

LN101 Languages and Cultures Across Boundaries

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, Seminar 2: France and its Others

Primary and secondary reading:

- Letters 46-67 (pp. 101-143).
- Letters 112-141 (pp. 202-254).
- Lisa Lowe, 'Re-readings in Orientalism: Oriental Inventions and Inventions of the Orient in Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes*', *Cultural Critique*, No. 15 (Spring 1990), pp. 115-143. [on JSTOR].

1. Find out and note down some more about Edward Saïd and the idea of 'orientalism'.

2. Summarise in a paragraph what you understand Lisa Lowe's main argument to be about 'orientalism' in *Lettres persanes*.

3. Close reading:

Read and annotate letters 50-51 (on French vanity and cultural ethnocentrism vs. cultural relativism); 59 (ethnocentrism again); 114 and 26 (on Uzbek's relationship to his wives).

4. Read this online article on the recent clash between Students' Unions and feminist author Germaine Greer on the gender of transsexuals.

<http://www.politics.co.uk/comment-analysis/2015/10/28/comment-the-attack-on-germaine-greer-shows-identity-politics>

How does this discussion relate to the Enlightenment value of freedom of expression? What, in your view, would Montesquieu think of this controversy and of the practice of 'no-platforming' in particular?