Beyond the Symbolism of the Headscarf: 
The Assemblage of Veiling and the Headscarf as a Thing*

What does it mean to claim, as French protesters did in 2004, that the headscarf is not a sign? Drawing on our focus group interviews with covered women in Turkey, we examine this proposition theoretically and empirically. Regarding the headscarf as a thing, rather than an object or a sign, opens up an important critique of how the headscarf has been cast within public discourse. The headscarf, we argue, is one element of an assemblage oriented towards the ethical problematic of Islamic modesty. By engaging the claim that the headscarf is not a sign, we move beyond the logic of the sign and towards an understanding of the veil that is attuned to the protests of those who wear it.

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