

Woman in the eyes of orientalists

Dr. Ali Taha Omar

Coordinator for the restoration sector at The Italian-Egyptian Center for Restoration and Archaeology CIERA, Egypt

alitahaomar@hotmail.com

Abstract:

Antoine Galan (1646 - 1715 AD), the French Orientalist had translated the book "One Thousand and One Nights" in 1704 to the French, and it was the first translation of this book in twelve volumes. This translation had led to open the eyes of the West to the East, and he was followed by the English orientalist Edward William Lane (1801-1876 AD) by his translation to the same book to English from 1838 to 1840, and then began the great interest in the East. The eastern woman had occupied the attention of the Orientalists since the beginning of the Western colonial conquest to the East, Westerners had a passion for two themes: the veil (hijab) and the harem. The veil (hijab) and the lack of deal of the Arabian women with the Orientalists made it difficult for seeing the Arabian woman, there was also her own world that was difficult to break into, it was the enclosed space in their houses controlled very well by the authority of men, also the Islamic architecture, and the architect attention to not to allow woman to be seen and must have her privacy, so we find broken doorways, haramlek, and mashrabiyya made it impossible to see the Arabian woman. This was the reason for the headstrong of the orientalist imagination, and hinting of exotic experiences, and sensuality with veiled women, so we see them obsessed with painting the women in their bedrooms in intimate and sexual positions, although many of them had not seen the eastern woman and never entered her bedroom. Comparing the paintings of the western woman, she was always painted busy in cooking, embroidery, knitting or any thing else, in the same time, the Eastern woman appears in her bedroom in intimate and sexual positions or putting make up while she was waiting for the man, or appears in the slave market completely naked and for sale, she looked like had no role in society only that. And we find the paintings that show the eastern woman in the market or the street, that show the eastern woman in his nature, without any make up, with a dress that cover all his body even she cover her head, we can see the veneration and the respect of the eastern woman, and that can give an evidence of the lying paintings of these orientalists who used their imagination to describe the eastern woman in her bedroom. *Lady Evelyn Cobbold*, the first English lady that performed Hajj who is died in 1964 said when Islam came, brought back to the woman her freedom, Islam makes her a partner with the man, makes her dividing every thing with him in life, and if the man is tired of working to earn what is necessary to live, also the woman is working for him at home, and Allah orders that the woman is like the man, even the man has to do more. By these words, Lady Evelyn Cobbold explained what's the real role of the eastern woman in society.

Keywords:

Orientalists, harem, women