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Article Review 3

“Reading the Other Women, Feminism, and Islam”

<http://www.tandfonline.com.jproxy.lib.ecu.edu/doi/abs/10.1080/15240650409349215#aHR0cDovL3d3dy50YW5kZm9ubGluZS5jb20uanByb3h5LmxpYi5lY3UuZWR1L2RvaS9wZGYvMTAuMTA4MC8xNTI0MDY1MDQwOTM0OTIxNUBAQDA>=

Amal Treacher begins by saying that usage of words like the West, Arab regions, and America are not clear in certain situations (2003:59). Treacher’s background is interesting as she notes that she has an Egyptian Muslim father while her mother is British Christian (2003:60). The point of the study is to show a distinction between Western views and Islamic views as the other view (Treacher 2003:60). The question that she proposes is how to be unbiased in writing about gender from both points of views without assuming the western values are superior (Treacher 2003:60). Gender from an Islamic perspective cannot be objectively studies from one outside the religion, and even then it’s enough to get the full picture as each country like Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan and different regions will have different accounts of gender construction (Treacher 2003:61). The overwhelming rhetoric of Islam that gender roles do not conflict and are supposed to be compatible in forming a community (Treacher 2003:62). The image of women is that of virtue and modesty, while the man is viewed more as sexually deviant (Treacher 2003:62). From this mindset, the clerics in Iran for example favor the chador (total cover) or in Afghanistan the burqa (cover including the face) is the popular dress (Treacher 2003:63).

The disagreement stems from secular feminists who see the religion of Islam as patriarchal, negative and therefore oppressive which needs to be opposed (Treacher 2003:63). While secular feminists oppose colonialism, they work in between ideas from the West as well as their own governments and through politics is where gender issues are presented (Treacher 2003:63). Muslim feminists see woman’s rights through the perspective of the religion as to them it offers serious liberation that is not offered through western feminism (Treacher 2003:64). The religion is the medium for women’s rights and their political voice in their respected countries (Treacher 2003:65). The argument is then presented in Iran’s religious revolution in which women are nowhere to be found in politics as there are no female judges (Treacher 2003:66). For this reason, some have argued that any discussion on gender under the religious or secular framework has to do with political power (Treacher 2003:66).

Research on gender usually focuses on women while men are ignored except if they are seen as patriarchal or ones who protect women (Treacher 2003:67). Treacher feels that the main reason for this is that during colonial rule in Arab regions, the man’s authority was not criticized (Treacher 2003:67). With colonial rule and tough economic situations, men who find it difficult to provide for their families face two strikes to their masculinity (Treacher 2003:68). Due to this, Palestinian women found it easier to go against colonial rule rather than ask for women’s rights as it was seen as a rupture against the more issue at hand which was occupation of their lands (Treacher 2003:68). They may face accusations of using western ideas which is a political question of allegiance or alliance with the colonial occupiers (Treacher 2003:69).

Studying gender differences from country to country seems to depend on the political situations of that specific region. Treacher notes that every country will have a different perspective depending on who is running the country. Arguments from both the secular and religious feminists will ultimately rely on how governments apply laws that favor one side over the other. However, countries that are not independent seem to be fighting two battles which display intersectionality as one can be female and Iranian. So not only is an Iranian facing an uphill battle with politics, they will face political decisions also based on their gender.

Reference:

Treacher, Amal. 2003. “Reading the Other Women, Feminism, and Islam.” *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 4 (1): 59-71.