

"They" and "Others": Arab Culture and Art in European Orientalism

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Submission Date: 03 Sept. 2025

Accepted Date: 05 January 2026

Published Date: 07 February 2026

VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue 02

Page No. 5-10

DOI: - <https://doi.org/10.37547/social-fsshj-06-02-02>

ABSTRACT

Orientalism in culture and art is a way of perceiving the "mysterious East" by the artistic world of the West. This is the worldview underlying the exploration of the East by European and American cultures. According to the author, orientalism reflects one of the attempts to westernize the East as a world different from the West. The article analyzes the origins of Orientalism, its worldview, and the main stages of its development. The interpretation of the modern vision of the East, the worldview of post-orientalism, is given.

Keywords: orientalism, culture, art, globalization, worldview

INTRODUCTION

Orientalism is a cultural phenomenon that originated in Europe in the 18th century. Culturologists also call this period the era of orientalism. In the most general sense, orientalism is a worldview based on the study of the history of perception of the East by Western cultures (European and American), the study and understanding of the cultural heritage of the East, as well as all aspects of its history related to culture, art, economics and other aspects of social development.

It can be said that the worldview of orientalism begins with the ancient Greeks, who invented the division of humanity into Orient and Occident, into citizens and barbarians; with "oriental motifs" in the works of a number of European philosophers and sociologists. Based on this division, for Europeans and Americans, the West has always been a subject, while the East has been and in many ways remains an object – a world that remains stagnant and stuck in the past for centuries. On the contrary, the West appears to them as a bearer of

true knowledge and a vehicle for progress – a technological, dynamic, open and constantly modernizing world. In this way, orientalism creates cultural, spatial, and visual mythologies and stereotypes that are often associated with the geopolitical ideologies of governments and institutions. Historiography and political economy certainly play a special role in shaping such views and ideas.

Based on these assumptions, a new trend in the culture and art of Western Europe was born – orientalism, which promotes the description of life. A European artist who is not very familiar with this new civilization for him and is trying to copy its external features by hearsay. I must say that such a superficial approach had nothing to do with a true understanding of Eastern culture and was reduced, as a rule, only to various forms of exotisation of the East. In a sense, there was also a political order here - to show the superiority of the West over it, its social and technological

advancement.

Orientalism as a historical phenomenon is one of the first prerequisites for the beginning of the process of global globalization. It arose at a time when the West felt the need to develop not only in depth, but also in breadth. This happened after the Renaissance, the great geographical discoveries, the emergence of capitalism and the first capitalist revolutions, the industrial revolution, the discovery of the world and man.

All this was caused by the interest of Westerners in other cultures, when people had a need to understand themselves and their life values, to search for diverse and alternative ways of existence, the meaning of life. And they also turned to the East for answers to these questions. The fact is that the East has always needed the technology and power of the West, and the West has always needed no less a share of the mysticism and religious feeling of the East, although it did not accept them in a ready-made form. It was a fascination with the mysterious and heroic world that the West had created itself rather than borrowed or copied from the East. It was the East that was most familiar and understandable to Westerners at that time. The themes, plots, and motifs were Oriental, while the form and mode of presentation remained traditionally Western.

There are several main stages in the development of Orientalism as such. The first stage is classical orientalism, which occurred in the first half of the 19th century. At that time, the artists either gravitated towards romanticism or classicism, but they were all attracted to oriental subjects. They depicted scenes from harems or fearless eastern warriors fighting lions. In the works of romantic artists, the East appears as a passionate, wild and sensual world untouched by civilization. They contrasted the rationality and orderliness of the Western lifestyle with Eastern temperament and impulsiveness. Romantics dreamed and raved about the East, seeing it as a refuge from the pressing problems of the Western world.

At the second stage, which was more significant and important for the formation of the worldview of Orientalism, a new method of depicting the East appeared. This stage dates back to the last quarter of the 19th century and is associated with Japanism and the all-encompassing fashion for everything Japanese. In Western art, this was manifested by the Impressionists,

who not only borrowed subjects and images of Japanese beauties and geisha, but also began to depict surrounding objects and phenomena in the way the Japanese did. It was a revolution in European art that began with the Impressionists and post-Impressionists and continued in the Art Nouveau style, effectively leading to the birth of a new art.

After the Second World War, the third stage of Orientalism began. During this period, the Surrealists began to focus not on Japanese, but on art, idols and masks from Africa and the Pacific Islands. Thus, the development of orientalism began with an appeal to the Turkish and Arab East, and then spread to everything different and unlike the West.

In the light of the above, it can be said that orientalism reflects one of the attempts to westernize the East as a world different from the West. At the same time, orientalism manifested itself in the deep interest of the traditional West in the East, when the Western world became increasingly non-Western and gradually began to include alternative cultural practices, worldviews and worldviews. This process of westernization can be observed today in various cultural spheres, which is also one of the manifestations of the globalization of the world.

The end of the 21st and the beginning of the 20th centuries were the time when Orientalism acquired modern features. By this time, there was already a rich literature about the East in Europe, rooted in the European past. During this period, the Eastern Renaissance began. A new understanding of the East, stretching from China to the Mediterranean Sea, has appeared in the scientific literature. It was the East, previously unknown to the West, with its ancient wisdom and artistic diversity, which was very different from the usual view that had developed by that time. This view was formed primarily due to the collapse of the colonial system, in which orientalism was considered as a system of views and worldview. Serving the purposes of imperialism.

It should be noted that the term "orientalism" itself became known thanks to the American scientist and public figure Edward Said, who used it in his publications to describe the distorted image of the East, especially the Muslim one that had developed at that time. He was one of the first in the West to criticize traditional

approaches to Orientalism. He argued that the modern American image of Arabs was largely shaped by unscrupulous media and that Western interest in the East had intensified during the imperialist expansion. This approach considered the peoples of the East and their cultures as static objects that needed to be interpreted and subordinated. This trend was called "orientalism".

Saida's "Orientalism", published in 1978, became the basis for new research on the history of Asia and Africa and laid the foundation for the modern Eastern scientific paradigm. Today, almost any criticism of Orientalism begins with an analysis of Said's work. At the same time, many of them criticize Said for focusing in his works only on analyzing the Western understanding of Orientalism, without paying due attention to the development of the dialogue between East and West that had already begun at that time.

One of the key aspects of "orientalism" was the study of how the West shapes the image of the East. Traditionally, in the West, the East was perceived as a kind of "Other" — the embodiment of everything that the West considered negative and non-European. The ideas about the East were based on a contrast with European values: they emphasized the lack of progress and freedom inherent in Europe. The East became a kind of mirror through which Europe defined and justified its achievements, while simultaneously asserting its superiority and imposing its own system of views.

Said viewed orientalism as an ideology of superiority based on differences, which the West used to justify its dominance over the East. In his work, he gave examples from scientific works and literary works from different eras, from the Enlightenment to the present day. Said exposed the Oriental scholars who pretended to be searching for the truth. In his opinion, they were actually spreading the political ideas of the West and justifying the colonization policy of their governments.

Said argued that the basic principles of Orientalism contain unlawful and superficial stereotypes of comparing the West and the East. In particular, he denied the existence of radical differences between the traditional idea of the greatness of the West and the backwardness of the East, leading to the demonization of the East and claims about its immutability and uniformity, inability to develop. He believed that the

West was promoting a similar approach to represent the East in order to maintain its dominant position in the world and form its identity based on the principle of "friend or foe." According to Said, this understanding of the East and its cultural space was the political basis for its conquest and the establishment of colonial rule over it.

According to Said, what he wrote about orientalism was said before him by famous Oriental philosophers and ideologues such as A.L. Tibawi, Abdullah Larui, Anwar Abdel-Malek, Romila Fapar, who suffered from the devastating consequences of imperialism and colonialism. All of them also questioned the indisputable authority of the government and their social origin, realizing themselves to be something more than what was customary to write about them in scientific and journalistic literature.

Orientalism has become a kind of romantic construct for Western culture, an exotic fantasy of a rich European. Orientalism in the understanding of the West was not an independent style in art, but rather served as an image of the East, formed under the influence of various oriental legends, descriptions of travelers and, of course, under the influence of Oriental art itself. In this form, Oriental themes and plots have become an integral part of Western European culture. In artistic culture, orientalism manifested itself in various forms, such as heroic and romantic journeys, which were described in various travelogues and books (for example, "Journey to the East" by Gerard de Nerval, 1843), letters (for example, "Turkish Letters" by Lady Mary Wortley-Montagu, 1763), literary works (for example, "The Western Divan of the East" by Johann Wolfgang Goethe, 1819) or philosophical treatises (for example, "Persian Letters" by Charles Louis de Montesquieu, 1721).

Until the middle of the 20th century, there were no clear criteria in European art for defining the boundaries of various eastern "trends" and defining their boundaries. Even in ancient Rome, Europeans developed and maintained an interest in the art of Ancient Egypt for centuries. During this time, he found his manifestation in various forms of the use of Egyptian motifs in the art of classicism, Baroque, Empire, as well as in the stylizations of the periods of historicism and Art Nouveau.

The fashion for everything oriental on the European

continent appeared in the XVIII century and maintained its influence for two centuries. Orientalism in clothes, music, theater, subjects for paintings by great artists – all this together makes up the era of cultural influence of the "mysterious East". Romantic orientalism of the 19th century was formed as a result of European contacts with the peoples of North Africa, Turkey, the Eastern Mediterranean and other eastern regions. This was facilitated by the French conquests of Algeria, the struggle for the independence of Greece, the Crimean War of 1853-1856 and the policy of European colonialism.

Of all the eastern countries, Turkey is geographically, culturally and politically the closest to the countries of Western Europe. Therefore, for a long time, Europeans associated various romantic hobbies with oriental styles with the "Turkish style". Orientalism gave Europeans the dream of a fantastic Orient full of adventures and exotic pleasures. Fascinated by orientalist fantasies, European artists and writers made pilgrimages to Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, Algeria and Morocco. And although reality rarely corresponded to their dreams, the real East ultimately influenced Western art no less than the imaginary East.

The most controversial aspect of Orientalist painting of that time is the recurring image of a woman in a harem. Although the harem was just a private domestic space where unknown men were not allowed, Europeans and North Americans were intrigued by what was happening inside. Most artists used their imagination, using the background of the harem as an excuse to paint nude women. In most cases, this world was a figment of the imagination.

Orientalism first appeared in European visual art in the middle of the 18th century, during the Rococo era. This style is characterized by an embellished depiction of reality and exquisite decorativeness. First in France, and then in other European countries, there was a fashion for works of art created in the Turkish style — "turkeri". The artists of that era quickly responded to the demands of society and began to paint idyllic scenes from the imaginary life of Turks. Portraits of the nobility in exotic costumes were also in great demand. 19th-century artists often depicted the East as a figment of their imagination rather than as a real place. In their opinion, the East included the Ottoman Empire, India, and North

Africa, regions linked to Europe by trade, colonial, and military relations. Some artists visited the cities they depicted, such as Constantinople, Jerusalem, Cairo and Marrakech. Others stayed in Paris or Vienna, but were inspired by photographs, props, biblical texts, literature, and their own imagination. The images of the East ranged from detailed sketches of everyday life to magnificent scenes from the life of harems.

Orientalism as a worldview demonstrates the variability of its understanding depending on the national context and different cultural traditions of individual European countries. For example, French orientalism differs significantly from Russian, reflecting the specific historical, political and cultural characteristics of each of these countries. In addition, orientalism formed two opposing images of the East, which equally influenced colonial politics and art. From the point of view of the colonialists, the East was perceived as a civilization of decline. Its inhabitants seemed incapable of development and self-improvement, and their culture was full of cruelty, lust for pleasure and luxury. Such an East had to be conquered and brought in line with European standards. On the other hand, in art, the East was presented as a paradise on earth, a storehouse of myths, images and subjects for literature, music, painting and architecture.

As an artistic movement, Orientalism is generally regarded as one of the many academic art movements of the 19th century; however, there were many different styles of orientalism. Art historians distinguish two main types of Orientalist artists: realists, who carefully depicted what they saw, and those who invented orientalist scenes from the comfort of their studio. French artists such as Eugene Delacroix (1798-1863) and Jean-Leon Jerome (1824-1904) are considered the leading representatives of Orientalism.

In the history of art, literature, and cultural studies, orientalism is a way of depicting various aspects of Eastern culture by writers and artists from Western countries. Orientalist painting, especially related to the Middle East, was one of the many academic art trends of the 19th century and encompassed a wide variety of genres. For example, European viewers were fascinated by paintings depicting the lives of rulers and ordinary people, harems and baths, historical battles and landscapes, as well as portraits of famous personalities

of the East. In architecture, orientalism has led to the emergence of new styles. Among them are Neo—Moorish, Egyptian, Chinese, Japanese and Indo-Saracenic. For example, the Moorish Gothic ornament is a European adaptation of the Islamic Arabesque, which appeared at the end of the 15th century and has been used in some types of work, such as book binding, almost to the present day.

In decorative and applied art, oriental motifs are reflected in furniture such as ottomans and couches, incense burners, and costume elements including robes, turbans for women, and fezzes for men. For example, the Turkeri style originated at the end of the 15th century and included the use of a wide variety of "Turkish" styles, primarily in decorative and applied arts, very often it was associated with the design of Turkish clothing. Venice, a traditional trading partner of the Ottomans, was the first center of Turkey, and France became more prominent in this area in the 18th century.

The Chinoiserie style was associated with the fashion for using Chinese motifs in the decor of Western European countries, which began at the end of the 17th century. From the Renaissance to the 18th century, Western designers tried to imitate the technical complexity of Chinese ceramics, but only partially succeeded. The first hints of Chinoiserie appeared in the 17th century in countries where East India Companies were active.

Since the beginning of the 17th century, in Delft and other Dutch cities, dishes with tin glaze began to be made, imitating the blue and white porcelain of the Ming era. Early ceramic products produced in Meissen and other real porcelain production centers imitated Chinese molds for plates, vases, and tea utensils.

In the 19th century, art dedicated to the countries of the East was experiencing its golden age. These were mostly works by Western masters created in order to satisfy the growing public interest in the states of the Middle East and North Africa. Since the second half of the 19th century, the concept of "orientalism" has expanded significantly in the geographical sense. Initially, it was used only to describe works of art based on Middle Eastern and North African motifs. But at the World Exhibitions in London (1864) and Paris (1867), samples of Japanese art (prints, porcelain, and lacquered tableware) were first presented to the general public. In

the wake of the resounding success of the exhibitions, a completely new trend in painting has emerged — "Japanism".

Orientalism, due to its long history, has gone through many periods that can be explored in terms of geography, politics, themes, style, ideology, ethnicity, and nationality. In addition, many artists engaged in various art forms such as painting, theater, design, architecture, photography, music, and literature, which also influenced their orientalist work.

The fascination with everything oriental was largely imitative. It was a kind of attempt to draw the viewer's, readers, or listener's attention to exotic subjects, motifs, or comfortable kimonos. However, over time, representatives of the cultural elite of Europe plunged deeper into the unique world of Oriental perception of the surrounding world. This process took a long time, but eventually led to a cultural synthesis of the West and the East.

It is worth noting that in the modern world, the interaction of cultures of European and Eastern countries cannot be fully integrated into the framework of the concept of orientalism. Now it's more of a dialogue and an exchange of ideas. Relations between countries where one side was a conqueror and the other a colony have not yet reached the level of equality. Europeans still consider themselves missionaries and civilizers, but behind the outward simplicity and tranquility of the life of the conquered peoples, they increasingly see the natural harmony and wisdom that were lost by Europeans in the course of rapid development.

Today, we can say that orientalism, like the traditional Western view of the East in the past, is no longer an indisputable axiom. There is intense debate in all fields — in academia, the media, social media, and political circles — about the authenticity and accuracy of knowledge about the East, Islam, and Muslims, as well as about the relationship between Muslim and Western countries. In a sense, we can talk about the emergence of the concept of post-orientalism, developed by John Esposito and his scientific school and associated with the emergence of a broader post-colonial discourse that seeks to liberate the East from the imaginary and dominant approaches of traditional Orientalists.

The post-Orientalist school not only developed Said's critique of Orientalism, but also went even further.

Although Said insisted that the image of Islam, Arabs, and Muslims in Orientalist discourse is not authentic, post-Orientalists reserved the right to answer questions about what Islam is and who Muslims are. The post-Orientalists went even further by giving Muslims the opportunity to talk about themselves and their beliefs on Western forums.

In each of the relevant areas of discussion - the clash of civilizations, the compatibility of Islam and democracy, and Western policy towards Islamism — post-orientalists have managed to promote a less exotic, more realistic, and authentic view of Islam and Muslims. While the traditional Orientalist approach promotes Islamophobia, post-Orientalists challenge the stereotypes and myths that give rise to Islamophobia. Currently, the post-orientalist school prevails in academic circles, and therefore most of the new scientists who have appeared in the academic environment share the views of Said and Esposito, if not completely agree with them.

At the beginning of the 20th century, ethnographic exhibitions and museums in London, Munich and Paris stopped surprising visitors with shamanic rituals and unusual household items. It was here that a new generation of artists, future avant-garde artists, discovered African art. It was simple, devoid of unnecessary details, and possessed magnetic power.

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