

Presentation of M. Phil Thesis

Persistent Orientalism, Fragmented Souls-

A Critical Rethinking on the Return of Hijab through the Tunisian Case

(In English)



Overloaded with historical bearing and cultural-religious significance, hijab, or the Islamic veil undoubtedly exemplifies one of the most contestable female attires of our time, around which the so-called 'clash of civilization' initiated and aggravated, the governmental ban imposed and lifted, and the heated intellectual debate generated and continued in an on-going manner. The recent return of hijab among the Muslim women around the Islamic world in general, and the Arabic-speaking world in particular, being an eye-catching yet bewildering phenomenon in itself, offers us a fascinating site where new features of such a phenomenon can be carefully scrutinized under a critical eye, together with the tricky questions it has raised and new challenges posed.

In the current project, through an interview-based research on the newly return of hijab among college students in Tunisia, one of the most advanced Arab country in terms of women's rights, I am going to examine new features of this rapidly growing fad among the young and shed light on the intricate relation it has with pervious debates arising in a broader historical background. Furthermore, in my analysis of the moral hypocrisy as a vexing dilemma facing those overwhelmed by the trendy return to hijab, I am going to argue that it is the persistence of what termed by Said as Orientalism, with effective aid and compounding influence from the rapid growth of new medias like satellite TV and internet in the country, that has given rise to the current impasse for subjects of my research, represented in difficulty they encounter in reconciling the spiritual needs and secular pursuits on the one hand, and inability they reveal in contributing to public debate of the topic by resorting to more consistent reasoning and enlightened arguments on the other.

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