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**Sexuality, nationalism and the other: the Arabic literary canon between Orientalism and the Nahḍa discourse at the fin de siècle in *Middle Eastern Literatures*, 2021**

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This article examines the dual and paradoxical conception of the Arabic literary canon in Orientalist and *Nahḍa* discourses in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—an era of great change and closer mutual cultural awareness between Europe and the Arab world. What Arabic literature had long signified to European scholars since Antoine Galland’s eighteenth-century translation of *The Arabian Nights* (mysticism, Romanticism and a platform to explore sexual taboos) was very different from how the nationalist-minded *Nahḍa* intellectuals wanted to reconfigure it as the hallmark of the rational “Golden Age” of Arab civilization. Sexuality became a site of contestation between certain Orientalists who praised Arab literary “frankness” and an anxious class of Arab scholars who wanted to “cleanse” the Arabic literary canon and reconfigure it in line with modern, European standards of “respectability” and “politeness.”

**About the author**

Dr Feras Alkabani is a Lecturer in Arabic and Comparative Literature and Co-Director of the Middle East and North Africa Centre at Sussex (MENACS). His research interests include fin-de-siècle Orientalist literature, Sir Richard Burton, T.E. Lawrence, Arabic literary and translational scholarship in the Nahda, travel writing, comparative approaches to love and desire in European and Arabic literatures, postcolonial Arabic literature, sexuality and nationalism, Romanticism and Orientalism in the bilingual oeuvre of Kahlil Gibran.