



Women and Islam: Myths, Apologies, and the Limits of Feminist Critique

By Ibtissam Bouachrine

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Muslim women of all ages, economic status, educational backgrounds, sexual orientations, and from different parts of historically Muslim countries suffer the kinds of atrocities that violate common understandings of human rights and are normally denounced as criminal or pathological, yet these actions are sustained because they uphold some religious doctrine or some custom blessed by local traditions. Ironically, while instances of abuse meted out to women and even female children are routine, scholarship about Muslim women in the post 9/11 era has rarely focused attention on them, preferring to speak of women's agency and resistance. Too few scholars are willing to tell the complicated, and at times harrowing, stories of Muslim women's lives. *Women and Islam: Myths, Apologies, and the Limits of Feminist Critique* radically rethinks the celebratory discourse constructed around Muslim women's resistance. It shows instead the limits of such resistance and the restricted agency given women within Islamic societies. The book does not center on a single historical period. Rather, it is organized as a response to five questions that have been central to upholding the 'resistance discourse': What is the impact of the myth of al-Andalus on a feminist critique? What is the feminist utility of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism? Is Islam compatible with a feminist agenda? To what extent can Islamic institutions, such as the veil, be liberating for women? Will the current Arab uprisings yield significant change for Muslim women? Through examination of these core questions, Bouachrine calls for a shift in the paradigm of discourse about feminism in the Muslim world.

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- Rank: #2349276 in Books
- Published on: 2015-12-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .50" h x 6.00" w x 8.90" l, .52 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 162 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

Women and Islam is both an important book and a wonderful and exciting text. It should be required reading for all courses in Middle East Studies that seek to impart a serious understanding of the real lives of Muslim women. The study of Muslim women has become a battleground where the academy seems more concerned with debating whether Islam is good or bad than with probing how this religious system actually works. By bringing together texts written by Europeans, as well as by Muslim men and women in pre-modern Muslim Iberia, Ibtissam Bouachrine shows that women's lives do not comprise a unified story captured either by those who see only unrelenting suffering and abuse or by those who find signs everywhere of their resistance. Through her creation of this literary dialogue—and only someone possessed of a rich set of linguistic skills and literary sensitivity can discharge this kind of scholarly task—Bouachrine is able to uncover the diversity of points of view about women and perhaps, more importantly, convey their meaning. (Donna Divine, Smith College)

This is literary criticism, intellectual history, and feminist theory at their best. In uncompromising fashion, Ibtissam Bouachrine's *Women and Islam* challenges received myths or partial pictures of both past and present Islam. Bouachrine courageously engages previous scholarship that had presented al-Andalus as a model of tolerance, early Islam as an ally of women's challenges to Arabian patriarchy, or the current Arab revolutions as potentially liberating for women, and submits these claims to a nuanced, impeccable feminist critique. This is a first-rate scholarly work with which specialists in feminist theory, Cultural Studies, both medieval and modern Arab literature, as well as history of religions, will grapple for years to come. (Idelber Avelar, Tulane University)

Women and Islam is a refreshing, well-written, and heartfelt critique of a series of modern myths, apologies, and celebratory discourses that have been constructed about the role and status of women in Islamic societies—medieval and modern. Beginning with a close reading of a wide range of pre-modern sources, Ibtissam Bouachrine skillfully demonstrates how modern myths and falsehoods about the Andalusian 'Golden Age' as well as the patronizingly protectionist Saidian discourse about Muslim culture have been used to silence criticism and stave off reform. *Women and Islam: Myths, Apologies, and the Limits of Feminist Critique* is a welcome and outstanding contribution to the field. (James E. Lindsay, Colorado State University)

About the Author

Ibtissam Bouachrine is associate professor in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and the director of Middle East studies at Smith College.

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The reason? Because this *Women and Islam: Myths, Apologies, and the Limits of Feminist Critique* is an unordinary book that the inside of the reserve waiting for you to snap this but latter it will shock you with the secret it inside. Reading this book next to it was fantastic author who have write the book in such amazing

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