



# The Homoerotics of Orientalism

By Joseph A. Boone

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## **The Homoerotics of Orientalism** By Joseph A. Boone

One of the largely untold stories of Orientalism is the degree to which the Middle East has been associated with "deviant" male homosexuality by scores of Western travelers, historians, writers, and artists for well over four hundred years. And this story stands to shatter our preconceptions of Orientalism.

To illuminate why and how the Islamicate world became the locus for such fantasies and desires, Boone deploys a supple mode of analysis that reveals how the cultural exchanges between Middle East and West have always been reciprocal and often mutual, amatory as well as bellicose. Whether examining European accounts of Istanbul and Egypt as hotbeds of forbidden desire, juxtaposing Ottoman homoerotic genres and their European imitators, or unlocking the homoerotic encoding in Persian miniatures and Orientalist paintings, this remarkable study models an ethics of crosscultural reading that exposes, with nuance and economy, the crucial role played by the homoerotics of Orientalism in shaping the world as we know it today.

A contribution to studies in visual culture as well as literary and social history, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* draws on primary sources ranging from untranslated Middle Eastern manuscripts and European belles-lettres to miniature paintings and photographic erotica that are presented here for the first time.

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## **The Homoerotics of Orientalism** By Joseph A. Boone Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

### Review

A masterpiece and rare achievement; a completely new and convincing reading of a body of politicized knowledge that has dominated much of the field in the last thirty years. The entire concept of Orientalism will have to be totally rethought following Boone's book.

(Moshe Sluhovsky, Vigevani Chair in European Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

This book offers an erudite and timely interpretation of the phenomenon of homoeroticism in orientalism in the Near and Middle East. Treating a broad range of Western representations of the "Orient", Boone provides an important corrective to Edward Said's *Orientalism* by addressing the powerful ways in which Europeans writers' and artists' representations of homoeroticism in the "Orient" have covertly enabled the appeal of orientalism as a predominantly male mode of discourse.

(Ali Behdad, John Charles Hillis Professor of Literature at UCLA; author of *Belated Travelers* and *A Forgetful Nation*.)

Joseph Boone has opened a triple dialogue between Western perceptions (and fantasies) of Middle-Eastern homoeroticism, queer theory as it has evolved over the past decade, and the growing field of sexual studies in the Islamic world. Read *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* and discover that Boone has taken the necessary steps in offering oneself up to unsuspected, multiple ways of being. As he says, "how might the terms 'homoeroticism' and 'Orientalism', the two operative words of my title, each find itself refigured, wrenched apart and re-conjoined to create new meanings?

(Richard Howard, Poet, Columbia University)

A veritable tour de force. Boone's groundbreaking, timely book challenges us to revisit a wide range of orientalist visual and textual artifacts produced over the last four hundred and fifty years in which the recurrence of homoerotic desire contests heterosexual norms, colonial control, and race and gender hierarchies. The wealth of textual and visual materials and the broad selection of figures are, in and of themselves, extraordinary contributions to scholarship. A must read for scholars both of Anglo-European-American and Middle-Eastern and Islamic gender and sexuality studies.

(Sahar Amer, Professor of Arabic and Islamic studies, University of Sydney)

Orientalism will never be the same after Boone's extraordinary book, which disrupts the heterosexual template implicit in Edward Said's and refashions the cultural traffic between East and West as inescapably reciprocal, dialectical, and multiple?in a word, global. As much an intervention in visual culture as it is a revelatory history of the literatures of both West and East, *The Homoerotics of Orientalism* with its staggering erudition and critical finesse courageously recasts the stark divide of Occident and Orient that produced Orientalism as mutually constitutive, creative, and informing as it has been destructive, and it does so in the form of a critical gift?a book of utmost generosity, judiciousness, and political imagination? that

carries its own charge of love.

(Jennifer Wicke, Professor of English, University of Virginia)

Boone shatters the old binaries of Western Orientalist discourses AND the field of postcolonial studies and offers much needed insight for the field of sexuality studies in the Muslim world. A remarkable achievement!

(Janet Afary, Mellichamp Chair in Global Religion and Modernity and Professor of Religious Studies and Feminism, University of California, Santa Barbara)

Once every decade or so, a book appears that revolutionizes the field of GLBT studies.... [*The Homoerotics of Orientalism*] is a book that post-colonialists will seize immediately and argue over endlessly--but one that will also permeate the wider GLBT intellectual landscape. Every reader will benefit.

(*Gay and Lesbian Review Worldwide*)

This remarkable study models an ethics of cross-cultural reading that exposes, with nuance and economy, the crucial role played by the homoerotics of Orientalism in shaping the world as we know it today.

(Christopher Harrity *The Advocate*)

[A] substantial and fascinating book.

(Robert Aldrich *H-Histsex*)

*The Homoerotics of Orientalism* is an outstanding and bold intellectual discussion of transgressive sexualities in both the Islamic and the Western worlds.... A well-researched book that puts forth a new thinking on Orientalism.... Highly recommended.

(*Choice*)

Important and engaging volume.

(*Journal of Modern History*)

Meticulously researched.

(*Modern Philology*)

Review

An ambitious and astute examination that resonates with real-world issues and debates in the twenty-first century.

(Luke Gartlan, School of Art History, University of St. Andrews)

#### About the Author

Joseph Allen Boone is a professor of English and gender studies at the University of Southern California and the author of *Libidinal Currents: Sexuality and the Shaping of Modernism* and *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction*. He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the National Humanities Center, the Huntington, the Stanford Humanity Center, and the American Council of Learned Societies and has been in residency at the Liguria Center at Bogliasco, the Rockefeller-Bellagio Center, and the Valparaiso Foundation.

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**Christina Vallejo:**

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