

# Music, Literature, Dance and Fashion | Literature | Orientalism in the West and in the East

Literary studies uses the term Orientalism to characterise the Western imitation and depiction # whether fact or fiction # of “exotic” aspects of Middle Eastern cultures.

Orientalism # an intellectual movement in Western literature, art and music # is linked to a fascination with all aspects of the “Orient” as perceived by the West. A body of knowledge about the “Orient” has been collected and systematically studied and argued among scholarly Orientalists since the 18th century, but among those critical of the ideal in the modern period is the Palestinian-American author Edward Said (1935#2003) whose book *Orientalism* (1978) unpicked the negative connotations of the term. As a phenomenon, Orientalism can be divided into the romantic and the scholarly: romantic Orientalism can be seen as part of this movement in Europe, which developed as a reaction to 18th-century realism and rationalism; thus, while to European eyes the “Orient” was a world of mystery and sensual pleasures, above all it was a world of unrestrained emotions. By the turn of the 19th century however, when Orientalism had become a scholarly discipline, the cultures labelled “Oriental” were frequently depicted as alien and sometimes inferior.



**Working Number:** FR 186

**Name:** Théâtre de l'Opéra. "Aida". Avenue of the sphinxes at the gates of Thebes (act 2 scene 2)

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** National Library of France

**Materials:** 1880

**Curator** -

**Justification:** Popular interest in the “East” and its ancient history opened the way for many musical productions centred on famous historic personalities where focus was on the romantic, human dimension of history. Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aïda* is one such manifestation.



**Working Number:** FR 187

**Name:** Théâtre de l'Opéra. "Aida". The banks of the Nile (act 3). Set by Jean-Louis Chéret

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** National Library of France

**Materials:** 1880

**Curator** -

**Justification:** Popular interest in the “East” and its ancient history opened the way for many musical productions centred on famous historic personalities where focus was on the Romantic, human dimension of history. Giuseppe Verdi's opera *Aïda* is one such manifestation.



**Working Number:** PD 024

**Name:** Doctor and author Tawfiq Kan'ān, three-quarter length portrait, standing, facing front, in uniform

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** The Library of Congress

**Materials:** Between 1905 and 1920

**Curator** Photographic print on cabinet card mount

**Justification:**

Western interest in different aspects of life in the “East” opened the eyes of local intellectuals to the importance of their cultural heritage. Dr Tawfiq Kan#an participated in an ethnographic expedition to Wadi Musa (Petra) to document local oral history.



**Working Number:** FR 162

**Name:** One Thousand and One Nights: Arabic fairytales translated by Galland, illustrated by the best French artists...

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** National Library of France

**Materials:** 1875

**Curator** -

**Justification:** The mysterious “East” captured the European imagination for many decades. A decisive role was played by translations of popular folk tales from Arabic, first into French, then into English and other European languages.



**Working Number:** PT 076

**Name:** Histoire de la Princesse Boudour (Conte des mille et une nuits), Translation by J.C. Mardrus

**Holding Museum:** of The Story of the Princess Boudour: Tales of a Thousand and One Nights

**Date:**

**Materials:** Calouste Gulbenkian Museum

**Curator** Paris: F.L. Schmied, 1926

**Justification:** Binding: black and green morocco by Georges Bretté (1893–1969), with one lacquered plate by Jean Dunond (1877–1942)

Translations of tales from the Arabian Nights played a decisive role in fuelling European Romanticism. The mysterious and exquisite “East” fired the imaginations of European intellectuals in the fields of art, music and literature.



**Working Number:** SP 059

**Name:** Design for book cover: Tres morillas me enamoran

**Holding Museum:** National Museum of Decorative Arts

**Date:** 1910–1936

**Materials:** Paper; ink; printed

**Curator** The “Orient” is reflected in the arches and the

**Justification:** clothes and generally in the decoration of this book cover, which was produced in Spain towards the end of the 19th century.



**Working Number:** PT 068

**Name:** The Mandarin

**Holding Museum:** National Library of Portugal, Digital Library

**Date:** 1880

**Materials:**

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**Curator**  
**Justification:**

Far Eastern cultures were documented as well, this book about China, written in Portuguese, was published in 1880 by José Maria de Eça de Queiroz.



**Working Number:** TR2 098

**Name:** Constantinople

**Holding Museum:** Istanbul Archaeological Museums

**Date:** 1883

**Materials:** Paper

**Curator**  
**Justification:** A travel book about Constantinople (Istanbul) published in Paris by Colomb (1883). Advances in transport and books such as this encouraged more people to travel abroad.



**Working Number:** SP 053

**Name:** Description of the Arab monuments of Granada, Seville and Córdoba: the Alhambra, the Alcazar and the Great Mosque

**Holding Museum:**

**Date:** National Museum of Decorative Arts

**Materials:** 1885

**Curator**  
**Justification:** Paper, ink; printed

Document of 1885 detailing the monuments of Arab Spain: Granada (Alhambra), Seville (Alcázar) and Córdoba (the Great Mosque). This and other books like it contributed to an understanding of the significance of these monuments and consequently to their preservation.



**Working Number:** PT 067

**Name:** The Relic: On the Harsh Nakedness of Truth – the Diaphanous Mantle of Fantasy

**Holding Museum:** National Library of Portugal, Digital Library

**Date:** 1887

**Materials:**

**Curator**

**Justification:** -  
One result of Orientalism was that it fuelled popular and scholarly interest in the social and cultural history of the “East”. Inventories and properly documented studies contributed greatly to the preservation of material cultural history.



**Working Number:** PT 069

**Name:** King Solomon's Mines

**Holding Museum:** National Library of Portugal, Digital Library

**Date:** 1891

**Materials:**

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**Curator  
Justification:**

With advances in transportation and communication more people travelled and a new literary genre appeared: the travel book. In these, authors described remote places and related some incredible stories, some based in fact and some fictional. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines* (1885) was translated from English to Portuguese by Eça de Queiroz and serialised in the journal he founded, *Revista de Portugal*.

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