INTRODUCTION

The Orient has been a mythical, looming presence since the foundation of Islam in the 7th century. It has always been the “Other” that Edward Said wrote about in his 1979 book Orientalism.¹ The gulf of misunderstanding between the myth and the reality of the Near East still exists today in the 21st century.

Throughout the centuries, Westerners have maintained a distorted view of Orientals. Images from The Travels of Sir John Mandeville², published in the 16th century, include drawings of foreign men with heads on their chests, men with dog faces and Cyclopes figures. In the 19th century, the image was of a backwards, indolent man who still dressed as though he lived during Biblical times. Today the perception is of an Islamic extremist, whose mission in life is to hate the United States and to suppress his woman by forcing her to wear a burka.

Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1798 and the subsequent colonization of the Near East is perhaps the defining moment in the Western perception of the Near East. At the beginning of modern colonization, Napoleon and his companions arrived in the Near East convinced of their own superiority and authority; they were Orientalists. Donald Rosenthal summarizes Said’s theory of Orientalism as “a mode of thought for defining, classifying and expressing the presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient: In short, it is a part of the vast control mechanism of colonialism, designed to justify and perpetuate European dominance.”³ The supposed superiority of Europeans justified the colonization of Islamic lands.

Said never specifically wrote about art; however, his theories on colonialism and Orientalism still apply. Linda Nochlin first made use of them in her article “The Imaginary Orient” from 1983.⁴ Artists such as Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, Eugène
Delacroix and Jean-Léon Gérôme demonstrate Said’s idea of representing the Islamic “Other” as a culturally inferior and backward people, especially in their portrayal of women. The development of photography in the late 19th century added another dimension to this view of the Orient, with its seemingly objective viewpoint.

The perceptions of these artists as they painted and photographed the Orient are crucial in the development of the view of the Near East. Lene Susan Fort states “artists never create in a vacuum, bringing to their interpretations the opinions and biases of their cultural environment as well as their own life experiences. Whether the Orientalist painter personally visited the East or not, he was depicting a land he experienced as an outsider.”

As outsiders, painters and photographers quickly learned the limitations of their visits. The private sphere of Muslim society and Muslim women were frustratingly unattainable to Western men. To compensate for this inaccessibility, male artists had to hire prostitutes, use Jewish women or to simply use their imagination. This led to a distorted view of Oriental women, one where the women appeared as the artists hoped they would be.
CHAPTER 1: HISTORY

The cultural interest in the Orient in 19th century Europe developed from a long history dating back to the 7th century. Since 622 CE, when Mohammad immigrated to Medina, dynasties fighting in the name of Islam had steadily been conquering more and more lands in the Near East, North Africa and even reaching Europe itself with Spain and parts of France. Not only was Islam a force to be reckoned with, it was a lasting challenge, as the Ottoman Empire lasted until 1924. Said writes that to the Christians “Islam became an image . . . whose function was not so much to represent Islam in itself as to represent it to the medieval Christian.”

Not only did Muslims control the Holy Land, but Mohammad was also seen by Europeans as a Christ imposter. The view of Mohammad as a Christ-like figure shows the lack of knowledge of Islam on the part of Christians. Mohammad was believed to be the messenger of God, not God himself. Muslims also worship God directly, not through intercessors like Christ.

In 1095 Pope Urban II promoted the organization of the first crusade to reclaim the Holy Land. Delacroix’s *Entry of the Crusaders into Constantinople* (Fig. 1) shows the continued importance of the crusades, even in the 19th century. *The Mission of the Apostles* from the Bible was seen...
as a validation for the holy war, since it proclaims the duty of every Christian to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. This tympanum (Fig. 2), from the central portal of Saint Madeleine in Vézelay, France, shows Christ sending the apostles out to spread the word of Christ. The Catholic Church utilized scenes such as this one as propaganda to justify the crusades and to rally support for the defeat of the unenlightened Muslims.

Chateaubriand, a pilgrim to the Holy Land, writes that

> The crusades were not only about the deliverance of the Holy Sepulcher, but more about knowing which would win on the earth, a cult that was civilization’s enemy, systematically favorable to ignorance [this is Islam, of course], to despotism, to slavery, or a cult that had caused to reawaken in modern people the genius of a sage antiquity, and had abolished base servitude?“

The 8th century in Toledo, Spain, is a rare exception to the hostile attitude between the Christians and Muslims. Proving that it is possible, Muslims, Christians and Jews all coexisted peacefully. The Mosque of Bab Mihrab, the Catholic Church Santa Maria de la Vega and a synagogue (now named Santa Maria del Blanco) were all places of worship around the same period.

This peace changed in 1492 when the Catholic Kings, Ferdinand and Isabella, reconquered all of Spain. They displayed their superiority over the Muslims by moving the capital to Granada (the capital of the Muslims and the last city to fall) and living in the Sultan’s palace, the Al-Hambra. They also converted the most coveted mosque in Cordoba, Spain, into a cathedral. The idea of the superiority of the Christians over the Muslims would become a tradition for later conquerors of Islamic lands.

Artists were also interested in the Orient. Antoine Watteau painted this
portrait of *The Persian* (Fig. 3) in 1715 after meeting the Persian ambassador to France, Mehemet Riza Beg d’Erivan, in Paris. Jean-Etienne Liotard traveled to Constantinople in 1738. He gained notoriety by wearing Turkish costumes and painted this picture, *European Woman with her Slave in the Hammam* (Fig. 4), in 1761, with the woman wearing a costume made in Constantinople. Adding to this Oriental craze, François Boucher’s hunting scenes, such as *The Leopard Hunt* (Fig. 5) painted in 1738, became very popular.

Yet these works are not purely “Oriental;” these are not objective paintings of the Orient in its natural form. Watteau’s *The Persian* looks like a typical portrait from the 18th century. The posture, indirect gaze and the position of his hands mimic other portraits of Western men. The distinguishable difference is, of course, the Oriental clothing and turban worn by the sitter. This portrait is also somewhat unusual, as the Koran prohibits images of people.

Liotard’s painting shows a “quaint exoticism.” It is a costume piece, showing a European woman and her slave playing dress-up in Oriental clothing. It shows both the fascination with the Oriental culture and the sense of superiority over it. The European woman authoritatively wears the costume while gesturing to her slave.

*The Leopard Hunt* by Boucher focuses on the exotic and dangerous nature of the Orient. The Muslim men valiantly fight as the leopards attempt to kill them. The man on the white horse in the foreground pushes the leopard off his horse with his foot, while his servant stabs the leopard attacking the fallen comrade. The intensity of the action is heightened by the strong diagonal line of the mountain in the background that ends in front of the white horse.
Perrin Stein, in his article “Amédée Van Loo’s *Costume turc*: The French Sultana,” analyzes some important differences in 18th and 19th century Oriental paintings. Stein sees in Van Loo’s series “that the view of the ‘other’ which finds expression in *Le Costume turc* (and in much of 18th century exoticism) was rather a manifestation of the artist’s own cultural milieu than a (failed) attempt at objective description.”

Paintings such as *The Grand Turk Giving a Concert to his Mistress* (Fig. 6) show that Van Loo barely researched the clothing, interior and physiognomy of the Muslim world. The Turks are not racially distinguishable from the French, the figures are seated on chairs, there are musicians playing violins and a cello, and only Van Loo’s imaginary Oriental world differentiates it from a European setting.

In fact, Van Loo’s series was not popularly received because of these inaccuracies, showing a shift in European awareness of the Orient. One critic writes:

> The French, on the other hand, have the odd habit of turning the whole universe French. Look at these paintings by M. Vanloo, which represent a seraglio, where the beauties are surely not coiffed in the Turkish style. This pleases at first glance, but is the second as favorable?...The French must leave home in order to paint foreign subjects, or else they should confine themselves to national subjects."

The 19th century would provide this opportunity. The “picturesque exoticism” that fascinated the 18th century French would be replaced by the “sublime erotic” in the 19th century. “In the minds of the French Romantics, the Eastern female became a sensual object existing entirely for the delectation of men.” At the same time, the development
of mass culture, with the invention of photography, increased literacy of the people and the new affordability and access to books and articles paralleled the beginning of modern colonization. Western countries like France now had the power to control and dismantle other empires with faster ships, new weapons and a greater population to go and fight.

Leaders also had new motives in colonizing. When Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, he did not go with the intention only to trade with the Egyptians, but to conquer them politically and culturally. Napoleon brought writers and painters with him to document this momentous experience. Napoleon originally asked Jacques-Louis David to accompany him, although he refused. This documentary trip heavily influenced the perception of the Near East, however, instead of David, Vivant Denon traveled to Egypt.

Denon traveled to Egypt with the intent to document the visit. Yet Denon did not see Egypt through unbiased eyes. In the preface of his book, *Travels in Upper and Lower Egypt*, published in 1802, Denon writes:

To Bonaparte.
To combine the luster of your Name with the splendor of the Monuments of Egypt, is to associate the glorious annals of our own time with the history of the heroic age; and to reanimate the dust of Sesostris and Mendes, like you Conquerors, like you Benefactors. Europe, by learning that I accompanied you in one of your most memorable Expeditions, will receive my Work with eager interest. I have neglected nothing in my power to render it worthy of the Hero to whom it is inscribed.
Denon was able to experience and document many different facets of Egyptian society. He visited a harem, as seen in his engraving *Entertainment in the Harem* (Fig. 7). Denon acknowledges the importance of the visit, by retelling the difficulties they had in convincing their guides to allow them to attend. Denon gives a detailed account of the visit. After convincing the almés (Egyptian female dancers) to remove their veils, Denon and the other Westerners were soon shocked at the dance performed.

At the commencement the dance was voluptuous: it soon after became lascivious, and expressed, in the grossest and most indecent way, the giddy transports of the passions. The disgust which their spectacle excited, was heightened by one of the musicians of whom I have just spoken, and who, at the moment when the dancers gave the greatest freedom to their wanton gestures and emotions, which the stupid air of a clown in a pantomime, interrupted by a loud burst of laughter the scene of intoxication which was the close of the dance.¹⁴

Denon also confirms the stereotype of the idle, lounging Muslim man. Denon admires the “voluptuous pleasures” of the Orient: “to be indolently stretched on vast and downy carpets, strewed with cushions… intoxicated with desires; to receive sherbet from the hands of a young damsel, whose languishing eyes express the contentment of willing obedience, and not the constraint of servitude.”¹⁵

Denon’s book was very successful after its initial publication in 1802. The Comte de Volney commented that this book was “among the first to provide the public with the facts and images of a living universe, encountered face to face, described vividly, without
any scholarly apparatus, without the sacred respect of ancient discourse." Denon’s detailed descriptions of the land, people and customs of Egypt helped to heighten interest in the Orient.

Even though France’s control over Egypt did not last long, the ideas behind the invasion and the subsequent Egypt-mania had long lasting consequences. Napoleon was one of the first Westerners to analyze the Near East as more than the Biblical Orient. As Said writes, “Egypt was to become a department of French learning;” all aspects of Oriental culture were to be analyzed. Westerners had a right to colonize the Near East because of their cultural, intellectual, and technological superiority over the Arabs.
Those who traveled with Napoleon held the same ideas. “Faced with the obvious decrepitude and political impotence of the modern Oriental, the European Orientalist found it his duty to rescue some portion of a lost, past classical Oriental grandeur in order to ‘facilitate ameliorations’ in the present Orient.”\textsuperscript{18} The painter Antoine-Jean Gros exemplifies this theory. His works illustrate Roland Barthes’s theory of contrived art.\textsuperscript{19} Works such as \textit{Bonaparte Visiting the Victims of the Plague at Jaffa} (Fig. 8) are clearly propagandistic. Here Gros spins a potentially career damaging event in Napoleon’s past into a miracle scene. While fighting in Tel Aviv in 1799, hundreds of French and Arab soldiers had been infected with the bubonic plague. At the time, accusations had been made that Napoleon had poisoned his troops. Napoleon confronted this allegation by commissioning this painting, which instead shows Napoleon as the concerned leader, even touching the body of one of the sick soldiers. This contrasts greatly with Napoleon’s assistant who has turned his head in order to cover his mouth. This type of imagery presents Napoleon as a Christ-like figure, healing the sick. It is essentially an advertisement; Gros is selling Napoleon to the public.
But underlying this interpretation is a deeper, more psychological reading of this painting. Darcy Grimaldo Grigsby addresses this in her book, *Extremities: Painting Empire in Post-Revolutionary France*. “In Gros’s painting, Frenchmen not North Africans provide the ‘Orientalist’ figurations of regression, chaos, heightened sexuality, and passivity, conventionally construed as ‘feminine’ as well as ‘barbaric.’”20 In fact, this painting reverses many traditional roles of heroic history paintings.

The “hero” of this scene is presumably Napoleon, yet he is fully clothed in full military uniform; he is not the classical nude male. Instead, the male nude has become not the active hero, but the passive victim, usually associated with women. The substitution of women with male nudges adds a latent homoeroticism, as Napoleon delicately touches the wound of the injured French soldier.

It is surprising that Gros would risk such a juxtaposition, especially when the fear of feminization by the Arabs is considered. French soldiers in Egypt were terrified by the perceived widespread sodomy there. Nicolas Sonnini’s 1799 travel account writes:

> It is not for the women that their amorous ditties are composed; it is not on them that tender caresses are lavished; far different objects inflame them. Their sensual pleasure is not at all amiable, and their transports are merely paroxysm of brutality. This horrid depravity which, to the disgrace of polished nations, is not altogether unknown to them, is generally diffused over Egypt.21

Yet, in this painting the Arabs are portrayed in a relatively desexualized manner. The Arab assistants calmly tend to the sick Frenchmen. However, as Grimaldo Grigsby notices, this is in agreement with Said’s theory. “The Arabs are represented as remaining unaffected by the particular event; they do not succumb to the disease, nor do they react to it. Such was the character of the Oriental: impassive, resigned, unchanged, and thus permanently available to European analysis and classification.”22
These anomalies help to explain why this work was used by many to criticize Napoleon. Gros altered a known and accepted aesthetic to portray Napoleon in the role of hero and concerned leader of his troops. The real or imagined fears of the French against the “feminine” Egypt heavily influenced the portrayal of the Orient.

Gros was prevented from traveling to the Near East by the British naval control of the eastern Mediterranean; instead he relied on eyewitness accounts to create an exotic world of brilliant color, dramatic turmoil and unfamiliar settings. In *The Battle of Nazareth* (Fig. 9) of 1801, Gros depicts General Junot’s victory on the slopes of Mount Tabor. Gros received his information of this site from strategists. Although the final version was never started, Gros attempted to capture the shadows and light during the actual battle time. The Battle of Abukir took place on July 25, 1799, when the cavalry commander Joachim Murat forced the Turkish army into the sea. Gros was determined to have as much accuracy as possible in his painting of *The Battle of Abukir* (Fig. 10) from 1805. Gros requested fabrics, saddlecloths and arms from Denon. He used Denon’s plates of the battle and the site of Abukir to complete the work.
Reviews of this work were mixed. Some praised his study of physiognomy of the figures, while others complained that Egypt was only identifiable by a few monuments. Because Gros was not present at the battle he used exoticism to intensify the central action by heightening the presence of the figures. 23
CHAPTER 2: ROMANTICISM

The explosion of the Orient was a perfect fit for the Romantics. The exoticism and eroticism of the Orient fed into Romantic ideals and imaginations. The popularity of disaster and death scenes, such as Delacroix’s *The Massacre at Chios* or *The Death of Sardanapalus* is rooted in the concept of the Sublime. Edmund Burke, in his book *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* from 1756, explains the Sublime as the delight that arises from the contemplation of a terrifying situation—natural, artistic or intellectual—that could not actually harm the spectator, except in the imagination. The resulting imagery produces an emotion more intense than that offered by beauty, it is the ‘strongest emotion, which the mind is capable of feeling.’

The Picturesque is another important concept for Romanticism. It is based on the idea of travel and promoted an interest in the quaint, the Old World and the irregular. This explains why so many artists would travel to the Near East.

Even though many artists traveled to the Near East during this period, it does not mean that they necessarily painted the land and its inhabitants exactly as they saw them. Artists clearly went to the Orient with preconceived notions. In Gombrichian terms, artists made paintings of the exotic, wild, cruel Orient then matched them to what they selectively saw. Linda Nochlin writes, “Gérôme is not reflecting a readymade reality but, like all artists, is producing meanings.”

As Said forcefully writes, this preconceived notion was “that the space of weaker or underdeveloped regions like the Orient was viewed as something invitingly French interest, penetration, insemination— in short colonization.” Colonization was largely justified because the Orient was seen as essentially female; something weaker and even
asking to be overpowered. This concept can be seen in literature, politics and especially the art produced during this period. Books with Oriental subjects, like Lord Byron’s *Cain* and *Sardanapalus*, were very popular, as were pornographic books set in harems with beautiful odalisques and powerful sultans. Art produced with Oriental subjects exploded during this period, with artists such as Ingres, Delacroix and Gérôme taking a special interest in the Orient.
CHAPTER 3: ARTISTS

The inaccessibility of the Orient and especially Oriental women caused many artists to rely on other eyewitness accounts. Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres never actually traveled to the Near East. Instead he used Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’s published letters of her adventures in Turkey. Due to his own interpretations of the letters, however, and of the artistic license taken, some scholars wonder if Ingres actually read the text or recorded what he wished to remember from a loosely translated edition. Ingres would write certain passages or phrases in his notebooks, yet he disregarded many of Lady Montagu’s conclusions. Lady Montagu wrote that Turkish women

...are (perhaps) freer than any Ladys in the universe, and are the only Women in the world that lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure, exempt from cares, their whole time being spent in visiting, bathing, or the agreeable Amusement of spending Money and inventing new fashion... Tis true they have no public places from the Bagnios, and there can only be seen by their own Sex; however, that is a Diversion they take great pleasure in.

It was particularly Lady Montagu’s letter about her visit to the Bagnio (a bathhouse in Turkey) that inspired one of Ingres’s most famous paintings, the *Turkish Bath* (Fig. 11) from 1863. After her visit, she wrote:

I was in my traveling Habit, which is a riding dress, and certainly appear’d very extraordinary to them, there was not one of ‘em that shew’d the least surprise or impertinent Curiosity... I know no European Court where the Ladys would have behav’d them selves in so polite a manner to a stranger... The first sofas were cover’d with Cushions and rich Carpets, on which sat the Ladys, and on the 2nd their slaves behind ‘em, but without any
distinction of rank by their dress, all being in the state of nature, that is, in plain English, stark naked, without any Beauty or defect conceal’d, yet there was not the least wanton smile or immodest Gesture amongst ‘em… In short, tis the Women’s coffee house, where all the news of the Town is told, Scandal invented, etc.\textsuperscript{31}

In this work, Ingres clearly takes what he wants from this letter. He turns a public bathhouse into an intimate, private quarter; Linda Nochlin writes that it is “an egregiously unrealistic erotopia.”\textsuperscript{32} In effect, this is an example of Ingres’s and all Western male’s fantasies overriding the evidence found.

Although nude, Lady Montagu writes that there were no “immodest gestures” or “wanton smiles”. Yet Ingres’s work has clear sexual overtones, especially with the lesbian couple in the left corner and the construction of the picture as a peephole into a zone forbidden to male access. The multitude of sprawling limbs and overlapping of forms create a tension between eroticism and abstraction.

Perhaps the most telling example of Ingres’s changes is the exclusion of Lady Montagu from the painting. Ruth Bernard Yeazell concludes that the \textit{Turkish Bath}

\ldots transforms a social encounter into a private vision, a dream in which the dreamer himself remains invulnerable to observation. Only by expelling Lady Mary from the picture can Ingres complete his transformation of her public baths into the haremlike enclosure of his fantasy . . . What he chose to see in the end was not a collection of living women, but a harem of memory.\textsuperscript{33}
The *Turkish Bath* is a very erotic painting, yet the women possess what Walter Friedlaender called a “frozen sensuousness.” These are not real women that the viewer could meet one day, but are presented like classical statues, all carefully posed and directed. The erotic positions and expressions of the women oppose the highly stylized linearity of their forms and create tension in the work.

Ingres’s interest in the Orient was long standing. His famous *Grande Odalisque* (Fig. 12) was painted in 1814 for his patrons Joachim and Caroline Murat. Her power lies in the fluid linearity and the elegance of the figure and pose. Although the odalisque is a very beautiful and idealized woman, she has received much criticism and discussion due to her anatomical disproportions. She appears to have extra vertebrae, her left leg does not quite seem to be in a realistic position, and Ingres exaggerates the twist of the neck and the size of her hips. This does not mean that Ingres did not understand human anatomy; on the contrary, the distortions were done deliberately. As Amaury-Duval pointed out, “Properly proportioned, would she have exerted such powerful attraction?”
Even though the work was not universally acclaimed in the 19th century, today it is appreciated for the perfectly controlled simplicity of the composition with its fluid arc and formal resolution. This painting represents Ingres’s identification with the classical and mannerist order. Compared to Delacroix, this work is much more controlled, detailed and elegant. Not only this, but Ingres has represented a harem woman in a completely different manner. Having never visited a harem himself, Ingres admitted that he used a ten-year-old Roman girl as his model. He adds the token turban, fabric and peacock feathered fan to represent her as an odalisque. She looks at the viewer in an almost detached manner, yet by the fact that she makes direct eye contact with the viewer, it is as if she gives a “come hither” look. The discrepancies between Delacroix and Ingres’s odalisques show that for Ingres the odalisques were a project of the imagination, a fantasy space.

The power of the gaze has been much discussed in 19th and 20th century art theory. Margaret Olin discusses some of these theories in her article for Critical Terms for Art History.\textsuperscript{36} She mentions that “while most discourse about the gaze concerns pleasure and knowledge…it generally places both of these in the service of issues of power, manipulation, and desire.”\textsuperscript{37}

Paintings like Grande Odalisque draw power from a gaze. The gaze here is a reciprocal action: the beholder gazes at the woman in the painting and the woman in the painting gazes at the beholder. The odalisque exists for the pleasure of the male beholder. “Woman is the image; the man is the bearer of the look. Power is on his side.”\textsuperscript{38} Yet the woman looks directly at the viewer, acknowledging, even inviting, the gaze of the beholder. This return gaze restores some of the woman’s power. This gained power will
be lost in other paintings of Oriental women (like Gérôme’s *Moorish Bath*, where the woman seems to be unaware of the viewer).

Ingres creates another fantasy scene in his painting, *Odalisque with Slave* from 1839 (Fig. 13). The work is composed like a stage setting with strong horizontal and vertical lines. The extreme sexuality and provocative position of the reclining nude was socially acceptable because this is not a European woman, but an odalisque. Ingres uses the conception of the erotic in Muslim women to portray women in a certain way. Once again the proportions of the figures are not exact. Ingres creates his ideal woman not necessarily the most realistic one.

The name of the model is known; she is a Parisian model named Madame Felix. Ingres’s studies for this work were completed in Paris, and the final version was painted in Rome. Several titles listed on the sketch are “sleep,” “the sultana at rest” and “Italian
woman taking a siesta.” The interchangeability of the title proves that Ingres was more interested in portraying the scene rather than showing the European world the interior of a harem.39

Even in the 19th century, Ottoman writers complained of the representation of Eastern women by Western artists. In his 1889 book Avrupa’da Bir Cevelan (A Tour in Europe), Ahmed Mithad Efendi, a prominent Ottoman writer, criticized paintings like Ingres’s *Odalisque with Slave* for the way “…the Eastern woman Europe [were] depicted until now…It is assumed that this body is not the mistress of her house, the wife of her husband, and the mother of her children, but only a servant to the pleasures of the man who owns the house. What a misconception!”40

The skin color of the odalisque is significant in showing Western views of race. Harem pictures by Western artists typically show a hierarchy based on race. The most prized odalisque should be the woman with the lightest skin color. This can be seen in Ingres’s *Odalisque with Slave*. The dark-skinned male figure is delegated to the background and the brown-skinned female is nearly fully clothed (only her left breast is partially exposed) while she entertains the beautiful, reclining, nude white woman. Joan DelPlato writes:

> All three skin types, rendered unambiguously by Ingres’s use of a precisely chiseled line, reflect the ultimate fantasy of subservience each maintains to the unseen, powerful pasha—and to the powerful Western viewer. The ruler here is not the women’s only master, however; so is the nineteenth-century spectator who assumes a scopic mastery in viewing these pictures.41

Eugène Delacroix offers a very different perspective of the Orient than Ingres. Delacroix is very much the Romantic painter, with passionate colors and emotionally moving works. Unlike Ingres, Delacroix traveled to the Near East, visiting Morocco in 1832. This allowed him to experience the exoticism and beauty of the Orient firsthand.
Delacroix did, however, paint two of his most famous works, *The Massacre at Chios* (1822) and *The Death of Sardanapalus* (1827) without visiting the Near East. Instead he based the works on newspaper reports, eyewitness accounts and Romantic literature.

In *The Massacre of Chios* (Fig. 14) Delacroix depicts an event from contemporary life - the Greek War of Independence from the Ottoman Turks. This scene is the horrible episode of the Turkish massacre of male inhabitants of the rebellious island of Chios and the abduction into slavery of their women and children. The figures are arranged in pyramidal compositions with the very sketch-like landscape showing in both the foreground and background.

Delacroix maximizes sympathy for the Greek victims, an example of what Said calls the “Eurocentric and Christian prejudice against Arab-Islamic peoples and their culture.” The figure in the center represents resignation and oppression. The cruel Arab charges into the scene on his horse and grabs the naked woman while slaying the man. Perhaps the most tragic figures are the mother and child as the child attempts to feed from his murdered mother.

Delacroix read eyewitness accounts of the event; however, even supporters of his work complained that he merely reused conventions derived from pictures of the plagues
(such as Gros’s *Bonaparte Visiting the Victims of the Plague at Jaffa*). For example, the nude male in the center has a similar look and feel to the kneeling male in Gros’s work.

Delacroix takes a clear stand on this event; the Greeks are everything good and innocent and the Arabs are ruthless and cruel. In this respect Said is correct in his belief that most Europeans maintained their prejudices against Arabs. Yet, in this example, it is a little more complicated. Perhaps Delacroix did not attempt to show the point of view of the Turks, but most would agree that this was a horrible event in world history. The Turks massacred the Greeks and abducted the women and children. Said tends to gloss over the fact that there are examples of cruel, savage behavior in Arabic history.

Linda Nochlin concludes that for some artists “the Near East existed as an actual place to be mystified with effects of realness, for other artists it existed as a project of the imagination, a fantasy space or screen onto which strong desires- erotic, sadistic or both- could be projected with impunity.” Delacroix’s *The Death of Sardanapalus* (Fig. 15) can be seen as an extension of Delacroix’s own personal fantasies regarding women.

This work is considered one of the ultimate Romantic works. It portrays the ancient Assyrian king, Sardanapalus, in his palace at Nineveh. He has been besieged by rebels, and rather than let the rebels control his possessions, he orders the destruction of everything, including the death of his mistresses. The scene is based on Lord Byron’s play of 1821. However Delacroix takes some artistic license, as Byron’s play does not even include this scene of utter destruction.
To create this complicated composition, Delacroix looked at a wide variety of sources to create an authentic image, while still leaving room for his imagination and penchant for the sensational. Despite its brilliant colors, broad brushwork and dynamic composition, this work was not well received by the public or critics when it debuted in the Salon in 1828. With the aloofness of the hero, Delacroix had, as Nochlin states, “come too close to an overt statement of the most explosive, hence the most carefully repressed, corollary of the ideology of male domination; the connection between sexual possession and murder as an assertion of absolute enjoyment.” She believes that “it is not Western man’s power over the Near East that is at issue, but rather, I believe, contemporary Frenchmen’s power over women.” Although I agree with Nochlin on this point, I believe the two are not mutually exclusive. The colonization of the Near East
was justified by the fact that Western men saw it as female. So the power over the Near East and the Frenchmen’s power over women are analogous.

Gombrich’s beholder also plays an especially important role in this work, one created essentially for male reception. The de-centered position of the king gives way to the even more privileged view of the women’s bodies, and other objects offered to the male viewer. The viewer’s relation to the women, like that of Sardanapalus to the women, can also stand for the power of the contemporary Frenchmen over women.46

Delacroix’s life changed dramatically in 1832 when he was invited to accompany the Comte de Mornay, Louis-Philippe’s ambassador to the Sultan of Morocco, to Spain, Morocco and Algeria. Delacroix’s sketch shows the Sultan of Morocco and his Entourage (Fig. 16). Delacroix kept very careful records of his trip and we have hundreds of drawings and watercolors, notebooks, letters and his journal available to us. Figure 17 shows one page from his journal.

For the first time, Eugène Fromentin writes, “he saw the human spectacle of the Orient. Delacroix was struck by the discrepancy between the Orient that he was discovering and the one that he had represented in his previous work. He discovered a living antiquity in the nobility of bearing and gesture that he saw around him.”47
This trip to Morocco rather than Egypt or Turkey was unusual but was made because France wanted an alliance with Morocco to help control Algeria. Because of resentment in the area, the French needed to travel under heavy guard. The constant traveling disrupted Delacroix’s ability to capture the scenery and figures in the way he would have liked. He wanted to provide himself with aides for future pictures; because of this, he would in his journals intersperse text, drawings and watercolors.  

Delacroix’s other problem in Morocco was the lack of willing models. He wrote in a letter: “their prejudices are great against the beautiful art of painting, but a few coins here and there will appease their [Muslim men’s] scruples.” Delacroix learned in North Africa about costume, setting, lighting and Moroccan men’s public behaviors and practices.

He learned very little about Muslim women, however. Delacroix’s biggest frustration was their inaccessibility. Not only were their houses off limits but even their terraces could be gazed on only at tremendous personal risk. The world of a Muslim woman took place entirely in private quarters.

Delacroix compensated for this by painting Muslim men and Jewish women, such as the *Jewish Wedding in Morocco* (Fig. 18) and the *Jewess Bride of Tangier* (Fig. 19).
Jewish women were still sexually inaccessible but Delacroix was able to study their ornate costumes and jewelry.\textsuperscript{50}

The double standard between Muslims and Europeans can be seen in some of Delacroix’s works. Delacroix turned the violence and animosity he encountered into the pictorial value. In his \textit{Moroccan Military Exercises} (Fig. 20) from 1847 the Moroccan men no longer shoot at the French enemy; the violence is self-contained; there is a separation from the viewer and the men, accomplished by the horizontal placement of the figures and the fact that no one looks out to the viewer. The Orient has become theatrical, a wild production of dust and violence.

In \textit{The Fanatics of Tangier} (Fig. 21) from 1838 Delacroix decides that unlike the mob of Paris, this Moroccan crowd is worthy of painting. The mob reinforces the idea of the savage Muslim, with his irrational violence. By ignoring violence in his own country, Delacroix allows his sense of superiority over Orientals to pervade this painting.
In July 1832 Delacroix returned to France with notebooks full of future paintings. Delacroix did learn about Muslim and Oriental culture, although, as Christine Peltre points out, Delacroix never completely loses the image of his first Orient. His works will never again have the sadistic overtones of *The Death of Sardanapalus* or the same overt exoticism, but Delacroix’s lion scenes, such as this *Lion Hunt* (Fig. 22) from 1854 show the continuation of his penchant for the violent.\(^{51}\)

Due to the inaccessibility of women, Delacroix’s notebooks were mostly filled with sketches of Muslim men. Once he returned to France, however, the works he presented to the Salon were of women. He transformed the seductive men into the elusive women whose invisibility and inaccessibility had filled his writings.\(^{52}\)

The most famous of these works is the *Women of Algiers in Their Apartment* (Fig. 23). Through the intervention of a colonial administrator, Delacroix was able to enter a harem in Algeria after the military defeat of Algeria by the French. There he admired the tranquil domestic occupation of its inhabitants. As the first Romantic male painter to
paint a harem from first-hand experience, Delacroix carefully constructed this painting. Delacroix wanted to dispel the myth of the harem as a constant orgy with ugly, African women as prostitutes for the French army, as was commonly seen in cartoons from the period.⁵³

He portrays the interior of their apartment as very peaceful with a dignified hush over the space. The women who, self-contained, even remote, impassively occupy a calmly logical space. The viewer respects the women in their residence. Darcy Gimaldo Grigsby writes,

The power of the picture resides in its successful integration of discrepant descriptive and generalizing registers. On the one hand, the tableau flaunts Delacroix’s newfound knowledge in its plethora of sumptuous details that describe how things look: patterns of tiles, pillows, rugs, jewelry, and fabrics. On the other hand, those details are everywhere subordinated to the self-evidently painterly handling of the composition’s overall atmospheric lighting: the dusky late afternoon interplay between golden light and veiling, cushioning shadows.⁵⁴
Delacroix downplays the image of the overtly, raw sexual prowess of the women by leaving them mostly covered. He does not even accentuate the women’s cleavage in their low-cut outfits. Renoir would later write that “Arab women were ‘clever enough to know the value of mystery. An eye half-seen through a veil becomes really alluring!’” Delacroix understands that it was the impenetrability of the harem and the women in it, which made it the most urgently desired space to penetrate. Delacroix does not overexpose his women in order to preserve their mystery.

These women also distance themselves from the viewer. Unlike Ingres’s *Grande Odalisque*, these women do not acknowledge our presence— we are intruders. The two women on the right are sharing an intimate conversation, of which we do not take part. The beholder’s intrusion takes power away from the women, as they did not invite us into their home.

Delacroix’s admittance into a harem can be equated to the admittance of the Western man into the Orient. Both represent the violation of a sacred space— devaluing the treasures of the Orient. But this was easily justified, as the Westerners deserved to be there due to their domination and superiority over the Arabs.

Delacroix’s contemporaries disagreed greatly over this work. Some thought it “bizarre” and disagreed with the portrayal of the woman; these women did not fulfill Western expectations of harem women. Delacroix did not even title it properly; he avoids the terms “harem” and “odalisque,” instead he uses “apartment” and an ethnic identifier, “women of Algiers.” Delacroix did have supporters though. Gustave Planche called the work a “most brilliant triumph” as it grabs our attention “by the art of painting alone…without the aid of a subject that might distract the eye.”
Jean-Léon Gérôme, in contrast to Ingres, traveled extensively in Egypt. Gérôme represents the Realist tradition; he sought to establish a documentary realism. In order to prepare his works, Gérôme used pencil drawings, precise oil sketches and even photography. Gérôme’s works sold very well, especially after he married the daughter of an influential gallery owner. Due to his relative wealth he could actually buy Oriental artifacts to use as studio props back in France. Gérôme, however, was not always successful with critics. The Romantics accused him of being too static in his visual approach and that his figures were too wooden.\(^{57}\)

Gérôme aspired to paint with complete realism. But as Nochlin points out, we must “clarify whosereality we are talking about.”\(^{58}\) Gérôme believes he is being objective; he even uses photographs! But Gombrich and I would argue that there is no objectivity in art or even photographs. Photographs can still be manipulated and affected by human judgments. Nonetheless, Gérôme’s works do show much more detail than Delacroix’s. Gérôme was interested in many parts of the Islamic world, especially scenes of Islamic life and women.

Before the opening of the Orient, very little was known about Islam. Many Westerners, after visiting the Near East, responded with awe and considerable respect of the Muslim faith. Gérôme was able to enter mosques in order to complete such works as the *Prayer in the Mosque of Amr* (Fig. 24). Gérôme was impressed by the equality of worshippers in the
sight of Allah and the solemnity of the religious celebrations. Visitors in general who sought to understand Islam, such as Alphonse de Lamartine, praised the depth of their faith, their charity, tolerance and administration of justice, and he even claimed that the teaching of the Koran is essentially no different from Christianity. Sir Richard Burton (translator of *Arabian Nights*) compared the two in commenting that Christianity debased Man by conceiving him as a fallen being, while Islam exalts and teaches respect for human dignity.  

However, not all visitors saw Islam in this favorable light. David Roberts blamed indolence in conjunction with Islam as the root cause of the deplorable condition of Egypt. He wrote,

> Splendid cities once teeming with a busy population and embellished with temples and edifices, the wonder of the world, now deserted and lonely, or reduced by mismanagement and the barbarism of the Muslim creed to a state as savage as wild animals by which they are surrounded. Often I have gazed on them till my heart actually sickens me.

Thus, colonization was justified in order that, as the French historian Edouard Driault said, “It was necessary to change Muslim habits, to destroy the age-old fanaticism which was an obstacle to the fusion of the races and to create a modern secular state.”

Gérôme showed considerable interest in Islam. He painted over twenty-five works of Muslims at prayer. Scholars, however, disagree in the meaning of this. Some, like Nochlin, believe that by showing the decaying mosque interiors and the unusual beliefs of some Muslims, like *Whirling Dervishes* (Fig. 25), Gérôme was commenting on the corruption of Islamic society. Gerald M. Ackerman takes a more sympathetic view. Ackerman believes that Gérôme was more interested in the history of the mosques and painted these subjects in order to learn more about them. The answer is probably a mixture of these two opinions.
Artists were also interested in social customs of Muslims. Artists, however, did not necessarily choose to paint the poverty, dirt and disease that nearly every visitor commented upon. Instead, artists wanted to portray the fantasy. Yet underlying this fantasy a moralizing aspect can be seen. Gérôme’s *The Snake Charmer* (Fig. 26) is an example of this. A young boy holds the snake while an old snake charmer plays off to the left. The audience is huddled together against the wall. Gérôme creates a sense of mystery with this work by location of the viewer. We are negated to watch the scene from the back, only seeing the backside of the boy and the show. Nochlin points out that “a ‘naturalist’ or ‘authenticist’ artist like Gérôme tries to make us forget that his art is really art, both by concealing the evidence of his touch, and, at the same time, by insisting on a plethora of authenticating details, especially on what might be called unnecessary ones.” This can be seen on the extraordinary detail on the tiled wall behind the audience. Along with this detail is the
clear deterioration of the walls, analogous with the deterioration of Muslim society as a whole.

This same theme can be seen in his *Moorish Bath* painting (Fig. 27). A beautiful white woman is being washed by her African slave in a bathroom. Gérôme emphasizes the textures of the room, from the marble floor, to the towels on the wall, to the tile. Although this is a beautiful setting, it is also showing signs of decay.

Just as in *The Snake Charmer*, the Western viewer watches the scene from behind, thus prohibiting us from seeing the woman’s complete nudity. This concealment makes her even more alluring. MaryAnne Stevens writes that these “unobtainable women, with their veils and secretive lives, haunted the Western visitor and goaded him to seek access, if only in his imagination, to the forbidden quarters of the harem and bath.” The viewer is clearly not supposed to be here, which explains the viewpoint. However, it would not require much imagination to picture the rest of the scene.
In the *Dance of the Almeh*, (Fig. 28) a beautiful belly dancer dances to a small crowd while the musicians play to her left. Here instead of dancing in an opulent setting, she dances in the dark, somber interior of an Egyptian café. The whiteness of her skin and the brightness of her costume contrast greatly with the setting, emphasizing the decrepitude of the café.

Just like Delacroix, Gérôme also fantasizes about the absolute possession of a woman’s naked body, seen here with *The Slave Market* (Fig. 29). Although writers have commented on scenes like this happening in the Near East, the reason for Gérôme to choose this scene has a lot to do with Orientalist eroticism. Here the naked, powerless woman is analyzed by the clothed, powerful men. The prospective buyer forces the woman’s mouth open in order to run his finger over her teeth. Gérôme has exaggerated the size of his hand, amplifying the cruelty. Nochlin describes its popularity as it gives “the
Unless Delacroix, however, Gérôme’s paintings of women were popular in the Salons of the mid-19th century. Nochlin believes it is mainly due to their different styles. Gérôme’s are more remote, rational, objective, while Delacroix’s were passionate, subjective and outwardly sensual. Gérôme is saying that “Don’t think that I or any other right-thinking Frenchman would ever be involved in this sort of thing. I am merely taking careful note of the fact that less enlightened races indulge in the trade of naked women— but isn’t it arousing!”

Not all scholars agree with Nochlin and Said’s view of Orientalism in regards to Gérôme. Gerald Ackerman is one critic. Ackerman finds precedent for Gérôme’s chosen iconography. Nochlin complains of Gérôme’s choices as being propagandistic, feeding into Western perceptions of the Orient. Ackerman argues that Gérôme’s subject matter has precedent. Not only were prayer scenes common in the 19th century (Manet is one artist) but Gérôme’s dreaded The Slave Market has a Roman counterpart. The fact that Gérôme acknowledges Rome, the founder of Western civilization, also partook in this degrading act means that Gérôme could not have seen it as something which “less enlightened races indulge in…”

Ackerman does have a point. However, even he must admit that Gérôme’s bath scenes are expressions of Western voyeurism. In addition, the difference between the two slave scenes is that the Roman scene is from antiquity; the Oriental scene, however, is contemporary. This emphasizes the backwardness of Oriental culture.

Ingres, Delacroix and Gérôme all take very different approaches in portraying the Orient. For better or for worse, they have affected the perception of the Near East since
their inception. The development of photography in the late 19th century would add a new dimension to the view of the Orient.
CHAPTER 4: PHOTOGRAPHY

A photograph can capture a memory, portray unknown places or document a social conflict. It is a seemingly exact representation of something at a particular moment in time. Yet, just like a painting, photography is not completely objective. The photographer still approaches a shot with a particular aim and uses different angles, light and poses to accomplish this goal. This can especially be seen in the work by French photographers traveling to the Orient in the 19th century. Photographers like Maxime Du Camp, Félix Teynard and the Bonfils family intended to document and classify the Orient through photography by whatever means possible, including the staging and manipulation of photographs.

Photography in the Near East was a potent weapon. The supposed objectivity of the medium gives it credibility over painting. Thus Westerners took photographic images of the Near East as the truth. However, this was not always true, as photographers manipulated scenes to portray the Orient in the manner that they wished. They did not necessarily photograph the Orient they saw, but the Orient as they wished to see it.

The development of photography in the Near East corresponds to the development of photography in general. Louis Daguerre invented the first practical photographic process, the daguerreotype, in 1839. François Arago then introduced the daguerreotype to the French Academy of Sciences in January 1839. Arago realized the potential of the medium with regards to the Orient:

To copy the millions and millions of hieroglyphs covering only the exterior of the great monuments of Thebes, Memphis, Karnak, twenty years and scores of draughtsmen are required. With the daguerreotype, a single man could execute this immense task...[and] the new images will surpass in fidelity and local color the work of the most capable among our painters.68
The engravings that took years to complete for the *Description de l’Égypte* after Napoleon’s invasion of Egypt in 1789 could now be completed within a few minutes. The French could now effectively categorize and document the cultural “backwardness” of Islamic society. The market for photographs exploded as hungry tourists bought souvenirs of their travels and curious Westerners could experience the Orient from the comfort of their homes.

Du Camp was the only photographer to travel to the Near East on an “official” mission from the French government. He was sent by the French Ministry of Public Education in 1849 to create a record of his travels and to publish the first extensive book on photography. This book would become *Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie*, published in 1852.

Du Camp considered himself more than just a photographer. In his writings, “Du Camp presented himself as the romantic traveler drawn to a distant place and time—the East was considered to exist outside of the time/space of modern Europe—and as an informed and well-traveled student of the region, an Orientalist.”

As a self-described “Orientalist,” Du Camp sought to photograph the Orient in a scientific, objective manner. The wishes from the ministry were very clear.

Although the principal monuments along the banks of the Nile have been carefully reconstructed and exactly drawn, it would be useful to have views of the entire ensemble taken by daguerreotype and the architectural details in their grand proportions. The particular character of photography, its incontestable accuracy, and its minute fidelity, down to the most unseen accessories, gives value to all that it produces...Hasty, scattered sketching, the all too common habit among travelers, of jumping from one monument to another without having exhausted the attention and study which each of them requires, should be avoided; one does not obtain any serious results in this way. It is also not a question of charming our eyes by the seductive effects that light produces in the camera, but of faithfully and sequentially copying the texts claimed for science.”
Du Camp initially adheres to this scientific method in his photographs. He does not “charm our eyes,” but seeks to document exactly what he sees. Two examples of this are The Mosque of Omar (Fig. 30) and Jerusalem (Fig. 31) both from 1850. Du Camp takes a frontal approach to the shots with a noticeable lack of drama or shading.

However, traces of Du Camp’s romanticism can still be seen in some of his photographs. In his untitled photograph of the tent encampment beneath the cliffs (Fig. 32), Du Camp reveals his nostalgia for his visit and wrote about the “delicious sensation that pervaded me every time I lived under a tent.”71 While living in the tents, Du Camp could imagine himself “a hadji in search of an ideal Mecca.”72

La Kaire, armes et utensils, 17 January 1850 (Fig. 33), Du Camp includes items that
personify his Oriental lifestyle: a brass coffee pot, a narghile, the water pipe in which tobacco or hashish is smoked, daggers and pistols, all arranged on an Oriental carpet. These items represent the Romantic ideals of the Orient. Kathleen Steward Howe writes “the ensemble conjures up the Orient of Byron, Delacroix, and The Thousand and One Nights, a terrain, physical and psychological, where opulence and opiated dreams merge with fierce warriors and the simple nobility of desert hospitality.”

Du Camp’s book, Égypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie, was enthusiastically received by both critics and the public. Du Camp was very confident of the reception, claiming “it is a precious collection…which will be seen by many as a great work of history, archaeology and geography…because this will provide a solid and irrefutable base for scholarly works henceforth.” Despite its popularity, this book was his only photographic work; Du Camp would, however, continue to write about the Orient until the end of his life.

Félix Teynard traveled to Cairo in the fall of 1851, two years after Du Camp. Although Teynard also went to document the Near East, his work had a more personal meaning. In his book, Egypte et Nubie, he writes “the plates which comprise this work had been photographed as souvenirs, during a voyage I made in 1851-52,” in order “to remember the trying sensations during the many months which we passed alone among the people of Egypt and Nubia.”

Teynard was a civil engineer by trade but had a strong interest in the Orient. While in Egypt, Teynard used the Nile River, Napoleon’s Description de l’Égypte and Franz-Christian Gau’s Antiquités de al Nubie from 1822 to guide him on his journey. Teynard strove to complement the engravings Description de l’Égypte rather than replace
them, like Du Camp wanted to do. Howe writes “Teynard’s decision to create an atlas to ‘complement’ Description de l’Egypte grounded him in a scholarly tradition and freed him to travel beyond the bounds of an Orient of romantic associations.”

Free from academic restrictions, Teynard was able to exploit the special effects permitted by photography, such as the contrast of light and shade. In his photograph of a temple on the island of Fila (Fig. 34), Teynard waited to take the picture until the light would illuminate the gallery behind the colonnade and a dramatic shadow would cut across the bottom of the photograph.
These effects also helped Teynard to recreate the atmosphere of the places he visited. Teynard toured the abandoned fortress at Qsar Ibrim (Fig. 35) and captured the desolation of the site in his photograph by using a wide-angle shot. “Teynard’s placid image of distant horizons and empty space reproduces the silence at the site, which the photographer wrote was punctuated only by the cries of a jackal.”

The differences between Teynard and Du Camp can be further illustrated when comparing their respective photographs of the same monument. When Du Camp photographed columns from Medinet-Habu (Fig. 36), he used the light to illuminate the hieroglyphics. Teynard, however, showed how the shadows could create a dramatic entrance (Fig. 37). His concern was not the meaning of the hieroglyphics but the presence created by them.
Teynard returned to Europe in 1852 and his work was published in 1858. Unlike Du Camp, who received the Legion of Honor for his work, Teynard’s book was not received with any fanfare. This was due to a variety of reasons. Teynard was not sponsored by the Academy of Sciences, like Du Camp. Teynard also did not have the same social connections as a civil engineer that Du Camp had as a well-connected writer. But most of all, in 1857 Francis Frith published his book on Egyptian photographs using the technique of wet collodion on glass plate negatives. This new technique allowed an increase in detail and brilliance in the photographs. Nonetheless, today Teynard is one of the best-known photographers to travel to the Near East because of his contrasting style from other photographers, like Du Camp.

From the time they moved to Beirut in 1867 until their return to Europe in 1918, the Bonfils family of Félix, Marie-Lydie and Adrien produced one of the largest
collections of photographs of the Near East. By 1871 Félix mentions that his collection includes 15,000 prints and 9,000 stereo views from 590 negatives. Their enormous success was due to their clever marketing abilities; their stock included classical landscapes, ethnic portraits and subtly erotic images.

The Bonfils realized the potential for photographs that combined the academic details of Du Camp and the interesting angles of Teynard. This along with the collodion glass-plate negative and albumen printing paper process, which allowed for the printing of multiple high-quality prints, served as a catalyst for their success. In architecture shots like Figure 38 from Karnak, the history of the site is preserved, while showing the decay with the leaning column in the background.

The Bonfils’s ethnic portrait photography has received the most attention. These photographs were very popular in Europe, yet finding willing models was very difficult with the social restrictions of Islam. To compensate for this, Bonfils had to rely on the occasional Jewish model, paid models and prostitutes. Bonfils would take photographs that would satisfy Oriental stereotypes. To achieve this effect, many of their shots would be carefully posed in a studio; there were very few actual candid shots of Oriental life.
One famous example of this is *Syrian Ladies at Home* (Fig. 39). The Syrian “ladies” are actually adolescent girls, the “home” is the studio and the actions of the models are probably a figment of the photographer’s imagination. The overall effect of the stage setting is to create a scene that emphasizes the exotic in Muslim everyday life.

Photographs of Bedouins, like *Group of Syrian Bedouin Women* (Fig. 40), were also common. The Bedouins were easily accessible and, like beggars, were examples of a poor, picturesque group. Although photographs such as this one may have sought to tame the image of the Bedouins, it also served as an example of the superiority of the Europeans over the wild, nomadic Near East.
The Bedouins could also be used to fulfill a subtle erotic and voyeuristic motif. *Bedouin Carrying her Child* (Fig. 41) is one example. The side angle of the shot clearly emphasizes the woman’s exposed breast. Europeans could gaze at this photograph and admire the woman’s sexuality without feeling as though they were looking at pornography.

I suspect that this is a studio shot, not only because of the strategic pose of the woman, but also because of the size of her child’s head. The child’s head is approximately the same size as his mother’s, very unusual for a three year old child. It is very possible that the photographer posed a man to stand behind the woman, leaning against her to create the effect of a Bedouin woman carrying her child.

The development of photography had far reaching consequences for the Near East. Not only did it expose the Orient to a new generation, but photography studios became an important tourism and commercial industry. The supposed objectivity of a photograph gave new authority to representations of the Orient. Yet, as seen above, many of these photographs were not exact representations of life in the Orient but just a like a painting, represented the Orient that Europeans wished to see.
CONCLUSION

Since the 19th century, the Western world has seen many different portrayals of the Islamic world. From Disney’s animated Aladdin to demonstrations of Muslim men chanting “death to the United States,” the Arab world has remained the mystery it was to 19th century travelers. The need for a better understanding of Islam and the Near East is especially important in the 21st century, as Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world.

Edward Said’s Orientalism analyzes the stereotypes and images of the Near East in the Western colonial mind. In modern politics, however, the focus has turned to the stereotypes and images of the Western world in the Oriental militant mind. Ian Buruma and Avishai Margalit examine this trend in their book Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of Its Enemies. This book is an important counterpart to Said’s work, as it shows how the colonization of the Near East in the 19th century affects modern views of Westerners by Arabs.

Western superiority over the Orient is a theme that has prevailed throughout Western history. This assumed superiority played out in art as painters and photographers illustrate the assumption of power in their works; how men’s power over women equates the white man’s superiority over inferior, darker races, thus visually proving the right to domination and colonization of the Near East.

Thus Orientalism was born and travelers during the 19th century who visited the Near East brought with them their idea of the Orient. These preconceptions pervade the artwork produced during this period. Artists like Delacroix, Ingres and Gérôme, along with photographers like the Bonfils family, Du Camp and Teynard, created work that showed the Orient of their imagination—the mythical Orient, not the Orient they found.
NOTES

5 Lene Susan Fort, “Femme Fatale or Caring Mother? The Orientalist Woman’s Struggle for Dignity,” in *Picturing the Middle East*, ed. Henry Krawitz (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1990), 40.
6 Ibid., 41.
11 Ibid., 433.
12 Lene Susan Fort, “Femme Fatale or Caring Mother? The Orientalist Woman’s Struggle for Dignity,” in *Picturing the Middle East*, ed. Henry Krawitz (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1990), 42.
14 Ibid., 230-233.
15 Ibid., 261.
18 Ibid., 79.
21 Ibid., 79-80.
22 Ibid., 83.
30Ibid., 113.
31Ibid., 114-115.
34James Thompson, “ Beauties in the Eyehole: The Voyeur’s View of Ingres’s Turkish Bath,” in *Picturing the Middle East*, ed. Henry Krawitz (New York: Dahesh Museum, 1990), 70.
37Ibid., 319.
38Ibid., 322.
44Ibid., 125.
45ibid., 123.
49ibid., 75.
50ibid., 78.

Ibid., 79.

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Gerald M. Ackerman, “Gérôme’s Oriental Paintings and the Western Genre Tradition,” Arts Magazine 60, (March 1986): 77.


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