



## French Orientalism: Culture, Politics, and the Imagined Other

By Desmond Hosford and Chong J. Wojtkowski

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In 1798, Napoleon I launched his Egyptian Campaign and opened what has become recognized as the canonic period of French Orientalism, which extends from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century. As defined by Edward W. Said (*Orientalism*, 1978), Orientalism is intrinsically Eurocentric and places the Orient in opposition to the European West as the quintessentially foreign Other. In this sense, the Occident supposedly defines itself by gazing at the East as its inverse image and purportedly asserts a geopolitical dominance materially confirmed through imperialism and colonization. Although Europe may cast the Orient as the archetypal Other, this necessarily entails deep conflict since the Orient is also frequently posited as the source of Western civilization, which prohibits the articulation of a complete separation between Europe and the Orient. Nevertheless, according to French Orientalist discourse, the East had fallen into barbarism, inertia, and languished, awaiting the mission civilisatrice by which France followed a heroic undertaking of universal enlightenment. The canonic approach to Orientalism has drawn much criticism, which calls for reexamining the notion of French Orientalism, broadening the scope of enquiry, and exploring the history and ideological strategies behind French formulations of the Orient from the Middle Ages through the twenty-first century. Such an expanded field of investigation reveals that the canonic Orientalist paradigm is not universally applicable, particularly regarding material from before the late eighteenth century. New theoretical, literary, historical, philosophical, and cultural perspectives provide the opportunity to deploy, question, subvert, and resituate canonic Orientalist theories, revealing the continuing evolution and relevance of French Orientalism as a notion with global stakes and material consequences. Because of its broad scope and variety of theoretical approaches, this volume will interest scholars and students from a wide spectrum of disciplines, including literature, gender studies, history, theater, art history, music, cinema, and cultural studies.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### About the Author

Desmond Hosford is a Ph.D. candidate in French at The Graduate Center of The City University of New York, where he also earned his Ph.D. in musicology. He is the director of the Foundation for French and Francophone Musical Culture of the Barry S. Brook Center for Music Research and Documentation at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York, an editor at the *Repertoire International de Litterature Musicale*, and an adjunct lecturer in French at Hunter College. Desmond specializes in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tragedy, *tragedie en musique*, the Bourbon court of France, early modern gender and sexuality, and animal philosophy. He is co-editor of *Fortune and Fatality: Performing the Tragic in Early Modern France* (Cambridge Scholars Press, 2008), and his other publications include 'Uneasy Anthropocentrism: Cartesianism and the Ethics of Species Differentiation in Seventeenth-Century France' (2010), 'Anthropomorphic Terror: The Bete-Machine, the Ballet de Cour, and the Tragedie en Musique' (2009), 'Reigning Women, Crushed Women: Duty, Glory, and Suicide in the Tragedies of Philippe Quinault' (2006), 'The Queen's Hair: Marie-Antoinette, Politics, and DNA' (2004), and the articles 'Marie-Antoinette,' 'Opera,' and 'Queering Royalty' in *The Gale Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender* (2007). Desmond is the harpsichordist and director of the period instruments ensemble, *La Musique de la Reine*. Chong J. Wojtkowski is a doctoral candidate in French at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York where she specializes in contemporary French cinema, music, and urban culture. She is completing her dissertation, 'Made in Marseille: Global Youth and Cosmopolitan Identities.' Her publications include articles on the representation of delinquency in *Fais-moi des vacances* (2002), the construction of identity in Marseille hip hop, and the articulation of Italian-ness in French rap music from Marseille. She held a Graduate Teaching Fellowship at Hunter College, where she is an adjunct lecturer in French. Chong is the advisory board member for French popular music at the Foundation for French and Francophone Studies of the Barry S. Brooke Center for Music Research and Documentation at the Graduate Center of The City University of New York.

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