The Faculty of Arts International Conference

The East in The Eyes of The West
The East in the Eyes of Western Women Travellers of the 18th and 19th Centuries: Solidarity and Understanding the East

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Abstract

Women travellers from Great Britain, France, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, America and Greece explored, visited, worked and resided in regions of the East that were considered “proper and safe for dynamic men only” (Smith, 1887). The mammoth body of writings by women travellers of the 18th and 19th centuries, that claim to be eyewitness descriptions of the female microcosms, provide a rich and detailed interpretation and feminine version of the Orient. European and American women identified with the so-called “Other”, expressed their solidarity and participated in Muslim women’s daily domestic life, customs, female social gatherings, religious celebrations and feasts. As a result, they accused male travellers- who had written about domestic manners in the East and the position of women in Islam of misinforming and misleading their readers, stressing that their accounts were based on second or third-hand information, their unrestrained imagination and exotic fantasies.
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