 361.