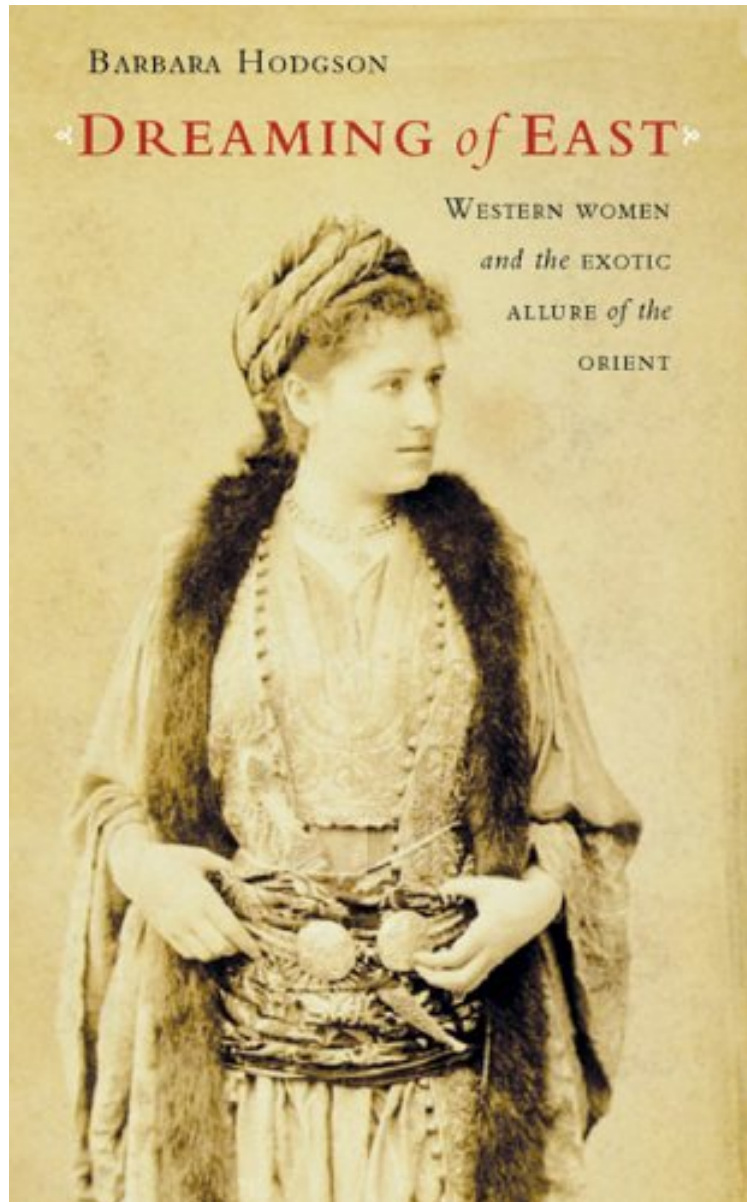


[FREE] Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient

## Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient

*Barbara Hodgson*

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**Barbara Hodgson : Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dreaming of East: Western Women and the Exotic Allure of the Orient:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. disappointingBy SassenachA fascinating choice of subject, but tackled in such a way as to frustrate the reader. She writes about a number of Western women, mostly British, who defied both western and eastern convention by travelling in the Middle East in the 19th and early 20th centuries. If she had written a chapter about each it would have had some continuity, and hence been more satisfying, but she chose to approach her subject at right angles to that: she takes a topic: dress, the harem, transport etc and writes a chapter on each, bringing in the various women in turn to illustrate the various ways her protagonists dealt with the problem. I found this quite unsatisfying, frustrating even, and I had to compel myself to finish the book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great bookBy Janey QMy daughter is taking an East meets West history course. She found this book to be interesting and exciting. She was able to view the topic from a very different perspective. Something that you don't usually get from your teachers. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Travelogues of early women explorersBy Shannon B. What a fascinating book! While Westerners of today often imagine the Middle East as a place where women are oppressed, European ladies of the 18th to early 20th century went there for freedom from the restrictive Western culture. The book quickly acknowledges that many of these women saw only what they expected to see in the land of Arabian Nights. Most of these women would have been deemed Orientalists by Edward Said. Nevertheless, their journals provide an interesting perspective on European as well as North African/Middle Eastern culture. Many of these women were early feminists, cross-dressing as men to gain freedom, exploring where few other Westerners, let alone women, had before. This book paints a fascinating picture of these early female travellers to one of the most interesting areas of the world.

When Lady Mary Wortley Montagu visited the baths in Turkey in 1717 she was so tightly corseted that Turkish women were convinced her husband had locked her into some devious machine. Montagu's account of her journey helped bring the region into the Western world's consciousness, and by the 1800s, the vogue for Orientalia had overtaken a continent slowly sinking into the gloomy repressions of the Victorian era. Richly illustrated with color photos and sketches, *Dreaming of East* examines not just the exotic trappings of the Middle East but the heady freedoms it offered Western women. Conditions to defer to men, women travelers were suddenly free to make their own choices and form their own opinions, ones that were respected by all people, including men. For a woman all too used to her inferior status, this venture into quasi-equality and latent sexuality was exhilarating. When she returned home, and found herself again relegated to second place, she would never be content there again.