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## THE IMAGE OF ARABS IN THE SOURCES OF AMERICAN CULTURE

By Marsha Hamilton

Editor's note: This essay was first proposed to CHOICE in the spring of 1989; it was formally commissioned in October of that year. During the final weeks of its editing for publication, world events added a special relevance. The names of other national and ethnic groups could be substituted—the literature about such groups would demonstrate the same need for and benefits of greater knowledge. Timely and particular as it now happens by chance to be, the import of this essay is also timeless and universal.

The Middle East is seldom out of the news. Civil unrest, terrorism, and volatile political personalities all reinforce Americans' negative mental image of the Arab world, the Arab people, and Islam. In ignorance, Americans think of Arabs, Turks, and Iranians as one ethnic group; forget that not all Arabs are Muslims; and fail to understand that peoples in the Middle East are as diverse as those found in the United States.

How we Americans depict other cultures may say more about our own fears and values than about the cultures represented. Many American images of other peoples have their sources in European, especially British, culture. For hundreds of years, Europeans and Americans have viewed the Arab Middle East in terms of a few unchanging stereotypical images: the wealthy sheikh, the harem beauty, the religious fanatic, or the downtrodden peasant. These images were common in Colonial America; yet despite massive social change in the Arab world, they remain virtually unchanged in American popular culture today.

Literature on the image of Arabs in American culture agrees on two points: the images are stereotypes and the images are negative. Adjectives such as "lazy," "dirty," "backward," "oversexed," "fanatical," "violent," and "greedy" have been applied at different stages of US history to groups including African Americans, Chinese, Eastern Europeans, the Irish, Jews, and Native Americans. As each group fights the discrimination that is a direct result of stereotypes and sensitizes the American public to that particular group's plight, another ethnic or social group takes its place in the role of the villain. The decline of the Cold War and the newly polished image of the Soviet Union have seen a parallel increase in vilification of the Arab.

By the time children are four years old, they have begun the process of assimilating stereotypical images from television. This process is examined by Jack Shaheen in a highly recommended book *The TV Arab*, the personal odyssey of an Arab American in the world of television production. Shaheen asks why Arab characters are always villains despite many positive, real-life role models available in the Arab and Arab-American communities. This readable book discusses stereotypes in programs ranging from children's shows to prime time and follows Shaheen's discussions with statements from television spokespeople who say that America is "not ready" for positive Arab characters.

Current stereotypes of Arabs and Islam in popular literature are examined by Janice J. Terry in *Mistaken Identity*. Terry looks at the negative image of Arabs in more than 70 British and American works including "instant" histories and romance, adventure, spy, and mystery novels. In *The Middle East in Crime Fiction: Mysteries, Spy Novels, and Thrillers from 1916 to the 1980s*, Reeva S. Simon analyzes the plots, heroes, villains, and major themes of about 620 American and British authors like John Le Carré plus some unexpected writers like Spiro T. Agnew, Marvin

Kalb, and Ted Koppel. Although voluminous, Simon's annotated list is admittedly not exhaustive. Sadly, almost every title contains one or more villainous Arab characters. Suha J. Sabbagh summarizes the same subject in a 57-page monograph, *Sex, Lies and Stereotypes: The Image of Arabs in American Popular Fiction*.

## **PUBLIC OPINION AND THE NEWS MEDIA**

The news media are often blamed for perpetuating negative images of Arabs and the Arab world. News thrives on controversy, and the images journalists use to describe the events, individuals, organizations, and nations in the Arab world have been highly controversial. Several works representing different viewpoints analyze the people who bring us the news. Highly recommended is *Split Vision: The Portrayal of Arabs in the American Media*, edited by Edmund Ghareeb. This incisive look at television and print coverage of the Middle East between 1975 and 1982 includes interviews with journalists of the stature of Peter Jennings and essays on the prevalence of negative images of Arabs on television and in editorial cartoons, textbooks, and fiction. Authors tackle the sensitive subject of US support for Israel and attempt to combat the belief that -to be pro-Israel one must be anti-Arab. Other highly recommended collections are *Television Coverage of the Middle East*, edited by William C. Adams, and *The American Media and the Arabs*, edited by Michael C. Hudson and Ronald G. Wolfe. Both provide insight into the difficulty of reporting on complex Middle East issues.

Less information is available on the earlier history of media coverage of the Middle East. Although badly printed, Issam Suleiman Mousa's *The Arab Image in the US Press* is useful for its coverage of the period 1917-1947. Richard Curtiss's excellent *A Changing Image* examines American news coverage of the Arab-Israeli conflict from 1918 to the Reagan years, concentrating on the more recent period. Montague Kern's very brief *Television and Middle East Diplomacy: President Carter's Fall 1977 Peace Initiative* can be used in conjunction with Carter's own books, *Keeping Faith* and *The Blood of Abraham*.

Among several works representing various Israeli viewpoints on press representation of the Arab-Israeli conflict is Eytan Gilboa's *American Public Opinion Toward Israel and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Gilboa suggests that Americans are more favorably disposed to Israelis than to Arabs, who are viewed as backward. This work does nothing to combat negative images of Arabs but contains pertinent opinion surveys. *The Media's Coverage of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, edited by Stephen Karetzky and Norman Frankel, contains previously published articles that support the belief that US media coverage of the Palestinian uprising and the invasion of Lebanon is anti-Israeli because of pro-PLO sentiments in the American press. In *Double Vision: How the Press Distorts America's View of the Middle East*, Ze'ev Chafets, an American-born Israeli who served as director of Israel's Government Press Office, discusses the relative ease of reporting from Israel, as opposed to reporting from the Arab countries. He also considers the question of pro-Israeli versus pro-Arab coverage.

Two works with a Palestinian viewpoint are Edward W. Said's *Covering Islam: How the Media and Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* and *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, edited by Said and Christopher Hitchens. These works critique the media for presenting Islam and Palestinians solely in a threatening context while ignoring deeper issues and background information.

*The Middle East and the United States: Perceptions and Policies*, edited by Haim Shaked and Itamar Rabinovich, contains 17 papers from a 1978 international colloquium, sponsored by the

Shiloah Center and the Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University, on American policy and public opinion toward the Middle East. *Public Opinion and the Palestine Question*, edited by Elia Zureik and Fouad Moughrabi, examines existing American, Canadian, Western European, Israeli, and Palestinian public opinion polls in five useful essays covering the period from the 1940s to the early 1980s.

## **EDUCATION AND AUDIOVISUAL MATERIALS**

Simplistic media views of the Middle East are accepted by American audiences because they reinforce images that are already a part of American culture. Many champions of multicultural education believe that stereo types seldom survive in an atmosphere of knowledge and free access to information. What role then has the American educational system played in promoting a balanced understanding of the Arab world?

Most minorities are justifiably concerned with how they are portrayed in textbooks and how their history is taught in American schools. Several studies by Arab-American scholars have examined the poor representation of Arabs and Muslims in textbooks. Among these is Michael Suleiman's *American Images of Middle East Peoples: Impact of the High School*. This brief, frequently cited work is a landmark study on the effect of Arab stereotyping in the American educational system. Suleiman's *The Arabs in the Mind of America* documents how the prejudices of American high school teachers are transferred to students and how stereotypes enter the school system unwittingly to become part of the curriculum. The author also examines the negative effect this process has on Arab-American children and on the formation of US Middle Eastern policy.

However, available works provide easily implemented programs to help identify and correct instructional gaps. *The Arab World: A Handbook for Teachers* by Ayad al-Qazzaz is a major revision of his *The Arabs in American Textbooks*. These works point out strengths and weaknesses in the Middle East coverage of specific elementary and junior high school textbooks, and al-Qazzaz includes a bibliography, list of AV materials, and books recommended for young readers. The scholarly Middle East Studies Association has also addressed this topic through publication of William J. Griswold's *The Image of the Middle East in Secondary School Textbooks*, which looks at negative "national characteristics" attributed to the Arab and Islamic worlds in dozens of US and Canadian texts. The work offers alternative syllabi for study of Middle Eastern culture, history, and political science and is most useful in its positive recommendations, which have been adopted by a few textbook publishers.

More assistance is available in *The Middle East: The Image and the Reality*, by Jonathan Friedlander. These ten clearly written essays on teaching the Middle East from elementary to high school are presented with practical plans including a list of recommended audiovisual and library acquisitions to support teaching. Its companion volume, the *Teacher's Resource Handbook for Near Eastern Studies*, by John N. Hawkins and Jon Maksik, is an annotated bibliography of 828 records, tapes, books, filmstrips, and films to support teaching from preschool through high school.

There is a wealth of basic documentation on audiovisual materials about the Middle East and North Africa. However, much information is dated as many of these reference works were published in the early 1980s. In addition to those already mentioned is the *Educational Film Guide for Middle Eastern Studies*, by Joseph Greenman and Ann Joachim, a catalog of about 580 films with short annotations covering Israel, Turkey, and Iran in addition to the Arab world. *The World of Islam, Images and Echoes: A Critical Guide to Films and Recordings*, edited by Ellen

Fairbanks-Bodman, is one of eight units in the Islamic Teaching Materials Project sponsored by The American Council of Learned Societies. Audrey Shabbas's more recent *Resource Guide to Materials on the Arab World*, published by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, describes titles in a variety of formats to support instruction. *The Middle East and North Africa on Film*, by Marsha Hamilton Mc-Clintock, is an exhaustive annotated filmography of 2,460 films produced between 1903 and 1980 dealing with the Arab world, Turkey, Iran, and Israel. All these guides contain distributor information.

Another resource for the educator is the local Arab-American community which may provide speakers for the classroom or for special international day events.

## **ARAB AMERICANS**

A major concern of the Arab-American community has been that negative stereotypes of Arabs affect not only US political policy but also the daily lives of Americans of Arab ancestry. Hate crimes against Arab Americans, recognized and condemned in a speech by President Bush, increase in direct proportion to negative news coverage of Middle East events. Even non-Arab stories, such as the Iranian hostage crisis, caused hate crimes against Arab Americans to increase.

Several Arab American organizations work to counter unbalanced imagery and protect the civil rights of Arab Americans. These include the National Association of Arab-Americans (NAAA), the Association of Arab-American University Graduates (AAUG), and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC). Each of these organizations has a publications office, and these and other Arab-American organizations publish much material of interest. Several directories are available to help identify organizations. *Middle East: A Directory of Resources*, edited by Thomas P. Fenton and Mary J. Heffron, is intended for educators. It contains lists of Jewish and Arab organizations, an annotated bibliography, and lists of periodicals and audiovisual materials on the Middle East. *Middle East Organizations in Washington, DC.*, by Sindy Wayne and Riad El-Dada, describes 116 organizations whose focus is the Middle East. About half cover the Arab world. The third edition of the handy reference work *Arab-American Almanac* describes Arab-American organizations and serves as a state-by-state guide to religious institutions, newspapers, and radio programs directed toward the Arab-American community.

The *ADC Times: News and Opinions of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee* is a newsletter published ten times per year covering organization activities and lobbying efforts, as well as programs to counter anti-Arab stereotypes in advertising and the media. The publication also covers controversial political topics such as the Palestinian uprising and Israeli-Arab world relations. An example of an AAUG monograph is *Arabs in America: Myths and Realities*. This collection of 15 scholarly conference papers covers images of Arabs in the media, immigration of Arabs to America, and the question of Palestine.

Readers interested in a popular overview of the history of Arabs in America have several works from which to choose. *Arabs in America, 1492-1977*, by Beverlee Turner Mehdi, begins with a chronology of events followed by the texts of major documents on US-Arab world relations and on the Arab American community. A personal vision of the community is provided by Gregory Orfalea in *Before the Flames: A Quest for the History of Arab Americans*. This highly recommended collection illustrates the diversity of the Arab immigrant experience through 125 narratives by Arab Americans of varied religious, social, and economic backgrounds covering the period from the 1880s to the present. Two annotated bibliographies are Philip Kayal's *An Arab-American Bibliographic Guide* and *Arabic-Speaking Immigrants in the United States and*

*Canada*, edited by Mohammed Sawaie. Alixa Naff's *Becoming American* focuses on the early Syrian immigrant experience from the late 19th century to the 1930s and the role of peddling, transporting dry goods directly to consumers, as a route for many to assimilation into American culture. This is a controversial book in Arab-American circles because of its emphasis on peddling over other trades. Written by a major figure in the Arab-American community, this interesting work also includes much information from a woman's perspective.

An older work focused on assimilation is *The Arab Moslems in the United States: Religion and Assimilation*, by Abdo A. Elkholy, which attempts to explain why the substantial Toledo, Ohio, Arab Muslim community assimilated more quickly into American life and culture while retaining its basic Arab heritage than did the larger Arab Muslim community of Detroit. Other problems facing the Arab-American community are described in *The Arab World and Arab-Americans: Understanding a Neglected Minority*, edited by Sameer and Nabeel Abraham. These 13 concise essays resulted from a project to raise cultural awareness of the heritage and needs of the large Arab-American student population in the Detroit/Dearborn school systems. Some essays focus on Detroit but many discuss the larger image of Arabs in film and textbooks and the effect these have on children and teachers. This work also makes positive suggestions for organizing consciousness-raising seminars in local communities.

A visual journey through the Arab-American community is available in a 30-minute videotape by Jonathan Friedlander, *Arabs in America*, produced through the UCLA Office of Instructional Development. The tape uses photographs from archives and private collections to illustrate the history and diversity of the Arab-American community. It also addresses the issue of the poor image of Arabs in American popular culture.

There is a general agreement among scholars of the subject that contemporary American popular images of Arabs are negative stereotypes reinforced by television and literary Arab villains, by gaps in the American education system, and by media coverage of real-life crises in the Middle East. The question becomes, where did these images originate?

## **THE CRUSADES AND THE MEDIEVAL WORLD**

Many popular images of the Arab world and of the Middle East were brought to the New World by colonists who were themselves seeking economic opportunity and freedom from discrimination. Their attitudes were shaped by more than 500 years of struggle between Europe and the Arab and Turkish worlds for the religious and political domination of the eastern Mediterranean.

Followers of the three great monotheistic religions—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—have acted on the premise that believers have an inherent right of access to the territory where their religion was revealed. Since the three faiths share many sites, yet worship in different ways, contact and conflict have proved inevitable.

As the cradle of Christianity, the eastern Mediterranean assumed importance as a place of pilgrimage as the early Christian Church spread throughout Europe. Despite hardships, pilgrims throughout the Christian world ventured to the Holy Land. Richard Bevis's *Bibliotheca Cisorientalia* is a checklist of more than 3,000 English works dealing with pilgrimage and travel to the Middle East from the 7th century to 1914. *Jerusalem in History*, edited by K.J. Asali, is an excellent, compact look at the importance of Jerusalem. In *Jerusalem Pilgrims Before the Crusades*, John Wilkinson translates excerpts from 18 pilgrimage texts set down between 385 and 1099. Another extremely interesting selection of Christian pilgrimage works is found in *The*

*Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600*, by Mary B. Campbell, who also analyzes the importance of the holy sites to medieval Christians. F.E. Peters's unusual selection of texts in *Jerusalem: The Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims and Prophets...* quotes travelers to Jerusalem from the ancient Greeks to 19th-century Europeans, with many passages denigrating Islam and local inhabitants. Itineraries from 19 pilgrimages can be found in *Jerusalem Pilgrimage, 1099-1185*, edited by John Wilkinson with Joyce Hill and W.F. Ryan. In addition to these pilgrimage texts, Kenneth Nebenzahl's *Maps of the Holy Land* traces two millennia of historical visual images.

The uneasy truce between medieval Arab Muslims and Christian pilgrims collapsed following the conquest of Palestine by the less tolerant Seljuk Turks in the late 11th century. The Turkish threat to Byzantine lands also prompted the Byzantine emperor Alexius I to request aid from several European nations. That European response became the uncontrollable series of religious wars against Muslims, Jews, and Arab Christians we know as the Crusades.

Several titles address the topic of cross-cultural images developed during this crucial period. *Chronicles of the Crusades*, edited by Elizabeth Hallam, is an excellent illustrated work for readers at all levels showing the Crusades through contemporary eye-witness accounts. The highly recommended *The Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, by Amin Maalouf, tells of the Crusades through medieval Arab accounts showing a perspective far different from the Hollywood-style sources of common imagery. Sophisticated Arab principalities, torn by internal strife and caught between the equally barbaric European invaders from the west and Mongol invaders from the east, saw the end of much of civilization as they knew it. *The Cross and the Crescent*, by Malcolm Billings, is the companion volume to a high-quality BBC radio series first broadcast in 1987. This skillfully illustrated work covers the origins of the Crusades, the massacre of Jews in Europe by Crusaders as they travelled eastward, and the continuation of the crusader ideal to modern times. In the same vein but written for the academic specialist are Francesco Gabrieli's *Arab Historians of the Crusades* and Benjamin Z. Kedar's *Crusade and Mission: European Approaches Toward the Muslims*.

Not all medieval studies focus on the Crusades. Contact through trade, the Arab conquest of Spain, and the transmission to Europe of Greek and Latin scientific texts through Arabic translations are examined in, respectively, *The Arabs in Europe*, by Gabriele Crespi, *The Arab Conquest of Spain, 710-797*, by Roger Collins, and *The Influence of Islam on Medieval Europe*, by W. Montgomery Watt. The highly recommended *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*, by Maxime Rodinson, summarizes East-West images, relations, and scholarship from the Middle Ages through the 20th century. R.W. Southern's *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* is an interesting analysis of attempts by early medieval European scholars to understand why medieval Muslims were successful religiously, technologically, and scientifically while the Christian community in Europe stagnated.

Two scholarly works by Norman Daniel, *The Arabs and Mediaeval Europe* and *Islam and the West* examine medieval writings on Islam and the misrepresentation of Islam by European clergy in order to gain popular support for the Crusades. Daniel's excellent *Islam, Europe and Empire* is an illustrated work on Western images of the Arab, Muslim, and Ottoman worlds from medieval times through the period of European colonial expansion.

## LITERATURE

The effect popular literature and song have had in disseminating images of the Arab world

cannot be underestimated. In *Heroes and Saracens* Norman Daniel examines popular medieval European images of Muslims and Arabs, images which were spread by troubadors through song, poetry, and storytelling.

The single most important literary event in terms of image-making, however, occurred in the early 1700s with the translation of the *1001 Arabian Nights*, first into French, then English.

Contemporary European readers mistakenly believed that the ancient Eastern bawdy tales accurately represented the contemporary Arab world and could be used as an anthropological study of Arab customs, sexual practices, and political relationships. Although that belief now seems fantastically naive, many respected European philosophers were proponents of it.

*Scheherazade in England*, by Muhsin J. Musawi, is a major contribution detailing the effect of the *1001 Nights* on European, especially English, images of the Middle East. The author traces the work's reception by readers of various translations and the use of its themes in other works; and he shows how mistaken images created by the tales affected Western political theory regarding the Arab world. This theme is also explored by Martha Pike Conant in *The Oriental Tale in England in the Eighteenth Century*, a study of Oriental and pseudo-Oriental fiction written in English. Conant looks at the uses to which these tales were put as romances, moral fables, satire, or philosophy. She concludes that the devices and the style of the *Arabian Nights* were so well known as to be easily parodied, creating characters, images, and phrases common to this day. Who among us, including children, has not heard of Scheherazade, of cruel caliphs with many wives, and of flying carpets, geniis in magic lamps, "Open Sesame," wicked viziers, beautiful harem girls, Sinbad the Sailor, Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves, and on and on?

## **FRANCE AND BRITAIN IN THE ARAB WORLD**

The Enlightenment in Europe corresponded in the Middle East to a period of political decline and loss of technological superiority over the West which culminated in the French and English colonization of much of the Arab world, beginning with Napoleon Bonaparte's 1798 invasion of Egypt and Palestine. The brief French presence in the Middle East speeded the parallel effort by the British to create a Middle Eastern political and economic sphere of influence to protect Britain's access to India. This heralded a lengthy period of British domination of Arab affairs, especially evident in Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, and the Gulf sheikhdoms. *The Arabs and the English*, by Sari J. Nasir, traces images of Arabs internalized among English-speaking peoples as does Brandon H. Beck's *From the Rising of the Sun: English Images of the Ottoman Empire to 1715*. Another image familiar to Americans, that of the "Barbary pirate," is examined by Ann Thomson in *Barbary and Enlightenment: European Attitudes Towards the Maghreb in the 18th Century*, an in-depth scholarly study of North Africa which also explains how the Enlightenment's mania for classification developed into 19th-century theories of racial superiority and justifications for slavery and colonialism.

## **FROM COLONIZATION TO TOURISM**

Legions of diplomats and colonial administrators followed the military to the Middle East in the 18th and 19th centuries, and with them came their families and friends. Young men who before the Napoleonic wars took the Grand Tour of Europe as part of their educational experience now added a tour of the antiquities of Palestine and Egypt to the itinerary.

There is a plethora of works on famous Western travelers to the Arab world. In addition to

reading American works such as Mark Twain's *Innocents Abroad*, Americans avidly read British travelers' accounts. A separate essay would be needed to cover works on Sir Richard Burton alone. Among studies that cover the period of growing popular travel to the Arab world are *Travelers in Ancient Lands: A Portrait of the Middle East, 1839-1919*, by Louis Vaczek and Gail Buckland, an essay accompanied by early photographs; Sarah Searight's *The British in the Middle East*, a review of British contact with the Arab world from the mid-16th century through the 19th century;

James C. Simmons's *Passionate Pilgrims*, an uncritical account of several famous English travelers; Kathryn Tidrick's *Heart-beguiling Araby*, a very readable account of the fascination some English felt with the Arab world and the parallel belief that Britain should intervene in Arab affairs; Rana Kabbani's *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule*, a partisan view of the sinister side of several 19th-century travelers' obsessive interest in Middle Eastern sexuality; and Richard Trench's *Arabian Travellers*, a look at European travelers in Arabia and their motivations. Trench includes incredible stories of how some 19th- and 20th-century European travelers overstayed their welcome, abused their Arab hosts' hospitality, and flouted local customs. Yet these travelers were admired as heroes at home without any realization of how they were seen by their Arab hosts. In *The Mediterranean Passion*, John Pemble presents a wide range of Victorian and Edwardian travellers, from aristocrats on the Grand Tour to the middle class on Cook's tours, and he recounts how many travelers' experiences were predetermined by expectations created by biblical stories and the *Arabian Nights*.

Complete or excerpted journals of several eminent 19th-century travelers are available, including *Disraeli's Grand Tour*, by Robert Blake; Florence Nightingale's *Letters from Egypt: A Journey on the Nile, 1849-1850*; and Gustave Flaubert's *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*, translated and edited by Francis Steegmuller. The life of an eccentric British aristocrat who lived much of her life in the Middle East is detailed in Lady Hester Stanhope's *Memoirs*. The flip side of this intercultural exchange is examined by Bernard Lewis in his readable *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, a look at Arab embassies to Europe, and by Ibrahim Abu-Lughod in *Arab Rediscovery of Europe*, which presents three Arab chroniclers of the French invasion plus accounts of 19th-century Arab travelers to Europe.

## **MODERN GUIDES TO THE ARAB WORLD**

Travel works and guides for today's travelers continue very much in the 19th-century tradition with titles such as the bittersweet *Beyond the Veil: The Adventures of an American Doctor in Saudi Arabia*, by Seymour Gray, and *The Arabs: Journeys Beyond the Mirage*, by David Lamb, a whirlwind journalistic survey of the Middle East by a writer who discusses why Americans do not understand Arabs.

*Communicating with the Arabs*, by A.J. Almaney and A.J. Alwan, is a useful basic handbook written for the business executive who needs to develop a working understanding of the Arab world. It also discusses Arab images of Westerners and Western images of Arabs. Margaret K. Nydell's *Understanding Arabs* is a short but thorough introduction for Western travelers to the culture, etiquette, and social structure of the Arab world. In *The American in Saudi Arabia*, Eve Lee looks at "typical" American reactions to situations commonly experienced in Saudi Arabia with suggestions for culturally correct action.

## **ORIENTALIST ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Early European artists borrowed Arab and Middle Eastern themes to enrich their work, as



portrayed by R.A. Jairazbhoy in his *Oriental Influences in Western Art*. Artists also used Middle Eastern settings to "authenticate" paintings with biblical themes, as seen in two works aimed at art historians, *Venice, Dürer, and the Oriental Mode*, by Julian Raby, and *Rembrandt and Persia*, by Leonard J. Slatkes.

Just as the translation of the *1001 Arabian Nights* had created a period of intense interest in the Middle East at the beginning of the 18th century, the French invasion of Egypt and Palestine at the end of the century caused a period of Egyptomania in European art, architecture, literature, and fashion. The source of many Egyptian motifs can be found in *Egypt Revealed: Scenes from Napoleon's "Description de L'Egypte,"* edited by Robert Anderson and Ibrahim Fawzy, which reprints almost one third of the original 600 plates from a work of 26 volumes and 11 folios commissioned by Napoleon Bonaparte to document the explorations performed during his campaigns. This enthusiasm also extended to the study, and removal from Egypt, of Egyptian antiquities and ancient writings, documented by Erik Iversen in *The Myth of Egypt and Its Hieroglyphs in European Tradition*.

The frequent revival of interest in Eastern motifs affected not only painting but also furniture, architecture, and graphic design. This theme is examined in *The Egyptian Revival*, by James Stevens Curl, which follows the recurring explosion of Egyptian imagery in the arts, first following the invasion of Egypt by Napoleon in 1798, second during the expansion of tourism in the mid-1800s, and again after the discovery of King Tut's tomb in the 1920s. *The Inspiration of Egypt: Its Influence On British Artists, Travellers and Designers*, edited by Patrick Connor, is an under illustrated exhibition catalog which explores the same theme. A revised dissertation with many American examples is *The Egyptian Revival: Its Sources, Monuments and Meaning*, by Richard G. Carrott. In *The Oriental Obsession*, John Sweetman looks at Western use of Islamic themes and motifs in painting, textiles, and architecture, between 1500 and 1920.

With the addition of the eastern Mediterranean to the Grand Tour and the increase of tourism, the day of the painter-traveler commenced. Some artists who used Middle Eastern themes—such artists are known collectively as Orientalists—traveled to the Middle East in search of inspiration; others stayed at home and used the *Arabian Nights* and their own imagination to create images that symbolized the Arab world to many Americans. Interestingly, the greatest market for Orientalist art was in America although most Orientalist painters were French or British.

In *The Orientalists: Painter-Travellers 1828-1908*, Lynne Thornton looks in detail at 65 artists who actually traveled in the Middle East. Other 19th-century artists and their works are examined in several well-produced, heavily illustrated titles including the recommended *The Orientalists*, by Philippe Jullian; *Orientalism: The Near East in French Painting*, by Donald Rosenthal; *Popular 19th Century Painting: A Dictionary of European Genre Painters*, by Philip Hook and Mark Poltimore, which has two large chapters on Orientalist art and harem scenes; *The East: Imagined. Experienced, Remembered*, by James Thompson; *Eastern Encounters*, an exhibition catalog of the Fine Art Society (London); the brief *The Orientalists*, introduced by Michelle Verrier; and *The Orientalists: Delacroix to Matisse*, an exhibition catalog of the Royal Academy of Arts (London) and National Gallery of Art (Washington, D.C.), edited by Mary Anne Stevens. This beautiful volume emphasizing both art history and social history includes a well-written essay on Orientalism, tourism, and religion, with copious notes and color illustrations of major works. For the avid British and American religious public of the 19th century, David Roberts created subtle, colored lithographs in *The Holy Land*, now reprinted with extracts from the journal of his 1838-39 tour and with modern commentary and photographs of some of the scenes

portrayed in 1838.

Two titles focus on the work of individual artists, one at the beginning and one at the end of the Orientalist era. *The Life and Work of Jean-Léon Gérôme*, by Gerald M. Ackerman, includes a catalog of paintings and sculptures by one of the most famous of the French Orientalist painters. Although Gerome produced other works, his Orientalist odalisques and scenes created an image that lingers today of a sensual, violent Middle East. Most Orientalist art is mid-19th-century, but artists such as Matisse continued to portray Middle Eastern themes. *Matisse in Morocco: The Paintings and Drawings, 1912-1913* is a National Gallery of Art exhibition catalog.

An extensive collection of an estimated 10,000 images by more than 500 travelers is found in *The Muslim World: In the Victoria and Albert Museum: 18th and 19th-century European Paintings, Prints and Drawings of Life in the Middle East*. The large microfiche set and guide is rather difficult to use; however, the effort is rewarding for the serious researcher.

Another beautifully illustrated work on Orientalist art is Lynne Thornton's *Women as Portrayed in Orientalist Painting*, showing Middle Eastern women as they were imagined by 148 European painters from the 1840s to 1930s. The text examines the obsession with Eastern women's sexuality and the unfortunate tendency to avoid painting typical daily activities with which a Western viewer might identify. This preoccupation with themes such as black slaves and white odalisques and languid sexuality says more about the Victorian artists and their avid European and American buyers than about the Eastern women supposedly portrayed.

## WOMEN

Europeans and Americans in sexually repressed mid-19th-century society used the Middle East as a distant locale into which sexual fantasies could be projected and, in the case of travelers like Flaubert, acted out. The Western image of Arab women has both fascinated and angered Western audiences. But how close is the image of the harem beauty, the belly dancer, or the stooped matron swathed in black to the reality of Arab women today or throughout history? The reality of women's lives may be examined in statistical works such as *Women of the World: Near East and North Africa*, by Mary Chamie; through numerous historical and anthropological studies such as *Women in Nineteenth-Century Egypt*, by Judith Tucker; or in *Land Before Honour: Palestinian Women in the Occupied Territories*, by Kitty Warnock. Anthologies containing Arab women's own voices include the excellent *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*, edited by Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, and, a less-focused work, *Images of Arab Women: Fact and Fiction*, by Mona Mikhail.

But the finest single "stereotype-buster" is the highly recommended *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950*, by Sarah Graham-Brown. This is a detailed analysis of women of diverse socioeconomic groups over a 90-year period, addressing both women's public and private lives. The well-researched text, heavily illustrated with period photographs, parades the richness and diversity of Arab women's history and their service in both traditional and nontraditional roles, and it slams the image of Arab women as sex objects, as so often portrayed in Orientalist art.

The concept of the harem, or separate living and working quarters for women, has also been difficult for Western audiences to comprehend, especially as the term is often incorrectly confused with the idea of polygamy. Indeed, the Western image of the harem as a wild sexual playground is still the most pervasive of American popular cultural representations of Arab women.

The traditional world of the harem is documented in several works, including Fanny Davis's readable *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*. Although Davis examines Turkish not Arab women, the description of life passages of upper-class women in Istanbul over a two-hundred-year period gives a clear picture of the activities within the harem where women performed many social and household functions. Also describing Turkish women is *Harem: The World Behind the Veil*, by Alev Lytle Croutier, whose grandmother lived in a 19th-century Turkish harem. Unfortunately, the text relies heavily on secondhand material, largely by European men who were seldom permitted inside a harem. A highly recommended primary source is *Harem Years: The Memoirs of an Egyptian Feminist (1879-1924)*, by Huda Shaarawi, the political activist who is remembered for being the first Egyptian woman to appear in public without a veil. This unique autobiography covers her personal life, her awakening as a feminist, and her fight for women's rights and Egyptian independence.

The dark side of colonialism and its effect on Arab women is examined in *The Colonial Harem*, by Malek Alloula. This is a disturbing collection of French colonial photographic postcards depicting nude Algerian women, cards that were sent openly through the mail from Algeria to France between 1900 and 1930. A nationalist/feminist text decries the "cultural violence" of this exploitation of women and the dehumanizing effects of colonization.

One title on women that defies categorization is *Serpent of the Nile: Women and Dance in the Arab World*, by Wendy Buonaventura. This is a delightful look at traditional Middle Eastern dance, at the role of dancers and singers in the 18th- to 20th-century Arab world, and at attitudes toward dance in the Arab world and among European travelers. It contains a lengthy section on popular American images of the belly dance in the 19th and 20th centuries. Lavishly illustrated with paintings and photographs, this work chips away at the stereotype of the belly dancer and is suitable for all audiences.

## PHOTOGRAPHIC COLLECTIONS

Already mentioned is Sarah Graham-Brown's *Images of Women: The Portrayal of Women in Photography of the Middle East, 1860-1950*. The period of expansion in tourism and Orientalist art in the mid-19th century saw the birth of a new visual medium, photography. Various types of early photographs were used — by artists to document scenes to be transferred to canvas, by travelers, by missionaries for fund-raising activities at home, by professionals for the lucrative recreational stereopticon trade, and by studio photographers producing portraits, postcards, and visiting cards. That scenes portraying biblical sites were especially popular in mid-19th-century America may be seen in the brief exhibition catalog *The Photographic Heritage of the Middle East... 1849-1893*, by Paul E. Chevedden; in Francis Frith's *Egypt and the Holy Land in Historic Photographs*; and in *The Bible and the Image*, by Yeshayahu Nir, an examination of photography in 19th-century Palestine. A valuable reference work is *Focus East: Early Photography in the Near East*, by Nissan N. Perez, which lists more than 250 Armenian, Christian Arab, European, Jewish, Muslim Arab, and Turkish photographers with brief biographies and examples of their work.

Some specialized collections and archives of major photographic studios are also available. Fouad Debbas's *Beirut: Our Memory* contains hundreds of 19th- and early 20th-century photographic postcards of Beirut from the author's collection. The alluring text describes Beirut life from a Lebanese viewpoint. An excellent collection of ten microfiche and guide can be found in Carney E.S. Gavin's *The Image of the East: Nineteenth-Century Near Eastern Photographs by*

*Bonfils from the Collections of the Harvard Semitic Museum*. The clear images portray antiquities, street scenes, posed portraits, and much more from one of the most skilled Middle Eastern photographic studios of the time. More difficult to use is the 190-michofiche set *Historical Photographs of the Middle East: From the Middle East Centre, St. Antony's College, Oxford*, edited by Gillian Grant. However, the sheer volume of images (circa 1858 to 1973) provides a look at photographs as diverse as those of the famous Bonfils and tourist snapshots. *The Middle East in Pictures*, by G. Eric Matson, contains photos made from the Matson Photo Service Collection of 20,000 original negatives created between 1898 and 1946. They are presented in four oversized volumes, six images to the page. The massive collection of antiquities, street scenes, portraits, pictures of anthropological interest, and some aerial shots are especially useful for the scholar who prefers to work with print, not microfiche. Other microfiche collections include *Early Photographs from Egypt, 1880-1910* and the British Library's fascinating *Sultan Abdulhamid II Photograph Collection*, edited by Muhammed Isa Waley. This set of 126 fiche is a reproduction of several presentation photo albums now in the British Library which were commissioned by the Ottoman sultan to document the technological progress of his empire. A matching set of albums presented to the United States is housed in the Library of Congress.

## RELIGION AND AMERICAN POLITICS

Few people know that the author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" also wrote a biography of Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, based on Arabic sources. *Washington Irving's Life of Muhammad* is an edited text of that work, which was first published in 1849. Irving's Yankee skepticism about miraculous events attributed to another religion's prophet undoubtedly helped put Muslim traditions in a context accessible to his 19th-century Christian readership.

Napoleon's invasion, the growth in tourism, and the evolution of the discipline of archaeology led to a revival of interest in Palestine in the mid-19th century. Many 19th-century American Protestants believed that the Bible had to be proved by archaeology to be a chronicle of verifiable places and events to counter arguments against biblical authenticity raised decades earlier by philosophers of the Enlightenment. These issues and further religious and political implications of Near Eastern archaeology are examined in the excellent *Digging for God and Country: Exploration, Archeology, and the Secret Struggle for the Holy Land, 1799-1917*, by Neil Asher Silberman. In *The Zealous Intruders*, Naomi Shepherd traces the creation of Palestine exploration societies and early efforts to authenticate the Bible through archaeology.

The spectre of depravity fueled by Orientalist art and the reality of Middle Eastern poverty under Ottoman Turkish rule also led to propagation of American and European sectarian Christianity in the Holy Land, not only as a fulfillment of biblical prophecy but also as a philanthropic ideal. In *Protestant Diplomacy and the Near East*, Joseph L. Grabill examines missionary activity in the Middle East and its early ties to educational institutions. The role of missionaries in American politics is examined by Grabill and also by John A. DeNovo in *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900-1939*. DeNovo's study also discusses Arab images of the United States. In *American Philanthropy in the Near East, 1820-1960*, Robert L. Daniel looks at the creation of humanitarian relief organizations as outgrowths of missionary activity, at missionary involvement in American politics to further church goals abroad, and also at the attempt by many missionaries to change Arab culture to correspond more closely to the ideals of American society.

Among several works that view the involvement of the Catholic Church in modern Middle

Eastern politics is *Vatican Policy on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict*, by Andrej Kreutz, one of the better books on this subject in scope of coverage and clarity of writing. *The Papacy and the Middle East*, by George Emile Irani, covers the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1962-1984, in a more popular presentation than Kreutz's. In *The Catholic Church and the Question of Palestine*, Livia Rokach, takes a partisan look at Vatican policy toward European Zionists, Palestinian Jews, and Arabs from the late 19th century to the late 1980s. Attempts by Roman Catholics to find a bond with Muslims as co-monotheists appear in *The Vatican, Islam, and the Middle East*, edited by Kail C. Ellis, papers from a 1985 Villanova University conference.

Political images in the late 19th and 20th centuries can be found in Marwan R. Buheiry's thought-provoking *The Formation and Perception of the Modern Arab World*. This collection of 28 studies by the late Lebanese scholar analyzes Western views of Islam and the Middle East as well as political relations from the 19th century to the 1980s. The text is followed with photographs, from Buheiry's personal collection, of Lebanon and other Arab countries from the 1880s to the 1910s.

For those who believe American involvement in the Middle East is recent, a brief history suitable for library collections at all levels can be found in Thomas A. Bryson's *American Diplomatic Relations with the Middle East, 1784-1975*. A more intensive review from an Arab viewpoint can be seen in *American-Arab Relations from Wilson to Nixon*, by Faiz S. Abu-Jaber. In *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict*, Steven L. Spiegel looks at the way Americans have viewed the question of a Jewish homeland from the time of John Adams to active United States involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Finally, *The Last Crusade: A Negotiator's Middle East Handbook*, by William R. Brown, tracks Henry Kissinger's shuttle diplomacy and reaches the conclusion that unless Americans, Israelis, and Arabs all change their basic perceptions of one another, there can never be constructive negotiation.

## WESTERN SCHOLARLY STUDY OF THE ORIENT

Few scholars expect popular guides, travel works, or even the news media to present readers with the millenia of historical background information needed to fully understand Arab culture and interpret current events in the Arab world. This has traditionally been the sphere of the scholar. Yet how well have Western scholars succeeded in understanding and interpreting non-Western cultures?

The question of bias has become a major issue in the Western study of the Arab and Islamic worlds. Can a Western scholar steeped in the anti-Arab traditions of the Crusades, Western colonization of the Arab world, and Christian attitudes toward Islam offer valid scholarship on the Middle East? The essential landmark study that raised these questions is Edward Said's *Orientalism*, a scholarly yet passionate examination of the biases built into 19th- and 20th-century Western scholarship. The nine essays in *Orientalism, Islam, and Islamists*, edited by Asaf Hussain, Robert Olson, and Jamil Qureshi, take a more conciliatory approach to the history of the study of Islam in the West up to the early 20th century and review the careers of several eminent Western scholars.

The attempt by Western philosophers to apply Western models to the Middle East may be seen in Bryan S. Turner's *Marx and the End of Orientalism*. Turner looks at the effort by 19th- and 20th-century European Marxists to fit the Arab world into a sociological framework that did not apply to that society. H.S. Haddad's high-quality but very brief *Middle East History and the West* examines images of the Middle East propagated by Western scholars from early times to the

present. One example is the American myth of an intellectual heritage traced directly from the ancient Greeks. This progression from ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome through Western Europe to America as presented in most American textbooks bypasses whole millenia of cross-fertilization and the contributions of non-Western societies to the development of European and American culture and technology.

The history of the image of Arabs in American popular culture and its historical sources has been a sad compendium of outdated stereotypes, convenient villains, sexual fantasies, excuses for discrimination, and justification for support for particular economic or political policies. Further United States involvement in the Arab world may again bring stereotypes of Arabs to the American public as hurried commentators reduce to simple terms extremely complex political situations rooted in decades of conflict. It is to be hoped that Americans will be motivated to search beyond these simple stereotypes for a deeper knowledge and understanding of the rich and diverse culture that is the Arab world.

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