

# Orientalism

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# New Orientalism

## Post-colonialism

New-colonialism: late 19<sup>th</sup> + 20<sup>th</sup> cent.



# Latent and Manifest Orientalism

Orientalism is a school of interpretation whose material happens to be the Orient, its civilizations, peoples, and localities.

An area of concern defined by travelers, commercial enterprises, governments, military expeditions, readers of novels and accounts of exotic adventure, natural historians, and pilgrims to whom the Orient is a specific kind of knowledge about specific places, peoples, and civilizations.

Oriental character, Oriental  
despotism, Oriental sensuality, and  
the like

Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.

Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West, which elided the Orient's difference with its weakness.





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# 60,000 books about East

1800-1950

# As a cultural apparatus

Orientalism is all aggression, activity, judgement, will to-truth and knowledge

# Islam: 8<sup>th</sup> -16<sup>th</sup> cent.

Then the center of power moved to west

And again...

# Late 19<sup>th</sup> cent.

Distillation of essential ideas about the Orient:

Sensuality, its tendency to despotism, its aberrant mentality, its habits of inaccuracy, its backwardness-into a separate and unchallenged coherence;



# Positivism and Latent Orientalism

The distinction is between an almost unconscious positivity, **latent Orientalism**, and the various stated views about Oriental society, languages, literatures, history, sociology, and so forth, **manifest Orientalism**.

Whatever change occurs in knowledge of the Orient is found almost exclusively in manifest Orientalism; the unanimity, stability, and durability of latent Orientalism are more or less constant.

# East: somewhere that

- Require Western attention, reconstruction, redemption.
- Isolated from the mainstream of European progress in the sciences, arts, and commerce.

# Darwinism:

Biological distinctions between races

Second-order Darwinism: accentuate the "scientific" validity of the division of races into advanced and backward, or **European-Aryan** and **Oriental-African**.



The Oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society:  
delinquents, the insane, women, the poor

# Oriental male

Considered in isolation from the total community in which he lived

Evident in the writing of travelers and novelists:

[Oriental] **women**: creatures of a male power-fantasy.

Unlimited sensuality, more or less stupid, and willing.

# Orientalism:

Ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality with a bad sort of  
eternality (rigidity).



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# Orientalism:

Male-oriented & eternal

**Silent shadows** to be animated by the Orientalist, brought into reality by him, **cultural and intellectual proletariat** useful for the Orientalist's grander interpretative activity, necessary for his performance as **superior judge, learned man, powerful cultural will.**

# Again: France vs. Britain



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# Thanks