

Journal of Consumer Culture (in press)

Book Review

Reina Lewis, *Muslim Fashion: Contemporary Style Cultures*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015. 400 pp. \$28.95 (pbk).

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Reina Lewis examines Muslim women's hijab (i.e., veiling) as 'fashion', a phenomenon that prevails in the contemporary global consumer culture. Her central argument is that the over-politicization of hijab, particularly in the West, has deterred not only the public but also academics from understanding a plethora of dynamics that both influence and are influenced by hijab as fashion. While this overlook is largely related to the post-9/11 signification of hijab as Islamism, Lewis holds Orientalism equally accountable for the underrepresentation of hijab in the fashion discourse. As the author argues, traditionally, fashion has been associated with Western modernity, assuming no place for fashion among Muslims and confining hijab to ethnicity and religiosity. Following the recent rise of Islam's visibility in the West, hijab has been largely viewed as exclusion from and/or opposition to a progressive modernity, manifested in the West-centric consumer culture.

Throughout the book, Lewis argues that hijab is not a fixed entity (e.g., religious or ethnic identity); rather, it is a time and space bound phenomenon that relates to multiple aspects of individuals' private and social life. Using visual data, interviews, archived sources, and observations, accumulated over 10 years of fieldwork in Western Europe and North America (WENA) and Turkey, the author depicts the transitions of hijab in relation to socioeconomic, cultural, technological, and political conditions of society. By describing her book as "a history of the present", Lewis assists her readers to make sense of a wide range of discussions that, at first glance, may seem to lack coherence.

The book is divided into seven chapters, excluding the Introduction and Conclusion. In the Introduction, Lewis uses the example of state secularism in France (*laïcité*: the mutual prohibition of the state and religion in influencing each other's affairs) and Turkey (*Laiklik*: active neutrality of the state toward religion) to explain the reason why hijab has been politicized as a threat to secularism. While for France, hijab symbolizes the imposition of an alien religious regime, for Turkey it signifies return to an underdeveloped past. In this confrontation, hijab is not compatible with neoliberalism that necessitates women's unconditional participation and competition in global markets.

Chapter 1, "From Multiculture to Multifaith", explores fashion's roles in the Muslim-minority West. Muslim young women use fashion to de-ethnicize Islam,

eradicate accusations of backwardness and extremism, and project new identities compatible with the mainstream consumer culture. They also use the hijab fashion to individualize religion and differentiate themselves from their parents. In Chapter 2, “The Commercialization of Islamic Dress”, Lewis focuses on the development of Islamic fashion in Turkey in the 1980s. In spite of their rapid development, and perhaps due to the historically institutionalized spatial definition of modernity, hijab retailers are absent from malls that are meant to represent Turkish secularism. Yet, hijabi women are significantly present in such spaces. The Islamic fashion in Turkey owes its success to the catalogues and their use of Caucasian models that aestheticize and stylize hijab as modern.

Chapter 3, “Muslim Lifestyle Magazines”, reveals how lifestyle magazines seek to include Muslim women in the global consumer culture and challenge stereotypes about Muslims. While some outlets (e.g., Alef) promote luxury, others (e.g., Aziza) are focused on creative styling. Such magazines raise a host of questions in relation to the paradoxical nature of Islamic fashion; that is, how can Muslims resolve the issues of environmental damage, sexuality, ethical dilemmas, and unfair distribution of wealth that are associated with consumerism? In Chapter 4, “Taste and Distinction”, Lewis argues that women’s choice of hijab is also influenced by their habitus. Muslim women cannot escape others’ judgements. For example, while a white convert to Islam can be seen as infidel to Western values, a Muslim black immigrant can be judged for

belonging to an ethnic and a religious minority group. Similarly, Muslim women, especially from diverse sociocultural backgrounds, tend to judge one another for the (in)appropriateness of their hijab and religiosity. From a social capital perspective, these dynamics can reproduce inter/intra-group conflicts and discourses of power and stigma.

Chapter 5, “Hijabi Shop Workers in Britain”, explains the relationship between hijabi women and their workplace. For example, in the UK, where multiculturalism allows a certain degree of religious freedom, hijabi women are able to adapt their hijab in relation to the corporate values of their organizations by wearing colorful scarves that reflect corporate brand identities. Likewise, hijab retailers in Turkey facilitated employment for hijabi women who would have to unveil in order to be employed in state departments. In Chapter 6, “Modesty Online”, Lewis explains how the Internet has paved the way for the emergence of female entrepreneurship. Many women nowadays run online businesses in the hijab fashion sector. Through weblogs, forums, and social media, the Internet has also empowered women to develop diverse discourses on religion that in the offline environment exclusively belonged to me.

In Chapter 7, “Commodification and Community”, focus is on the commercialization of Islam through Islamic branding and marketing. Lewis argues that commercial Islamic fashion discourses are often aimed at generating new Muslim consumers. Although an inherent risk of such discourses is to signal cultural homogeneity, Muslim female entrepreneurs’ creativity in the fashion industry is

promising in terms of establishing dialog between different cultural and faith groups. This positive aspect of the hijab fashion is reiterated in the Conclusion where Lewis hopes that developments in the fashion will make people understand that they have more in common than thought before.

Overall, given the extensive engagement of the author with academic literatures from a variety of disciplines, the book provides many valuable insights on understanding hijab as fashion. Despite its theoretical and empirical richness, the book's focus on WENA and Turkey at the expense of other Muslim-majority and non-secular countries can be seen as a main weakness. Readers may wonder how hijab as fashion works and evolves in the everyday life of women in these societies. Although established scholars and doctoral students in different disciplines (e.g., cultural studies, sociology, consumer research, marketing, and anthropology) can benefit from the book, those who are not/less familiar with Islam and Muslim geographies and those whose research focuses on fashion and female consumers can find the book thought provoking.