

DEPLOYING ORIENTALISM IN CULTURE AND HISTORY

From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe



EDITED BY JAMES HODKINSON AND JOHN WALKER WITH
SHASWATI MAZUMDAR AND JOHANNES FEICHTINGER

Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History

Studies in German Literature, Linguistics, and Culture

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Preface

THIS VOLUME IS the first publication to be generated by the International Occident-Orient Research Network, which was established in 2008 by Anil Bhatti and James Hodgkinson. The network arose out of a collaborative arrangement between Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and Warwick University, UK, and it originally had a solely German Studies focus. The project expanded rapidly to include Delhi University and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (OeAW), Vienna, as its other key locations. The group has subsequently attracted scholars from Europe, Asia, and North America, who have also brought a wide range of expertise to the project: these include literary scholars of all persuasions, historians, social scientists, as well, of course, as specialists in the field known problematically as “oriental studies.”

The resulting text is an edited volume of chapters that has been developed by members of the network, working in close collaboration. Thus far the project has spanned a period of four years from January 2010 to the date of publication, and has been driven forward by three symposia, held in Delhi, Vienna, and Birmingham, UK. The editors would like to thank a great many institutions and people who have assisted the production of this volume and the research group underlying it since late 2009. These are too numerous to list in their entirety here, though others should not go without mention. Our heartfelt thanks are due especially to: the Department of Germanic and Romance Studies at Delhi University, Delhi University itself, and Jawaharlal Nehru University in India for funding and hosting the first symposium; the OeAW, particularly the Institute of Culture Studies and Theatre History, for hosting the second symposium and the Austrian Research Association (*Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft*), City of Vienna (MA 7 Culture and Science) and the Austrian Federal Ministry of Science and Research for generous funding; Professor Sarah Colvin and the Institute of German Studies at Birmingham University, UK, for hosting the third symposium, and the Department of German Studies and the Strategic Partnership Fund at Warwick University, together with the Institute of Humanities at Birkbeck College, London for generously funding this most recent event.

For funding the publication of this volume the editors wish to thank the Humanities Research Fund and the Department of German Studies at Warwick University; and the Research Fund of the Faculty of Arts,

Birkbeck College, London. The editors would like to extend a special personal thanks to Professor Emeritus Anil Bhatti for his pivotal role in establishing the network and to Dr. Brian Haman (Warwick University) for his assistance in organizing the third symposium and in the preparation of the manuscript. Finally, we should like to thank the Gallica Digital Libraries at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris, for the reproduction of the cover image and for granting us the rights to use it: thanks are also due to Laurie Duboucheix-Saunders for overseeing the whole process.

Introduction

James Hodgkinson and John Walker

I. Received Orientalisms and New Departures

OVER THE LAST THREE DECADES the term “orientalism” has become a commonplace and often pejorative term within cultural studies. In Edward Said’s seminal *Orientalism* (1978)¹ the term was first defined critically as a mode of thought and writing by which Western discourses exercise a form of ideological power over the peoples and cultures of the East, reducing them to Europe’s consummate other: exotic, degenerate, passive, fanatical, mysterious, civilized, and uncivilized by degree. The term has, though, come to be used so liberally that it seems to imply the existence of a real, unified historical school of thought, an ideological movement of like-minded people or at least a recognized set of writings, attitudes, and beliefs that carried that name within the Europe of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was not the case. Naturally, the terms “Orient” and “orientalism” permeate this volume. Here, though, they are treated within a context of critical awareness, as a contemporary tool for critically tracing patterns and tendencies within historical European discourses. The scope of what can be termed “orientalism,” of where and in what forms we might seek it, of the range of differing functions it fulfills in differing contexts, and of where, quite simply, the so-called Orient was thought to be in a geographical sense, must be considered as open to a process of redefinition.

This volume is intended as part of this process. Its aims are two-fold. First, it seeks to broaden the perspectives of the Anglo-American debate on orientalism within an English-language study. During the last two decades significant progress has already been made in advancing that debate beyond Said’s original emphasis on British and French forms of the phenomenon. Substantial contributions, not least within international German studies, have widened the range of material covered and shed light on orientalist traditions in a different national-cultural context. This book builds on such progress. However, it is a key innovation of this collection to draw into the debate other, relatively neglected forms of European orientalism from the disciplines of Central and East European studies, juxtaposing these with Western European traditions for the first

time in a comparative mode within a single volume. This approach raises a host of issues concerning whether or not the imagined borders of the Orient change as we move to consider eastern European forms of orientalism, and also how national cultures that have been considered to border directly onto or even in some senses “contain” the Orient (one thinks of Austria-Hungary and Russia) configure their geographical relationship to it. The volume’s second aim is connected to the first: an attempt to extend our understanding of how the geographical locus of the Orient varied across a range of European cultures also illuminates the differing *uses* and *functions* of constructions of the Orient within those shifting settings. It is in this sense that the volume’s key term of “deployment” arises: this, though, does not necessarily refer to forms of orientalism operating within a solely colonial or military context, or indeed to an exclusively predatory or reductive use of the Orient in the material considered, but rather to its uses and functions in the widest possible sense: political, cultural, theoretical, aesthetic, theological, or otherwise. While seeking to discern differences in how imagery, knowledge, ideas, and tropes of the Orient vary with changing European perspectives, the collection as a whole will not overstate such discontinuities and thus crudely reinscribe a sense of national cultures working in mutual isolation: the chapters also illuminate continuities in orientalist values, themes, attitudes, and strategies across European boundaries.

II. Orientalisms in Evolution

German studies and the German tradition of reflection about the oriental world was a self-confessed blind spot for Said, and therefore a point at which future scholars were bound to engage critically with his work. Inquiries into Germanic forms of orientalism have both widened the canon of what constituted European orientalist writing and refined the conceptual apparatus that scholars bring to bear on it. There is already a considerable body of scholarship that has made headway in this context. In her study *Colonial Fantasies* (1997) Susanna Zantop wrote on the slightly wider though intimately connected theme of German colonialism—or, rather, on the colonial paradigms or fantasies that were to be found in historical, anthropological, literary, and popular texts between 1770 and 1870. The diverse yet imaginary encounters between Germans and imaginary “natives” in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literature were prefigurations for “real” colonial encounters in Africa, South America, and the Pacific after 1871: by that time Germany’s collective cultural imagination already contained a glorified sense of national identity, defined against both European and non-European others.² Russell Berman’s *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* sought a more complex understanding of German culture’s

complicity in the colonial age, specifically by rehabilitating aspects of German Enlightenment thought and culture and exploring their anticolonial tendencies: his opening and quite striking juxtaposition of Captain James Cook's account of his voyages with that of his German shipmate Georg Forster perhaps best exemplifies this.³ Germany's position not only as the so-called belated nation, but also as the belated empire of Europe neither automatically exculpates nor implicates its traditions in the legacy of colonial thinking—and thereby of orientalism.

Nina Berman's *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (1996) examined texts from Germany's imperialist period. While Hugo von Hofmannsthal sees the Orient as an exotic and retrogressive space that offers an alternative to a disenchanted European modernity, Karl May's oriental novels offer the literary German protagonist an opportunity to pose as a worldly traveler, better integrated in the Orient than his British imperialist counterparts but, through his mastery of Eastern languages and mores, exerting a quasi-colonial form of control over the Orient; Else Laske-Schüler's exile writing from Palestine seeks to fashion an alternative Jewish identity derived from an essentialized vision of a fantastical Orient that remains undiminished despite her residence within it.⁴ Nina Berman's more recent *German Literature on the Middle East* (2011) extends the discussion over a longer period, from the time of the Crusades to the end of the Cold War, examining the diverse and changing relationships between the German-speaking world and Middle Eastern states and empires.⁵ This interdisciplinary study illuminates these complex relationships not only within literature and writing more generally, but also within economic, social, and political processes and patterns of material exchange. Focusing on German-language literary and nonfiction writings about the Middle East (including historical documents, religious literature, travel writing, essays, and scholarship), Berman suggests that the German encounter with the Middle East is at once distinct from and yet characterized by patterns shared with other European countries.

Todd Kontje's *German Orientalisms* (2004) offered a "more nuanced version" of orientalism "as seen through the lens of German literature of the last thousand years."⁶ It examined Wolfram's *Parzival*, Grimmelshausen's *Simplicissimus*, Herder, Novalis, Goethe, and later Thomas Mann's *Zauberberg*; it also looked at themes in German writing on the Orient across epochs, taking in Eichendorff, Gustav Freytag, and Günter Grass, as well as migrant writers working within contemporary Germany such as Emine Sevgi Özdamar. Acknowledging Said's obvious point that given its diffuse political structure prior to 1871 Germany had no colonial interest in the geographical Orient, Kontje argues that this led to an idiomatic form of German orientalism, whereby writers oscillated between identifying "Germany" with the rest of Europe and, conversely, allying

Germany with the Orient (2–3). Kontje’s readings of these tendencies in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment periods reveals a “compensatory Eurocentricism” (demarcating a European Germany from the East), yet also emergent traditions of “anti-semitic Indo-Germanicism” (ibid). Consequently a plurality of specifically German “orientalisms,” free of geographical specificity, is revealed, in which each serves a differing function at different points throughout the history of German nation building.

Susan Marchand’s study *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race and Scholarship* (2009) picks up on similarly problematic ideological tensions in the first study of academic oriental studies as practiced within the German speaking lands throughout the long nineteenth century. Against the shifting backdrop of German national and political history, the study of oriental language, culture, and history was caught up in an ongoing field of tension between enlightened objectivity and politicizing and racializing tendencies.⁷ Scholars have also drawn our attention to the fact that European cultural discourse about the Orient was present long before the emergence of modern academic disciplines from the later Enlightenment onwards. Berman’s and Kontje’s studies are in themselves evidence of this, though a range of other contributions also discern traditions of using what might be termed “oriental tropes” in medieval German literature.⁸ Sarah Colvin’s study *The Rhetorical Feminine: Gender and Orient on the German Stage, 1647–1742* (1999) filled further gaps by examining the use of orientalist tropes on the German stage during this period, with a particular focus on how gendered orientalist tropes and figures represented threats to patriarchal Christian Europe.⁹ However, the focus of this volume will be the deployment of orientalism in the European traditions of the so-called modern and postmodern periods: that is, from the second half of the eighteenth century to the present day. This choice of historical context is not born of a failure to recognize the extent to which the thought and writing of the premodern period bequeathed a swathe of tropes, figures, and stereotypes to later eras, nor is it motivated by any disparagement of the very significant scholarship on the earlier period in which several contributors to this volume have participated. This editorial decision derives from the historical fact that the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed, in German-speaking Europe and arguably beyond, a reflection on nationhood, cultural identity, and difference, often closely entwined with the growth in empirical scholarship about the “oriental” world, which took a recognizably modern form and continues directly to inform contemporary debates.

III. Reconsidering Difference

The concern of this volume to extend critical reflection on orientalism both geographically, in order to include the many different orientalisms of

Central and Eastern Europe that feature only marginally in Said's seminal text and the responses it provoked, and historically, culturally, and politically, in order to address the very different ideological considerations that shaped those iterations of orientalism, is also paralleled by a widening of theoretical concerns. The idea of orientalism and its critique has played a major role in one of the most influential discourses in contemporary intellectual life: the debate about the ideas of "subjectivity," "difference," and "otherness," which has preoccupied much of recent philosophy and cultural studies. This discourse has been especially influential in the linguistic and psychoanalytic philosophy of postmodernism in the French-speaking world and its Anglo-American reception. However, these intellectual traditions are not the same as those of Central and Eastern Europe. This volume will therefore also aim to explore the relevance of the different kinds of orientalism practiced in Central and Eastern Europe to some central concerns in philosophy and cultural theory, especially the ways in which we conceive the very idea of cultural difference.

The contributions to this volume are informed by an idea of linguistically and culturally diverse, yet simultaneously shared, histories,¹⁰ which calls into question the need or indeed the possibility of individuals, groups, or nations identifying absolutely with either side of the dualism of Orient and Occident. That idea, the volume suggests, becomes more visible within the thought of Germanophone Europe than it does within the traditional Anglo-American or Francophone conceptions of the Orient. There is often a self-reflexive quality to the Germanophone tradition, which shows an explicit awareness that the construction of any non-European other is also inextricably bound up with the problem of defining "Europe" itself. The alternative orientalist thinking of German-speaking Europe also demonstrates that an understanding of how difference is constructed need not make real intercultural communication impossible. According to this way of thinking, difference, by being acknowledged, might in fact be transcended. One of the most important recent initiatives in reconstructing the history of such reflection is Andrea Polaschegg's *Der andere Orientalismus* (2005). As well offering the fullest discussion to date of German forms of orientalist culture, placing these in their intellectual-, literary- and political-historical contexts, Polaschegg makes a key theoretical contribution by questioning whether the pervasive postmodern concern with cultural difference and otherness might in fact entrench the very colonial ideology it seeks to overcome.¹¹ What is the real "difference," and who is the real other, with which genuine intercultural dialogue ought to be concerned? Could our ideas of difference and otherness be cultural constructs themselves, just as much as the universalist ideology that they oppose? And could those ideas, so current in contemporary philosophical discourse and so influential in oriental studies in the wake of the Saidian critique, be equally capable of imprisoning intercultural

dialogue within a framework of Western cultural assumptions? While these philosophical-methodological questions are explored at the *theoretical* level throughout this volume—and particularly in those chapters with a focus on German culture—the collection also shifts to consider how the treatment of the Orient in the literary and cultural *practices* and traditions of Central and Eastern Europe further undermines the starkly segregated model of Europe vis-à-vis its others.

IV. The “Imaginary Geography” of Orientalism and the Shift Eastward

The expanding awareness of European paradigms of the Orient also exposes the geographical fluidity of the concept. Can we ever really draw a single and fixed map of the historical and geographical Orient as it appeared to varying forms of nineteenth-century European consciousness? In fact, to attempt to create a single, fixed map of the terrains that were included in the nineteenth-century term “Orient,” be that pictorially or semantically, is to fall into the trap of orientalism, even if we seek to re-create that map from the critical distance of an ostensibly postcolonial age. For different models of the Orient, constructed from the perspectives of different national and cultural perspectives, reflected the specific needs and outlook of each. There were many Orients, each of which were not only relative to their cultural origins, but also fluid and subject to change.

Said had already begun to make this point in *Orientalism*, describing the changing ideological coloring of Orients within Western discourses.¹² It has become almost required practice to begin studies of orientalism with some form of critique of his work—and in some ways this volume is no exception. Yet another of his concepts remains of ongoing relevance and is of key importance here: the “imaginary geography” that Said sees at work in orientalist or indeed colonial writing generally will figure in many of the chapters that follow. Reflecting generally on how space and distance are endowed with meaning within language, Said wrote in *Orientalism*: “space acquires emotional and even rational sense by a kind of poetic process, whereby the vacant or anonymous reaches of distance are converted into meaning for us here” (55). The imagining or reimagining of space within representational systems, then, is crucial to understanding how regions, landscapes, and cities were shifted in and out of the European construction of the Orient. The idea was later further developed by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993):

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.¹³

Said proposes that physical space is never finally fixed, be it as part of an Orient or otherwise, but that all geographies necessarily construct the imaginary identities of places. The naming of regions, of topography, the marking of territory and its affiliation or subjugation to forms of human power, are characteristics of all history and are as true of the so-called precolonial and postcolonial periods as they are of the age of empire. The colonial period, it would seem, simply provides particularly violent and visceral physical instances of this transepochnal struggle. We need only consider briefly the history of maps of any one selected region within the so-called Orient to find evidence of the imaginary quality of geography at work. North Africa, for instance, is a rich example: often thought of as the near shores of the Orient from the European perspective, the region was once divided into the *beyriks* and *deyliks* of Ottoman territory, the so-called Barbary states that made up the empire's western limits.¹⁴ Subsequently the region reverted to being the western part of the resurgent Arabic world—an identity encapsulated by the Arabic term “Maghreb,” meaning “West” or “place of the sunset,” which has in turn become a common term in postcolonial discourse. Even the ostensibly neutral phrase “North Africa” can be traced back, etymologically and culturally, to the Roman colonization of the region. Such shifts in nomenclature mark the way in which culturally determined ideologies have sought to appropriate the region as part of a sequence of mutually “superseding” geographies. But the Maghreb always was part of the (now conventional) Saidian Orient—the boundaries of the Orient dealt with in the following chapters are much more varied, they are constantly reimaged and remain in constant flux—as do their uses and functions.

V. The Scope of the Volume

Scholarship on Germanic orientalism has been so transformative of the wider debate that there remains a strong Germanic focus to this collection. Several contributors to this volume reconnect the modern discipline of oriental studies to one of its most important roots in the German Enlightenment and the philosophy of German idealism. In the world of Herder, Humboldt, Kant, and Hegel, the intellectual encounter between the German-speaking and oriental worlds was constantly accompanied, in a way conspicuously lacking in Anglophone and Francophone Europe, by a sustained reflection about *German* cultural identity, as well as a philosophical interrogation of the ideas of “culture” and “identity” themselves. Several of our contributors trace the trajectories of such theoretical reflection.

John Walker traces the continuing relevance of Wilhelm von Humboldt's idea of the comparative study of language as a model for intercultural dialogue in Jürgen Habermas's most recent work on the

demand for recognition by ethnic and religious minorities in a liberal and secular public domain. He argues that Habermas's most recent reception of Humboldt suggests a model of intercultural communication very different from the apparently definitive ideal of a "discourse without domination" (*herrschaftsfreier Diskurs*) that informed his earlier work. Habermas's later work, Walker suggests, reflects a kind of Kantian regulative ideal of intercultural dialogue, closely modeled on Humboldt's idea of linguistic translation, in which cultural presuppositions, including those of religious or theological origin, have more to be acknowledged and empathetically understood than abstractly overcome. Michael Dusché highlights a less self-critical tendency in German thought, showing how Friedrich Schlegel's "discovery" and interpretation of the ancient Indian texts reflects debates within German romanticism about German cultural identity in Europe. For Dusché, Schlegel's "discovery" of the East is as much a discovery and construction of a German European identity in response to the political and cultural challenge of postrevolutionary France as it is a theory or interpretation of Asian language or culture. In India, Dusché shows, Germany finds a reflection of its own self-understanding as the oriental other of Europe: an idea with fateful political and cultural consequences from German romanticism to Thomas Mann, Hermann Hesse, and beyond.

Todd Kontje refines the concepts of the discussion, arguing that the multiple German representations of the Orient from the nineteenth century onward have their roots in "local orientalisms" internal to different variants of German culture. The investigation is transepochal, working back from the films of Fatih Akin through the work of Franz Kafka and Thomas Mann to Johann Wolfgang Goethe. Thus the chapter explores multiple and conflicting imaginings of the German nation, which was itself always more a cultural than a geographical entity, by writers informed as much by regional and European identities as they were by the idea of a unitary German state. The function of the Orient, though always serving some purpose and often reduced in one form or another, reflects Germany's internal complexities across localities and history, such that "the site from which orientalism is deployed becomes as mobile and multilayered as the places onto which it is projected."¹⁵

The chapters in this volume further enrich our knowledge of the diverse and sometimes lesser-known forms of German orientalism. Shaswati Mazumdar's chapter focuses on how three received oriental figures, the Jew, the Turk, and the Indian, were represented in three separate historical events, the Damascus affair (1840), the Crimean War (1853–56), and the Indian Revolt (1857) in Germanophone journalistic discourse: all three events drew an extraordinary amount of attention in the European press in general and in the German print media in particular. In fact they happened at a time when "print capitalism," as Benedict

Anderson calls it, had begun to provide the basis for imagining the nation and conflicting imperial interests abroad reflected increasing competition between the European powers.¹⁶ If travel writing has long been seen as a genre that exemplifies classic models of orientalism, then James Hodkinson's chapter further refines that view, examining two contrasting and hitherto uncommentated examples published by German-speaking travelers to French colonial Algeria around 1840—one a missionary (Timotheus Dürr) and the other (Friedrich Fürst zu Schwarzenberg) an Austrian conscript in French military service. As writers, both are connected to and yet distinct from the French colonizers, making possible a critical perspective on colonialism; however, both writers, still indebted to the French colonial enterprise as they wrote, had limited scope or need to express this. Ultimately, both writers have classically orientalist aims, although each employs different tactics: while Schwarzenberg's text tells of the sacking of Algiers and, subsequently, conceives of implicitly policed lines of ethnic distinction between colonists and colonized under French rule, Dürr's report on his missionary work almost denies the existence of any sense of the Orient other than as a geographical and cultural vacuum to be filled with European infrastructure and Christianity.

Two other chapters—those by Jon Keune and Jyoti Sabharwal—complete the Germanophone focus. Both look at German speakers who were interested in India, though in different periods and from differing perspectives, and both detect in their chosen writers an approach that adopts an anticolonial posture that, in contrast to the texts in Hodkinson's piece, questions or destabilizes orientalist stereotyping. Keune writes on Matthias Christian Sprengel, a deskbound German professor of history and politics who marshaled information from diverse European sources at the turn of the eighteenth century to write histories of two Indian powers. *Die Geschichte der Maratten* (1786) and *Hyder Aly und Tippto Sahib* (1801) represent a different vision of the Orient that was concerned with current affairs and political developments in relation to colonial rule around the world. This focus on the political structures, the economic and military history of important Indian kingdoms, together with his lack of interest in those areas most open to contamination by orientalist modes—discourses on culture, religion, and language—possibly goes some way to explaining why Sprengel managed to avoid the more essentialist tendencies of contemporaries such as Johann Gottfried Herder. Sabharwal leaps forward to the twentieth century to treat the works of one exemplary German-speaking exile who came to India to escape persecution from the Nazi regime in Europe, namely, the screenwriter, critic, and publisher Willy Haas, who scripted some of the most successful films of the 1940s for the Bhavnani Studios in Bombay, and also published a series of essays on Indian culture and mythology that were published in India and in Germany. Locating these writings within

the German discourse on India, this chapter shows how the comparative framework in Haas's writings, the influences of German Indology and the specific location of exile in the Orient circumscribe and undermine the hegemonic position of the Occident vis-à-vis the Orient. The interacting issues of empire, race, religion, and fascism on the one hand, and the writer's contrasting affinities with India as a country struggling for independence on the other, form the background for Haas's engagement with the institutionalized orientalism of British rule in India.

The chapters within this volume pan eastward, however, moving to consider the orientalist traditions of Central and Eastern European nations including a discussion of the phenomenon in the culture of the Russian Empire—a country that would by most European standards be seen to encompass large parts of the Orient within its borders. The first point of departure is the Germanophone, though culturally distinct, Austro-Hungarian perspective. Robert Lemon has already begun to reflect on how Austrian orientalist discourses employed oriental motifs not to enforce Western hegemony, but rather to practice self-reflection and self-critique.¹⁷ Continuing the discussion, Johann Heiss and Johannes Feichtinger's chapter considers how Austro-Hungarian foreign and domestic policy in the late nineteenth century combined the idea of an inherited Christian and Catholic mission to the Turkish and Islamic world with the realities of power politics in the Balkans. This chapter focuses specifically on how Bosnia-Herzegovina was integrated into the empire. Austria-Hungary's "civilizing" mission in the Balkans was designed to strengthen the imperial hold over the region, on the one hand strengthening its political and cultural borders with, and cultural distinctiveness from, the southern Slavic states and the Ottoman East, while simultaneously granting political rights and freedoms to "oriental" Bosnian Muslims who formed new communities within Austria-Hungary and thus encouraging them to be part of the empire.

Sarah Lemmen offers an analysis of Czech travelogues about Africa and Asia from around 1918: while her chosen texts appeal to the model of a civilized and civilizing Occident vis-à-vis an untamed Orient, Lemmen maintains a sense of how the writers also resisted these tendencies. The result is the sense of a modern traveling Czech subject who envisions a role for the recently liberated Czech nation on a global stage and presents it not least as a foil to the colonial outlooks of other European nations. Margit Köves covers the last two hundred years of intellectual history, within which Hungarian culture sought to fulfill the complex tasks of nation building and of forming national literary and political identities. Throughout, the Orient plays a central but evolving role, as it is used as a narrative of origin, as an alternative to a Germanicized Austrian identity and a modern capitalist Hungary, and later as the object of a sophisticated, self-reflexive socialist traveling

subject. The Orient functions to express a complex sense of Hungarian identity as an occidental-oriental hybrid, though not in a manner that is uniformly and crassly reductive of the East. Finally, Kerstin Jobst considers how the idea of the Orient in nineteenth-century Russia developed when Russia itself, under the pressure of the Pan-Slavist movement, constructed a cultural and religious identity distinct from Western Europe but also promulgated its own “civilizing” mission in the Russian East. Russian orientalism is thus unique among its “European” counterparts because it is predicated on the idea of its own internal “East,” which it is called on to make a more uniform part of itself, and yet also the idea of Russia itself as a culturally privileged “East” that must resist incorporation into the culture of Western Europe.

It is, though, precisely this geographical shift eastward that complicates any notion of the Orient predicated solely on attempts to control territory, politically or conceptually. The discussions of the Central and Eastern European perspectives do not simply show a geographical Orient that was uniformly displaced further to the east as the European subject itself moves in the same direction. Just as Kontje’s chapter complicates the sense of a unified national orientalism in Germany by exposing how local inflections codetermine the use of concepts, images, and tropes of the Orient, so other contributors show how the apparently “closer” geographical relationship between Central and Eastern European nations and the Orient produced more complex East-West encounters and relationships of a different, namely, human dimension. The so-called heterogeneous and pluricultural societies of this region, Habsburg Austria-Hungary being the obvious example discussed in these chapters, exemplify this notion of how certain forms of the Orient were thought of as indivisible from or even intrinsic to so-called occidental national cultures. Insofar as it is thought of in terms of human groupings or communities, the nineteenth-century conception of Orient can be something internal to and inextricably fused with Europe.

Versions of the Orient were also configured in terms of a different notion of “space,” however. The spaces implied here are conceptual rather than geophysical, and delineate the boundaries between communities and forms of collective human identity.¹⁸ Thus we can conceive of the Orient, perhaps more obviously for this context, as an ethnic and religious space, though also as a socioeconomic or a gendered space. Such insights inform the chapter by Ulrike Stamm, for instance, who shows how nineteenth-century European travelers’ accounts of the Islamic world presented a highly loaded image of oriental women and female sexuality. Yet in seeking within travelogues more than a uniform exoticization of the oriental feminine, Stamm’s analysis maps out a complex range of attributed functions. The sexualized oriental woman serves as a point at which the male traveler can seek to master the Orient allegorically through sexual

conquest, while the female traveler, working within the literally feminine space of the harem, can depreciate oriental femininity in a manner that (re)asserts her own socially predicated norms of sexuality. Significantly, Stamm's approach allows us to trace new patterns of deployment: while the gender, social status, and nationality of the writers considered often point to a range of types of oriental encounter across which oriental femininity plays varying roles, the discussion finds a common tendency to functionalize oriental femininity in a way that ensures the primacy of nineteenth-century European identity, roles, and values. By examining works by Flaubert and de Maupassant, as well as Germanophone writers such as Hermann von Pückler-Muskau, Ida Hahn-Hahn, and Ida Pfeiffer, Stamm reconnects the discussion with the classic orientalisms of Western Europe (France, Germany, and Austria). Her transnational discussion shows that, when thought of as a gendered space, the Orient can also complicate or undermine a model of orientalist traditions organized discretely along European national-cultural boundaries.

Thus these chapters seek a pluralistic approach to modern forms of European orientalism in several senses. They continue to deconstruct the notion that the Orient was ever reducible to one fixed physical region by exploring its "imaginary geography," showing that constructions of the Orient were always spatially fluid. Building on this model of the "ever shifting Orient," the chapters also conceive of a heterogeneous European subject and begin to chart the diverse functions and uses of these Orients across national cultures, exploring how writers from differing contexts and times inherited and adapted tropes and strategies to fit their divergent ideological, political, and cultural needs across the period considered. The discussions also attempt to show a more complex set of intercultural dynamics to be at work within ostensibly orientalist traditions than simple binaries of self and other, such that not all writers prove crassly reductive in their uses of the Orient, but at times seek to conceive and represent a more heterogeneous and less ideologically loaded version of the Orient to destabilize the binary East–West model. In working toward this kind of productive complexity, however, the volume as a whole sounds a cautionary note: to distinguish neatly between forms of the Orient or orientalism in terms of discrete European national cultures runs the risk of homogenizing and stereotyping those European perspectives. We must not lose sight of how the critical examination of Orients highlights the internal complexity of European societies. We are reminded, furthermore, of other constructions of Orient, such as those predicated on social and gendered identities, which allow us to discern tendencies that cut *across* national boundaries, with different forms of European writing on the Orient actually showing certain practices in common. To find such continuities in the midst of such divergent complexity is in some ways to return to Said's core idea, and to the title of this volume: textual

renditions of the Orient are always deployed to fulfill some function or other and, however benign these might seem to be, we must seek to maintain a critical awareness of this.

This book may also help to illuminate some urgent contemporary cultural and political debates. The resurgence of political Islam, both in the global “South” and “East” and in the American and European worlds, has decisively recast academic and political discussion about Eurocentrism and the contested universalism of the idea of human rights. For some secular European thinkers like Tzvetan Todorov in France, Frank Furedi in the United Kingdom, and Heiner Geissler in Germany,¹⁹ the inheritance of the European Enlightenment is under attack and in need of defense against its fundamentalist opponents in the Middle East and the Anglo-American world. By contrast, Islamic scholars like Tariq Ramadan²⁰ have repeatedly warned against the instrumental deployment of a false idea of human rights, itself negated by Western political practice, in response to the perceived threat of radical Islam. For some, current events make a restatement of Enlightenment values against the political and cultural critique of the last two decades urgently necessary. For others, the current geopolitical deployment of those values makes their capacity to serve the interests of Western political and cultural domination all the more evident. These issues, now of such contemporary relevance, are reflected in German, Austrian, and other Central and East European discourses at least two centuries old. Those discourses are by no means identical with what has come to be known as orientalism in the Anglo-American world, and yet are highly relevant to the debate about the uses of orientalism in a truly global culture. In this way the multidisciplinary and diverse chapters of this volume will seek to make a lively contribution to that continuing debate.

Notes

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 3rd ed. (London: Penguin, 2003).

² Suzanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997). See also the German translation *Koloniale Phantasien im vorkolonialen Deutschland (1770–1870)* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1999).

³ Russell Berman, *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

⁴ Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1996).

⁵ Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

⁶ Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004). Quotations are from sleeve notes.

⁷ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

⁸ See, generally, Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East*; Kontje, *German Orientalisms*; and also James Hodkinson and Jeff Morrison, *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2009), esp. chaps.1–3.

⁹ Sarah Colvin, *The Rhetorical Feminine: Gender and Orient on the German Stage, 1647–1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), especially “The Rhetorical Feminine: Women and Muslims in the Literary Imagination,” 14–69.

¹⁰ A useful exploration of the concept of such “shared histories” can be found in Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria, eds., *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Campus, 2002), esp. 9–49.

¹¹ Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenlandischer Imagination im neunzehnten Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005). A full discussion of Polaschegg’s application of more sophisticated alterity theory to issues of German orientalism can be found in John Walker’s contribution to this volume (chapter 1).

¹² Said, *Orientalism*, 22–23.

¹³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred Knopf Inc, 1993), 7.

¹⁴ See James Hodkinson’s chapter in this volume.

¹⁵ See Todd Kontje’s chapter in this volume.

¹⁶ See Shaswati Mazumdar’s chapter in this volume.

¹⁷ Robert Lemon, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-Critique in the Habsburg Fin de Siècle* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011).

¹⁸ Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, *Thinking Space* (London: Routledge, 2000), esp. 1–30 and 302–48.

¹⁹ See: Tzvetan Todorov, *In Defence of the Enlightenment* (London: Atlantic, 2009); Frank Furedi, *On Tolerance: A Defence of Moral Independence* (London: Continuum, 2011); Heiner Geissler, *Sapere Aude: Warum wir eine neue Aufklärung brauchen* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2012).

²⁰ Tariq Ramadan, *The Quest for Meaning: Developing a Philosophy of Pluralism* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

1: (Re)translating the West: Humboldt, Habermas, and Intercultural Dialogue

John Walker

THERE ARE NO TWO WORDS in contemporary discourse more current, or more elastic and therefore potentially more misunderstood, than “difference” and “otherness.” Both terms are constantly present in discussions of intercultural communication and therefore of the practice of orientalism, which is our theme. This chapter will interrogate this discourse in light of contemporary debates about communication between cultures and the linguistic thought of the German Enlightenment, especially the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and the reprise of some key Humboldtian themes in the most recent work of Jürgen Habermas on intercultural dialogue.

I. Von Humboldt and a New Paradigm for Orientalism

In her seminal book *Der andere Orientalismus* (2005), Andrea Polaschegg shows that our constant concern to deconstruct false ideas of the other can make sameness and difference the controlling and even exclusive categories of intercultural study, so preventing us from understanding what might be really other no less than what is really part of ourselves.¹ In other words, a concern to overcome one kind of use of orientalism—the Eurocentric construction of an artificial oriental other—can sometimes license a different kind of instrumentalism in oriental studies. Our concern to deconstruct a false other might prevent us from communicating with real others: those actual other people with whom we must speak if any true intercultural dialogue is to begin.

The suspicion that the kind of intercultural studies conducted in the West might imply the false construction of a supposedly real cultural other as their object—a suspicion inherent in oriental studies at least since Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978)—can therefore become a self-fulfilling prophecy. For, as Polaschegg convincingly argues, what really grounds intercultural study, and even more so intercultural dialogue, is not the dialectic between what is our own and what is other than ourselves—*das*

Eigene and *das Andere*—but rather the dialogue between what we experience as familiar (*das Vertraute*) and what is initially foreign to us (*das Fremde*). In that dialogue, our understanding of each of the two poles will be changed. What we believe we know from the inside will necessarily become strange as we make it into an object of study, and what was strange to us will become part of what is familiar to us.²

The paradigm shift that Andrea Polaschegg has proposed is anything but an abstract matter of terminology. For, as she points out, the critical cultural turn in Anglo-American oriental studies often associated with Edward Said has its own shadow side in the idea that a supposedly absolute opposition and difference of culture—what Samuel Huntington in 1993 called *The Clash of Civilizations*—is the key to understanding contemporary political history.³ This position, in the last two decades, has all too often been taken to support not the practice of intercultural dialogue but rather the failure to begin it. This chapter will take up some of these contemporary debates in relation to the linguistic thought of the German Enlightenment, especially the work of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and what I will suggest is its echo in the most recent work of Jürgen Habermas on the question of multiculturalism and the problem of intercultural communication.

The work of von Humboldt offers a conceptual framework for the discussion of cultural and linguistic difference that has some decisive advantages over the most influential paradigm by which that discussion has recently been defined: the linguistic deconstructionism that has dominated much of recent French thought. For much of that paradigm, the key concept is not difference but *différance*: the supposedly inevitable elision of otherness, and hence the infinite deferral of true communication, which all linguistic communication is supposed to entail.⁴ For Derrida, the acknowledgement of that elision and deferral is also the recognition of the real difference between persons (and, implicitly, cultures) that language can make manifest but neither can nor should overcome. By contrast, for von Humboldt the work of linguistic and cultural interpretation is about “translation” in both the literal and extended senses of the term. The purpose of translation is as much to extend our own linguistic capacity as it is to assimilate the thought of another. Translation means allowing what we trust (*das Vertraute*) to become strange and unfamiliar to us as well as making our own what is initially foreign (*fremd*). The two processes are inseparable and necessarily unpredictable in their results, which can never be brought to a fixed and definitive articulation in a single linguistic and conceptual scheme. For von Humboldt, there can be no ideal metalanguage through which all cultures might potentially be interpreted. Linguistic understanding—whether of our own language or of others—takes place only in and through the act of translation itself. While fully aware of the link between language and culture, Humboldt insists that

the encounter between languages (of which “translation” can only be the contingently imperfect result) is the key to cultural understanding, not the other way around.⁵ It cannot make sense to speak of an other until we have encountered a real other in dialogue. The study of language must be both singular and comparative, synchronic and diachronic, at once: an activity that develops the communicative and therefore the intellectual capacity of individuals, cultures, and humanity itself.⁶

To be sure, von Humboldt’s conception of the general cultural relevance of linguistic study is also linked to the discovery of the Orient and *Orientalistik* in the Germany of his time. Von Humboldt, like other German orientalists of the early nineteenth century, insisted that the study of other cultures required the study of the most ancient and pure forms of those cultures’ languages. The interest of knowledge behind that study had as much to do with the self-definition of Germany in early nineteenth-century Europe as it did with any dispassionate study of the East. However, while von Humboldt certainly shared part of that cultural and political interest,⁷ he differs from many of his contemporaries—especially Friedrich von Schlegel, the leading German orientalist of his time—because his primary intellectual focus was not *Orientalistik* in the modern or nineteenth-century sense of the term, but the comparative study of language as a paradigm for a program of universal education.⁸ Von Humboldt’s concern with the study of oriental languages (and indeed the languages of the world) has an epistemological and ethical relevance that cannot be reduced to the cultural or political interests that may in part have motivated German orientalism. Indeed, I will argue that von Humboldt’s conception of the comparative study of language offers an alternative to the Saidian paradigm of orientalism that is more fruitful than the apparent reversal of that paradigm in some more recent forms of oriental studies. In the last part of the paper I will suggest that the most recent work of Jürgen Habermas develops an idea of “translation” as the key to intercultural understanding that owes much to von Humboldt’s own. The idea of “translation” developed in Habermas’s most recent work also provides a much more fruitful concept of intercultural dialogue than his earlier work could offer. I will conclude by suggesting some ways in which Habermas’s idea of translation between cultures is relevant to contemporary debates about dialogue between religious traditions.

The linguistic thought of von Humboldt is unthinkable without that of Herder. Herder’s key concept is language as the self-expression of humanity in its environment. Language is the vehicle of both the particularity and the universality of the human. For Herder, language is the source of culture rather than the reverse; it is both cultural *and* intercultural. Language develops through human interaction in two senses. First, it becomes a more powerful instrument of communication as humanity becomes more conscious of itself and its environment.⁹ Second, this

process of development (*Fortbildung*) also involves interaction with other and different linguistic communities. Particular languages develop as the capacity for universal human communication grows.¹⁰

In the work of von Humboldt the focus on language is both more formally developed and more focused on the comparative study of language, especially the activity of translation, which he sees as the key to intercultural communication. Von Humboldt completely changes the terms of the debate about the origin of language that dominated the linguistic thought of the European Enlightenment. In his essay *Über das vergleichende Sprachstudium in Beziehung auf die verschiedenen Epochen der Sprachentwicklung* (1821, *On the Comparative Study of Languages in Relation to the Several Epochs of Language Development*) he argues that the question of the origin of language can only be formulated in terms of an epistemological circle:

So natürlich die Annahme allmählicher Ausbildung der Sprachen ist, so könnte die Erfindung nur mit einem Schlage geschehen. Der Mensch ist nur Mensch durch Sprache; um aber die Sprache zu erfinden, musste er schon Mensch sein.¹¹

The ideas of humanity and language are coextensive and originally linked in an act by which humanity creatively engenders language and reflection. Hence the specific question of the *origin* of language reveals itself to be either insoluble or unintelligible. However, von Humboldt makes the epistemological circle virtuous by changing a question about the origin of human language into one about the nature of human self-expression. At the same time, he makes the question more specifically linguistic by emphasizing that thought is not just dependent on language as such, but indeed on the structure of particular languages as well: “Das Denken ist aber nicht bloß abhängig von der Sprache überhaupt, sondern, bis auf einen gewissen Grad, auch von jeder einzelnen bestimmten” (*W*, 3, 16.). This insight leads von Humboldt to the view that full understanding of the nature of language comes not from the study of particular languages, or even the comparative study of language as such. Such understanding can come only from an attempt to reach and to make sayable that as yet ineffable region that lies in the center (*in der Mitte*): the semantic space between all languages, which cannot be reduced to the idiom of any particular one of them. Von Humboldt crucially argues that this ultimately objective (and potentially culturally transcendent) domain of truth can, in our actual practice, only be approached subjectively: that is to say, from a culturally specific standpoint. In other words, we can do so only by using our linguistic and human imagination, even if we remain contingently constrained by the particular speech communities from which we come and the limited range of those we know: