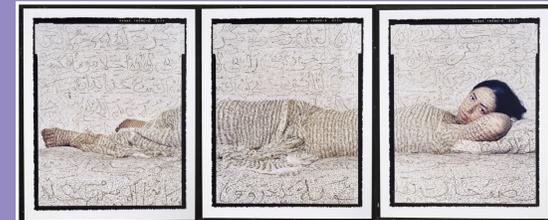


Orientalism Through the Lens of Postcolonialism

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Corrections of Preceptions:

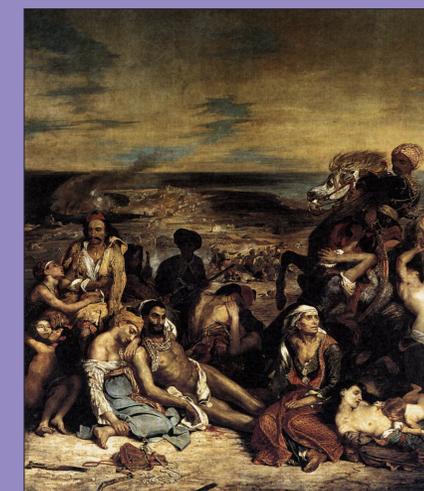
- Timothy Mitchell writes that Orientalism is self-perpetuating in that it “is understood as the product of unchanging racial and cultural essences.”⁶
- In order to see these effects of Orientalism today, one only needs look at Aladdin or the portrayal of the East in the media.
- Lalla Essaydi has sought to correct the perception of her culture by reappropriating Orientalist imagery.⁷
- The model in this picture emulates the standard posture of an odalisque, a staple of the Orientalist art period.
- The model’s stare straight at the viewer challenges the male gaze present in most art including Orientalism.



Lalla Essaydi
Les Femmes du Maroc:
Reclining Odalisque - 2008

The Militant Violent East:

- The massacre at Chios sent massive waves through the Western world.
- The Ottoman forces killed thousands of civilians and sold the rest into slavery.
- While there is no excuse for these terrible crimes, the West had just committed the massacre at Tripoli killing thousands of civilians as well.
- Delacroix is presenting to his audience a horrendous scene of the dead mothers and elderly, showing the viciousness of the East in war.
- He does not acknowledge the terrible war crimes committed by the West a year earlier.



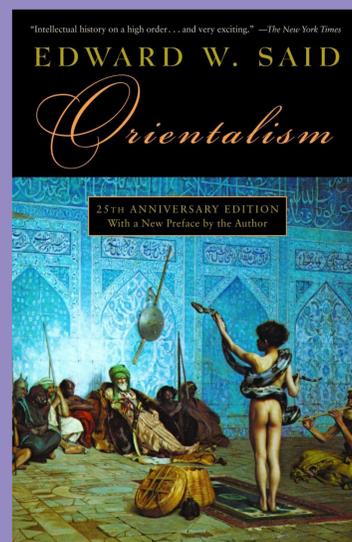
Eugène Delacroix
The Massacre at Chios - 1824

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6. Mitchell, Timothy. "Orientalism and the Exhibitionary Order." In The Art of Art History: a Critical Anthology, edited by Donald Preziosi, 445. Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1998.
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Thesis:

Orientalist artists were hailed by their contemporaries as precise ethnographic painters. However, modern postcolonial theory exposes the misrepresentations and racism found across the style. These stereotypes, still found today, are being confronted and reshaped by modern artist from the very cultures Orientalist artists purported to represent.



What is Orientalism?

- Orientalism as an art style is the infusion of stereotypes into the portrayal of the Middle East and Northern Africa to a European audience.
- Orientalist art is marked by the stereotypes it embraces: the sensual woman, the violent and emotional, the effects of cultural decay, and the timeless of the Orient.³
- Postcolonial analysis of Orientalism focus on the use of these tropes to define the non-European existence as the exotic or immoral 'Other'.⁴

The Emotional Violent East:

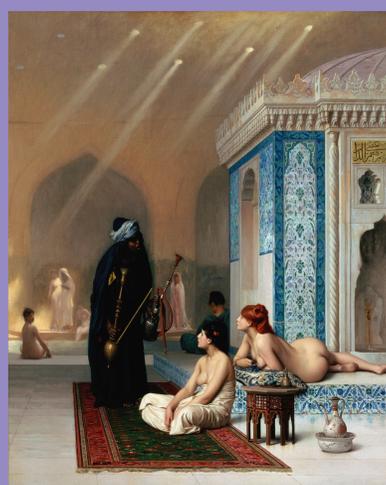


Paul Emil Jacobs
The Pasha's Favourite - 1842

- This painting displays the Ottoman sultan Pasha and his Greek bride Kyra.
- Using her position as Pasha's favorite harem bride, Kyra convinced him to spare the lives of many Greeks.¹
- She also engaged herself in many restorative projects on Holy Mount Athos.¹
- However, the sultan still committed many horrendous acts including the drowning of young girls and the use of brutal execution techniques.²
- From the perspective of Orientalism, Kyra represents not only herself nor even all women, but rather the reasonable and active West contrasting with the East.

The Sensual East:

- Harem scenes are the most popular Orientalist theme because of room for imagination they provided and the opportunity to paint nudes.
- The fascination with harem scenes stems from the need in Orientalist dialog “to emphasize the enslavement, especially in the sexual sense, of women within Middle Eastern...societies.”⁵
- The contrast between the clothed slaves and the harem members further draws the viewers' attention to the sexuality in the image
- In the past, nudes in art were limited to mythological figures.
- Since the 'Orient' was seen as almost mythological, artists could draw contemporary nudes in an Oriental setting.



Jean-Léon Gérôme
Pool in a Harem - 1876