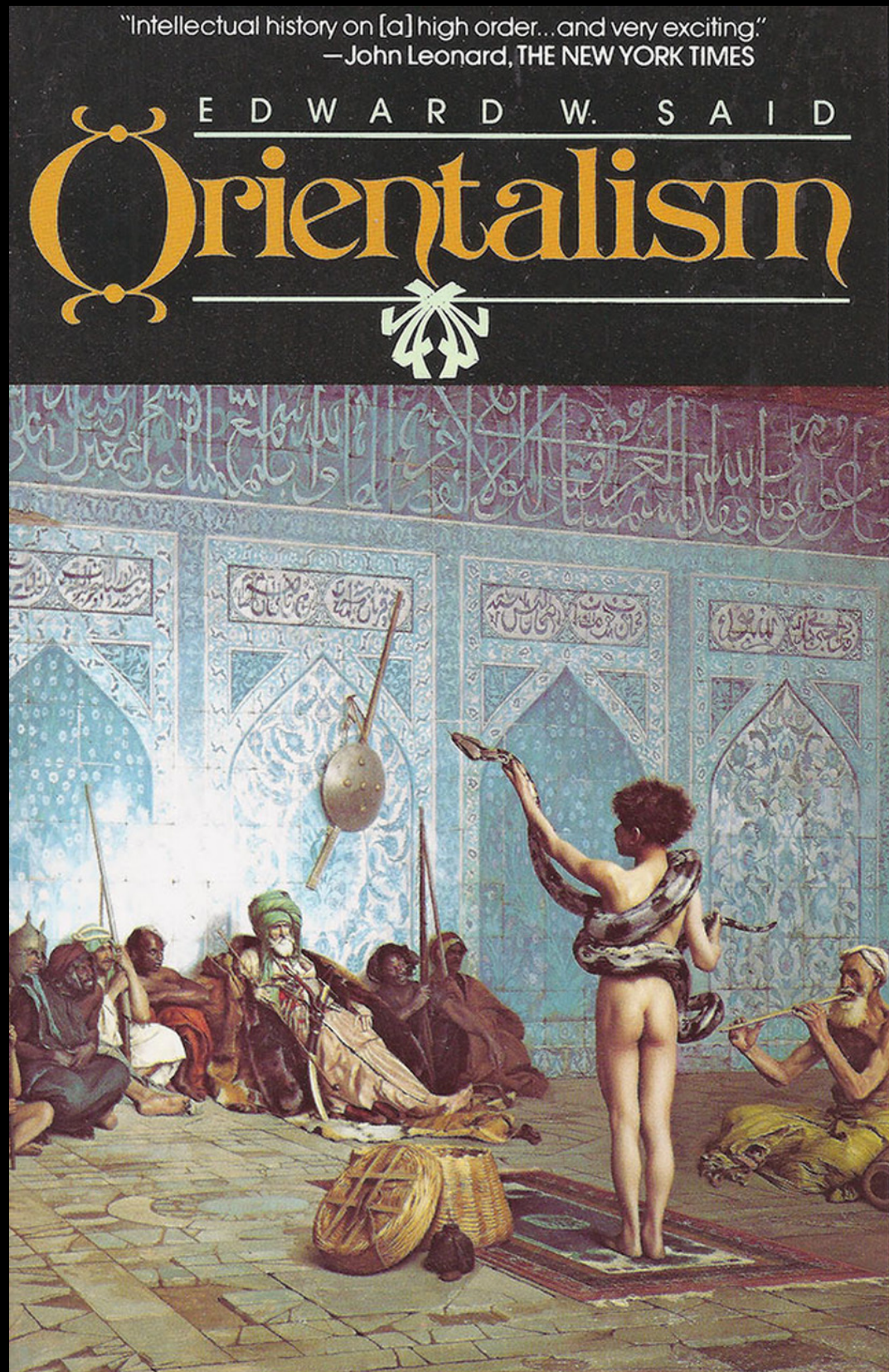


# PICTURING THE OTHER (I)

---

## 19TH CENTURY ORIENTALISM

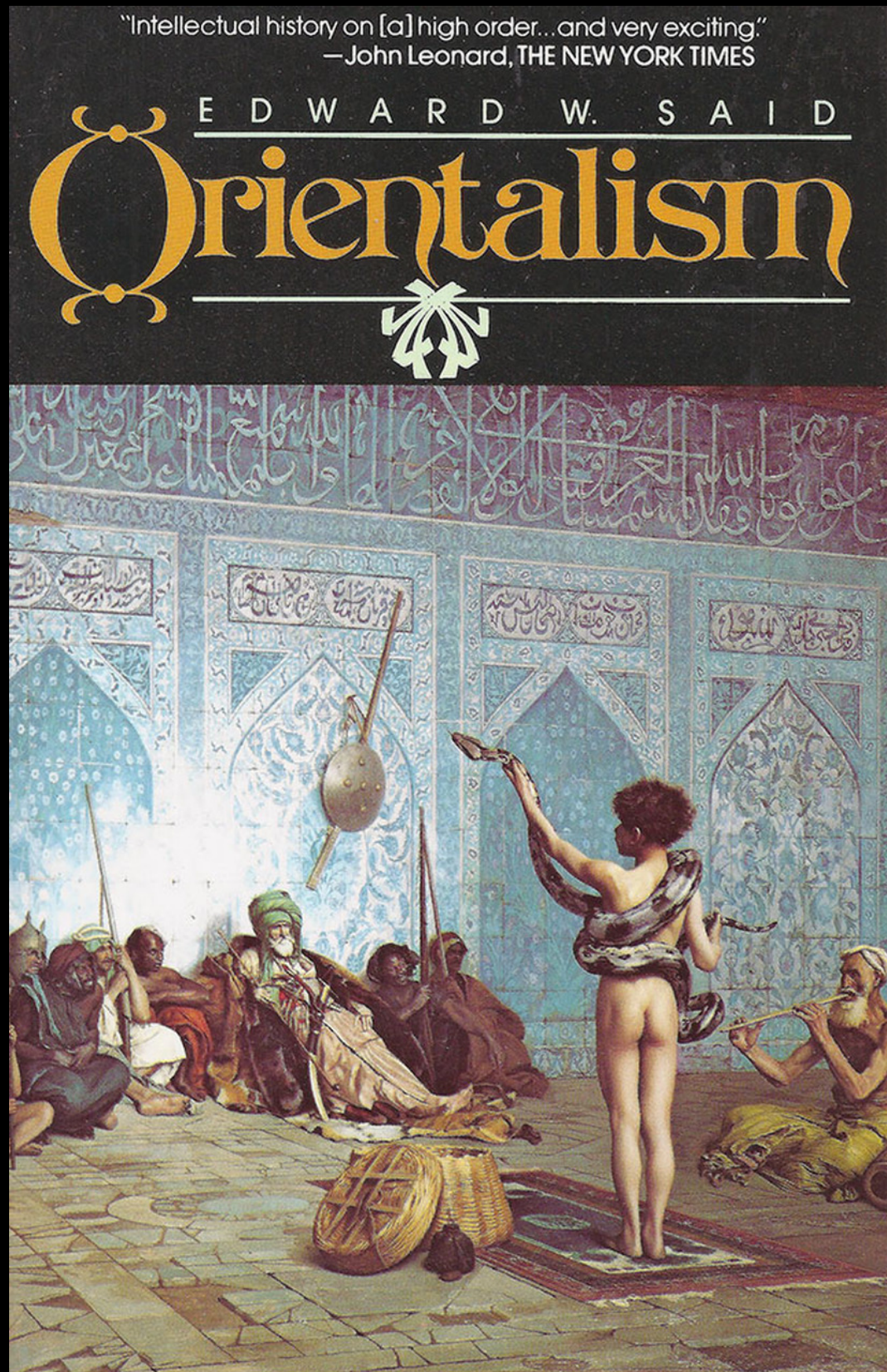
# What is "Orientalism"?



Book cover of *Orientalism* by Edward Said, 1978



# What is "Orientalism"?



Book cover of *Orientalism* by Edward Said, 1978

- ▶ The "Orient": referred to the regions of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia
- ▶ Broadly refers to the depiction of the "Eastern" world in art, literature, culture etc.
- ▶ Edward Saïd argued that a dominant European political ideology created the notion of the Orient in order to subjugate and control it; "presumed cultural inferiority of the Islamic Orient"



# Orientalism in Art History

- ▶ Refers to depictions of the Orient in 19th century paintings for European viewers
- ▶ **Absence of history:** the Oriental world depicted as timeless, mystical, exotic, untouched by development or progress
- ▶ Included images of **snake charmers, veiled women, courtesans**
- ▶ **Style:** detailed, realistic, highly stylised and picturesque paintings



Unknown Venetian artist  
*The Reception of the Ambassadors  
in Damascus*  
1511  
Louvre



**Realism:** 19th century artistic movement characterised by subjects painted from everyday life in a naturalistic manner; the term is also generally used to describe artworks painted in a realistic almost photographic way



Jean-Léon Gérôme, *Snake Charmer*, c. 1879, oil on canvas (Sterling Francine Clark Art Institute, Massachusetts)



# Historical Context

- ▶ Began as a fully fledged movement with **Napoleon Bonaparte's** conquest of Egypt in 1798, and his occupation of the country until 1801
- ▶ 19th century Orientalist paintings were intended as **propaganda** in support of **French imperialism**
- ▶ Depicted the East as a place of barbarism and lawlessness that needed to be tamed



Antoine-Jean Gros  
*Bonaparte Visiting the Plague  
Victims of Jaffa*  
1804 (Louvre Museum)



- ▶ Was a result of **imperialism**, **tourism** and **consumerism**- new fascination with goods like textiles, fashion, porcelain and carpets from the East in Europe
- ▶ Was furthered by **World's Fairs** and cultural-national pavilions, beginning with Crystal Palace in 1851

**Imperialism:** a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.

**Colonialism:** The physical act of taking control over another nation by setting up colonies



Department of India.  
Dickinson's Comprehensive  
Pictures of The Great Exhibition  
of 1851, London, 1854.





Crystal Palace, The Great Exhibition. London, 1851.



# GENRE PAINTINGS

Scenes of everyday life in Eastern cities and settlements



Jean-Léon Gérôme  
*Bashi-Bazouk*  
1868-69

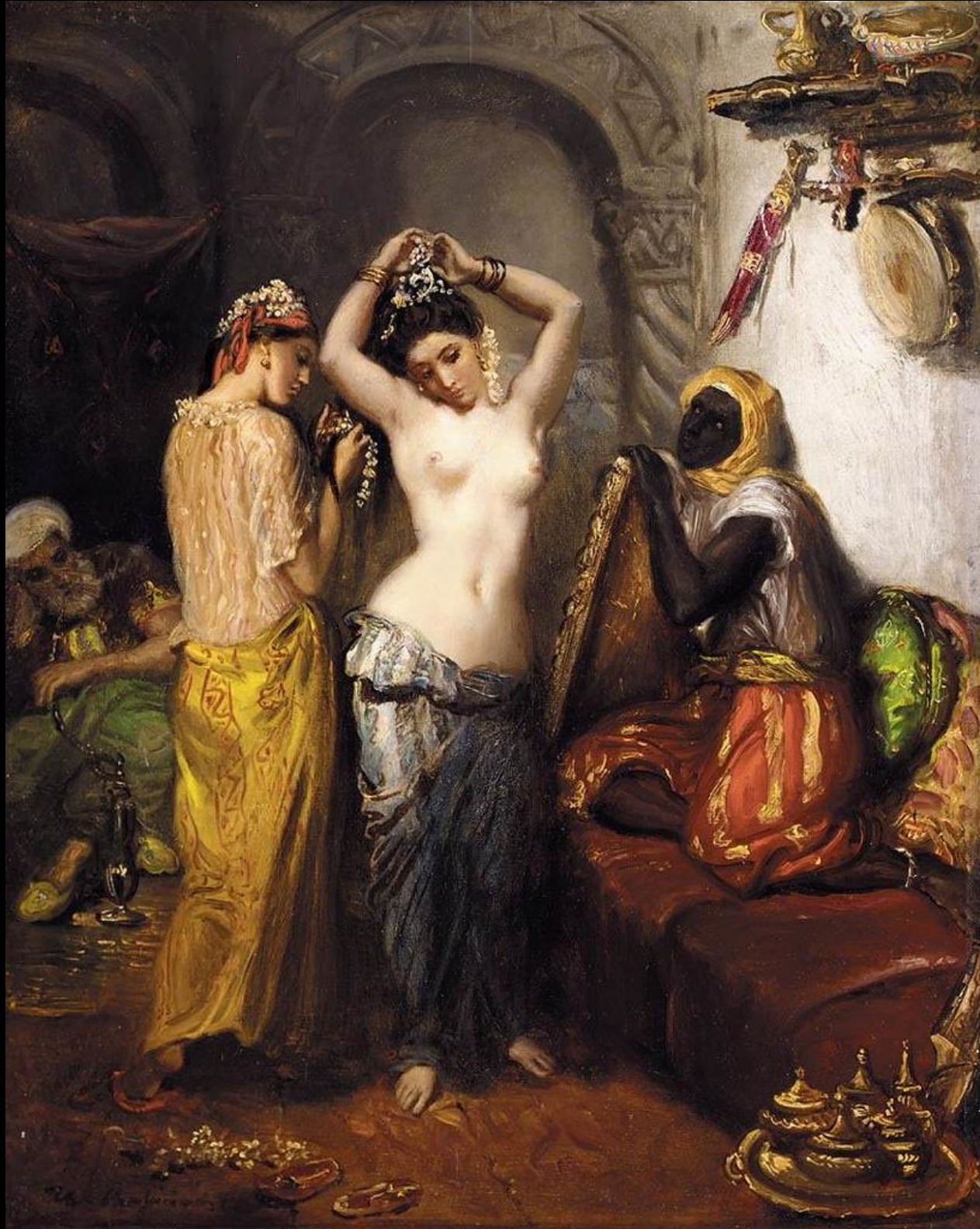
Bashi-Bazouk = Turkish mercenary soldier



Alexandre-Gabriel Decamps  
*The Turkish Patrol*



# THE HAREM PICTURE

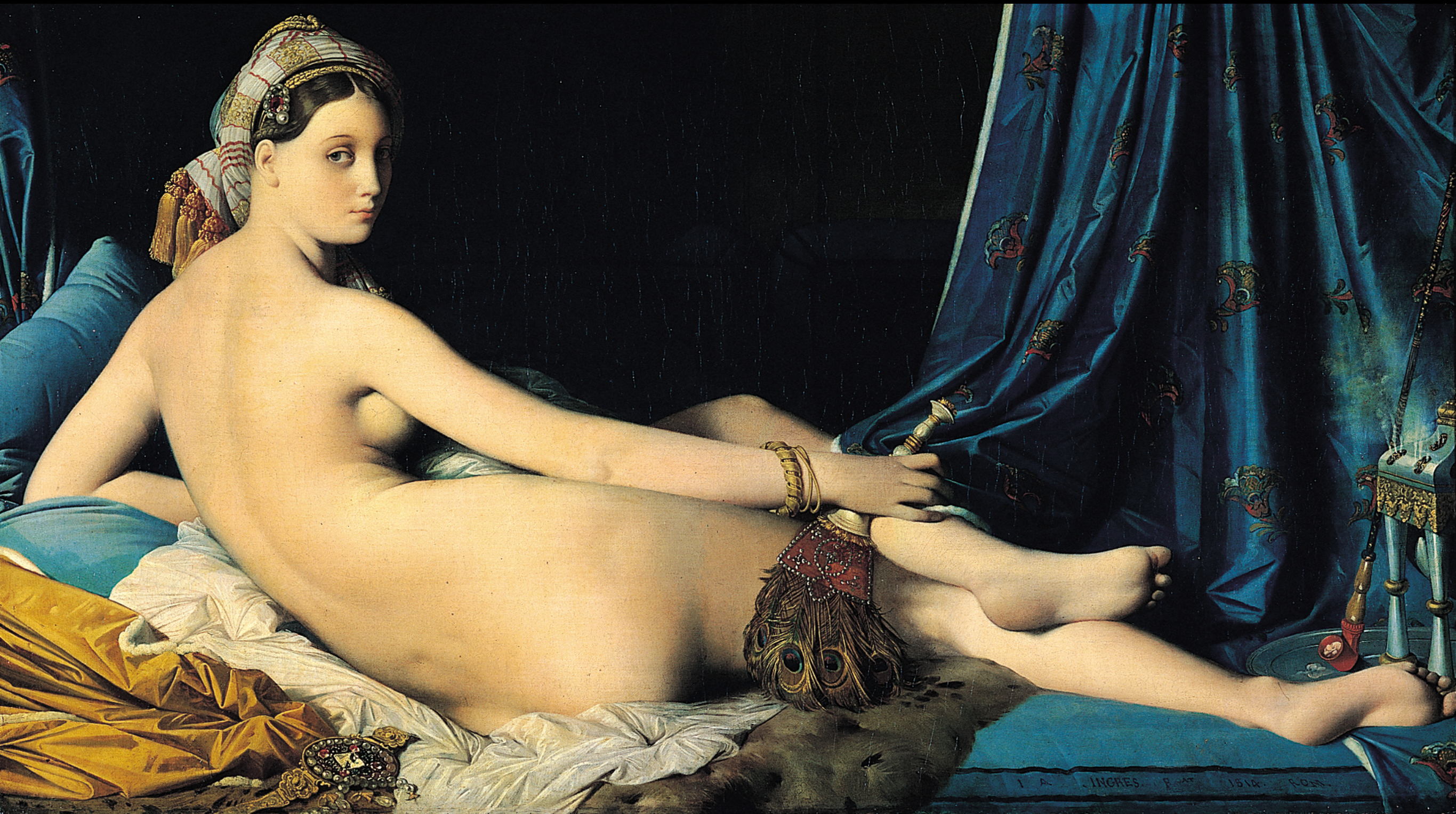


Chasseriau, Theodore, *Orientalist Interior*, 1850-52  
(Private Collection)

- ▶ Harem scenes were a common genre of Orientalist painting
- ▶ Male artists would have been denied entrance and relied on hearsay and their imagination
- ▶ Depicted opulent and luxuries interiors- mosaic tiles, detailed carpets, Eastern architectural motifs
- ▶ females slaves/concubines in the nude or in stereotypical Oriental attire
- ▶ Setting of the harem was used to conjure an erotic ideal of the Orient
- ▶ Notion of the "male gaze"



**Odalisque:** French term for concubine in a harem



Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Grand Odalisque*, 1814 (Louvre Museum)

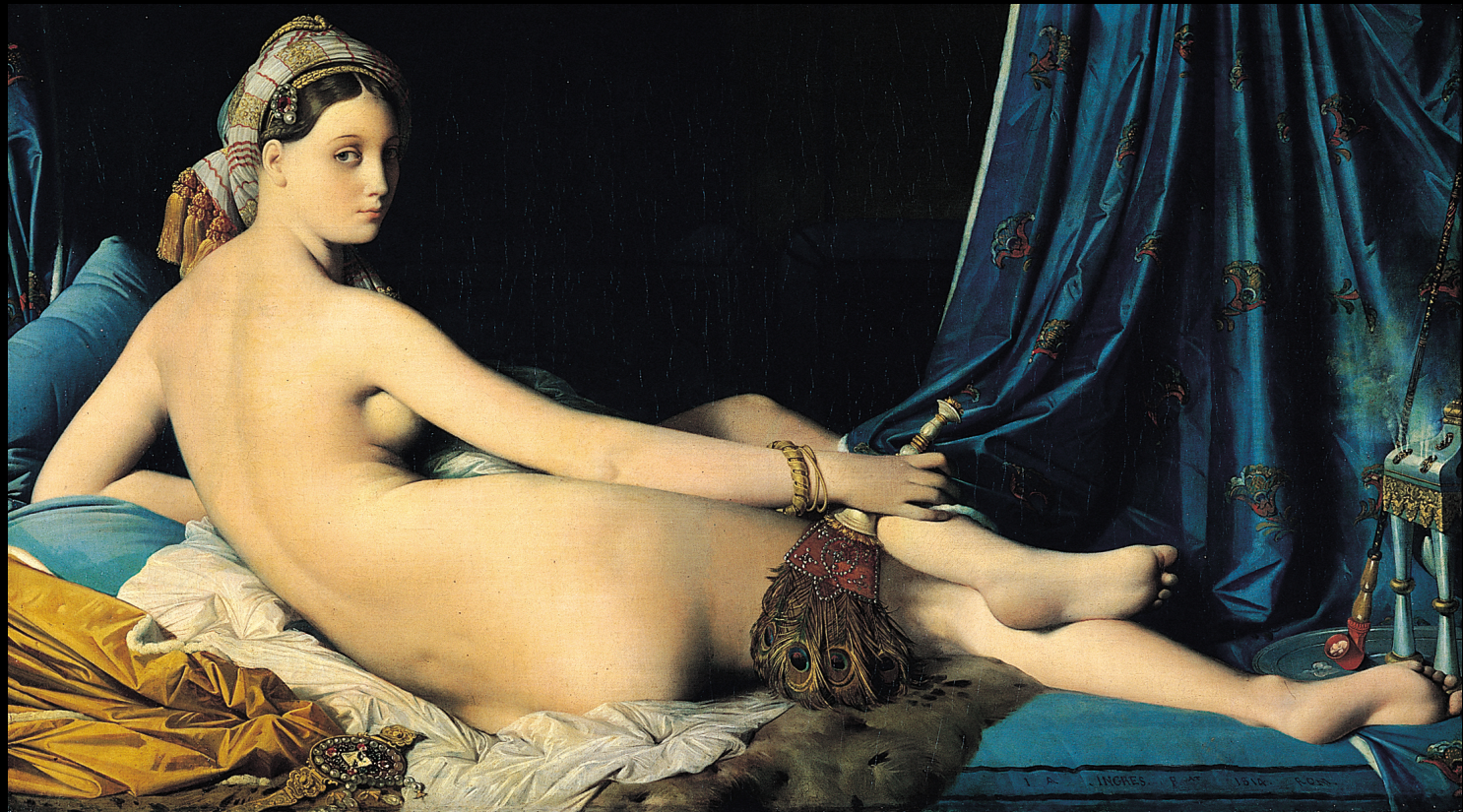




Copyright MIBACT 2017

Titian, *Venus of Urbino*, c. 1532 (Uffizi Gallery)









Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, *Odalisque with Slave*, 1842 (Louvre Museum)



# ORIENTALIST PHOTOGRAPHY



Photographer unknown  
*Untitled (Woman posed in 'harem' by window)*, 1890s  
The Ken and Jenny Jacobson Orientalist Photography Collection,  
The Getty Research Institute Special Collections.



Bonfils Family,  
*Young Woman from Lebanon in Party Dress*  
undated, albumen print



# THE POLITICS OF PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION



- ▶ The invention of photography in 1839 did little to contribute to a greater authenticity of the Orient
- ▶ Instead, photographs were embellished and staged to appeal to the European imagination
- ▶ Taken in studios, with posed models, props and backdrops

*Orientalist Study*, 1858. The two men are white Europeans, posing in a London studio. Source: <https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2017/02/05/513252650/long-before-there-was-fake-news-there-were-fake-photos>





The Pyramids of El-Geezeh from the South West, from Egypt, Sinai and Jerusalem:  
A Series of Twenty Photographic Views, c. 1860.



“What makes much of the Bonfils family's work particularly Orientalist was their explicit effort to capture what they imagined was a timeless, unchanging Orient... By selectively and deliberating choosing only particular elements from the surrounding environment... they strove to meet their, and other European's expectations and interests” -Michelle L. Woodward



Portrait of Two Women in Middle Eastern Dress by Felix Bonfils



Félix Bonfils  
*Femme turque en toilette de ville*  
1870s



# ORIENTAL IMAGERY DURING THE IMPRESSIONIST MOVEMENT

**Japonisme:** French term coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the craze for Japanese art and design in the West

- ▶ Impressionist artists inspired by the flatness, brilliant colour, and high degree of stylisation and realist subject matter of Japanese woodcut prints.



Claude Monet  
*Camille Monet In Japanese Costume*  
1876  
(MFA Boston)





Mary Cassatt  
Maternal Caress  
1890-91



Kitagawa Utamaro  
*Midnight: Mother and Sleepy Child*  
1790



# VAN GOGH AND JAPONISME



Hiroshige  
*Evening Shower at Atake and the Great Bridge*, 1857



Van Gogh  
*Bridge in the Rain (after Hiroshige)*, 1887





Vincent Van Gogh  
*Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear*  
1889





(left) Van Gogh, Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear (1889)  
(right) Geishas in a Landscape, Anonymous (1870-1880)





# Orientalism: fact or fiction?

Literature, painting, and photography fit the real Orient into the imaginary or mental mold existing in the Westerner's mind. ... These attitudes are mirrored in many of the photographs taken during this time... they became living visual documents to prove an imaginary reality".

–Nissan N. Perez



Osman Hamdi Bey  
*Man reading Quran*  
1910



Osman Hamdi Bey  
*Girl reciting Quran*  
1880



## GLOSSARY

---

- ▶ **Orient:** originally referred to the regions of the Middle East, North Africa and Asia
- ▶ **Imperialism:** a policy of extending a country's power and influence through diplomacy or military force.
- ▶ **Realism:** 19th century artistic movement characterised by subjects painted from everyday life in a naturalistic manner; the term is also generally used to describe artworks painted in a realistic almost photographic way
- ▶ **Odalisque:** French term for concubine in a harem
- ▶ **Japonisme:** French term coined in the late nineteenth century to describe the craze for Japanese art and design in the West