

ORIENTALISM IN EUROPEAN ART*

One of the more interesting developments in the history of art over the past decade has been the rediscovery of pictorial orientalism, the use of Middle Eastern imagery by Western artists for a variety of ends and purposes. One reason for the scholarly interest is economic. Orientalist paintings which once would have been dismissed as the worst sort of academic trash have suddenly found an appeal in the marketplace not totally unrelated to the concentration of buying power in the hands of the descendants of the purported subjects of these paintings themselves.¹ At the same time, orientalist works of art, which have constituted a major aspect of the history of Western art from the fifteenth century onward, have in recent times been subject to intense scrutiny because of their role in the creation of cultural stereotyping. One result of this scrutiny has been an outpouring of indignation from critics who have suddenly discovered in many orientalist works of art themes of intolerance; racial, sexual and cultural prejudice; and the subtle manipulation of images for political purposes.² And yet if we look over the history of representations of "foreign" cultures in the history of art—in the history of any art, Western or non-Western—such indignation must strike us as more than a little naive. For there is certainly nothing astonishing or novel about the fact that people outside of a given culture or group have been regarded by members of that group as being, at best, funny-looking and uncultured, and at worst, ugly and malignant. The Turkish artist (possibly a retired naval officer named Haydar Reis, nicknamed Haydari)³ who painted a

*In preparing this paper for publication, the author has reduced the number of illustrations from the original 39 pairs of slides. He is indebted to Yvonne Haddad for suggesting the topic, and to Edwin Binney, 3rd, who aided in the obtaining of the illustrations.

¹ The practice of holding speciality sales on orientalist works appears to have started in London during the week of 12 April 1976, at the time of the World of Islam Festival, when Sotheby's instituted an "Islamic Week" whose sales included *Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Twentieth Century Paintings, Watercolours, Prints, and Photographs of Islamic Interest by European Artists* (Wednesday, April 14). See also the similar Sotheby's sale of 4 May 1977, and the Hotel Drouot sale *Le Colonel F. Colombari et Autres Voyageurs de l'Orient du XIX^e au debut du XX^e siècle* (Paris: Nouveau Drouot, 19 June 1981).

² The impetus for this reappraisal of orientalism in art stems from the well-known work *Orientalism* by Edward W. Said (New York: Pantheon, 1978), in which the matter of the visual arts is not treated in any detail, but the outlines for a basis of criticism are established.

³ See *Turkish Treasures from the Collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd*, by Edwin Binney, 3rd (Portland, Oregon: Portland Art Museum, 1979), entry 12, pp. 24–25.

portrait of Francis I of France in the style of Clouet (Figure 1) not only had trouble with the strange three-quarter profile present in the engraving from which he copied his "portrait," but he was struck as were many who knew the king of France, by the unusual size and shape of that monarch's prodigious proboscis. At roughly the same time, Peter Mercinus, a European artist, produced an engraving purporting to be a portrait of Süleyman I, Sultan of Turkey (Figure 2), in which we can see similar elements of caricature, especially in the large turban.⁴ There is nothing unusual about this sort of thing; one has only to look at the editorial cartoons in French or German newspapers between 1914 and 1918, or at today's American newspapers when the cartoonist chooses to portray an Arab subject, to find out that ignorant national stereotyping is one of the oldest most persistent indoor sports in any culture.⁵

We should also expect, somewhat cynically to be sure, that in the normal run of things, strangeness in another culture leads almost automatically to intolerance, which in turn leads to fear, hatred, and the impugning of the "furriner's" morals. In an early nineteenth-century Turkish manuscript of a work known as the *Zenan-nameh*, for example, we find a picture of a European lady of degree (Figure 3). Reading the text, we discover that she is of loose morals, while "her belly is a place for Muslims to throw their offal."⁶ Nicolas de Nicolay's sixteenth-century account of his travels in Turkey features a Louis Danet engraving of a Turkish woman (Figure 4) going to a public bath; the commentary reflects contemporary European attitudes toward three despised things, baths, women, and Turks:

Among the women . . . there is great amity proceeding from the resort to baths; they become fervently in love the one of the other . . . and will not cease until they have found the means to bathe with them & to handle and grope them, so full are they of feminine . . . wantonness.⁷

⁴ Reproduced here from the frontispiece of *Solyman the Magnificent Going to Mosque*, privately printed for Sir William Stirling Maxwell, Florence and Edinburgh, 1877.

⁵ See, for example, Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Pantheon, 1981).

⁶ Binney, *Turkish Treasures*, entry 79a, pp. 124–25.

⁷ An English translation of Nicolay's work, entitled *The Navigations into Turkie*, was published in London in 1585, and was reprinted in reduced facsimile by Da Capo Press, *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, Ltd. (New York and Amsterdam, 1968). Our quotation is adapted from the text of Book 2, folio 60 *recto*, referring to the illustration of folio 61 *recto*. Our illustration is taken from a copy of the second Italian edition of 1580.

No wonder, then, that in this marvelous atmosphere of ignorance coupled with religious and cultural intolerance, cultural stereotyping of the most negative sort has flourished for centuries. But the picture of the perception of the Islamic world in the eyes of Western artists is much more complex than this simple pattern of attributing loose morals and low culture to the stranger. For looking at the East is an almost obsessive theme in Western art, literature, political thought, and performing arts for over half a millenium—indeed in one form or another it has existed for over a thousand years. It is a consistent theme in Western civilization, and an integral part of that civilization.⁸ The subject of our short essay, then, will be to go beyond the simple discovery that people, even people with impressive university degrees, are often ignorant and intolerant about each other. Rather, in analyzing some basic themes in Western views of the East we will attempt to take a tripartite view of the realm of the visual arts, whether in and of themselves, or as the handmaidens of history, literature, dance, theater, and political and religious propaganda.

A few observations seem in order. One of the first things that strikes us, especially if we look in the rare book rooms of major libraries, is the large *volume* of early publication on the subject of the Mysterious Middle East, due in part to the popularity of travel narratives in general in European civilization, and in part to the manner in which the subjects of these narratives lent themselves to interesting illustrations. The political/religious conflicts between East and West—which at the time of the invention of moveable type and the emergence of the woodcut and engraving as major means of communication in Europe were focused primarily upon the Ottoman Turks and their conquests in the Balkans, Central Europe, and the Mediterranean—led to a widespread anxiety in European civilization prompted by what was referred to as *Türkengefahr*.⁹ The Turkish danger led in the realms of

published by Francesco Ziletti in Venice, now in the collection of Edwin Binney, 3rd. The French original was published in Anvers in 1576, with engravings by the Fontainebleau master Louis Danet, thought to be after drawings by Nicolay himself.

⁸ See, for example, A. St.-Clair, *The Image of the Turk in Europe* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1973); D.A. Rosenthal, *Orientalism* (Rochester, NY: Memorial Art Gallery of the University of Rochester, 1982); J. Alazard, *L'Orient et la peinture française au XIX^e siècle* (Paris: Pion, 1930); D. Metlitzki, *The Matter of Araby in Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); and N. Daniel, *The Arabs and Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1975).

⁹ See R. Schwoebel, *The Shadow of the Crescent: The Renaissance Image of the Turk* (Nieuwkoop: de Graaf, 1967); P. Coles, *The Ottoman Impact on Europe* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968); and E. Eickhoff, *Venedig, Wien, und die Osmanen* (Munich: Callwey, 1970).

art to the emergence of unusual imagery. For example, Turkish warriors formed a common element in the decoration of popular tin-glazed Italian maiolica ceramics; the atrocities allegedly committed by Turks against Europeans led to the emergence in Germany of a whole genre of popular literature *Flugschriften*. When the Islamic menace was at its height and the Turk was established in such diverse places as Toulon and Otranto, the Sultan was equated with the Antichrist, and European artists used the turban to identify all sorts of *personae non gratae* in religious paintings, from a turbaned Herod who orders the massacre of the Innocents in Bethlehem, to turbaned Jews who surround the cross at the Passion of Christ.¹⁰

As the political fortunes of Islam in Europe waned, especially after the second siege of Vienna in 1683 and the subsequent Habsburg *Drang nach Süd-osten* under Prince Eugene of Savoy, a remarkable change came about in the European image of the Turk. The "Grand Turk" became instead the "Sick Man of Europe" and the practices and personages of Islamic civilization became the subject of ridicule, either in popular broadsheets or in the court ballet and theater of the time. In the works of Marlowe and Racine, the Turk could be cast in the role of tragic hero, but as early as 1626 in the French court a scene in the *Grand bal de la douairière de Billenbahaut* featured an "entrée de Mahomet et ses docteurs" casting the Prophet in a ridiculous role.¹¹ Nineteenth-century liberalism in Europe, coupled with neo-classicism and philhellenism, merely intensified these themes, giving them a new and sharper political edge. The most effective user of this imagery was Eugène Delacroix, whose paintings on the subject of the Greek war of independence cast the Greeks as the "heroes" and the Ottoman Turks as the "heavies." Even this intensity eventually dissolved, however, into romantic and sentimental imagery. Delacroix in his later years turned more frequently to exoticism and the oriental for his subjects, as the Orient became a sort of screen upon which sublimated European notions of sensuality and sexuality were often projected with vivid colors.¹² As more and more European travellers, missionaries, and

¹⁰ The Islamic Herod may be seen in Matteo di Giovanni's "Massacre of the Innocents" in St. Agostino, Siena, of the later fifteenth century; Dürer's engraved Passion series of 1512 shows numerous images of turbaned Jews. See W.L. Strauss, ed., *The Complete Engravings, Etchings, & Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer* (New York: Dover, 1972), entries 59, 60, 61, 62 and 63.

¹¹ See the important work by C.D. Rouillard, *The Turk in French History, Thought, and Literature* (Paris: Boivin, 1938), pp. 630-35, where Rouillard quotes *in extenso* from the 1626 text.

¹² See the classic work by W. Friedlaender, *From David to Delacroix* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 116-18.

imperialists moved to the Orient, the later nineteenth century saw the development of a popular romantic notion of the Middle East which until 1948 remained uppermost in the European mind, a Middle East of popular music and exotic imagery (Figure 5) which continually beckoned to Europeans, and whose costumes seem to have exercised an irresistible fascination not only for painters but for travellers, missionaries, and imperialists themselves, who from Mary Wortley Montagu to T.E. Lawrence were continually putting them on.¹³

The types of oriental imagery to be discussed here necessitate our cutting the pie of orientalist art into three large wedges. "Rapportage Orientalism" was at least in theory motivated by the notion that imagery of the Middle East should be accurate and should depict things which actually existed in fact. "Political Orientalism" used the Orient and its imagery in the service of a religious or political message of some sort, generally anti-Islamic. "Exoticism" used the Orient as an excuse to portray subjects and to elicit emotions which until the time of Courbet and Manet could not be properly conveyed with images of the "girl next door" type. Interestingly enough, none of these three categories was confined to a particular stylistic school in the history of European painting. For example, in all of the bickering and ideological struggle between the Classicism of Ingres and the Romanticism of Delacroix, painters of both schools indulged in all three categories of orientalist painting imagery.

Rapportage Orientalism

Rapportage—the recording of events with accuracy as an objective—is an element in European orientalist painting which developed parallel to the publication of travel accounts, and many of its earliest examples occur either as illustrations to travel accounts, or extrapolations from travel accounts added to paintings in order to give them "authenticity" or "local color." The paintings and prints using oriental subjects attributed to Gentile Bellini, Costanza da Ferrara, Melchior Lorichs,

¹³ The theme of Europeans wearing Islamic dress is an all-pervasive one, extending over the centuries in Europe and eventually in the United States. The famous scene of Lawrence trying on his Arab clothing, from the David Lean film *Lawrence of Arabia*, is undoubtedly familiar to many readers, but the type of individual who not only donned Arab apparel but had a formal portrait painted while so clothed varied from Markgraf Ludwig ("Türkenlouis") of Baden-Baden, to Mary Wortley Montagu, to the American traveler and painter James Wells Champney, whose self-portrait in a turban hangs at Historic Deerfield in Massachusetts.

and others who were among the earliest European artists actually to travel in the Near East, are generally distinguished by a concern for accuracy.¹⁴ In the engravings of Louis Danet, whose sources may have been drawings executed *in situ*, we can see details of costume, of fabric design, weaponry, and physiognomy which show a remarkable attention to detail (Figure 6). The highly specific paintings of Delacroix, developed from his notes and water-color sketches made *in situ* during his trips to North Africa, while employing the characteristic broad brushstroke of the Romantic style, nevertheless show the same concern for careful and competent rapportage, in marked contrast to the more generalized conceptions of oriental peoples and facial types which fascinated artists such as Rembrandt two centuries earlier.¹⁵ But even in as blatant an example of stem-winding exoticism as the painting by Ingres entitled "Odalisque with a Slave" (Figure 7), we find the element of rapportage present in the extremely detailed and accurate rendition of the various objects scattered about the scene, even though these objects are highly inappropriate to the interior of a real harem, and also incongruous in style and date.¹⁶

The most important of the early published travels to Turkey were profusely illustrated, and certain artists published suites of prints dealing with the Islamic East. Among these were the series done by the Flemish artist Peter Coeck van Aelst,¹⁷ the German/Danish Melchior Lorichs,¹⁸ the anonymous artist who illustrated the account of Salomon Schweigger,¹⁹ and the German Erhard Reuwich, who illustrated the account by Bernard von Breydenbach.²⁰ The subjects

¹⁴ The question of the accuracy of early paintings made by European artists who either visited the Near East or who obtained glimpses of the Orient in Venice, is dealt with in the masterful new study by Julian Raby of Oxford University, *Venice, Dürer and the Oriental Mode* (London: Islamic Art Publications, 1982).

¹⁵ Cf. H. Schmidt, "Rembrandt, der islamische Orient und die Antike" in *Aus der Welt der islamischen Kunst: Festschrift für Ernst Kühnel* (Berlin: Mann, 1959), pp. 336–49.

¹⁶ The masculine *taj* helmet to the left is entirely out of place; the slave's headwear is eighteenth-century Ottoman, her *shalvar* or pantaloons are Indian, the background architecture is Cairene, and the drapes are European velvet.

¹⁷ See St.-Clair, *The Image of the Turk*, entries 4 and 5; also the facsimile of the entire series in *The Turks in MDXXXIII*, privately printed for Sir William Stirling Maxwell (London and Edinburgh, 1873).

¹⁸ See St.-Clair, *The Image of the Turk*, entries 6–10; other illustrations from Lorichs's several groups of prints, including his architectural woodcuts from *Wohlgerissene und geschnittene Figuren samt türkische Gebäuden* (1570), may be seen in E. Oberhummer, *Konstantinopel unter Sultan Süleiman dem Grossen* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1902).

¹⁹ Salomon Schweigger's *Konstantinopel und Jerusalem* of 1608 has been reproduced in reduced size, with a new Introduction by R. Neck, by Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt of Graz, in 1964.

²⁰ See St.-Clair, *The Image of the Turk*, entry 1.

covered by these artist-rapporteurs were those we might naturally expect to be of the greatest interest to prospective readers. There was an interest in political figures, especially the rulers of the Ottoman and Persian empires, known respectively as the "Grand Turk" and the "Great Sufi." There was a particular interest in religious practice sometimes tempered with intolerance to be sure, but generally quite straight-forward. Depictions of the attitudes of Muslim prayer (Figure 8) and of all the ceremonies and processions of day-to-day religious life, are quite common in the early travel accounts, and they are also generally quite accurate. Heterodox religious practice, and especially the purported activities of the more picturesque of the various dervish orders such as the Mevlevis or "whirling dervishes," also formed a part of early orientalist depictions, and some of the more extensive costume books form a virtual catalogue of obscure heterodox religious practice in the Ottoman Empire. Festivities of all sorts again fascinated the early European travelers, and the depictions in their works of weddings, circumcisions, and various Muslim holiday celebrations show an often astonishing similarity to the same events as they can be witnessed today around the Middle East.²¹ The aspects of social life which most fascinated Europeans of course were those associated with women. The themes of the veiling of women, the seclusion of women, and institutions such as public baths reserved for women, were all subjects of the rapporteur's artistic efforts, all the more intriguing because they were in theory forbidden to be seen by men and especially by foreign men. In general, it is possible to applaud for their accuracy many of the early travel-related images connected with this aspect of Islamic civilization seen as the most provocative and problematic one. In fact, one can see in perhaps the most famous later example of alleged "rapportage" about women, Ingres's great exotic "Turkish Bath" tondo of 1862,²² not only the taking of almost indecent liberties with the subject (the allusions to lesbianism, the pretextual nature of its eroticism), but also the reliance on two of the most accurate and dispassionate rapporteurs. The inspiration for the painting comes directly from the eighteenth-century letters of Mary Wortley Montagu,²³ while

²¹ A village circumcision fête is depicted by Coeck; Schweigger shows a "Beschneidung" procession after p. 190, a "Hochzeit" after p. 206, and a Turkish funeral on p. 200.

²² Paris, Musée du Louvre.

²³ See R. Halsband, ed., *The Complete Letters of Mary Wortley Montagu*, I (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 312-14. In this letter, written in April of 1717, Lady Mary gives a detailed description of the women's bath in Adrianople (Edirne); in marked contrast to Ingres's painting, however, is her description of the women in the bath: "there was not the least wanton smile or immodest gesture amongst 'em."

one of the figures in the background was lifted directly from a Louis Danet illustration of Nicolay's sixteenth-century best-seller.²⁴

Artists became involved in scientific rapportage of various types; Reuwich made a woodcut of the Arabic alphabet for Breydenbach, and Schweigger took pains to reproduce in his work a transcription of some Turkish music for the edification of his readers.²⁵ Discussions of medicinal plants, of architectural methods, and even of the types and varieties of tents, were all mentioned in travel accounts and meticulously depicted by artists. Certainly the scientific side of European rapportage, which from the time of Rauwolf²⁶ represents a major trend in European orientalism, reached its peak around the time of the Napoleonic invasion of Egypt, when shiploads of scholars of all sorts followed in the wake of the conquering French armies. And of all of the rapporteurs, one of the most scientific is Delacroix, who with his sketchbook water-colors of fauna, flora, costumes, landscapes, houses, and the panoply of daily and ceremonial life, shows himself to be the committed observer par excellence. What a contrast is to be observed between these scientific observations and the famous canvases which made his reputation!²⁷

Political Orientalism

As we mentioned at the outset, we should not be surprised to find intolerance in images of foreigners, especially when great cultural, social, religious, and political differences exist among groups of peoples. Here again, however, there is a curious mixture of politics with both rapportage and exoticism in many of the most political works of art. Those of Delacroix are of course the very best-known—works such as the "Massacre at Chios" (1824), "Greece Expiring on the Ruins of Mesolonghi" (1826), and his paintings inspired by Byron's philhellenic romance *The Giaour and the Pasha*.²⁸ In past times as in the present, however, it was left to the slightly less exalted realm of

²⁴ See our Figure 4; the engraving from the first French edition is reproduced by St.-Clair, *The Image of the Turk*, entry 11.

²⁵ Schweigger, *Konstantinopel und Jerusalem*, p. 209.

²⁶ See Karl H. Dannenfeldt, *Leonhard Rauwolf: Sixteenth-century Physician, Botanist, and Traveler* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968).

²⁷ Reproductions of the North African water-colors are reproduced in many places, among them C. Roger-Marx and S. Cotté, *Delacroix* (New York: Braziller, 1971).

²⁸ See, for example, the painting in the Fogg Art Museum (1943.233, bequest of Grenville Winthrop).

political cartooning (Figure 9) to make the most blatantly anti-Islamic political statements, while in the realm of painting the political edge was often dulled by the irresistible veneer of exoticism. Still, the enemy *was* the enemy. The theme of cruelty, always ascribed to one's political enemies in any period or culture, shows in the wall paintings of Częstochowa, where in the great Jasna Góra monastery we see vivid depictions of the sufferings of pious monks under the cruel onslaught of the Turks (Figure 10).²⁹ Popular fiction from Washington Irving's *The Alhambra* to Richard Burton's translation of the *Arabian Nights* played up the picturesque cruelty of Islam at a time when the West still buried the mentally ill in foul dungeons and hanged lower-class criminals for trivial crimes; but then again the essential nexus of politics, whatever else may have changed over the centuries, is to emphasize one's rival's failings while excusing one's own.

Exoticism

The author of this paper recalls quite vividly an episode in his own career some years ago, when he was delivering a lecture on the present subject at a great American university. The instant that the image of the "Odalisque with a Slave" by Ingres (Figure 7) was projected on the screen, a number of Middle Easterners in the audience made a very abrupt departure from the hall. It is exoticism in European art, and not other aspects of orientalism, which evokes both the greatest fascination and the deepest repulsion; it fascinates because of its appeal to what an interminable series of dreary Supreme Court decisions have rather antiseptically termed our "prurient interest" while at the same time representing for many partisans of the Islamic world a sort of "pictorial slander" of Islam. Offensive at times to historical truth, the sensibilities of women, the canons of good taste, the concept of racial equality, and the concept of cultural tolerance, exoticism is the juiciest of the three wedges of our orientalist pie. But whatever it *reflects* about the Orient pales before what it *reveals* of the troubled subconscious of the Occident.

It is hard to pinpoint exactly where exoticism as a discrete aspect of orientalism begins to emerge in the visual arts. Drawings said to be copies of works by Melchior Lorichs made around 1558, for example,

²⁹ See Z. Rozanow and E. Smulikowska, *The Cultural Heritage of Jasna Góra*, 2nd ed. (Warsaw: Interpress, 1979), p. 71. I am indebted to my colleague Tadeusz Majda of Warsaw University for this source.

show the germs of exoticism in their depiction of nude women dancing and making music in a purported peep into an Islamic harem.³⁰ Exoticism focuses on several themes: by far the most important is that of sexuality and the harem. Also important are the themes of cruelty and bloodthirstiness; drugs, alcohol and tobacco; horses and horsemanship. Exoticism also has a long and relatively blameless life in the realm of this history of architecture, where Islamic fantasies may be seen on buildings as diverse as a bizarre "Moorish" Bohemian teahouse brought from a Paris exhibition to the grounds of Schloss Linderhof in Bavaria by the crazy Wittelsbach Ludwig II,³¹ to the considerably more sincere gravity of the stately Temple Emanuel on Fifth Avenue in New York City.³²

The linchpin of exoticism, which offends the most viewers in both East and West, but for widely differing reasons, is one of the most pervasive and popular perjorative conceptions of Islamic culture: the notion that Islam, from private house to paradise itself, condones, practices, and encourages all sorts of imaginable and unimaginable manifestations of lust and the pleasures of the flesh. That Islam, the most puritanical of all of the world's great religions, should have achieved this reputation, is a measure of two things. The first is the way Europeans either inadvertently or deliberately misinterpreted both Islamic scripture (specifically, descriptions of Paradise) and Islamic social mores (specifically, the institution of polygamous marriage). The second is the difficulty Europeans have always had in reconciling any concept of sexuality with their Pauline heritage of Epistolary Christianity, with its constant warnings about the evils of the flesh, the sins of pleasure, and the diabolical nature of lust. Be this as it may, exoticism became a thriving industry in European painting during the nineteenth century, and it is the backward-looking academic art of this period (rather than the forward-looking revolutions in European art taking place during this time) which today has begun to beguile so

³⁰ See E. Fischer, *Melchior Lorck: Drawings from the Evelyn Collection at Stonor Park England and from The Department of Prints and Drawings, The Royal Museum of Fine Arts, Copenhagen* (Copenhagen: Museum of Fine Arts, 1962), catalogue numbers 54 and 55, illustrated p. 107.

³¹ The eclectic tastes of King Ludwig are perhaps best known from his Wagnerian castle Neuschwanstein near Munich, but the opportunity to buy the Moorish Teahouse, purportedly an exhibition of the Bohemian crystal industry at a Paris World's Fair, evidently was one he could not pass by.

³² For Islamic elements in Western architecture, see P. Conner, *Oriental Architecture in the West* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1979), and G.S. Bernstein, *In Pursuit of the Exotic: Islamic Forms in Nineteenth-century American Architecture* (Ph.D. diss.) (Ann Arbor, MI: University Microfilms, 1968).

many auctioneers and dealers in London, Paris, and New York.³³

As mentioned above, exoticism with the Orient as a theme has been around for a long time. Nicolay's comments on Turkish women at the public baths show what people were inclined to believe. Rembrandt's portrayals of the subjects of Susannah and Bathsheba partook of this general image. Ingres's "Grande Odalisque" of 1814, now in the Louvre, is perhaps the most restrained of the genre, with her acres of sub-zero skin and icy disdain. Delacroix's "Odalisque" of ca. 1850 in the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, by contrast, is the most carnal of the lot and its high heat makes it the only work in that venerable institution which still appears to draw the attention of the aged guardians who police its quiet halls.³⁴ But the range of exoticism is much wider than this. The little porcelain figurines of Turks and Turkesses modeled by Kaendler in Meissen represent exoticism in one of its most charming phases; a delightful aspect of the Rococo style in Europe, in addition to the better known "chinoiserie," was the "turquerie" which found its way into wall decoration and tiled ceramic stoves (Figure 11).³⁵ In its more extreme examples, exoticism represents the paradox of what the viewing public in Europe wanted—they wanted images of great sexuality and eroticism, which did not offend their innate puritanism. When Manet painted his celebrated and sensational nude portrait of the courtesan Olympia, who coolly appraises her onlookers like a high-class rug dealer looking at some miserable product of the looms of Hamadan, the painting shocked Parisians by the thousands, some returning to be shocked dozens of times. But had the turban been on Olympia and not on her servant, and had the painting been entitled "Zulaika," or some other name out of Victor Hugo's *Orientales* or Goethe's *Westöstlicher Diwan*, the painting would have entertained without offending. The Islamic world, in other words, provided a convenient and morally acceptable remove

³³ Publications resulting from this interest, in addition to the examples of sales catalogues mentioned in note 1 above, include *The Orientalists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979); J. Soustiel and L. Thornton, *Mahmal et Attatichs* (Paris: J. Soustiel, 1979); and *Travellers Beyond the Grand Tour* (London: Fine Art Society, 1980).

³⁴ Reproduced [oddly enough] in black-and-white [more oddly still] in the standard textbook, H.W. Janson's *History of Art*, 2nd ed. (New York: Abrams and Prentice-Hall, 1977), p. 586, fig. 747.

³⁵ Ceramic turquerie ranged the entire gamut from German porcelain stoves actually molded in the form of seated, turbaned Turks, to the fireplaces constructed in imitation of Turkish İznik tile-work by the great British studio potter William de Morgan. The example illustrated in Figure 10 is a detail from a large stove now in a restaurant in Luzern, Switzerland.

in which to portray the full gamut of European sexual fantasies, which remained fantasies as long as they focused on the imagery of faraway places. It was a useful way of evading the strictures of Saint Paul, while at the same time sacrificing to Mammon, as the phenomenal success of the American Hiram Powers's pale tincture of orientalism dissolved in exoticism, the famous "Greek Slave," demonstrated at fairs, side-shows, and expositions all over the continent of North America.³⁶

The theme of the harem woman, the so-called "odalisque,"³⁷ has a thousand varieties in European art. Take the painting in words by Victor Hugo:

Dis, crains-tu les filles de Grèce?
Les lys pâles de Damanhour?
Ou l'oeil ardent de la négresse
Qui, comme une jeune tigresse,
Bondit rugissante d'amour?³⁸

Hugo's "Captive" could have stepped right out of an Ingres painting:

Je ne suis point Tartare
Pour qu'un eunuque noir
M'accorde ma guitare,
Me tienne mon miroir.³⁹

The theme is a persistent one; it finds expression in the works of the impressionists (Renoir's "Odalisque" from the Chester Dale collection in the National Gallery, Washington, is an excellent example) through the works of the post-Impressionists such as Matisse, who treated the

³⁶ The story of the peregrinations of Powers's famous statue is a fascinating commentary on American taste, and on the respectability which a classical or an oriental "venue" could bestow on a work of art; its exhibition at the Great Exhibition of 1851 in London made it one of the most popular works of art of the nineteenth century.

³⁷ The etymology of "odalisque" is evidently from the Turkish "odalik," literally, "for the (bed)room" and figuratively, "concubine."

³⁸ Speak! do you fear the daughters of Greece?
The pale lily of Damanhour?
Or the burning eye of the negress,
Who, like a young tigress,
Leaps, raging with love?

Victor M. Hugo, *Orientales* I, ed. E. Barineau (Paris: M. Didier, 1952), "La Sultane favorite," 51-55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, "La Captive," 9-12.

subject in paintings and prints by the dozens.⁴⁰ In the nineteenth century, the popularity of such works as Julia Pardoe's profusely-illustrated *Beauties of the Bosphorus* and Walsh and Allom's *Constantinople and the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* in middle-class Protestant parlors in England and North America meant that the theme of the odalisque had to submit to a sort of virginal Victorianism, of which Thomas Allom's "The Favorite Odalisque" is a typical example (Figure 12).⁴¹ No such Anglo-Saxon inhibitions ever affected Ingres's pupil Jean-Léon Gérôme, whose famous painting of the "Slave Market" in the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, showing a nude female slave being examined closely by prospective male buyers, exhibits a breath-taking degree of exploitation and old-fashioned male chauvinism.⁴²

The academic orientalists present another curious paradox, for they were not only the most ardent practitioners of exoticism, with all of the distortion of Islamic mores and beliefs which exoticism frequently implies; at the same time they were in the details of their paintings among the most assiduous of rapporteurs. Using photographs, or extremely detailed sketches made in situ and borrowing all sorts of objects from collections around them, the orientalists filled their paintings with an amazing array of archaeological detail. For example, in the paintings of Rudolf Ernst, an Austrian orientalist, we encounter scenes of the interiors of Turkish mosques in which several different buildings, all recognizable immediately to a specialist, are abstracted in detail to construct a pastiche of variegated "authenticity."⁴³ Gérôme's famous "Snake Charmer" shows his nude herpetologist against a meticulously-painted tiled wall taken directly from the Harem of the Topkapı Palace in Istanbul. How Gérôme managed to produce this almost photographic reproduction of a monument that was supposedly

⁴⁰ Cf. Alazard, *L'Orient et la peinture française*, for Renoir; for Matisse, see, among others, A. Barr, *Matisse, His Art and His Public* (New York: Arno, 1966).

⁴¹ Julia Pardoe, *Beauties of the Bosphorus: The City of the Sultan, and Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836* (London: G. Virtue, 1838); Thomas Allom and Robert Walsh, *Constantinople and the Scenery of the Seven Churches of Asia Minor* (London: Fisher, son, & co., 1838).

⁴² Illustrated in *The Orientalists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1979), introduction by Michelle Verrier, entry 27.

⁴³ Ibid., entry 46. The *mihrab* of the mosque is taken from the mosque of Rüstem Pasha in Istanbul; the *kürsü* or pulpit is from the Yeni Valide mosque in Istanbul; the inscription above the *mihrab* is from a third building; the Iranian rug hanging on the pier is totally out of place.

guarded from the eyes of the outside world, remains a mystery.⁴⁴ The academic orientalists surrounded their voluptuous nudes, intriguing courtiers, dissolute Pashas, headless corpses and headstrong warriors with layer upon layer of the most impeccably-portrayed jewelry, architecture, cityscapes, carved wood, carpets, and costumes. Their influence was quite pervasive, and finally, inevitably, invaded the Orient itself.

The Ottoman painter Osman Hamdi studied in Paris, and then made quite a career of depiction of scenes of his native Turkey, working primarily as a *rapporteur* in the style of the academic orientalists.⁴⁵ But how do we explain a work such as his "Mihrab" in which he portrays a young woman dressed in a *décolleté* dress, seated in a *rahle* or stand for the Qur'ān, directly in front of the *mihrab* or prayer niche of a mosque, with manuscripts, presumably Islamic holy books, dumped in disarray on the ground at her feet? This rather interesting piece of exoticism recalls the crowning of a member of the Parisian *demi-monde* as the Goddess of Reason upon the high altar of Notre-Dame during the French Revolution.

Art-Historical Problems and Orientalism

The fascinating use of oriental imagery in European visual arts has a long lineage. The Beatus manuscripts and the sculpture and architecture of the Romanesque in France reflect Islamic *influence* on European art at its strongest,⁴⁶ while it is not until the fourteenth and especially the fifteenth century in Italy that we see Islamic *imagery* in the art of Europe developed to a significant degree. There are many other aspects of the Orient in Western art in addition to those we have examined to this point in the present essay, among them the entire question of *chinoiserie* and the influence of the cultures of Japan and South Asia,⁴⁷

⁴⁴ "The Snake Charmer," from the Clark Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts, is likewise illustrated in the Rizzoli volume, entry 42. An article analyzing this painting and its sources is currently being prepared for publication by J.W. Bailey, Harvard University.

⁴⁵ See M. Cezar, *Sanatta Bayi'ya Açılış ve Osman Hamdi* (Istanbul, 1971), after p. 312. The original work is in the Hakgüden Collection in Istanbul, and can be dated to 1901.

⁴⁶ See R.A. Jairazbhoy, *Oriental Influence in Western Art* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965); S. Ferber, ed., *Islam and the Medieval West* (Binghamton: State University of New York Press, 1975); and A. Fikry, *L'art Roman du Puy et les Influences Islamiques* (Paris: Leroux, 1934).

⁴⁷ See Jairazbhoy, *Oriental Influences*, and H. Honour, *Chinoiserie* (London: Penguin, 1974).

the much-studied representations of Islamic carpets in European paintings,⁴⁸ the profound cultural interdependence in the area of arms, armor and fortifications, and the role of Islamic textiles, ceramics, and metalwork in the development of the European decorative arts. The chief failure of historians of art in studying these phenomena has been yet another aspect of the basic problem itself: historians of art are trained in a Eurocentric curriculum structured by a Eurocentric discipline, and a very significant criticism to be made of a large part of the literature on orientalism in European art is that it proceeds from a base of relative ignorance about the Islamic civilization whose imagery is being used, about the attitudes and experiences of the European practitioners of orientalism, and above all about the historical background of these attitudes and experiences. If—as we stated at the outset—it is perhaps a bit naive to get overly exercised about the moral corruption of some aspects of orientalism, it is also a bit naive to ignore the problem altogether.

But if orientalism is an integral part of the long history of Western art, the pinnacle of orientalist exoticism was not reached until the early years of the present century, in the Diaghilev production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Schéhérazade*, choreographed by Michel Fokine and designed by Léon Bakst.⁴⁹ Here, the visual arts combined with music, theatre, and dance, in a virtual apotheosis of exoticism's major themes: lust, cruelty, blood, death, and passion. It is by now a familiar view of the Islamic Orient. The swing of the pendulum toward a more moderate direction, returning to influence and abandoning imagery, may be seen in the 1981 exhibition *Islamic Allusions* at the Alternative Museum in New York, where eighteen artists presented works in which the impress of the Islamic world is felt profoundly, but which call up

⁴⁸ In addition to the work by K. Erdmann, *Europe und der Orientteppich* (Mainz: Kupferberg, 1962), an interesting series of articles by John Mills on various carpet types has appeared in the journal *Hali* in volumes III and IV (1981 and 1982).

⁴⁹ See *Diaghilev: Costumes and Designs of the Ballets Russes* (New York: Costume Institute, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1978), and *Bakst* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980), illustrations 4-12.

no racial, religious, cultural, or social stereotypes.⁵⁰ How the future develops, and how we put the past into perspective, depends on an elusive sort of enlightenment, one that is only developed through study of and exposure to cultures other than our own. The record of American education in particular is far from encouraging in this matter, and higher scholarship does not enjoy an unblemished record either. The excesses of orientalist art should remind us not only of past weaknesses but of present failures; the positive achievements of orientalist art, on the other hand, should provide us with some hope for a brighter future without cultural stereotyping.

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⁵⁰ April Kingsley, *Islamic Allusions* (New York: Alternative Museum, 1981); see also the review of the exhibition by John Perrault, entitled "Mideast Pipeline," in *The Soho News*, January 14, 1981. I am indebted to my colleague Anne Mochon for the reference.