Orientalism in Art
Definitions

- Fascination with Asian cultures
- Scholarly knowledge about the Orient
- A way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient’s special place in the Western experience
- “The Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience.” (Edward Said, 1978)
Market for Orientalist Art

- Rich bourgeoisie
- Bachelors, who liked dancing girls
- The state, which commissioned works commemorating colonial victories
Popularity of Orientalist Paintings

- After the decline of neo-classicism, they satisfied the Romantic feeling for the picturesque and for local color.
- Napoleonic Wars aroused a patriotism that launched England and France into full-blown colonial conquest.
- The East stood for the easy satisfaction of sensual desires which could not be indulged in Europe.
- Longing for mystery, especially in Biblical lands.
Lord Cromer

“The European is a close reasoner; his statements of fact are devoid of any ambiguity; he is a natural logician… he is by nature skeptical and requires proof before he can accept the truth of any proposition; his trained intelligence works like a piece of mechanism. The mind of the Oriental, on the other hand, like his picturesque streets, is eminently wanting in symmetry. His reasoning is of the most slipshod description. Although the ancient Arabs acquired in a somewhat higher degree the science of dialectics, their descendants are singularly deficient in the logical faculty. They are often incapable of drawing the most obvious conclusions from any simple premises of which they may admit the truth. Endeavor to elicit a plain statement of facts from an ordinary Egyptian. His explanation will ordinarily be lengthy, and wanting in lucidity. He will probably contradict himself half a dozen times before he has finished his story. He will often break down under the mildest process of cross-examination.”
Sir Joshua Reynolds: Captain John Foote (1765)
Brighton Pavilion
Brighton Pavilion: Long Gallery
Decay

David Roberts: “Splendid cities, once teeming with a busy population and embellished with... edifices, now deserted and lonley, or reduced by management and the barbarism of the Muslim creed, to a state as savage as the wild animals by which they are surrounded.” (Cairo, 1838)
Gérôme, *Portal of the Green Mosque*
Deutsch, *The Scribe* (1911)
Climatic and Architectural Otherness
William Hodges, View of Benaras (1781)
Gérôme, *The Carpet Merchant*
Charles Robertson, *Carpet Sale, Cairo*
Piety
Gérôme, *Prayer on a Rooftop* (1865)
Deutsch, *At Prayer* (1923)
Demasculization of Male Bodies
Gérôme, *The Snake Charmer*
Possession of Women’s Bodies
Gérôme, *Slave Market* and *Dance of the Almeh*
Possession of Women’s Bodies
Gérôme, *Woman of Cairo at her Door* (1897); *Arab Girl with Waterpipe* (1873)
The Harem

- The harem trope provided the means for the British and French to construct their political and psychosexual self-images.
- Links to abolition of slavery, the Woman Question, the Cult of Domesticity, and the Eastern Question.
Eugene Delacroix, Algerian Women
John Frederick Lewis, The Hhareem
Gérôme, The Great Bath