



Orientalism

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- Culture
- Ideas
- History
- Power

Orientalism

- “History is made by men and women, just as it can also be unmade and re-written, always with various silences and elisions, always with shapes imposed and disfigurements tolerated, so that "our" East, "our" Orient becomes "ours" to **possess** and **direct**” (Said: 2003).

Edward Said: 1978

History

- Linear?
- Contested?
- Re-written?
- Omitted?

- The 'Western' gaze
 - The power to 'possess'
 - Both as viewer and consumer

- E. Said argued that the Orient was a European invention
- It was presented as:
 - A place steeped in romance
 - Exotic beings
 - Haunting memories & landscapes
 - Remarkable experiences



Renoir's
'Woman of
Algiers' 1870

A European 'Invention'

- The Orient is presented as 'Other'
- The Orient is articulated through European Western experience
- It is a Western construct
- "The Orient is not only adjacent to Europe; it is also the place of Europe's greatest and richest and oldest colonies, the source of its civilizations and languages, its cultural contestant, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other".



Orient v Occident

- Arbitrary boundary?
- Drawing a line on a map
- Orient is being presented through Westerners experiences

Said on Orientalism

- Colonialism
 - Orientalism “connotes the high-handed executive attitude of nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century European colonialism”.
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Said (1985): Legitimization

- Legitimization
- It refers to a scientific discipline that, emerging in the early nineteenth century, specialized "in the study of various Oriental cultures and traditions"; and that, ideologically, it legitimizes the circulation of images and fantasies of the Orient designed, in large part, to confirm the epistemic authority of the West.
"Orientalism Reconsidered" - Said (1985, 128).

Said (1985)

Objectification

- Objectification
- The Arab world, in particular, have all too often been constructed as "Europe's silent Other," frozen into place as the fixed objects of a self-privileging Western gaze (1985, 130-31).

Said (1985)

- Domination
- A system of domination which is "collectively maintained" (1985, 141-43).

- Said employed Michel Foucault's notion of a discourse (The Archaeology of Knowledge & Discipline and Punish)
 - Making statements about it
 - Authorizing views of it
 - Describing it
 - By teaching it
 - Settling it
 - Ruling over it

Power and Control

Cultural Politics

- The basic distinction between East and West as the starting point for elaborate theories, epics, novels, social descriptions, and political accounts.
 - A form of imperialism that was/is constructed via culture.
 - European culture was managing and producing the Orient politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period.
 - “Because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action”.
 - Examine Orientalism as a discourse
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**This was acted
out through
culture**

The Power of Culture

- Flaubert created the influential model of the 'Oriental woman': Kuchuk Hanem
 - She never spoke of herself
 - She never represented her emotions, presence, or history.
 - He spoke for and represented her.
 - He was foreign, wealthy, male
 - Imbalance in their positions
 - He explained to his readers how she was "typically Oriental."
 - Objectification: presented as a 'Muted Object'

Kuchuk Hanem & Flaubert: The model for the discourse about the Orient

Critique of Said

- Mortimer (2005): Said grants all control and representation to the colonizing power, thereby rejecting the possibility of resistance or independent action on the part of the colonized.
 - James Clifford (1980) : Said's book, for all the power of its criticism, "sometimes appears to mimic the essentializing discourse it attacks"
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- Prakash (2005): “Orientalism's authority as a critique of Western knowledge remains unmatched, and continues to derive force from its subversive violation of borders”.
 - Lisa Lowe (1991)
 - Orientalism is historically and geographically heterogeneous
 - The Orient Said refers to may encompass all or parts of Central Asia, North Africa, Turkey, and the Middle East (Lowe 1991, 5).
 - There is a fundamental heterogeneity and instability of the discourses contained within the umbrella term "Orientalism,"
 - Expand the territory to Japan and China (Which Lowe does)
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- The expansion of the geography of the 'Orient' risks turning Orientalism into a code word for "Other-ing"
- A process that involves the mapping of dominating practices of knowledge/power onto peoples seen as culturally 'marginal,' economically 'undeveloped,' or psychologically 'weak'

G. Huggan (2005)



Orientalism as a Tool of Colonialism

- The Orient (including Turkey, Greece, the Middle East, and North Africa)
 - Captured Western imagination before the 19th Century.
 - The Orient had appeared in Renaissance, Baroque and French Rococo aesthetic styles.
 - But Europeans had minimal contact with the East
 - Contact via trade and intermittent military campaigns.
 - In 1798 Napoleon Bonaparte and his Army invaded Egypt and occupied the country until 1801.
 - The European presence in Egypt attracted Western travellers to the Near and Middle East.
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- Napoleon's expedition to Egypt 1798
- Gros was commissioned by Napoleon to paint images of his campaigns.
- Propaganda
- Important figure in the development of Romanticism
- Genre painting was the prevalent form of Orientalist art in the nineteenth century

Antoine Jean Gros b.
1771



- Stereotype: the East is presented as 'backwards' and lawless.
 - 'Barbaric' v 'enlightened' / tamed by French rule.

The Battle of Abukir 1799

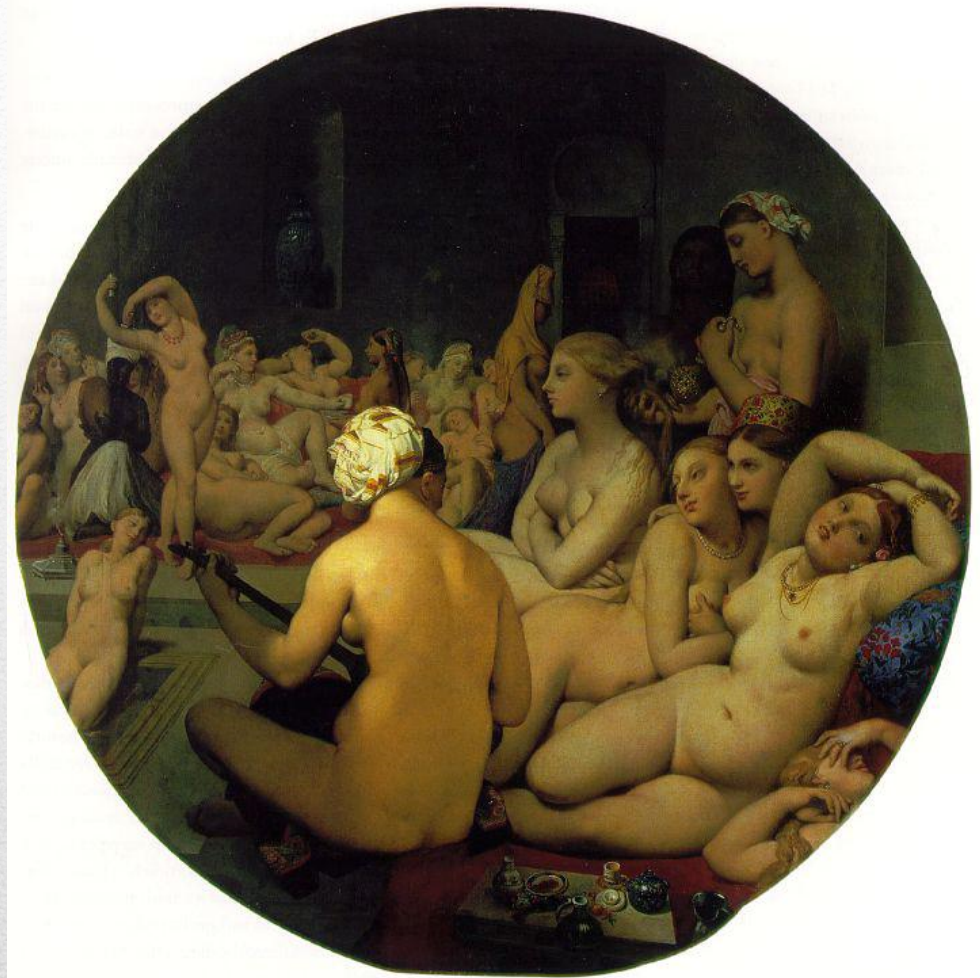
- Granted permission to view these cloistered women briefly in 1832, shortly after the French conquest, Delacroix composed the painting two years later based on drawings made in Algiers (Porterfield 124).
- Silence
- Immobile
- Some critics view French Orientalist painting in terms of aesthetic merit, and reject interpretations rooted in political ideology Rosenthal (1984) 'Orientalism: The Near East in French painting 1800-1880'.



The Women of Algiers (In their Apartment) 1834

Delacroix 1798 - 1863

- Ingres: rigid classicism
- Contrast to Delacroix's romanticism
- The National Gallery describes them as 'escapist scenes of the Orient'.
- A male 'colonization' of the eroticized female body

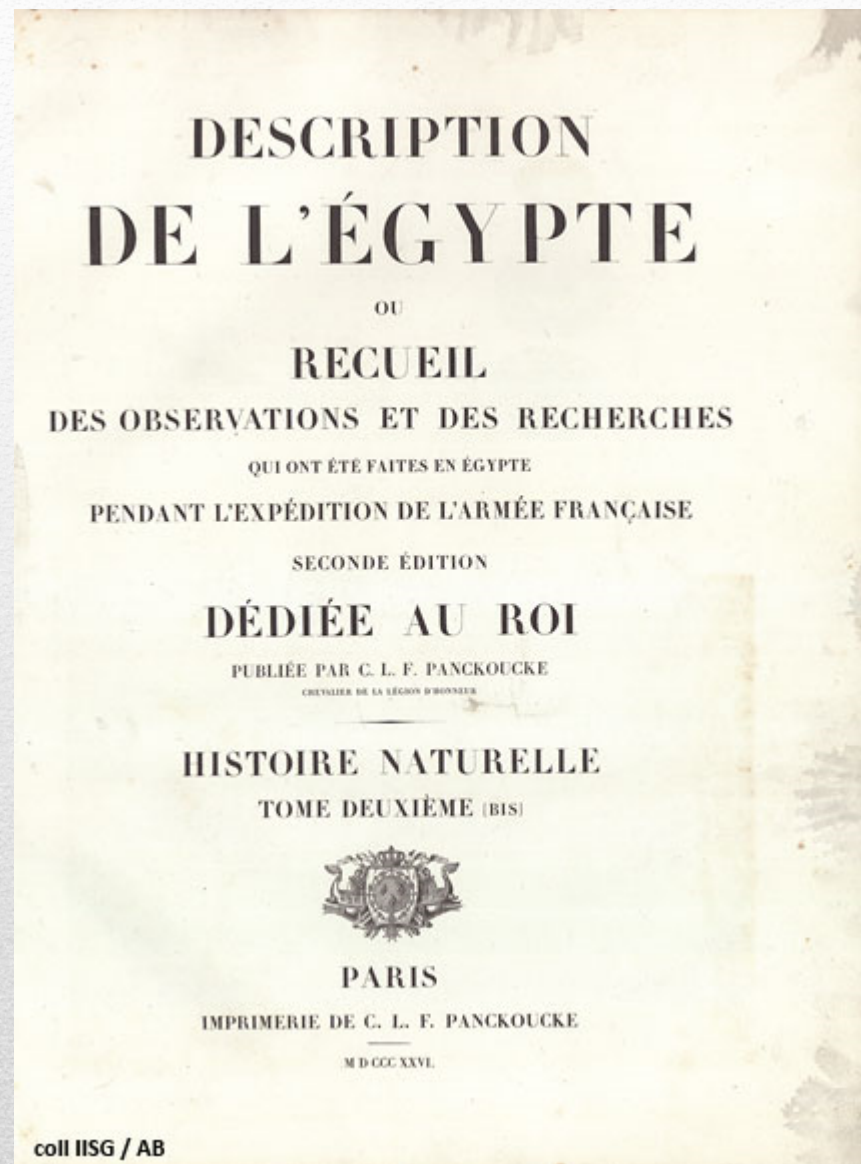


Le Bain Turc 1863

Ingres 1780-1867

- Multi-volume *Description de l'Égypte*, contained detailed architectural drawings of the country's medieval as well as Pharonic heritage.
- French government published the first installment of the twenty-four-volume *Description de l'Égypte* (1809–22)
- Illustrated the topography, architecture, monuments, natural life, and population of Egypt.
- Documented the culture of this region.
- Inspired the early nineteenth-century 'Egyptianising' passion in Britain.
- Material culture was circulated. 'Trophies' of Empire.
- London gained access to these pieces.

Description de l'Égypte 1809-22



- Italian explorer and archaeologist
- 1815 went to Cairo
- Excavated Egyptian tombs and temples.
- Worked as an agent for the British Consul, Henry Salt, and helped him collate his first collection which was sold to the British Museum in 1823.
- 1819 Returned to England
- Published a two-volume account, *Narrative of the Operations and Recent Discoveries Within the Pyramids, Temples, Tombs and Excavations, in Egypt and Nubia* (1820).



Statue of Ramesses II, the 'Younger Memnon'
From the Ramesseum, Thebes,
Egypt, 19th Dynasty, about 1250 BC

Giovanni-Battista Belzoni

(1778-1823)

- Regency chairs
1810
- Thomas Hope
Design
- British architect-
designer Thomas
Hope also
designed an
'Egyptian room'



Impact on British Design

- An Oriental Fantasy
- Joseph Nash
- 1815, George IV commissioned John Nash to begin the transformation from modest villa into the 'magnificent oriental palace'
- Cast Iron frame attached to the building
- Decorative pieces built onto the classically inspired building.



Royal Pavilion Brighton



- There were some 100,000 objects, displayed along more than ten miles, by over 15,000 contributors. Britain occupied half the display space inside, with exhibits from the home country and the Empire.

The Great Exhibition 1851, The Crystal Palace



The Indian court at The Great Exhibition by Joseph Nash

Photograph of the inside The Great Exhibition



- “The present is entirely bound up in colonial formations” (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998: 14)
- “Whereas people, cultures and nations may actively resist and deny colonialist tendencies and colonial constructs (Thomas 1994, 58–60), the past is always being reworked nostalgically and adapted creatively to the present.” (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998, 14)

Postcolonialism and Archaeology

- “The discovery and excavation of sites in ancient western Asia and the eastern Mediterranean positioned ‘Western’ scholars as the legitimate cultural (and imperial) heirs of a rich archaeological past (see Özdoğan, Chapter 5; Bahrani, Chapter 8 and Hassan, Chapter 11)”. (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998, 15)

‘IMPERIAL HEIRS’

- “As long as assumptions of superiority and the right of force are galvanised in the rhetoric of contemporary research, part of what Said (1978:12, 94–5) called the ‘Orientalist discourse’, constructions of the past will devalue indigenous cultures and histories, and propagate the dominant, Euro-American presentations of the past constantly repeated by the major figures in the field (Whitelam 1996)”. (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998: 15)

- Erroneous stereotypes?
- According to Said: self-perpetuating capacities.
- Western Knowledge a means of controlling the 'Other'?
- Legacy of Western cultural domination still visible?

Discussion
