



THORSTEN BOTZ-BORNSTEIN

# VEILS, NUDITY, AND TATTOOS

The New Feminine Aesthetic





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*The New Feminine Aesthetics*

Thorsten Botz-Bornstein

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## Introduction

This is a philosophical book about two aesthetic devices that seem to be diametrically opposed: nudity and veiling. Tattoos settle somewhere in the middle between both. At first sight, tattoos, nudity, and veils<sup>1</sup> do not seem to have much in common except for the fact that all three have become more frequent, more visible, and more dominant in connection with aesthetic presentations of women over the last thirty years. Still there are links. In 2013, Nicola Formichetti, the new artistic director of the fashion brand Diesel, launched his first advertisement campaign called “Dieselreboot” using bold iconography employing tattoos, nudity, and veils. What can appear as an artistic whim is held together by profound relationships that this book attempts to reveal through a conceptual analysis.

In October 2011, twenty-year-old Aliaa El Mahdy posted her nude photo on her blogspot page, arousing the anger of the conservative part of Muslim society. In this photo, El Mahdy, dis-objectifies and desexualizes her body *not* through the device of decontextualization, but rather through an act of “semantic inversion” by presenting her body precisely in a way that is *normally associated with objectification*. This she has in common with many tattooed women and “re-veiled” women. The example shows that today more than ever it is necessary to think “woman” outside those boxes that attribute her to either conservatism or progressivism. In other words, tattoos, nudity, and veils need to be wrenched from essentialized discourses that look *either* for the authentic, natural, traditional, and morally correct expression *or* for its contrary.

The present book sketches the image of a woman who is not only sexually emancipated and confident, but also more and more aware of her cultural heritage. By doing so, she takes an unorthodox approach towards three phe-

nomena that conventional ways of thinking tend to see as unrelated or even opposed.

What do tattoos, nudity, and veils have in common? All three concern the skin, are unconventional fashion objects, establish identity, and are linked to certain taboos. All three are private and public, humiliating and empowering, as well as backward and progressive according to the interpretation to which they are submitted. Furthermore, all three phenomena have considerably changed during the last thirty years, which makes comparisons possible. Nudity no longer represents a natural state of the body but rather detracts from nature. Still, it has a highly ideological value. On the radical feminist protest group FEMEN's posters, one can read "Naked Truth" or "Nudity Is Freedom." This book's purpose is to show that the veil has become part and parcel of a new script of body culture similar to nudity and tattoos. Though nudity still decolonizes the body, the nude can no longer be seen as "pure"; and tattoos and veils have developed in parallel with this cultural shift. As a result, all three phenomena need to be read in the same context. The chapters of this book will reveal many paradoxes revolving around respect, modesty, sexuality, female power, and female non-power. It will become clear that the only logic able to approach this world of paradoxes is the complex logic of Third Wave feminism that challenges dualism by recognizing diversity, particularity, and embodiment.

In order to understand the new constellations by which tattoos, nudity, and veils are determined, certain tropes need to be deconstructed beforehand. These include the trope of Western civilization vs. Oriental barbarism, the trope of the Muslim woman as the ultimate victim of an Islamic patriarchy, but also the trope of covering as an advancement of civilization. It is not enough to insist on tradition and to refuse so-called Western values.

Against this background, the questions asked in this book turn out to have a broad anthropological scope: What relationships do tattoos, nudity, and veils have with civilization? Is nudity itself "primitive" and does the covering (veiling) of nudity signify a step towards civilization or a step away from it? Do tattoos effectuate a shift from the primitive to civilization or does the untattooed, pure skin represent a supreme civilizational value even in contemporary postmodern culture? What will become obvious is that in contemporary culture neither the naked nor the nude can be seen as "pure." Nudity no longer functions as an ideal of civilization (or non-civilization) in the classical sense. As a consequence, the cancellation of essentialized notions of nature that were still current during modernity has also inaugurated a new approach towards tattoos and nudity.

Conventional comparative approaches might hold that tattoos and nudity are operating within the same system of signifiers because both have to do with the *baring* of the body and have sexual connotations for just this reason, while veiling consists of the *covering* of the body, and thus cancels those

connotations. However, this view is simplistic because in terms of sexual economy, baring and covering are not antagonistic. As a matter of fact, critics of the veil often condemn the veil for the same reason for which others (or they themselves) condemn nudity—instead of reducing sexualization, the veil can foster sexualization. This becomes particularly clear in a 2001 article in *The Guardian*, where Polly Toynbee announces “that the veil arouses lasciviousness: more moderate versions of the garb dull, uniform coat to the ground and the plain headscarf have much the same effect, inspiring lascivious thoughts they are designed to stifle” (5 October, quoted from Afshar 2008: 420).

It is also possible to argue the opposite case by using another set of semantic links. For example, one can argue that tattoos and veils are similar because both emanate an uncanny power affronting “liberal” subjects and filling them with horror because both represent (relatively) permanent body alterations. (Of course, in the case of the veil this concerns only the public appearance of the body. See more on this below.) More radically, what tattoos and the veil have in common is that the covering they represent can be perceived as a device that displaces and destroys the items it covers. The tattoo as much as the veil “can be thought of as a poisoned name” (Fleming 1997: 36); that is, as the Socratic *pharmakon* or as “the Derridean supplement to the (interior) subject that is located on the surface” (39). Juliet Fleming says this about tattoos, but it applies also to veils (at least in the eyes of many people).

In this case, nudity seems to be the only remedy that frees us from both tattoos and veils; it seems to be the “natural” signifier that can cancel all “bad” connotations. Normally, nudity can reestablish the subject in its natural form and rearrange the distorted hierarchical order between surface and center. However, what this book shows is that in praxis, this kind of natural degree-zero nudity cannot be obtained either, because: (1) Tattoos and veils are indelible (tattoos cannot be deleted and veils cannot be taken off in public once they have been assumed by a devout subject), and (2) “Natural nudity,” as a utopian vision of harmony between nature and civilization aspired by nudist movements emerging in the 1920 in Europe, has become a very difficult option because in a postmodern situation, nudity has become a supplement or poison in its own right. Nudity, in the way it appears today in the media, in the streets, in locker rooms, and on beaches, no longer represents the healthy natural state of the body but rather detracts from nature. This book provides examples, showing that at present nudity has become not more than the bleak vision of a utopian but impossible truth.

The theoretical conclusion is that we are very far removed from Plato’s conception of the body as a covering of the soul. In a postmodern context, the body—no matter if tattooed, nude, or veiled—is merely one means among others of expressing cultural messages. All metaphysical conceptions sug-

gesting that signs should always refer to a depth of meaning (situated in the soul) are overcome. The situation can be summarized through the sentence “The skin does not convey meaning; it stands in the place of meaning.” The sentence is a paraphrase of Jacques Lacan’s “Language does not convey meaning, it stands in the place of meaning” that has been taken up by Jean Baudrillard in another context (1990: 6).

By talking about veils, tattoos, and nude skin in a psychoanalytical context we approach indeed a concept that confirms the above reflections. It is psychoanalyst Didier Anzieu’s concept of the skin as a thinking envelope underlying the formation of the ego. Also Anzieu complained that “since the Renaissance western thought is clouded by an epistemological theme: to know means to crack the bark in order to reach the kernel. But this theme has exhausted itself” (1995: 31).

The radical and paradoxical consequence is that within a semantic constellation that no longer recognizes the “absence of signs” as a natural and naked “degree zero” of the body, nudity is not different from veils. This is why Ruth Barcan writes about nudity: “For early thinkers, nakedness was often a lost purity, perhaps irretrievably corrupted, and clothes a sad necessity. For postmodern thinkers, both nakedness and clothing are “impure,” but in a new sense: they are culturally and historically produced and experienced” (2004: 54).

The purpose of this book is to view the most recent developments of global culture as a coherent body in which resistance and humiliation of women are linked in an oftentimes curious fashion, and whose dynamics depends on those contradictions. As a result, the oppositions “veil vs. no veil,” “covered vs. bared,” “non-sexual vs. sexual,” and “objectified vs. subjectified” are no longer pertinent in a contemporary context. In the same way, it is impossible to speak, as does French psychoanalyst Élisabeth Roudinesco, of the unveiled state as a “natural” psychological process and conclude that girls would lose “their feminine identity if their bodies could not be seen” (from J. Scott 2007: 158); or it is impossible to call the veil, as does Iranian dissident feminist Chahdortt Djavann, a form of “psychological, sexual and social mutilation” (ibid.). However, neither veil nor non-veil is nature, but both are culture. The veil is simply too similar to the tattoo, which has also been dismissed as being “against nature,” but which seems to have been recuperated by contemporary youth culture *for just that reason*. Interestingly, the veil can also be conceived *as nature*, as is well demonstrated by a comment from the wife of an Amal militia member in Lebanon who held that “the veil reflects the natural differences between men and women” (Lazreg 2009: 69). This statement can be contrasted with French feminist Sarah Kofman’s rebuttal of Sigmund Freud’s idea that “in seeking to veil herself, the woman would only be imitating nature, which has always already cov-

ered over her genitals with pubic hair” (Kofman 1980/1985: 59). Kofman’s claim will be discussed in chapter 4.

On the other hand, pro-veiling fanatics are just as mistaken as Roudinesco if they hold that veiling fosters civilization because it *overcomes* nature. What the no-veil position aims to obtain is not natural primitiveness, but a sort of civilized nudist innocence towards the unveiled body, which does not know any shame.

For all those reasons, in this book, veiling and nudity will not be presented as opposites, but as communicating branches of the same discourse. The temptation to see veils and nudity as opposites is great but represents a dangerous trap leading, for example, to the construction of “liberating nudity” and “oppressive veiling” as rigid concepts. However, the bikini is not necessarily more liberating than the veil. First it is important to understand that both veiling and nudity are unique expressions deriving their power from an inner self-contradiction. Both can be seen as humiliations and as empowerment. This they have in common with tattoos. Second, both possess metaphorical powers that are disproportionate with their original significations, especially when it comes to religio-metaphysical statements. “The naked truth” or “veiling the truth” are strikingly handy expressions, though they say nothing about nudity or veiling in concrete anthropological contexts. Their metaphorical power can easily be taken for reality, but this is a mistake.

At present, the symbolism of both nudity and the veil is increasingly stretched to include the realm of politics. It has been said, for example, that “Muslims are on a crusade to *veil* anything that threatens their faith, whether it be Western democracy, history (associated here with polytheism and powerful goddesses), or simply any form of change” (Majid Anouar: 329, my italics). The metaphor of nudity can be used in a similarly metaphorical way as a political expression. It is the radical character of those expressions that can make them either convincing or annoying.

## VEILS, TATTOOS, NUDITY

### Veils

While veiling<sup>2</sup> had once been almost done away with by many modernizing authorities in Islamic countries in the 1950s and could appear almost as a matter of the past by the 1970s in some countries, in the 1980s one could observe the beginning of a “re-veiling” process that would undergo different stages. During a first phase in the early 1980s, many women began to dress “like nuns before Vatican II” (J. Williams 1980: 73). However, something else changed soon afterwards. Islamic dress would be adapted to the modern fashion situation as young, urban, middle-class women began to cover themselves in a completely new style. Suddenly it became appropriate that “an

orthodox Muslim woman could with just as great propriety wear a simple dress of modern type, with long sleeves, black stockings, and a nylon scarf tied over her hair, especially if she did it without jewelry or make-up” (75). In Turkey, so-called *tesettür* (veiling fashion) combines veiling with the standards of beauty as well as of marketing methods intrinsic to modern international fashion. In many Muslim countries, a new Islamic fashion industry offers “modern” (that is, “Western”) clothes that are compatible with religious standards of modesty. The phenomenon could be observed in many places where this practice had previously been almost nonexistent, such as Bangladesh (cf. Sandikci and Ger 2010: 11). The veil could even reach the upscale areas of the fashion business. For example, since 2012, the New York-based modeling agency Underwraps, set up by fashion designer Nailah Lymus, specializes in Muslim females. In some way, the veil has undergone a development similar to the tattoo, which went from counter-culture to glamour.

In the eyes of some, all this has led to the “desanctification of the veil” through which this symbol will end up being “just a piece of fabric” (Wassef 2001: 119). In the end, the veil might become an empty signifier helping to insert the female body onto the world of consumer capitalism. International lifestyle labels such as *Styleislam*, which distribute not only fashionable street wear but also accessories like mouse pads and coffee mugs with Islamic messages, might indeed indicate such a banalization of religious references in the lives of young Muslims. This is even more obvious in the music scene where mainstream youth culture includes Muslim punk and hard rock or even hip-hop as represented, for example, by the Danish band Outlandish.

At the same time, many women see the veil as a feminist tool of empowerment. In principle, the idea of the empowering veil is not new and can even be found outside feminist contexts. The veil has often been related to sexual seduction empowering women; and sometimes the mere fact of seeing without being seen has been perceived as an act of liberation. A Swedish woman wearing an all-covering veil in Saudi Arabia has thus reported: “That was the biggest sense of freedom I have ever had. . . . You are like a spy not taking part and you can pull faces” (Franks 2000: 921). Many women point out this kind of empowering effect. Even anti-Muslim campaigner Ayaan Hirsi describes her early experiences of veiling like this:

The hijab I draped over my scrawny frame was overwhelmingly enveloping: there was simply nothing left to see except a small face and two hands. When I arrived in school, I took off my robe and folded it up inside my desk. Then, at the end of the day, I modestly unfolded it and put it on—and suddenly I was interesting, mysterious, powerful. (Hirsi 2007: 74)



## Tattoos

The increased use of tattoos by women in Muslim and non-Muslim countries has developed in parallel with the phenomenon of veiling and is just as striking. Tattoos are no longer restricted to biker and sailor culture but have been sanctioned by the mainstream of liberal societies. For the past thirty years, the West has been enjoying a “tattoo renaissance” (Rubin 1988) during which tattooing underwent a “transition from a (generally disvalued) craft to a (partially legitimated) art form” (Sanders 1989: 24). At present, tattoos are marketed as fashion items and to a large extent (though not exclusively), the fashion aspect of tattoos is responsible for the increase of female tattoos. While a woman with a full-sleeve tattoo might still be socially “out,” society has become relatively tolerant towards smaller tattoos. In 1996, in America, tattoo parlors were among the top six growth businesses (American Business Information, Inc. 1996) and women made up almost half of those who get tattooed (Armstrong 1991: 215). In 2012, more women than men were tattooed in the United States (23% of women against 19% of men). (Lokke 2013).

However, in spite of their fashionable outlook, tattoos have not entirely lost their “mystical” appeal. In this sense they continue to stick out of mainstream culture. Though many people might wear tattoos merely as decorations (and are increasingly doing so), a “fundamentalist” spell continues to permeate the tattooing business. A recent tattoo e-handbook offering practical advice to anybody interested in tattoos overrides mere beauty arguments right at the beginning and lists the following as good reasons for getting a tattoo: “Self Expression, Tribal Identity, Spiritual Growth, For Spiritual Protection, Marking Important Events, Totem Symbols and Animals, As a Memorial, Enhancing Sexuality, To Make People Laugh” (Perry 1933: 14).

## Nudity

Like tattoos, nudity has become more visible than ever, especially on European beaches and on the internet. Obviously, we are talking here about public nudity and nudity as a social phenomenon and not about private nudity at home. On the internet, nudity often appears as pornography, which is today—in most countries—surprisingly easily accessed. Such a banalization of pornography would have been unthinkable only two decades ago. Female nudity is also more and more liberally used in advertising as well as in the media in general because “consumer culture permits and encourages the unashamed display of the human body” (Featherstone quoted in Barcan 2004: 61).

However, public nudity emerges also outside the realms governed by capitalist market economy. Having somehow disappeared from the counter-

cultural scene where it was very present in the 1920s/1930s (in the form of nudist movements) as well as in the 1960s/1970s (in the form of a nudism amalgamated with “hippy culture”), nudity has most recently reappeared in the context of almost exclusively female protests such as those staged by the Ukrainian feminist group FEMEN. On the posters of FEMEN, one can read “Naked Truth,” “Nudity is Freedom,” “I Am a Woman, Not an Object,” and “Undress and Win.” As in the 1960s, this activism speaks out against the objectification of women and proclaims women’s right to do what they want with their bodies. Now as before, nudity decolonizes the body. Based on this symbolical effect, it is also used to defend a whole range of other socio-political issues that are not immediately related to the body or to women’s liberation. The concept of protest nudity reemerged also in so-called Slut Walks that have been held in major cities all over the world in recent years and whose aim is to point out that women held responsible for rape because of what they are wearing are not sluts because if they were, then all women would be sluts, since anyone can be victimized regardless of what they are wearing. The “International Go Topless Day” (or “International Go Topless Jihad Day”), held since 2008, has a similar function. It falls each year on the Sunday closest to Women’s Equality Day. Even in China, Ai Xiaoming, 2010 laureate of the Simone de Beauvoir Prize for the liberty of women, posted nude photos of herself on the web in order to protest against the lax treatment of some rapists and pedophiles.

Public nudity can also be used in artistic contexts. Italian artist Vanessa Beecroft employs female nudity as an expression of female empowerment. Much of her performance art consists of the display of living nude young women, who look similar as they wear identical wigs, pantyhose, or shoes. Usually they stand motionless. In April 2005, one hundred women stood still in Berlin’s Neue Nationalgalerie for three hours. In those performances, the nude women appeared very much as cold and severe angels: Their bored, indifferent, and impertinent look reduced the spectators to helpless, confused, and embarrassed beings (cf. Agamben 2011). One set of Beecroft’s photographs presents a mock-fascist army of blonde, nude women in a dark space.

A remotely related concept of protest nudity is the Suicide Girls website (founded in 2001), which functions as a soft-porn website and at the same time as a woman-oriented interactive platform designed to inspire confidence and to help women build personality. Through its moral ambiguity, the site aspires to subvert the “traditionally gendered consumption of pornographic images” (Earle and Sharp 2007: 13) because (at least officially) Suicide Girls practices resistance as a part of the erotic aesthetic, which represents an attempt at freeing democratic society of the hypocritical and oppressive barrier to the nude body. The Suicide Girl phenomenon of “alternative erotica” will be examined in chapters 7 and 8.

Male nudity, on the other hand, as it has been presented in the media in recent years, does not empower, but more often disarms and embarrasses the *nude subject*. In 1997, an advertisement by Lee jeans showed a woman wearing stiletto-heeled boots with her toe resting on the naked buttocks of a prostrate man. The text reads: “Put the boot in.” The pictures of naked, tortured males in Abu Ghraib prison had a similar effect, especially since the torturers—always fully dressed in military uniforms—were sometimes female. Beecroft has explored the possibilities of entirely male performances with the U.S. Navy in San Diego and with the U.S. Silent Service at the Gallery Intrepid in New York (in 1999 and 2000). However, those males were never nude. Though following similar principles, the photos differ from those obtained with female models because the encounter between models and audience is of another nature. Shame, expectations, interests, and power relations follow different rules when male bodies are encountered.

The most remarkable fact is that female protest nudity has also spread to the conservative Middle East. In October 2011, twenty-year-old Aliaa El Mahdy posted a nude photo of herself on her blog, asking those who oppose her act to burn their own bodies that they obviously so much despise in order to “rid yourself of your sexual complexes.” A year later, in Turkey, four Ukrainian FEMEN activists staged their trademark bare-breasted protests in Istanbul to demonstrate against domestic violence in Turkey. Still six months later, in March 2013, Amina Tyler, a nineteen-year-old Tunisian woman posted two photos of herself topless on Facebook with the words “Fuck your morals” and “My body belongs to me and is not the source of anyone’s honor” written in English and in Arabic across her chest. Meanwhile, El Mahdy has founded an Egyptian branch of FEMEN.

FEMEN has increasingly appropriated anti-Muslim themes, especially in their Paris-based actions. In the French television documentary *Nos seins, nos armes! (Our Breasts, Our Weapons!)* (2013) by Nadia El Fani and Caroline Fourest, one sees FEMEN activists crossing the Arab quarter of Paris, employing burqas in their performances. The burqa is declared to not be a dress for women but “a dress made by men for women, which thus symbolizes the negation of women.” FEMEN have also demonstrated against the sharia. At the end of the documentary one sees the group of FEMEN demonstrators colliding with French far-right activists who beat them as the former invite themselves to a demonstration against gay marriage. The images, which are uncannily similar to what could be expected should FEMEN appear in Egypt or some other Muslim country, surprise the film’s older feminist commentators who had led similar actions in Paris in the 1960s. At that time, nude protests were met with more tolerance.

The recent Arab revolutions must also be seen as sexual revolutions as the nudity theme plays a part in it. Paul Moreira, author of the French television documentary *Sex, Salafists and Arab Spring*, depicts sexuality in Arab coun-

tries with the revolution as a backdrop, and shows how much religious radicalization, male frustration, gender segregation, and harassment of women are linked. In his opinion, “political democracy, just as much as sexuality and the place of women, will be a determining element showing how much control Islamists can get over society.”

It can be concluded that the veil is caught in a liberty-oppression (protection-imprisonment) paradox that academic discourses have great difficulties disentangling. However, in reality, the constellation is not really unusual as tattoos have been found to be caught in a similar paradox. Nancy Kang reports that tattooed women have been asked “to cover up your body art not for us but for yourself, for your own protection and feminine integrity” (Kang 2012: 66). The present analytical confrontation of the veil with nudity and tattoos attempts to clarify this situation. I show in this book that tattoos, nudity, and veils can be traced to similar social and psychological patterns and that it is possible to establish an ontology of veiling through comparisons with nudity and tattoos. This comparative concept is relatively new. As a matter of fact, in the past, corresponding parallels between tattoos, nudity, and veils have occasionally been evoked by scholars though none of them has analyzed them much further. Homa Hoodfar, for example, mentions the frequently encountered idea that women who veil might be “mutilating their bodies” (Hoodfar 2003: 26), which brings the veil indeed close to what some people believe to be the truth about tattoos. Marnia Lazreg detects a similarity between veiling and the presentation of nudity in magazines because both reduce women to their sex: “If advertising in the West thrives on depictions of naked or semi-naked women, it also finds fertile ground in representations of women with hijabs in Iran” (Lazreg 2009: 108). However, such analogies are not only rudimentary, they also simplify a reality in which the status and the use of tattoos, nudity, and veils is extremely complex.

### COOLNESS

The term “coolness” is central in this book and I use it in two ways. First it is derived from Marshall McLuhan’s conceptual system of “hot” and “cool” media. Then it is based on the premises of African American thinkers who wrote about coolness as an aesthetical and ethical peculiarity necessitated by the African American cultural and economic situation. The aesthetics of cool developed mainly in the form of a behavioral attitude practiced by black men in the United States at the time of slavery and residential segregation. Joel Dinerstein sees as essential for cool behavior the control of emotions, to remain relaxed in a performance, to develop a unique style, and to be “emotionally expressive within an artistic frame of restraint” (Dinerstein 1999: 241).

The instances of veiling shown in this book—reaching from protest veiling in Western countries to slogans such as “Islam and the hip hop nation” or “transglobal hip hop umma” (Anderson 2005: 273)—demonstrate that coolness can be transferred across different cultural contexts. Muslim identity values *can* enter into a transcultural relation with a concept of coolness inspired by the African American struggle for freedom. In ideological terms, the resulting constellation is complex because here a non-Western female topic (veiling) is discussed in a context that cannot be limited to that of “Third World feminism” because the comparison addresses not merely other women but also men (that is, African American men who were operating with the concept of coolness) and above that, men who are living in the first world. I admit that such associations of feminist topics with a “masculinist” theme are rare but I do not see why it cannot be handled correctly in theoretical terms.

## THE CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 introduces the veil by submitting it to an analysis inspired by McLuhan’s analysis of sunglasses. Both the veil and sunglasses aim to disrupt gazes, they enact a selective covering of the face, but in the former case only the eyes are uncovered whereas in the latter the face is visible while the eyes are covered.

Chapter 2 reflects upon those women who see their veiling as an act of resistance and liberation bearing a link with feminist strategies in general. My argument is that those pro-veiling positions can be much better understood when being read through Third Wave feminist thought. Both pro-veiling positions and Third Wave feminism<sup>3</sup> organize their fight by looking for means of empowerment in appearance and both contradict preceding anti-ideologies, which are anti-sex ideologies of earlier feminist generations for the former and hardline anti-veiling ideologies for the latter. The “complexity” as well as the “contradiction of lives” that Rebecca Walker puts forward as a subject of interest for Third Wave feminism need to be examined against the background established by the tattoo-nudity-veiling triangle. This is necessary especially today in a world where the arguably most famous Third Wave feminists are FEMEN. Also, Walker confirms that instead of perfect womanhood, feminism can only create “identities that accommodate ambiguity and multiple positionalities: including more than excluding, exploring more than defining, searching more than arriving” (Walker 1998: xxxiii).

In chapter 3, I compare veiling with some of the principle virtues of African American coolness: moderation and self-control. Can the veil function as a tool of cool? Does this piece of cloth maintain the crucial balance

between visibility and non-visibility, assimilation and cultural resistance, submission and subversion, control and the inability to control?

Chapter 4 presents the debate on veiling through French feminist Sarah Kofman's (1934–1994) reflections on the “respect for women.” In Kofman's opinion, the respect for women humiliates and elevates women at the same time because “the respect for women is always the moral and glorious flip-side of men's ‘misogyny.’” The veil turns out to be a highly ambiguous item for exactly those reasons.

Chapter 5 explores the phenomenon of spatial segregation and compares African American segregated space with that of gender separation increasingly practiced in Muslim countries. My thesis is that in both cases segregation is resolved through the creation of a “cool space” of playful transgression.

With chapter 6 begin the reflections of the veil against tattoos and nudity. This chapter establishes parallels and differences in a systematic fashion.

Chapter 7 analyses the spectacularly rising popularity of tattoos by showing that they have become a spatial project in the largest sense: The participation of tattoos in the creation of social space is different from that of tattoos before the Tattoo Renaissance. What took place is a shift from tattoos to body graffiti.

Chapter 8 disentangles the notions of the “savage” and the “civilized” in the cultural discourse on tattoos. Aiming to examine the position that sees tattoos through the perspective of the savage as opposed to civilization, this chapter looks at the particular link that tattoos maintain with nudity. Contrary to what had happened in former times, tattoos are now used in order to reinstall the body as a civilized entity: The tattooed body is never entirely naked and can never be entirely savage.

Chapter 9 considers the role of men with regard to fetishism and nature.

I would like to end this introduction with a colorful picture of the new body culture drawn by Rebecca Walker, which summarizes the subject of this book:

Whether it's multiple piercings, femme girls with no hair, two-foot-high head wraps, or skin covered with tats that the whole idea of “clear and blemish free” seems hopelessly naïve, it is obvious that as a result of artistic and political movements new and different scripts are being written. The body, the blank page waiting for words, and beauty, a subjective idea looking for a location have been liberated to meet up in a variety of unique and often surprising ways. Barbie, with her pert nose and shoulder-length blonde hair, no longer reigns supreme. (Walker 1998: xv–xvi)

It should be mentioned that, by now, Barbie has been submitted to a new aesthetics in her own right, this time based on Muslim culture. The Muslim Barbie comes with *abaya* and prayer rug. Trying to escape Western ideolo-

gies of consumption and moral laxness, the veiled Barbie follows the rules of religious correctness and piety. Interestingly, a Muslim woman interviewed by Emma Tarlo points out that a Barbie doll scheme is not alien to, but *inherent* in Muslim ideologies. According to her, it is not simply imposed by the West: “The ‘Muslim world’ is guilty of distorting women’s roles by promoting either ‘the self-sacrificing mother’ or ‘the Barbie doll thing,’ both of which she feels miss the essence of Islam’s real emphasis, which is on gender balance and complementarity” (Tarlo 2007: 26). Is Barbie really more Muslim than Muslim clerics are ready to admit?

## NOTES

1. Though I attempt in this book to cancel the ideological weight clinging to the term “veil” and to examine the phenomenon in purely aesthetic and phenomenological terms, I decided not to reject the term veil altogether and to replace it with the word “headscarf” or “covering” (though these terms would certainly be more appropriate in the Turkish context that will be evoked). The reason is that the metaphorical power of the word “veil” is essential to the present argument. The word “hijab,” which will also be used, is here defined as the headscarf worn in an Islamic way covering also the neck and leaving only the face visible.

2. In general, when talking about the veil in this book, my intention is not to establish an idealized version of the “veiled woman” in the way in which “ethnocentric universalism”—so much criticized by feminists like Chandra Talpade Mohanty—tries to invent the group of prototypical “Third World Women” as if they were “an already constituted, coherent group with identical interests and desires, regardless of class, ethnic, or racial location, or contradictions” (Mohanty 2003: 21). As a matter of fact, media and culture industry do already enough to erase class, ethnicity, nationality, piety, sexuality, and politics in terms of gender (cf. Gökariksel and McLarney 2010: 6). It is clear that the veil has different meanings for different people.

3. The generally accepted time periods for the three feminism waves are 1848 to 1923 for the first wave, 1960 to 1979 for the second wave, and 1995 to the present for the third wave. Though occurring successively, the waves do of course interpenetrate. The above scheme also shows that there have been long transitory phases between the waves. First Wave feminism emerged from women’s discontent during the Industrial Revolution, expanded women’s citizenship rights, and disrupted the separation of male and female spheres that was particularly typical for Victorian culture. Second Wave feminism expanded women’s equality with men in public activities and further modified traditional gender roles. It also protested against conventional-feminine trappings such as bras, cosmetics, and high-heeled shoes, along with the moral obligations of women to bear children and be pleasing to men. Third Wave feminism emerged within a social situation where much equality had already been achieved. It began to combine rebellious-masculine qualities with conventional-feminine qualities, that is, to make wearing lipstick compatible with women’s fights for greater freedom and empowerment.





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