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POPULARIZING THE ORIENT IN *FIN DE SIÈCLE* GERMANY

Suzanne Marchand

There has been a good deal of talk, in the years since Edward Said's *Orientalism* appeared in 1978 about Europe's 'discourse on the Orient'. This presumably coherent set of speech acts and artistic renderings of the East and its peoples is usually thought to have been consistent over time – or at least across the era of high imperialist engagement, between roughly 1780 and 1960 – and across Euro-American space (although generalizations are usually based on British and French examples). As in Said's original analysis, the literature here often lumps together scholarly figures (like Ernest Renan) and literary writers (like Flaubert), visual artists (Gerôme) and diplomats (Lord Cromer), and insists that these figures represented the Orient in more or less the same way, and, moreover, spoke the same 'orientalizing' language as all other contemporary Europeans and Americans. There has been some recognition that British 'orientalism' differed from the Russian (or Ottoman!) brands in certain ways, and that scholarly interests were often far more specialized and arcane than those of, say, the business community; many have quarrelled with the link Said makes between 'orientalism' and the will to colonize.¹ But few commentators, to my knowledge, have really examined the fundamental generalization underlying the whole conception of 'orientalism': *was there – even within the bounds of one European nation – a unified 'discourse on the Orient'?*

This is a question I want to pose at the beginning of this essay, but others will follow in its train. For although I do not think an entirely coherent and unified discourse ever existed in any European nation (and much less in all of them), I do think certain images and tropes often recur, and quarrelling over whether or not such recurrent stereotypes retrospectively constitute a 'discourse' is not very productive. What I want to do, instead, is to examine those parties who were most interested in promoting or consuming particular images of the Orient, and to find out whether or not *they* thought they were participating in a common discussion about the East (if, that is, they thought such an entity existed, a question that will have to be answered elsewhere). I will take Germany as a case study, hoping thereby to fill an important lacuna in the literature – though it is widely known that the Germans were *the* pace-setting academic orientalism there is, to date, not much literature about German 'Orientalism'.² What

¹ See, for example, R. Irwin, *Dangerous Knowledge: Orientalism and its Discontents* (New York: Overlook, 2006). J. J. Clarke's *Oriental Enlightenment: The Encounter between Asian and Western Thought* (London: Routledge, 1997) illustrates in beautiful detail the richness and variety of different sorts of European–Asian encounters; M. Sullivan's *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, rev. ed., 1997) and J. Sweetman, *The Oriental Obsession: Islamic Inspiration in British and American Art and Architecture, 1500–1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) do something of the same for art.

² There is, however, some excellent work underway here. See, for example, I. D. Kalmar, 'Moorish Style: Orientalism, the Jews, and Synagogue Architecture', *Jewish Social Studies*, 7:3 (2001), 68–100; N. Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997); S. Mangold, *Eine 'weltbürgerliche Wissenschaft' – die deutsche Orientalistik im 19. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2004); L. Hanisch, *Die Nachfolger der Exegeten: Deutschsprachige Erforschung der Vorderen Orient in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

I want to know is this: did *contemporaries* think they were all, essentially, on the same page? To anticipate, I venture that they did not think so, and that this was in fact troubling to some of them, namely, to those who believed themselves the possessors of real, scientific knowledge about the East: the scholarly ‘orientalists’. In what follows, I want to explore their attempt to create and dominate a ‘discourse on the Orient’, an attempt which ultimately failed, due to internal contradictions in the producers’ plans, and to an understudied aspect of German intellectual history, the flourishing of the *fin de siècle* cultural marketplace. But I also want to demonstrate that one does not need to have either a unified discourse, or a generalized ‘culture’ to prove that German studies of and entanglements with the Orient were a significant part of *fin de siècle* cultural politics. Even if German ‘Orientalism’ is not reducible to one coherent set of images and discursive acts, we can learn a great deal about the Wilhelmine world by focusing attention on it.

One of the things to be learned here is that German orientalist scholars, far from clinging to their ivy-covered towers, often did attempt to interact with the wider-reading public. We will trace below the activities of a number of individuals who were trying, for various reasons, to reach across disciplinary divides, and across the gulf that separated experts from lay readers, to convey their understanding of one or another aspect of ‘the East’. This act, the intentional creation of works designed to reach an audience beyond one’s social and intellectual peers, I will call ‘popularizing’ – though it will soon become clear that the impetus behind this act for Wilhelmine era scholars was rarely the one we most often connect with ‘popularizing’ attempts, namely, crowd-pleasing for cash.³ On the contrary, the ‘popularizing’ efforts described below were generally motivated by the desire to convince wider audiences of (1) the legitimate right of university scholars to guide German *Kultur*; and (2) the long-lasting power and beauty of the *ancient* world and its achievements. A third aim, cherished by many of these men,⁴ was to salvage Christian faith in an era of massive church-leaving and the proliferation of critics of institutionalized religion. The Foucauldians have warned us repeatedly about the ur-uncertainty of our assessments of motivation – and perhaps at the philosophical level I would have to agree that these assessments will never be absolutely certain. But it seems to me that it is by examining the ‘why’ question that historians are best able to understand the production of various kinds of knowledge, and to assess whether or not those forms of knowledge actually exerted social, cultural, or political power – for, after all, if the consequences of ideas are not what their creators intended, surely the knowledge/power linkages Foucault conceived are severed? How could knowledge used against one’s interests and desires be ‘power’? And so this paper begins by insisting that we can, and should, know ‘who is speaking’, and why, then seek to understand who – if anyone – was listening.

We need, also, to be sure we know what contemporaries were actually saying; how much, that is, professional orientalists actually wrote about certain subjects, and what they actually said they cared about. We are, I think, in for some surprises here; to offer a brief summary, they wrote (and evidently cared) very little about the political and social conditions of the present, even as concerns areas under Germany’s colonial administration.⁵ They had to be coaxed or even bribed to study modern oriental languages – which is not too surprising, since academic prestige was heavily bound up with the study

³ There is, however, some fine recent work on popularization in the natural sciences, e.g. A. W. Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung im 19. Jahrhundert: Bürgerliche Kultur, naturwissenschaftliche Bildung und die deutsche Öffentlichkeit, 1848–1914* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1998), and on the complex interrelationship of intellectuals and the wider public in the world of music and art, such as C. Applegate, *Bach in Berlin: Nation and Culture in Mendelssohn’s Revival of the St. Matthew Passion* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005) and B. I. Lewis, *Art for All? The Collision of Modern Art and the Public in Late Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003) as well as the occult sciences, for example C. Treitel, *A Science for the Soul: Occultism and the Birth of the German Modern* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

⁴ In 1900, academic positions were exclusively open to men, although some women were beginning to appear as students and research assistants.

⁵ This does not mean they were critics of imperialist endeavours (although some were); and of course there are exceptions here, especially among those who taught at the Orientalisches Seminar and the Kolonialinstitut. The subject of German orientalists’ political activities and allegiances is far too big to be explored here, but will be dealt with in full in the book manuscript I am preparing.

of the *ancient* Orient.⁶ They wrote a lot more about religion – and about Christianity’s superiority – than supposedly secularized scholars should have done, and we can hardly fathom the depth of their affection for the fine points of Sanskrit grammar. All of this has much to do with the history of *Orientalistik*, which was a field pursued, as had been the case for centuries, by theologians and by philologists and to a lesser extent historians, geographers and/or classicists with appointments in the philosophical faculty. Having sprung, like classics, from theology’s thigh, but never having managed full emancipation from theological questions or religious polemics, the various orientalist subdisciplines (including Assyriology, Egyptology, Semitic linguistics, Sinology) were products of the Christian humanist, not the Enlightened rationalist tradition and that tradition, even in 1900, or 1914, was by no means extinct.

Indeed, *Orientalistik* was sufficiently entangled in the humanist tradition to be implicated in the fates of its kindred offspring, Protestant theology and classics – and here is where we enter a domestic socio-cultural context that other historians of ‘orientalism’ have entirely overlooked. Imperialist endeavours did of course help to shape German cultural politics after 1884; but we should also recall that the period was marked by a series of domestic cultural developments of enormous import, among which were titanic battles over school and university reform (which of course affected and usually afflicted scholars quite directly), the huge expansion of the natural sciences and technical training, the rise of social democracy, extremely rapid urbanization and industrialization, a noticeable increase in leisure time, life expectancy, literacy and disposable income for most families, and the snowballing tendency for Protestant Germans to find spiritual solace outside traditional church institutions. All of these developments posed threats, of various kinds, to the cultural helmsmanship that had been allotted to the nineteenth-century academic elite, and to a presumptive German cultural unity which had been built, in any event, by excluding women, Catholics, Jews, non-German speakers, peasants, the working classes, and even the commercial middle class (*Besitzbürgertum*) from what one might call ‘cultural citizenship’, the right to create and consume cultural works of one’s own liking. By the 1880s, a new era was opening in the evolution of Germany’s ‘public sphere’, one in which those outside the neo-humanist elite were beginning to gain the clout, confidence, and purchasing power to exercise cultural citizenship.⁷ We should not forget that this was the era of the Baghdad Railway and annexation of Qindao; but the domestic cultural context sketched above also deeply shaped German orientalism’s coming of age.

Orientalistik, as I noted above, remained throughout the nineteenth century – and long into the twentieth – bound up with the study of classical antiquity and biblical scripture. However, whereas the classicists and Protestant theologians had ceased to appeal to the commercial and technocratic elites (and were rapidly losing their appeal to the educated middle class, or *Bildungsbürgertum*) the orientalists still had a shot at reaching a broad audience, and convincing them that humanistic learning was of vital interest to modern men.⁸ Having gained intellectual credibility by dint of acts of remarkable linguistic virtuosity (exerted, by and large, on dead rather than living languages), and having relevance thrust

⁶ Proof for this statement can be found in the histories of Germany’s leading institutions for instruction in modern oriental languages, the Orientalisches Seminar at the University of Berlin (founded in 1887) and Hamburg’s Kolonialinstitut (founded in 1908). Both hired very young professors, or non-Europeans to teach modern languages, and their German employees frequently jumped ship when an offer came from a more traditional university faculty, where orientalists typically confined themselves to the study of the ancient Near East.

⁷ On the evolution of public participation in cultural and political affairs over the course of the century, see J. M. Brophy, ‘The Public Sphere’, in *Germany 1800–1870*, edited by J. Sperber, Short Oxford History of Germany (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2004), 196–208.

⁸ There were also pressures put on museums to cater to the general public, rather than simply to the elite, and attacks from within the educated elite itself on the ‘dry as dust’ qualities of liberal-era classical philology and systematic theology. On school reform, see J. Albisetti, *Secondary School Reform in Imperial Germany* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983); on student discontent with ‘liberal’ values, see K. Jarausch, *Students, Society and Politics in Imperial Germany: The Rise of Academic Illiberalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), and also S. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 116–51. F. W. Graf, ‘Rescue of Personality’, in *Kultur und Kulturwissenschaften um 1900*, edited by R. von Bruch, F. W. Graf and G. Hübingen (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1989), 103–31.

upon them by the dawning of the age of Wilhelmine *Weltpolitik*, German orientalists by the century's close seemed to have an unprecedented opportunity to educate their contemporaries, to revive the study of ancient texts, and perhaps even shape cultural and political policy. After a long period of subordination to theology and classics, it was, the orientalists felt, their turn to enjoy lavish state patronage and to steer Germany's cultural ship. This struggle to create and dominate a 'discourse' about the Orient in Germany, then, had much to do with the attempt by the academic elite to revive and reform German *Kultur*, *Wissenschaft* and *Bildung* – from the top down and with the endeavours of one particular group of humanists to lead this campaign.

'ORIENTALISM' IN A PHILHELLENIC AGE

Glancing backward, briefly, at the development of oriental studies in the German-speaking world allows us to see how much the cultural position of the orientalists changed over the course of the nineteenth century. Some members of the romantic generation had exhibited keen interest in the Orient – one could list, for example, Friedrich Schlegel, Friedrich Creuzer, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Schelling. Hegel, Goethe and Wilhelm von Humboldt discovered the Orient late, but found its secular poetry, at least, alluring, and Leopold von Ranke was, at the outset of his career, considered an 'orientalist,' on the strength of having written books about diplomatic relationships between Spain and the Ottoman Empire, and the peoples of southern Europe – based on work (cutting edge at the time) in the Italian archives.⁹ But after the mid-1820s, historians tended to bracket or dismiss the East, in favour of more 'scientific' focus on cultures whose languages they could read, and whose archives they could ransack. Ranke did not learn any oriental languages, and after 1833 cut the 'oriental' coverage in his world history lectures back considerably.¹⁰ He fell so far behind in the specialized literature that when he published the opening volume of his *World History* in 1881, the philologists were shocked by his ignorance.¹¹ Disappointed by the small splash made by his history of the Hellenistic world, J. G. Droysen, too, gave up writing about the Near East after 1843 in favour of producing Prussophilic modern histories. This meant that, although in theory the content of culture was all of mankind's highest achievements, the emphasis in secondary schools, museums, and even university offerings fell very heavily on classical antiquity and, to a lesser extent, on German Christendom; the Orient (like Africa, the Americas, most of modern European history and literature) was largely left out. As Gymnasium professor Wilhelm Herbst wrote in 1852:

The sensibility and fashions of the age do not run East; at most it is a place:
Where the waves of the Hellespont
Coursing through the Dardanelles
Crash against rocky gates.¹²

⁹ Ranke's works here included *Die Osmanen und die spanische Monarchie im sechzehnten und siebzehnten Jahrhundert* (Hamburg, 1827) and *Die serbische Revolution* (Hamburg, 1829).

¹⁰ E. Schulin, *Die weltgeschichtliche Erfassung des Orients bei Hegel und Ranke* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1958), 155–79.

¹¹ Eduard Meyer was perhaps the most prominent of his critics; see A. Haridi, *Das Paradigma der 'islamischen Zivilisation' – oder die Begründung der deutschen Islamwissenschaft durch Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933)* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2005), 98; but Ranke remarked, for example, that his contemporaries had not moved far beyond Herodotus in 'positive knowledge of ancient Egyptian history', a statement that cannot have gone down well with Richard Lepsius, Georg Ebers or August Mariette. L. von Ranke, *Universal History: The oldest historical group of nations and the Greeks*, trans. G. W. Prothero and D. C. Tovey (London, 1884), 5.

¹² W. Herbst, *Das classische Altertum in der Gegenwart: Eine geschichtliche Betrachtung* (Leipzig, 1852), 134–5. To be sure, there were orientalists in this era trying to raise the status of their 'peoples' – one example might be Peter von Bohlen, professor at the University of Königsberg between 1828 and 1840. Bohlen was energetic in attempting to give the ancient Indians a larger role in mankind's history which he did, interestingly, chiefly by arguing that Indian culture was much richer, and more influential – especially as concerns the Greeks – than that of the Egyptians, whose hieroglyphs, he claimed in 1830, would never be deciphered. See P. von Bohlen, *Das alte Indien, mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Ägypten*, 2 vols. (Königsberg, 1830), esp. vol. 1, 81. It is evident, too, from this text that Bohlen was quite a philhellene (see, for example, vol. 1, 127).

This *de facto* narrowing of the cultural marketplace, both in social terms and in terms of its content, made it possible both at the time, and subsequently, to imagine German culture as relatively homogeneous *and* (with respect to universal scholarly standards, at least) at the cutting-edge of new knowledge.

In the meantime, however, there were other dynamics operating in the world of *Wissenschaft*, where it was possible, if one stripped away romantic quests for ur-origins and mystical wisdom, for orientalists to gain a foothold. The study of the Orient was, as mentioned above, by no means a new pursuit; it had been essential to Old Testament exegesis for centuries, and a few eighteenth-century scholars like J. D. Michaelis had even managed to get appointments in the philosophical faculties. An 'orientalist', here, to clarify, was a person who made it a career to study 'oriental' languages, the most important (and sometimes the only) one of which was biblical Hebrew. But often specialists commanded other languages, too, Syriac and Aramaic most often (for these too were useful in biblical interpretation), but also often Arabic, and then, as Persian poetry and English Indology came into fashion around 1780, Persian and Sanskrit as well. There were a few men whose work made them known in the wider culture – the Austrian diplomat Joseph von Hammer Purgstall, for example, or Friedrich Rückert, the orientaling poet – but many of those who chose to study the Orient as a career had a hard time finding jobs and readers for their books. The secular Orient, in particular, was a hard-sell, both to academics and to the wider public. In the early 1820s, the University of Würzburg refused to hire Franz Bopp as, they argued, the theological faculty had one Orientalist (teaching Hebrew, Syriac, Aramaic and Arabic) and a Persian and Sanskrit scholar would be a 'literary luxury [as opposed to their useful theologian-orientalist]', and he would have no students. Assisted by the Humboldt brothers, Bopp eventually got a post at the University of Berlin, but the classicists long treated his work, as a contemporary put it, with 'mistrust and doubt. [...] At the outset, few trusted this voice, many covered their ears as if they heard Sirens singing, and only at the end of the 20s could active and diverse life in this field begin to flourish.'¹³ Even then, the 'flourishing' of comparative linguistics, Indology and Arabistik meant the production of highly specialized grammars and handbooks. Bopp and his fellow orientalist experts did make their field respectable in scholarly terms; but they did not (on the whole) seek to make the Orient, or *Orientalistik*, accessible, or argue for its inclusion in German *Kultur*.

Thus, for the better part of the century, 'orientalism' belonged to *Wissenschaft*, but not to *Bildung* or *Kultur*. Some did get jobs, but in many cases they owed them to a few important patrons (like Christian Bunsen and Alexander von Humboldt), and had to be foisted onto university faculties. Those who spent the better part of the nineteenth century studying or admiring the Orient – now forgotten men like Justus Olshausen, Peter von Bohlen, and Christian Lassen – did so in small unheated garrets with rare books and scarcely any students or friends. Publications were narrowly focused and full of untranslated words in obscure languages; virtually all German scholarly production adhered to the rule, articulated more than a century later by Eugen Wirth: 'je älter um so interessanter'.¹⁴ Though this holds, to a certain extent, for other nations, it was particularly true in Germany, where orientalists tended to be either state-dependent employees (teachers, librarians, museum assistants) or pastors, in comparison to England, the US, France and even Russia, which had larger numbers of gentlemen orientalists. In the 1860s and even 1870s, then, it was not a field that seemed poised on the brink of popularity. Indeed, its best-known practitioner – Paul de Lagarde (d. 1891) – never published a remotely accessible account of the oriental philology which earned him his professorship at the University of Göttingen.¹⁵ This does not mean, of course, that

¹³ 'Misträuen und Zweifel. [...] Wenige trauten anfangs dieser Stimme, viele verklebten die Ohren dagegen wie vor Sireneengesang, und erst gegen Ende der zwanziger Jahre beginnt auf diesem Felde ein regeres und vielseitigeres Leben zu erblühen.' P. Corssen quoted in S. Lefmann, *Franz Bopp: Sein Leben und seine Wissenschaft, Erste Hälfte* (Berlin, 1891), 292.

¹⁴ E. Wirth, 'Orientalistik und Orientforschung: Aufgaben und Probleme aus der Sicht der Nachbarwissenschaften', in W. Voigt (ed.), *XIX Deutscher Orientalistentag (28 September bis 4 Oktober 1975): Vorträge, Zeitschrift der deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, supp. III, 1*, (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1977), LVII.

¹⁵ Lagarde was known, instead, for his political writings which drew so little on his specialized scholarship that the two fields of his activity have usually been seen to be wholly divorced from one another. See F. Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), 3–94.

the field was in scholarly terms unproductive. On the contrary, the grammars, translations, dictionaries and decipherments produced by this generation of philological positivists laid the foundations for modern orientalist scholarship, especially that portion of it that is still devoted to the ancient Near East.

There was, of course, a world of 'lighter' orientalism outside this one, one that stretched back into the early modern period. The pre-modern world of cultural, economic and political contacts between the German states and the Orient is one that Jürgen Osterhammel and others have begun to sketch, but one that requires more scrutiny.¹⁶ I would suggest, following Wolfgang Schivelbusch, that the spice (and silk) trade was a particularly important form of east–west interaction; from it Europeans learned to associate with the Orient qualities that have never ceased informing popular 'orientalism', namely, exoticism, rich flavors and colours, luxury, sensuality, and pleasure.¹⁷ There were also both written and oral versions of Crusaders' tales in circulation; these associated the East with other, persistent, stereotypical qualities: brutality, fanaticism, tyrannical leadership, cunning, bravery. All of these associations were still available to those who, in the eighteenth century, began to manufacture theater or opera pieces, porcelains and carpets, copperplate engravings and costumes, hand-painted fans and new versions of the oriental 'fairy tale'. It is probably the case that more Central Europeans learned (if that is the right verb) about the Orient by way of theater and material culture – areas where our historical scholarship is weak – than even through travelogues (an area of growing research).¹⁸ But in these media, it is clear that the Orient with the greatest appeal was a decorative, picturesque, exotic and sensuous Orient, one of costumes, colours, weapons and exotic animals; a rather different one, that is to say, than the largely philological and historical Orient that interested nineteenth-century university professors.¹⁹

The one place in which outside and inside touched was in the translation of the *1,001 Nights* and other oriental poetry, an industry in which Gustav Weil and Friedrich Rückert, both professors of oriental studies, were highly active; but such work did not make orientalists particularly influential players in cultural politics as a whole. In spite of the popularity of Weil's *Tausend und eine Nacht* (4 vols., 1838–41), it took him thirty years to get a professorship at the University of Heidelberg; Rückert, despite having written many an 'orientalizing' poem and mastered – according to his son – more than fifty languages,²⁰ resigned his post at the University of Berlin in 1849, embittered by (among other things) the hostility of his colleagues and his lack of students.

At mid-century, as the Herbst quotation above suggests, it was the classicists who dominated humanistic learning and who defined good taste. Even in 1870, parity between classicists and orientalists remained a distant prospect – one cannot even really call it a 'dream', for this generation did not really expect to achieve such a thing, or even want to replace the Golden Age Greeks with oriental exemplars. The great Semitist Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930), for example, spent his very long career working through the grammatical niceties of oriental languages, but freely admitted he had no particular taste for eastern literature, and would gladly erase it all from humankind's memory in exchange

¹⁶ J. Osterhammel, *Die Entzauberung Asiens: Europa und die asiatischen Reiche im 18 Jahrhundert* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998). See also the essays in J. Jenkins (ed.), 'German Orientalism', *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East*, 24:2 (2004). Nina Berman's forthcoming book, tentatively titled *Beyond Orientalism: Germany and the Middle East, 900–2000*, will give extensive and careful consideration of this topic.

¹⁷ W. Schivelbusch, *Tastes of Paradise: A Social History of Spices, Stimulants and Intoxicants*, trans. David Jacobson (New York: Pantheon Books, 1992), 3–14.

¹⁸ The literature on travellers is growing; for some examples (which contain goodly numbers of German examples) see Osterhammel, *Entzauberung*; J. Stagl, *Eine Geschichte der Neugier: Die Kunst des Reisens, 1550–1800* (Vienna: Bohlau, 2002); C. Essner, *Deutsche Afrikareisende im 19. Jahrhundert: Zur Sozialgeschichte des Reisens*, Beiträge zur Kolonial und Überseegegeschichte, 32 (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 1985).

¹⁹ I have formed my impressions here from leafing through decorative arts and china catalogues as well as from reading books such as M. Jasanoff, *Edge of Empire: Lives, Culture, and the Conquest in the East, 1750–1850* (New York: Knopf, 2005); Stagl, *Geschichte der Neugier*, R. Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662–1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), J. Gierlich and A. Hagedorn (eds.), *Islamische Kunst in Deutschland* (Mainz: Verlag Philipp von Zabern, 2004), and several draft chapters from Berman's *Beyond Orientalism*.

²⁰ H. Kreyenborg, 'Friedrich Rückert als Interpret orientalischer Dichtung', in *Friedrich Rückert an der Universität Erlangen 1826–1841: Eine Ausstellung*, edited by H. Bobzin (Erlangen: Universitätsbibliothek, 1988), 262.

for the preservation of a single Greek tragedy.²¹ Nöldeke's generation of orientalists, like Bopp's, focused on establishing themselves as *Wissenschaftler* and put off popularization, or even synthetic work, until they felt confident proper linguistic foundations had been laid. Despite a very long life and career, Nöldeke never completed the comparative grammar of the Semitic languages toward which many of his specialized studies pointed. Perhaps the closest to a general statement Nöldeke ever made was a popular essay of 1872, 'Zur Charakteristik der Semiten',²² written chiefly, it seems, to try to negotiate a truce between two other Semitists, Ernest Renan, and Daniel Chwolson. The essay, interestingly, concluded with a paragraph comparing the Semites and the Indo-German (and especially Greek) people in a way that speaks volumes both about the prejudices of his era, and about liberal convictions that the Orient might not, in the end, be inescapably and irreparably 'other'. Nöldeke agreed with Renan that the Semites were one-sided, but insisted that *historically* they still deserved a place among the highest civilizations; moreover, even if they lagged behind Europeans now, a little *Bildung* might give them new life.²³

This was the world in which Georg Ebers became an Egyptologist, and discovered, it seems rather accidentally, that Oriental scholarship could, in some ways, be popular. His career suggests in interesting ways what a 'popular' Orient looked like, for the early Wilhelmine era, and also indicates the difficulties already apparent in attempts to popularize scholarly knowledge. In the section that follows, I will offer his story as a means to sketch what it meant, in the 1870s and 1880s, to 'popularize' the Orient – an Orient, it will be seen, which was not yet, in any sense, entirely divorced from European history or cut off (for worse and for better) from the modernizing world.²⁴

THE ORIENT ACCORDING TO GEORG EBERS

Born in 1837, Georg Ebers spent his youth studying law, then switched to Egyptology, for undisclosed reasons, after recovering from a life-threatening illness. Through a family friend, Jakob Grimm, Ebers met Richard Lepsius, Professor of Egyptology at the University of Berlin. Lepsius was already a highly important cultural figure in Prussia; his expedition to Egypt in 1842–45 had been covered in the press, and the material he brought back was then exhibited in the Berlin Egyptian Museum (of which he was Keeper) on the Museum Island, which was, apparently, a 'popular' attraction (although again we should not think of its visitors as a 'mass' audience).²⁵ This museum, which opened in 1850, was historicizing, but not pedantically so; it interspersed real Egyptian artefacts with plaster casts and murals to give visitors the sense of being in an Egyptian temple.²⁶ Lepsius was, none the less, yet another linguistic positivist *à la* Nöldeke; most of his publications were unreadable for non-specialists, and though the extremely lavish and expensive volumes of lithographs produced during his expedition

²¹ T. Nöldeke to C. H. Becker, 5 August 1913, in Nachlass Becker, Staatsarchiv Dahlem (Berlin), Mappe 3138. Nöldeke was an rationalist-atheist, who disliked all religions: 'My old adage, that religions (and especially the religious of Semitic origin) in the end have brought more unhappiness into the world as happiness, seems to me more and more completely right.' T. Nöldeke to C. H. Becker, 24 February 1916, Nachlass Becker, Mappe 3138.

²² Published first in the journal *Im neuen Reich* and then in a collection of Nöldeke's occasional essays, *Orientalische Skizzen* (Berlin, 1893).

²³ 'Müssen wir nach dem allen nun auch urtheilen, dass die Begabung der Semiten in mancher Hinsicht einseitig ist und nicht die einzelner indogermanischer Völker, vor allem der Griechen erreicht, so wäre es doch entschieden ungerecht, ihnen den Anspruch auf eine der höchsten Stellen unter den menschlichen Racen anzusprechen. Freilich entdecken wir unter den reinen Semiten der Jetztzeit ausserordentlich wenig Anzeichen eines naturwüchsigen und kräftigen Fortschritts; vieles deutet darauf, dass diese Völkerfamilie ihren Höhepunct längst überschritten hat. Ob die moderne europäische Bildung auch sie wirklich erfassen und zu neuem thätigen Leben erwecken könne, das ist eine Frage, welche die nächste Zukunft sicher noch nicht lösen wird.' Nöldeke, 'Zur Charakteristik', *Orientalische Skizzen*, 20.

²⁴ More work remains to be done on Ebers, both as a scholar and teacher and as a writer and cultural figure; the best study to date is H. Fischer, *Der Ägyptologe Georg Ebers: Eine Fallstudie zum Problem Wissenschaft und Öffentlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1994).

²⁵ Lepsius's letters written during the trip also circulated quite widely; they were published not only in German but in English as well. R. Lepsius, *Briefe aus Ägypten, Äthiopien und der Halbinsel des Sinai geschrieben in den Jahren 1842–1845* (Berlin, 1852).

²⁶ See Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 68–9.

appeared between 1849 and 1856, the text portions had to be completed after his death, the final volume appearing only in 1913.²⁷ Lepsius, in any event, became Ebers's mentor, and trained him in the linguistic niceties of the field, as well as, perhaps, in the delicate balancing of scientific and lay-aesthetic demands.

During the course of his doctoral studies, Ebers fell ill once more, and again his career took a surprising turn. While confined to his bed, Ebers began writing an Egyptizing novel, intending it only for his own (and his mother's) amusement. The story line and main character were imagined, but historical characters were drawn in, and Ebers even footnoted the first edition – to show that the mundane details he invoked were in fact historically accurate. The young Egyptologist recovered his health, and decided to publish *An Egyptian Princess*, which to his amazement sold very well (a second edition appeared in 1869 and a thirteenth in 1889). The next year (1865) he completed his *habilitation*, and took up a position at the University of Jena; in 1870 he was appointed to the chair for Egyptology at the University of Leipzig. For the remainder of his career (he retired in 1889 and died in 1898), he continued to write novels which aspired to, in his words, 'clothe the hardly-earned results of severer studies in an imaginative form.'²⁸ His fiction appealed widely, it is said, and especially to women and young girls. But his career as a novelist did not prevent him from continuing to write specialized philological essays or from training a new generation of professional Egyptologists. He was able – like the other best-selling professor-novelist of his generation, Felix Dahn – somehow to straddle the popular/scholarly divide.²⁹

Let us take a moment to see how, both in material and intellectual terms, this was possible. First of all, judging by the reviews and numbers, Ebers's readership was broad, but not really a *mass* readership; first of all, if the information offered by the 'Projekt Historischer Roman' of the University of Innsbruck is correct, Ebers's first novel had sold only about 53,000 copies by the time it was reprinted by the Deutsche Verlagsanstalt in 1923 and *Uarda* (1877), his second Egyptizing effort, 65,000 by 1926.³⁰ Those are high figures for academic publications, but not particularly impressive for fiction and/or for the post-1900 era. His later novels *Homo Sum* (1878), *Serapis* (1885), *Die Nilbraut* (1889), *Kleopatra* (1894), and *Arachne* (1898) seem all to have been less popular than the first two, and his popularity seems to have waned, not waxed, towards the end of his career. Interesting, too, are the reviews of his early novels, which are crammed with references to Herodotus and Plutarch (two of Ebers's main sources), to Wilhelm von Humboldt and to Goethe and Schiller.³¹ We can imagine his readership as fully bourgeois, or upper-middle class, people who knew the ancient Orient, or at least Egypt, was of historical and religious importance but also liked a little colour, personality, and sentimentality with their *Bildungsmenu*. This group of readers certainly did not disappear after the century's close, and would continue to be important players in German cultural life after 1900; but this is not yet the mass, popular audience later orientalists would dream of reaching, educating, and, in some cases, converting.

Perhaps, indeed, Ebers spoke to these readers because his education and expertise was not, at least when he developed his novelistic formula, decidedly different from theirs; we should recall that in 1864, professional Egyptology was still in its infancy, and most of those who studied it were still largely dependent on classical sources and the Old Testament for their image of the ancient Near East. Indeed, in the introduction to the second edition of *An Egyptian Princess*, Ebers freely admitted that he had drawn most heavily not on Egyptian sources, but on Herodotus and other classical texts; to embellish private life in the sixth century BCE, he had used his own imagination – as well as, rather extensively, Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1836). It was ever his

²⁷ R. Lepsius, *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien*, 12 vols. (Berlin, 1849–56); *Denkmäler aus Ägypten und Äthiopien, Text*, edited by E. Naville with L. Borchardt and K. Sethe, 5 vols. (Leipzig, 1897–1913).

²⁸ G. Ebers, 'Preface to the Second German Edition', *An Egyptian Princess*, trans. E. Grove (New York, 1880), iii.

²⁹ On Dahn as a popularizer of *Germanic* antiquity, see Marchand, *Down from Olympus*, 161–2.

³⁰ See the entries under 'Georg Ebers' on the Projekt Historischer Roman website, at <http://histrom.literature.at>.

³¹ See, for example, Gustav Hauff's review of *Eine ägyptische Königstocher* in *Blätter für literarische Unterhaltung*, 49 (1864), 904 ff., available on the Projekt Historischer Roman Datenbank website, http://histrom.literature.at/cgi/rez_img.cgi?301/0/13370/Ebers%2c%20Georg%3a%20Eine

intention, as he wrote his good friend Lawrence Alma Tadema, intent ‘to give the life of the ancients artistic form’³² and that of course required some ‘art’ – though less, perhaps, than such an effort might entail in our day, for Ebers still inhabited a world thoroughly versed in the classical and biblical past. Breathing life into the Near Eastern past did, however, require bringing in some non-orientals; when Lepsius was consulted on how to make the story lively, Germany’s most prominent Egyptologist suggested ‘that a tale confined entirely to Egypt and the Egyptians might become wearisome [...] and following his hint Ebers wrote, [I] have so arranged the materials supplied by Herodotus as to introduce my reader first into a Greek circle. Here he will feel in a measure at home [...]’.³³ In subsequent novels, too, Ebers generally inserted a number of Greek characters; they typically exemplify intelligence and good taste, although the Jews and early Christians usually retain the moral and ethical high ground.³⁴ A good liberal (from a Jewish family), Ebers was accustoming his readers to an ancient world in which pagans were not just enemies of the just or inscrutable ‘others’, but he did so gradually, with many of his world’s prejudices and presumptions still showing beneath his fictions’ skirts.

The same sort of impulse, not to simplify or ‘dumb down’ expert knowledge but to bring it to life, would characterize Ebers’s two-volume coffee-table book *Ägypten in Wort und Bild* (1879–80). The work also had a rather romantic purpose: to record the unspoiled Orient before it could be destroyed by Europeans, and Europeanization. The volumes take the reader on a tour of Egypt, visiting especially biblical and historical sites, but also documenting their present conditions; illustrations of historical events are interspersed with ethnographic and picturesque depictions of the modern world. Although cast as a travel guide, the volumes probably served better the purpose Antoine Galland had announced for his *Mille et une Nuits* in 1704, that is, of allowing the reader to encounter faraway places and a wide variety of people without the trouble (and expense) of travelling.³⁵ But Ebers’s modern Egyptians, like his fictional ancient ones, were not all that exotic. The Egypt Ebers ‘saw’ – or wanted his well-heeled readers to see – was in many ways a ‘normal’ country, populated by workers and mothers, scholars and beggars. But it still mattered to Europeans primarily because of it was the site of Old Testament events and its people were, in some fashion, still intimately linked to a shared ancient world (see Fig. 1).

Let us examine, briefly, this magnificent, two-volume, large-folio work, for which Ebers wrote the text himself, but commissioned a series of contemporary artists to produce the numerous images (some of them depicting ancient, and some modern Egyptian scenes). As suggested above, his narrative offered a romantic rather than hurrah-colonial rendering of relations between East and West; that is to say, Ebers lamented the still half-Biblical Orient’s destruction by European modernization much more than he celebrated the replacement of camels by trains, or Mamlukes by Englishmen. ‘All the unique features of the Orient, the large and the small’, he wrote, ‘are increasingly suppressed and blanched out, and they are in danger, in the course of a few years, of wholly disappearing.’³⁶ There are, of course, condescending aspects to this romantic approach, for the European is clearly enjoining the East to remain ‘primitive’, simple and docile so that it will suit his taste for the picturesque and his presumption of its childlike and ahistorical nature. But we should note, too, the ways in which Ebers’s book portrays Egypt as a land of diverse settings (urban and rural, private and public, modernized and

³² Cit. Fischer, *Georg Ebers*, 81.

³³ G. Ebers, ‘Preface’, iv. Of his Egyptian characters, Adolf Erman later wrote: ‘Gewiss sind die Aegypter, die er uns vorführt, geglättet und verzeichnet, aber man muss sich fragen, ob sie dem Publikum ebenso nahe gekommen wären, wenn er ihnen den Geruch des Orients belassen hätte.’ A. Erman, *Mein Werden und meine Wirken: Erinnerungen eines alten Berliner Gelehrten* (Leipzig, 1929), 257.

³⁴ An excellent example here is Ebers’s novel *Serapis*, a love story which revolves around the destruction of the Serapeum (excavated by Mariette beginning in 1850) by the Romans in 391 CE.

³⁵ ‘All the Eastern Nations, Persians, Tartars and Indians, are here distinguish’d, and appear such as they are, from the Sovereign to the meanest Subject; so that without the Fatigue of going to see those People in their respective Countries, the Reader has here the Pleasure to see them act, and hear them speak.’ Galland, quoted in R. Ballaster (ed.), *Fables of the East: Selected Tales, 1662–1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 19.

³⁶ ‘Alle Eigenthümlichkeiten des Orients, die grossen wie die kleinen, werden verdrängt und erblassen mehr und mehr, und es droht ihnen die Gefahr, im Laufe der Jahre gänzlich zu verschwinden.’ G. Ebers, *Ägypten in Bild und Wort: Dargestellt von unseren Ersten Künstlern*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart, 1878–80), vol. 1, v.



Fig. 1 Hans Makart, *Joseph and Pharaoh*, 37.5 × 29.5 cm, from: G. Ebers, *Ägypten in Bild und Wort* (Stuttgart and Leipzig: Eduard Hallberger: 1879–80), vol. 1, 113, Lane Medical Library, Archives / Special Collections, Stanford University, CA

ancient) and of people who may look and dress differently than Europeans, but by no means lack individuality, sense, skill or virtue. The text, as well as the artistic renderings Ebers collected for *Ägypten in Bild und Wort*, do not depict the East as inhabited exclusively, or even heavily, by overly sensual women and fanatical or indolent men. Nor are Muslim Egyptians portrayed as ignoramuses, uninterested in their own history; they are, on the whole, bourgeois or proto-bourgeois civilians. Three images, one of a teacher at work in the El-Azhar, one of two quite ordinary women at a fountain, and one of Egyptian and European women scrutinizing ancient sculptures outside the Cairo Museum (Figs. 2–4), will have to suffice to make these points, but further study of these volumes is certainly merited.

To appreciate Ebers's illustrated travelogue as a high-end, liberal era effort at 'popularization' (something, by the way, that cannot be said either about the Napoleonic *Description de l'Égypte* or about Lepsius's *Denkmäler*), it should be added that at the time of *Ägypten's* publication, orientalist painting was not, especially in the Germanies, considered trite or bourgeois. Ebers engaged a wide variety of contemporary artists to contribute to his volume, some of whom, like Hans Makart and Lawrence Alma Tadema, were – like Ebers – both successful in the marketplace and admired by their peers. The artistic director of the project, Carl Leopold Müller, who had begun to paint Egyptian street scenes on his own in the early 1870s, took on Ebers's commission in large part because he had no other work, but subsequently became a professor at the Academy of Art in Vienna. In the winter of 1875–76, Müller, still something of a Bohemian, had organized a sojourn in Egypt for a group of painters, including Makart and the portraitist Franz von Lenbach, something that was at the time quite an



Fig. 2 Wilhelm Gentz, *Lecture in the University Mosque El-Azhar*, from: *Ägypten in Word und Bild*, vol. 2, 77

avant garde thing to do.³⁷ The French and English orientalist painters had been calling attention for some time to the unique qualities of light and colour in the East, not to mention to the splendour, sensuousness and exotic charm of oriental scenery and peoples. But in the 1870s, this work was mostly being collected by English travellers to the East or by French galleries, and relatively little of it was to be seen in Germany or Austria. It is true that Ebers's volume did not feature work that had begun to push beyond orientalist realism, or which revealed too much flesh. It was a middle-class book in an era in which neither artistic nor scholarly values were defined over and against bourgeois ones – in part, perhaps, because the German middle classes were still content to be steered by a taste-making, university- or academy-centred elite.

Ebers's work certainly made Egypt more interesting and accessible to Wilhelmine readers, and perhaps convinced orientalists that a wider audience might be reached. As his student Wilhelm Max Müller wrote on his passing in 1898, 'Ebers is the first to be thanked if today it is generally agreed that the wider public too has a right to know something of what was earlier buried in old folios.'³⁸ And it

³⁷ See M. Haja and G. Wimmer, *Les Orientalistes des Écoles allemande et autrichienne* (Paris: ACR, 2000), especially the pages on Müller, 298–309.

³⁸ '[W]enn es heutzutage allgemein anerkannt wird, dass auch das weitere Publikum ein Recht hat, von dem früher in Folianten Begrabenen etwas zu erfahren, so ist es Ebers in erster Linie zu danken W. Max Müller', 'Georg Ebers', in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 1:9 (1898), 294.



Fig. 3 Hans Makart, *Egyptian Women Fetching Water*, from: *Ägypten in Word und Bild*, vol. 1, 5



Fig. 4 Wilhelm Gentz, *Court of the Antiquity Museum in Bulak*, from: *Aegypten in Word und Bild*, vol. 2, 13

sold well: like *An Egyptian Princess*, the 1879–80 publication *Ägypten in Bild und Wort* was also popular abroad, and translated into the major European languages.³⁹ But by this time, both scholarly

³⁹ Fischer, *Georg Ebers*, 101–2.

and market dynamics were beginning to drive the worlds Ebers inhabited apart. Already in 1864, a number of professional classicists and orientalists had criticized the footnotes Ebers added to *An Egyptian Princess*. He dropped them in subsequent editions, and in later novels, but had he attempted this sort of hybrid form into the 1880s and 1890s, the years in which professional Egyptology really took off, one could imagine him not just criticized, but ridiculed for his dependence on western sources and sentimental view of ancient history. One of these critics would surely have been his own student, Adolf Erman, who, by the mid 1880s, was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with his field's dependence on non-Egyptian sources. The texts on which Ebers relied – Herodotus, the Old Testament, and Wilkinson's *Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians* (1836), Erman argued in 1886 – should be seen as no more credible than modern tourist literature written by English Lords and American ladies.⁴⁰ Erman later excused his beloved mentor by arguing that in Ebers's day, the public was not yet ready for really 'oriental' Egyptians: 'Of course the Egyptians that he offers us are inauthentic and prettified', he wrote, 'but one has to ask oneself, if the public would have found them so attractive, if he had left about them the smell of the Orient.'⁴¹

Almost certainly, Ebers had a rather more romantic, and less derogatory view of the Orient's 'smell' than did Erman, nearly a half-century later. Erman, by any measure, was the better scholar. But he was also much less interested in, and knowledgeable about, the *modern* Orient, and much less comfortable with fictional means of bringing the past to life. In his tenure as director of the Berlin Egyptian Museum, for example, he completely reorganized the collection along historical lines, doing away with casts and murals in order to display authentic artifacts. The objects, he insisted, should no longer 'be linked [...] to western cultures' or be forced into irrelevant contexts just to please the eyes of the spectators.⁴² But what did this auger for the effort to combine research with outreach? As scholars began to study Egypt in its own terms, based on its own texts, and to emphasize its own, non-western 'smell', would the public find it equally attractive? Ebers – described dismissively but not inaccurately by Egon Friedell as 'the man who discovered an Egypt for well-bred young ladies'⁴³ – was able to sell a scholarly view of Egypt, but perhaps only because he initiated his efforts before the eras of rapid specialization, mass readership, hyper-imperialist condescension and the breakdown of biblical and classical norms set in.

POPULARIZATION AND ITS DISCONTENTS

The years following Ebers's death in 1891 were heady, hopeful years for the Orientalists. Looking back on the last two decades of orientalist achievement, Enno Littmann declared himself to be living in an era of 'electricity – in scholarship as well!'⁴⁴ When historian Eduard Meyer sought to demonstrate progress in the humanities equal to that in the natural sciences, the example he used was Assyriology.⁴⁵ Lamenting the Eurocentrism of Gymnasium education, Ferdinand Bork even suggested teaching cuneiform in secondary schools.⁴⁶ Growing modestly over the course of the nineteenth century, the number of chairs and lectureships in oriental studies took a sudden leap as faculties realized they could not do without an Egyptologist, Assyriologist, Sanskrit philologist, and even a middle-Persian specialist. But generational as well as field divisions now began to fracture *Orientalistik*, and particularly among the younger orientalists, something very much akin to the artistic avant

⁴⁰ A. Erman, *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, revised by H. Ranke (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1923), 6–7.

⁴¹ Erman, *Mein Werden*, 257.

⁴² See B. Spinelli, "'Der Erwecker der ägyptischen Sammlung": Adolf Erman und das Berliner Museum', in *Ägyptologie als Wissenschaft: Adolf Erman (1854–1937) in seiner Zeit*, ed. B. U. Schipper (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 202–23 (204).

⁴³ Cit. Fischer, *Georg Ebers*, 1.

⁴⁴ E. Littmann to C. H. Becker, 7 September 1913, in *Nachlass Becker*, Staatsarchiv Dahlem, Mappe 4579.

⁴⁵ See E. Meyer, 'Die Bedeutung der Erschliessung der alten Orients für die geschichtliche Methode und für die Anfänge der menschlichen Geschichte überhaupt', *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*, 32 (1908), 648–63.

⁴⁶ F. Bork, 'Die Weltgeschichte in der Schule', *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 10:1 (1907), 3–4.

garde movement began to stir. Impatient with the philological positivism and the social Christianity of their ‘fathers’, this generation of young scholars turned to subjects that had long been considered distasteful or unscientific: mysticism, sex, ritual, symbolism, and subconscious states.⁴⁷ Their Orient would be a much deeper, more exotic and less westernized one than that of Ebers, or even of Erman; it would be an Orient which had colour, passion, and *life*, an Orient with subjective appeal. ‘For years’, wrote Heinrich Zimmer, who studied Indian philology before the Great War, ‘I was in search of the “real” India, of “my” India, of Schopenhauer’s India.’⁴⁸ This was to be an avant garde, anti-bourgeois Orient, one defined against liberal-era tastes, but which, rather ironically, these younger scholars believed might lay the foundations for a new kind of cultural–spiritual Renaissance.⁴⁹

Finding themselves now in a strong position within the Reich’s traditional cultural institutions, German orientalists began to cultivate wider audiences. At first, outreach was limited to a relatively small and elite audience – witness publications such as the Kautzsch-Weiszäcker *Textbibel des Alten und Neuen Testaments in Verbindung mit zahlreichen Fachgelehrten herausgeben* (*Biblical Texts of the Old and New Testaments, Edited with the Cooperation of Numerous Specialized Scholars*, 1899) or the volumes produced in Siebeck Verlag’s series, ‘Sammlung gemeinsverständlicher Vorträge und Schriften aus dem Gebiet der Theologie und Religionsgeschichte’ (which might be translated as ‘The Common Man’s Collected Popular Lectures and Writings from the Field of Theology and History of Religions’).⁵⁰ The founding of the *Deutsch-Orient Gesellschaft* – an elite society formed in 1899 to support German archaeological work in the Ottoman Empire – and the opening of new museums for oriental artifacts too were typical of the kinds of ‘popularizing’ they had in mind. By and large, their efforts continued to be governed by the presumption that culture was made through state-funded institutions rather than in the marketplace. But the fragmentation of the field that accompanied *Orientalistik*’s academic successes was now reflected in the variety of projects ‘popularizers’ and their patrons took on. Some, like Friedrich Peiser and the Assyriological contributors to the newly founded review-organ and gossip-sheet, the *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung* (founded in 1898) were eager to force reforms on outdated conceptions of ancient history. Bismarck, and the other backers of the Orientalistisches Seminar at the University of Berlin (which opened in 1887), wanted to train colonial administrators and officials in modern Oriental languages – something professors in the regular philosophical faculties generally felt was beneath them. Carl Becker, professor of Oriental studies first at the Hamburg Colonial Institute and then at the University of Bonn, wished to promote a liberal vision of Islam’s modernizing possibilities (and a not-so-liberal view of Islam’s potential for civilizing Africans).⁵¹ And some, like the Indologist Richard Garbe, agreed to give public lectures to business associations and/or to publish in popular journals primarily to make a little money on the side.⁵²

Perhaps most widespread was the desire, among theology students, to revive Christian (and Jewish!) piety being smothered by positivist scholarship. The classic formulation of this critique of the old was

⁴⁷ See S. Marchand, ‘From Liberalism to Neoromanticism: Albrecht Dieterich, Richard Reitzenstein and the Religious Turn in Fin de Siecle German Classical Studies’, in *Out of Arcadia: Classics and Politics in Germany in the Age of Burckhardt, Nietzsche and Wilamowitz*, BICS, Suppl. 79, edited by M. Ruehl and I. Gildenhard (London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London, 2003), 129–60.

⁴⁸ H. Zimmer, ‘Some Biographical Remarks about Henry R. Zimmer’ in H. Zimmer, *Artistic Form and Yoga in the Sacred Images of India*, trans. G. Chapple and J. B. Lawson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 258–9.

⁴⁹ Houston Stewart Chamberlain was by no means alone in insisting that the neoclassical Renaissance was over, and the time had come for an Oriental Renaissance to begin. H. S. Chamberlain, *Arische Weltanschauung* (Munich: F. Bruckmann AG, 1905).

⁵⁰ Gangolf Hübinger quotes publication and estimated sales figures for 78 publications in this series; most of them were published in editions of 1,000; only a few sold more. G. Hübinger, *Kulturprotestantismus und Politik: Zum Verhältnis von Liberalismus und Protestantismus im wilhelminischen Deutschland* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1994), 208–12. This compares interestingly to figures for the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, many of which were published in editions of 10,000, *ibid.*, 212–8.

⁵¹ On the founding of the Seminar, and on the persistence of preference for philologists in the universities, see Mangold (2004), 227–34, 256–73. On Becker, the literature is already large and growing; see L. Hanisch, *Islamkunde und Islamwissenschaft im deutschen Kaiserreich: Der Briefwechsel zwischen Carl Heinrich Becker und Martin Hartmann (1900–1918)* (Leiden: Documentatiebureau Islam-Christendom, Faculteit der Godgeleerdheid, Rijksuniversiteit, 1992); Haridi, *Paradigma der ‘islamische Zivilisation’*.

⁵² On Garbe, see I. Sengupta, *From Salon to Discipline: State, University and Indology in Germany, 1821–1914* (Heidelberg: Ergon, 2005), 187, fn. 108.

offered by the Hebraist Hermann Gunkel, in the *Christliche Welt* in 1900: ‘Dear God, if only I had a voice that would speak to the heart and conscience of every scholar of theology, I would proclaim, day and night, nothing other than this: do not forget your holy duty to your people! Write for the educated elite! Do no talk so much about literary criticism, textual criticism, archaeology, and all those other scholarly things, but talk about *religion!* [...] Our people thirst for your words about *religion* and its *history!*’⁵³ Gunkel undoubtedly overestimated the educated elite’s ‘thirst’ – but what is striking here is his confidence that the scholars’ words (especially about the history of religion) would satisfy it. But he was not alone. In the same year, rabbi Felix Perles criticized generations of fearful scholars who, since Spinoza, had been convinced that the Higher Criticism in the hands of lay-persons would destroy Christian faith.⁵⁴ Criticizing the liberals’ failure to tackle the preservation of faith head on, by speaking directly to the public (rather than letting the burden fall on the ill-educated clergy), these men saw themselves not just as scholars, but as educators with a crucial cultural mission.

Yet, even among the younger scholars, there was still some uncomfortableness about ‘popularizing’ – something German scholars regularly accused their French, British, and American counterparts of doing. One had to tread carefully; ‘not to “popularize”’, wrote Indologist Leopold von Schroeder in 1900, with all the connotations of debasement and frivolity – ‘but to speak to the larger public in the highest and noblest sense of the word – in a language that this public understands [...]’.⁵⁵ Schroeder himself practised what he preached, writing poems and plays as well as numerous popular essays on ancient India, Buddhism, and ‘Aryan’ religions, and capping his career with a sycophantic biography of his friend Houston Stewart Chamberlain. But as this trajectory suggests, once a scholar moved in this direction, he often found it hard to return to the professional fold. One successful work sparked more, these often written more quickly, with less expertise, by those with fewer credentials. And in any case, the academic world, with all its strictures, could not keep up with the critique of it, leaving those who would ‘popularize’ and remain respected scholars between markets rather than able to straddle them, while outsiders increasing recognized they could do without the credentials and leap directly into print.

The dynamics in the field of Buddhist studies are illustrative here. The first study to attract popular attention was Leipzig Professor Hermann Oldenberg’s *Buddha* of 1881; this was an accessibly written but scholarly biography, which, one reviewer commented in 1914 ‘belongs to the most widely-read books in all of orientalist literature. Reading it, in many circles, is seen as essential to one’s all-around cultivation (*Bildung*).’⁵⁶ But Oldenberg’s book was not really the *living Buddha* the next generation craved; this was much more the product of the academically trained (but never employed) Sanskrit and Pali scholar K. E. Neumann, who began publishing translations of Buddhist texts in 1892. Neumann published eleven of his own books (some multi-volume), which appeared in numerous editions, especially after he signed on with Piper Verlag in Munich in 1904;⁵⁷ but this was nothing compared to the output of Bernard Seidenstücker, who served as editor and publisher of several short-lived Buddhist journals: *Der Buddhist* (1905–10), *Die buddhistische Welt* (1905–10), and *Buddhistische Werte* (1907–11). He published seventeen of his own books (six under pseudonyms), translated fourteen books and brochures written by English Buddhists, plus nearly one hundred articles in Buddhist

⁵³ ‘Wollte God, ich hätte eine Stimme, die an die Herzen und Gewissen der theologischen Forscher dringt, so wollte ich Tag und Nacht nichts Anderes rufen als dies: Vergesst nicht Eure heilige Pflicht an Eurem Volk! Schreibt für die Gebildeten! Redet nicht soviel über Litterarkritik, Textkritik, Archäologie und alle anderen gelehrten Dinge, sondern redet über *Religion!* [...] Unser Volk dürstet nach euren Worten über die *Religion* und ihre *Geschichte!*’, Gunkel cit. Graf, ‘Rettung’, 108.

⁵⁴ F. Perles, review of Kautzsch-Weisäcker, ‘Textbibel des Alten und Neuen Testaments’, *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 2 (1900), 63–5.

⁵⁵ L. von Schroeder, ‘Vom Popularisieren’ [1900] in idem, *Reden und Aufsätze, vornehmlich über Indiens Literatur und Kultur* (Leipzig: Haessel, 1913), 314.

⁵⁶ ‘...gehört zu den verbreitetsten Büchern der gesamten orientalistischen Literatur. Seine Lektüre gilt in manchen Kreisen als Förderung der allgemeinen Bildung’, J. von Negelein, review of H. Oldenberg, *Buddha*, in *Orientalistische Literaturzeitung*, 11 (1914), 476. Negelein, a scholar of Buddhism (and a convert), however, cannot exactly be said to be an unprejudiced source as to the content of ‘all-around cultivation’.

⁵⁷ H. Hecker (ed.), *Lebensbilder deutscher Buddhisten vol. 1* (Konstanz: Universität, Arbeitsbereich “Entwicklungsländer/Interkultureller Vergleich, 1990), *Die Gründer*, 103–109.

journals. The even less credentialled Paul Dahlke (originally a doctor) contributed twenty-three books and pamphlets and 199 articles ... and so it went.⁵⁸ None of these men were offered academic jobs; but then again, there is no record that they sought such recognition either. They did not need academic recognition to slake their readers' thirsts.

Regrettably, there is little space here to explore the proliferation of oriental works, scholarly and popular, in the period between 1890 and 1914; but let me offer a few bits of evidence to suggest its scope. These were the years in which Paul Deussen produced his Indology-heavy *Allgemeine Geschichte der Philosophie mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der Religionen* (5 vols., 1894–1917; some volumes in their fifth edition when Deussen died in 1919) and Max Müller, a German exile in Britain, completed his influential series of translations, *Sacred Books of the East* (published 1879–1904). It is the era in which numerous *Vereine* were formed which catered to friends (or exploiters) of things eastern, and a period which saw the publication of wide-ranging cultural studies, like J. G. Frazer's *Golden Bough* and Eduard Stucken's *Astralmythen* (5 vols.; 1896–1907), which depended heavily on Near Eastern materials. A detailed account of the Kaiser's visit to the Orient in 1898 circulated widely,⁵⁹ succeeded by a huge wave of other 'oriental' travelogues. Christian socialist Friedrich Naumann produced his own travelogue, *Asia*, in 1899; it was in its seventh edition in 1909.⁶⁰ For the first time, there was more interest in excavations in the East, in Babylon, Assur, Tell-el-Amarna – than in excavations in Italy and Greece. And in biblical studies in particular, debates raged. The most famous of these, the 'Babel und die Bibel' Affair, according to Adolf Deissmann, 'was spoken of in the wardrooms of our men-of-war and in the crowded debating halls of the trade unions',⁶¹ and arguments over the origins of western philosophy, religion and science in Babylon continued to be so vociferous that a popular periodical was founded in 1907 appropriately named: *Im Kampfe um den alten Orient*.⁶²

To stick with this theme for a moment, it should be noted that biblical scholars — whose field had been transformed by new Oriental finds — were central in popularizing attempts. Oriental philology and archaeology were used both to critique traditional beliefs, and to shore them up.⁶³ Adolf Deissmann, himself an important orientalist cum theologian, sought to use new papyri sources to understand the New Testament not as a product of theologians, but as the product of 'eastern' popular piety.⁶⁴ Like the others, Deissmann hoped that scientific progress could coexist and even abet a democratic cultural and spiritual Renaissance. And here too, the volume was impressive; by 1913, Gunkel could look back with satisfaction on the production of popular works since his impassioned call thirteen years before:

Since then an extraordinary rich, even un-surveyable popular theological literature has, as if from a thousand sources, flowed forth! Pamphlets, essays in newspapers, whole journals and newspapers, books, larger works! All points of view are represented. In many cases a hundred or more pamphlets have appeared in the course of a couple of years on the very same subject, which are then accompanied by the small arms' fire of numberless newspaper articles [...].⁶⁵

⁵⁸ *Lebensbilder*, 127–37; 16–30.

⁵⁹ *Das Deutsche Kaiserpaar im heiligen Lande im Herbst 1898* (Berlin, 1899).

⁶⁰ F. Naumann, *Asia* (Berlin, 1899).

⁶¹ A. Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently-Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. L. R. M. Strachan (New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), 5.

⁶² Similarly, the conservative position in New Testament debates was put forward in a pamphlet series titled 'Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen'.

⁶³ Examples of the former include P. Jensen, *Moses, Jesus, Paulus: Drei Varianten des babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesh. Eine Anklage und ein Appell* (Frankfurt, third edition 1910); and of the latter, E. Sellin, *Die biblische Urgeschichte* (Berlin, 1905; in the *Biblische Zeit- und Streitfragen* series) and E. Sellin and C. Watzinger, *Jericho: Die Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen* (Leipzig, 1913).

⁶⁴ See A. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten: Das Neue Testamente und die neuentdeckten Texte der Hellenistisch-Römischen Welt* (Tübingen, 1908).

⁶⁵ 'Eine ausserordentlich reiche, ja unübersehbare populäre theologische Literatur ist seitdem (scil. 1900) wie aus tausend Quellen zusammengefloßen! Broschüren, Aufsätze in Zeitschriften, ganze Zeitschriften und Zeitungen, Bücher, grosse Werke! Alle Richtungen sind dabei am Werke. Manchmal erscheinen im Laufe weniger Jahre hundert und mehr Broschüren über denselben Gegenstand, sie dann noch von dem Kleingewehrfeuer unzähliger Zeitungsartikel begleitet sind [...].' Gunkel cit. N. Janssen, *Theologie fürs Volk: Der Einfluß der religionsgeschichtlichen Schule auf die Popularisierung der theologischen Forschung vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg unter besonderer Berücksichtigung des kirchlichen Liberalismus in der lutherischen Landeskirche Hannovers*, *Studien und Texte zur "Religionsgeschichtlichen Schule"*, 4 (Frankfurt-am-Main: Peter Lang, 1999), 180, fn. 96.

It is striking that many of those who participated in these popularizing efforts were either younger or rather marginal scholars; a generation or two earlier, their access to the public would have been limited by the German states' elitist forms of cultural production and classicizing aesthetic norms. But by the 1890s, the situation had changed, in large part, I believe, because of the intervention of an insufficiently studied group of cultural producers: the publishers. We know well how crucial printers and publishers were in fomenting the Reformation and acquainting Europeans with the New World. Thanks to Robert Darnton, we and others, we now appreciate how vital a role they played in spreading enlightened ideas and political critiques in the eighteenth century. But we still have much to learn about their role in *modern* cultural politics.⁶⁶ Working in tandem with, and also often subsidized by, the numerous new *Vereine*, publishers at the *fin de siècle* were willing to take chances on semi- or non-academic authors – and even to commission a daunting array of books and pamphlets on topics with little academic respectability.⁶⁷

When exactly publishers discovered that the Orient would sell is hard to pinpoint; bibles and religious literature – or anti-religious literature, as in the case of D. F. Strauss's *Leben Jesu* (1835) and Ernest Renan's *Vie de Jésus* (1863) – had always been big sellers. But also, of course, numerous other non-fiction books, pamphlets, journals, maps and prints relating to things 'Oriental' had appeared over the course of the century. *Petermanns Geographische Mitteilungen*, founded in 1855, was an early, quite popular geographical journal with much coverage of the Orient; other travel literature also sold well, and a few presses, such as Dietrich Reimer Verlag actively promoted the publication of maps, ethnographic, archaeological, and travel accounts, especially during the tenure of press director Ernst Vohsen, an avid backer of German colonial endeavours.⁶⁸ But again, I would point to the 1870s as something of a 'take off' period; it was in 1877 that Georg Ebers was swamped with offers from publishers at the Leipzig Book Fair; he had become, Ebers noted in a letter to his mother: 'in their eyes, the goose that lays golden eggs.'⁶⁹ Although they were first published in 1841, Hermann von Moltke's *Letters on the Circumstances and Conditions in Turkey* (1841) did not sell out until 1876; then, between 1870 and 1893, they went through six editions.⁷⁰ J. G. Droysen's work on the Hellenistic world really began to catch on after the publication of the second edition in 1877–78. And then in the 1880s, on the heels of Ebers, came Karl May's 'Orient-Cycle', a six-volume serialized set of novels which, Nina Berman has elegantly argued, taught Germans how to act as colonizers. In these novels, and in subsequent short stories, May enveloped readers in an Arab world of swift horses, desert scenery and tropical commodities (Figs. 6 and 7).⁷¹

May's novels were popular on a much bigger scale than those of Ebers; May was a writer who reached not just thousands, but hundreds of thousands of readers (his books sold some 1.6 million copies by the time of his death in 1912).⁷² This is also true of travel accounts of the Swedish traveller Sven Hedin which were published in Germany by Brockhaus Verlag; Hedin's hugely popular *Durch Asiens Wüste* of 1899 (a title which echoed May's first volume, *Durch die Wüste*) was only the first of

⁶⁶ Luckily we have the pioneering work of R. Wittmann, *Geschichte des deutschen Buchhandels*, second edition (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999) to draw on; for the *völkisch* movement, see J. H. Ulbricht, 'Das völkische Verlagswesen im deutschen Kaiserreich' in *Handbuch zur 'Völkische Bewegung', 1871–1918*, edited by U. Puschner, W. Schmitz and J. H. Ulbricht (Munich: Saur, 1996), 277–301. Other studies of popular culture, such as Daum, *Wissenschaftspopularisierung* and Lewis, *Art for All?* also make heavy and interesting use of the press. Frederick Bohrer has also called attention to the importance of the illustrated popular press in breaking down aristocratic aesthetic norms, especially in England. See F. Bohrer, *Orientalism and Visual Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁶⁷ Erman's first was commissioned, to sell to secondary school students (A. Erman, 'Vorwort des Verfassers', in idem, *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum* (1923), v); but this was in 1886; thereafter, the individuals commissioned often had few or no academic credentials.

⁶⁸ C. von Wolzogen, *Zur Geschichte des Dietrich Reimer Verlags, 1845–1985* (Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 1986), 49–71.

⁶⁹ Cit. Fischer, *Der Ägyptologe Georg Ebers*, 101.

⁷⁰ G. Hirschfeld, 'Moltke und der Orient: Einleitung zu Moltkes Briefen aus der Türkei', in H. von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus dem Jahre 1835 bis 1839*, sixth edition (Berlin, 1893), xiii.

⁷¹ N. Berman, 'Orientalism, Imperialism, and Nationalism: Karl May's *Orientalzyklus*', in *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy*, edited by S. Friedrichsmeyer, S. Lennox and S. Zantop (Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 51–68.

⁷² C. Reuter-Boysen, 'Im Widerstreit: Karl May', in *Handbuch zur 'Völkische Bewegung'*, 702.

many of Hedin's bestsellers, which he often condensed for younger readers or abridged in paperback for less affluent readers.⁷³ Another great popular success of the period was H. S. Chamberlain's *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* (1900), which went through three editions in its year of publication, despite its length and luxurious binding; the popular edition sold more than 10,000 copies in ten days when it appeared in 1906. By 1915, more than 100,000 copies had been sold.⁷⁴ Chamberlain has usually been treated simply as a race theorist, but in fact *The Foundations* contain 500 of 578 pages in volume 1, and an additional 137 of 564 pages in volume 2 (in the English translation of 1922) which treat events that predate the Resurrection, and many of these are devoted to the history of the ancient Orient. This is also true of the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*, a series of commissioned popular theological writings which, between 1903 and 1913, sold some 500,000 pamphlets.⁷⁵ Of course, not all the 'orientalizing' books published at the *fin de siècle* sold, and in some cases – such as the many specialized books on eastern and mystical religions published by Teubner Verlag, one suspects the publisher's personal interests took precedence over market calculations. This is certainly the case for Eugen Diederichs, the esoteric publisher in Jena, who commissioned translations of so many high modernist texts, but who also energetically promoted his own interests in ancient oriental religions. Diederichs took a chance, for example, on Richard Wilhelm's translations from Chinese classics when no other publisher would touch the stuff; he would later be rewarded when these works, and especially Wilhelm's rendering of the *I Ching* (1924), became cult classics.⁷⁶ Publishers also were willing to take on a large number of new journals⁷⁷ – although private associations or individuals also sometimes provided subsidies. It was this publishing boom – accompanied of course by the increasing speed and cheapness of printing, and of printing photographs – which, I am convinced, enabled not only the popularizing efforts in orientalism, but which finally put paid to the hegemonic role of neoclassicism and historicism in German cultural politics.

What is interesting about these works, for our purposes, is that creating many of them involved various sorts of confrontations or compromises with academic orientalism, which was, itself, continuing to become more specialized and less reconcilable with older bourgeois norms as well as with the demands of a mass marketplace. Academic orientalists found it hard to keep pace with recent finds, and even harder to synthesize them quickly; we should recall that Erman's *Ägypt und ägyptisches Leben* was written when *he* was a young scholar, and *before* a huge amount of new Egyptological information flooded Europe (in 1886, the Tell el Amarna letters had only just been discovered, and were widely considered forgeries; the Oxyrhynchus finds and the excavations of Flinders Petrie and George Reisner, not to mention Howard Carter's excavations of the tomb of Tutankamen were still in the future). Erman did not get around to revising it until 1923, at which time he assigned another young scholar to the project, as he considered himself too old to be able to properly synthesize all the new material.⁷⁸ Often finding new stuff (and taking advantage of lucrative excavation rights or antiquities' rushes) required haste, and hoarding, neither of which were favourable to educating the public. On the other hand,

⁷³ S. Brockhaus (ed.), *Sven Hedin und Albert Brockhaus: Eine Freundschaft in Briefen zwischen Autor und Verleger* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1942) is a highly interesting testimony to the importance of this relationship, both to author and to publisher.

⁷⁴ G. G. Field, *Evangelist of Race: The Germanic Vision of Houston Stewart Chamberlain* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), 225. Field also notes that the book's publisher, Hugo Bruckmann, had originally tried to find an academic to write a synoptic overview of nineteenth-century cultural history, but those he chose seemed unable to view the subject from anything other than the perspective of their specialized fields. *Ibid.*, 225.

⁷⁵ N. Janssen, *Theologie fürs Volk*, 150–9.

⁷⁶ S. Wilhelm, *Richard Wilhelm: Der geistige Mittler zwischen China und Europa* (Düsseldorf: Diederichs Verlag, 1956), 154. M. Leutner, 'Kontroversen in der Sinologie: Richard Wilhelms kulturkritische und wissenschaftliche Positionen in der Weimarer Republik' in *Richard Wilhelm: Botschafter zweier Welten*, edited by K. Hirsch (Frankfurt am Main and London: IKO, Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 2003), 43. Wilhelm's *I Ching* is still in print, both in German and in English.

⁷⁷ To cite just a few is to get a sense of the breadth both of topics covered, and of audiences targeted: *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* (1881); *Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes* (1887); *Zeitschrift des Palaestina Vereins* (1878); *Ostasiatische Zeitschrift* (1914); *Semitische Studien* (1894); *Orientalische Literaturzeitung* (1898); *Der Islam* (1910); *Die Buddhistische Welt* (1905); *Land der Bibel* (1913).

⁷⁸ 'Ich selbst konnte an dieser schwierigen und langwierigen Arbeit nicht teilnehmen', explained the busy professor. Erman, *Ägypten und ägyptisches Leben im Altertum*, v.

academia tended to frown on those who were active ‘popularizers’. Peiser, Bousset, Deussen, Schroeder and Richard Wilhelm were all treated with disdain by their more narrowly focused peers.

Attempts to popularize, indeed, led to several publicity disasters, beginning with Assyriology professor’s Friedrich Delitzsch’s 1902–03 ‘Babel und Bibel’ lectures. Delitzsch’s attempt to give Old Testament ideas Assyrian origins pleased the Kaiser, but caused a firestorm of protest from Protestants, Catholics and Jews, for whom it came as a shock that orientalist scholarship might be used not just to clean up the Bible, but to justify discarding it.⁷⁹ Drawing on arguments Delitzsch had been making since the mid-1870s, these lectures were the subject of fierce and wide-ranging debate (Delitzsch himself counted 1,678 German responses by 1904);⁸⁰ but they were already out of sync with some of the newer Orientalist scholarship, and professional Assyriologists tended to avoid referring directly, and certainly positively, to Delitzsch’s all-too-popular lectures. Perhaps even more embarrassing for the theology professors was Gustav Frenssen’s quite obviously agnostic *Hilligenlei* of 1905. Containing within its storyline a hundred-page, de-sacralized ‘life of Jesus’, this novel ended, shockingly, with a short bibliography listing virtually all of the important ‘liberal’ Protestant theologians of the age – making it appear that Frenssen’s agnosticism was the result of reading this specialized work.⁸¹ *Hilligenlei* sold 120,000 copies in its first year, one of them to Albert Schweitzer, whose *Quest for the Historical Jesus* came out the same year; Schweitzer’s aim in writing the book was to show that neither an orientalized Jesus, nor a Germanic or secularized Jesus, could satisfy readers thirsting for spiritual satisfaction.⁸² The attempt to use historical scholarship to save faith simply could not work. Immediately after completing this watershed work in the history of theology, Schweitzer decided to leave his European professorship in theology for Africa, where he might make a *real* contribution to Christianity.

One of the ways we might see classicism and historicism disappearing in the popular realm is by examining some of the illustrations in this new wave of popular texts (when, of course, they had any). My research is not complete here, but I can offer some preliminary suggestions. Increasingly, authors use photographs rather than lithographs to represent the Orient; this is of course more feasible by 1910 than it had been in the 1870s; not only were photographs cheaper to print by this time, but camera equipment was far easier to carry and use than had previously been the case. But photographs are not good media for conveying historical continuities or picturesque human commonalities; they depict discrete, different individuals, not universal ‘types.’ And as travellers, modelling themselves on Henry Stanley or Richard Burton, sought to visit more and more remote locations, the images with which they returned tended to reflect the peoples of the Orient least like modern Europeans. In Sven Hedin’s works, for example, his photos tended to feature desert and mountain-dwellers, and thus to primitivize the ‘Orient’ he selected for public view (Fig. 5). On the other hand, when authors focused on the *ancient* world, they tended to use photos of ancient artifacts and architecture, not recreations of ancient events, or modern street scenes, as in Ebers’s *Ägypten*. Despite the increasing pace of communications and transportation, despite the development of closer links between the German Empire and the Ottomans and Japanese, the contemporary Orient on popular view by 1905 was much *less* like modern Europe, and losing its connections to the ancient world which still, for academics, underwrote its universal importance.

THE ORIENT OUTSIDE THE TEXTS

Of course, print was not the only medium in which the Orient came home; newer entertainments like cabarets and circuses also helped to interest new viewers in all things Asiatic. Europeans had been

⁷⁹ See R. G. Lehmann, *Friedrich Delitzsch und der Babel-Bibel-Streit* (Göttingen: Academic Press Fribourg, 1994).

⁸⁰ F. Delitzsch, *Babel und Bibel: Ein Rückblick und Ausblick* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1904), 3.

⁸¹ See G. Frenssen, *Schlußwort zu Hilligenlei* (Berlin: Grote’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1906); A. Crystall, *Gustav Frenssen* (Gütersloh: Christoph Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2002), 225 ff.

⁸² The original German title of Schweitzer’s book was *Vom Reimarus zu Wrede*, Reimarus being the eighteenth-century rationalist critic of the New Testament, and Wrede a contemporary professor of theology who, by the way, was a major contributor to the *Religionsgeschichtliche Volksbücher*.



Fig. 5 Sven Hedin, *The Worthies of Alem* [a desert town to the east of Teheran], 1905–6, photograph reproduced in relief halftone, size, from: S. Hedin, *Zu Land nach Indien*, (Leipzig, 1910), vol. I, 260

exposed to ‘Oriental’ design since very ancient times, and had often reworked its symbols, style, and technological innovations to create its own forms; during the eighteenth century, deliberately ‘orientalizing’ creations, like Frederick the Great’s Chinese Tea House, became fashionable in elite circles. In the nineteenth century, oriental design features were increasingly and unabashedly used in synagogue architecture, as Ivan Kalmar has beautifully shown.⁸³ And then it became truly popular, for cafés, and tabacconists’ shops. By the 1870s and 1880s, Carl Hagenbeck, the great organizer of touring animal acts and *Völkerschauen*, or ‘shows of (exotic) peoples’ was offering new oriental attractions and cabarets began to feature eastern dances.⁸⁴ The circuses, which drew millions of spectators by the century’s end, made much of eastern tropes, animals and costumes. The circus, indeed, may have been even more influential in solidifying ‘orientalist’ stereotypes than were the international exhibitions.⁸⁵ These, of course, were instrumental in introducing the east to the west, as accounts of many artists’ careers have shown. By the century’s end, there were also more localized exhibitions featuring ‘oriental’ themes, like the Berlin’s ‘Cairo’ exhibit of 1896, which drew more than 2 million visitors to the Treptow park, and offered for their ethnographic scrutiny more than 400 native Egyptians, Syrians and Nubians. Visitors strolled down an ‘oriental’ street, complete with bazaar shops selling pottery and shoes, a coffeehouse, and, of course, camels.⁸⁶ But, to return briefly to our themes, it should be noted that at the precisely the same time as the Cairo exhibition and its like were attracting mass audiences, ethnographers were beginning to turn away from analyses of foreign cultures which relied on seeing

⁸³ Kalmar, ‘Moorish Style’.

⁸⁴ See H. Thode-Arora, *Für fünfzig Pfennig um die Welt: Die Hagenbeckschen Völkerschauen* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1989); J. Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 89–95.

⁸⁵ M. Otte, *Jewish Identities in German Popular Entertainment, 1890–1933* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 21–82.

⁸⁶ W.-D. Lemke, *Staging the Orient: Fin de Siècle Popular Visions / Représentations de l’Orient. Imagerie Populaire Fin de Siècle* (Beirut: Editions Dar An-Nahar, 2004), 47.



Fig. 6 Anonymous, Cover, coloured and embossed linen cloth binding, 11 × 17.5 cm, from: Karl May, *Durchs wilde Kurdistan* (Freiburg: Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld, 1892)



Fig. 7 Fritz Bergen, Cover, coloured and embossed linen cloth binding, 11 × 17.5 cm, from: Karl May, *Orangen und Datteln* (Freiburg: Friedrich Ernst Fehsenfeld, 1893)

'ethnographic shows', and moving in the direction of fieldwork.⁸⁷ This was, of course, enabled by new forms of imperialist penetration into 'exotic' lands; but it was also a means of professionalizing and specializing knowledge, and once again marked expert knowledge as decidedly different from forms of knowledge that could be had by the general public at home. The new demands for 'realism' were precisely what caused Karl May's nervous breakdown, while travelling in the Levant.⁸⁸

At home, or even in their homes, an expanded public could now experience forms of 'oriental' art previously restricted to a small elite. Downtown Berlin, by 1910, was bursting with mass-produced 'Persian' carpets and cheap Japanese tea sets. There was sufficient need for guidance in buying carpets – and especially the newer sort, which were less appealing to the scholars and the avant garde – that a Leipzig engineer and carpet-seller were able to publish, in 1909, a handbook on 'Teppichkunde' which ran to 246 pages – even while excluding carpets produced in north Africa, the Balkans, India and East Asia! The main point of the book, for the authors, was to assist the general public, who, 'as a rule, have no idea at all about how to look at oriental carpets.'⁸⁹ But the publisher apparently also insisted on the addition of an historical section treating the rarer and more valuable older carpets, perhaps to enhance the educational value of what could otherwise have been seen as a kind of consumer's guide to carpet buyers.

Those who purchased this handbook, and others like it, may well have been edified by its historical sections, but some carpet lovers were also, undoubtedly, chiefly interested in creating colourful and comfortable private spaces. The world of private interiors is of course difficult to reconstruct or to describe in general terms, but we may see some of these more pedestrian appropriations of the Orient in the material collected by Wolf-Dieter Lemke, *Staging the Orient: Fin de Siècle Popular Visions* (Beirut, 2004). The postcards and photographs of home furnishings, film-stills and book illustrations Lemke offers strongly suggest the persistence of an exoticizing, decorative Orient, one that has relatively little historical sensibility, but plays chiefly on stereotypes drawn from the *1,001 Nights*, and conditioned by older associations with the spice trade on the one hand, and the crusades on the other. Symbolic referents to specific Oriental cultures – Jewish, Egyptian, Assyrian, Islamic – seem to be missing, in favour of a more generalized style, in which men wear turbans and women inhabit harems. Interestingly, the mixed modernity and antiquity of Ebers's *Ägypten* is missing, as are images of middle-class, semi-westernized 'orientals'. It may well be that Gymnasium-educated buyers continued to read the most recent scholarly works, and to acquire or appreciate the Orient as contemporary artists rendered it; but at the very least, these items were losing market-share, and, at most, they had lost all promise, and in some cases, all intention, of shaping the minds and tastes of the German public.

Yet some did still hope that they could reduce the public's taste for *Bazaarkram* (bazaar-trash), and instill instead an appreciation for authentic eastern art (by which they chiefly meant the older, rarer, and more elite forms). With this in mind, museum officials (including Alois Riegl) staged the largest display of older oriental carpets at the Vienna Arts and Industry Museum in 1891 Europe had ever seen.⁹⁰ Impressive and influential as this exhibition was, it was clearly designed for a modestly sized, well-educated audience. In ambition and scope, it was far outstripped by the exhibition of 'Mohammedan' art in Munich in 1910. Offering more than eighty rooms and 3,600 mostly borrowed items for visitors to enjoy, this was truly a 'blockbuster' exhibit, and the organizers expected a mass audience. This they did not get, to the organizers' great disappointment, though August Macke, Vassily

⁸⁷ See G. W. Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology, 1888–1951* (Madison WI, University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 84–123; for the German context, A. Zimmermann, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), 217–38.

⁸⁸ In the 1880s, Karl May wrote his Orient-Cycle at home, relying on historical, archaeological, and philological works. This apparently satisfied the demands for 'realism' – his own and that of his readership – for a time, but then he went to Istanbul and Cairo and was sued by two journalists for pretending to know it intimately. Also recognizing the evils of imperialist governance, May suffered a nervous breakdown. Suddenly the Orient had become very real, and colonizing it, even with the imagination, abhorrent; he never wrote about the East again. Berman, 'Orientalism, Imperialism, and Nationalism', 66–7.

⁸⁹ R. Graul, 'Zur Einführung', in R. Neugebauer and J. Orendi, *Handbuch der Orientalischen Teppichkunde* (Leipzig: Karl W. Hiersemann, 1909, repr. 1920), xii. The volume was also volume 4 in a series titled *Hiersemanns Handbücher* (also produced by Karl W. Hiersemann Verlag).

⁹⁰ Riegl himself composed a catalog and overview: A. Riegl, *Altorientalische Teppiche* (Leipzig, 1891).

Kandinsky, and Henri Matisse appreciated the treatment of Islamic works as fine art.⁹¹ These connoisseurs liked the older, less colourful textiles, and the stark display cases, which, as one organizer described, were designed deliberately to avoid: 'Harem interiors with soft divans, jolly fountains and a thousand and one baubles, the air heavy with intoxicating smoke and perfumes [...]'.⁹² But, as an anonymous reviewer in the *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten* argued, precisely this decision turned off the wider public; Bavarians, whose knowledge of the Orient had been formed by circuses and operas, were disappointed by the exhibition's modesty (Figs. 8 and 9).⁹³

The Munich exhibition was followed, a few years later, by a smaller more discerning exhibition of early East Asian art in Berlin in 1912. Here we are in a better position to judge its reception, thanks to the hard work of Hartmut Walravens. His collection of 91 contemporary reviews offers a fascinating taste of the diverse ways in which visitors experienced the exhibit. Most were brief and purely descriptive, but there also were some loud criticisms from those who thought German art should be displayed, rather than endless, not very colourful carpets and images of 'Vampyr Buddha', the empty-eyed, limp-limbed god who sucked out millions of souls.⁹⁴ A number of critics loved the show, and thought it proved how far European taste had come since the Goncourt brothers' amateur *Japonisme*:

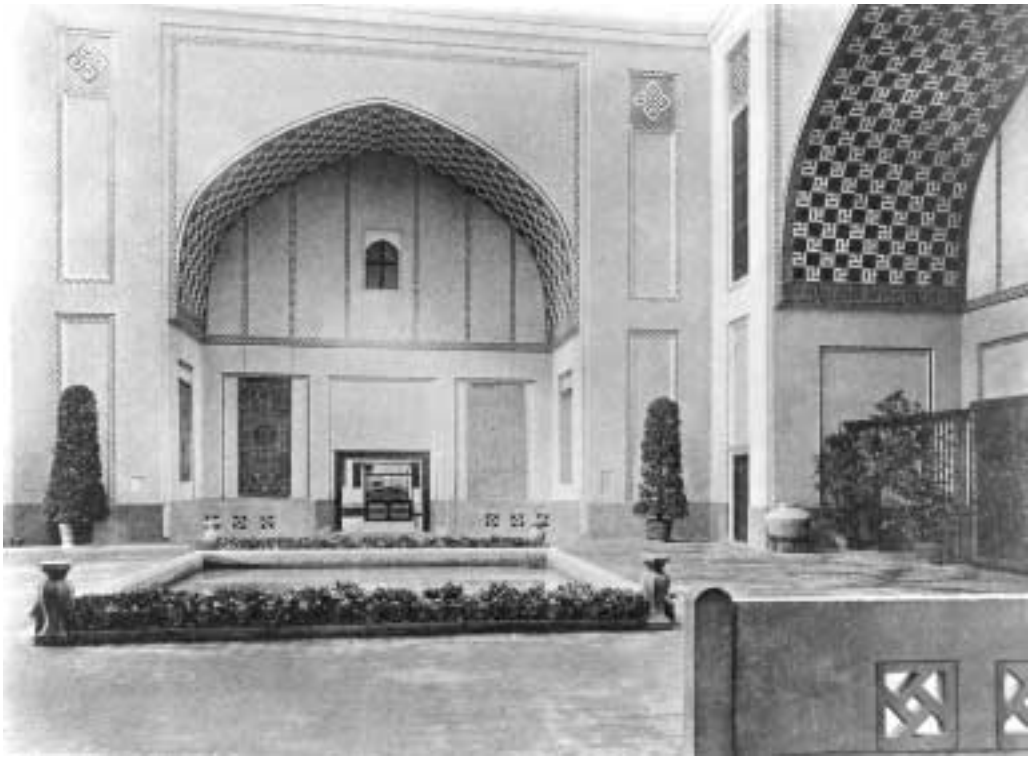


Fig. 8 Anonymous, Room in the Munich Mohammedan Exhibit, before 1910, collotype (?), 16.4 × 22.4 cm, from: F. Sarre and F. R. Martin, eds., *Meisterwerke der muhammedanischer Kunst auf der Ausstellung München 1910*, (Munich, F. Bruckmann: 1912), vol. 1, 1

⁹¹ Lemke, *Staging the Orient*, 43; E. Kühnel, 'Die Ausstellung Mohammedanischer Kunst München 1910', *Münchner Jahrbuch der bildenden Kunst*, 5 (1910), 210.

⁹² Kühnel, 'Ausstellung Mohammedanischer Kunst', 210.

⁹³ Anonymous, 'Eine englische Stimme über die Ausstellung München', *Münchner Neueste Nachrichten*, 31 (1910), No. 406, in Bayerische Hauptstaatsarchiv (Munich), HS 9286.

⁹⁴ W. Pastor, 'Der Gott des fernen Ostens', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 1 October 1912, cit. H. Walravens (ed.), *Die Ostasienausstellung Berlin 1912 und die Presse: Eine Dokumentation zur Rezeptionsgeschichte, Bibliographien zur ostasiatischen Kunstgeschichte in Deutschland*, 4 vols. (Hamburg: C. Bell, 1984), vol. 4, 41, 43.



Fig. 9 Anonymous, *Room in the Munich Mohammedan Exhibit*, before 1910, collotype (?), 16.4 × 22.4 cm, from: *Meisterwerke der muhammedanischer Kunst*, vol. 1, 1

As Lessing valued the Laocoon and Goethe the Apollo (Belvedere) as the highest achievements of the Greeks, so the Goncourts found the late, very refined and decorative ‘Vitruvian Japan’ [roughly, Japan for display cases] particularly delectable. We know, however, that the Laocoon like the Apollo belong to the era of baroque decline; we know too that up until the middle of the nineteenth century, Japan knew very well how to do excellent work, but that the peaks of development are to be found in earlier centuries. Only now can East Asian art be grasped, consciously and as an organism.⁹⁵

The reviewer was quite conscious that standards were getting more sophisticated, less showy, and more like those an indigenous intellectual might apply. But others realized that precisely these qualities, and the very plain, white backdrops and simple labels the exhibitors selected, excluded others from appreciating the artworks. As Marie von Bunsen wrote in the trendy Berlin journal *Die Zukunft*: ‘The boundaries have been so painstakingly drawn, and there is so little explanation and clarification [of the materials displayed] that all too many people, have, shivering [because the exhibitors couldn’t afford to heat the building], perceived [the exhibit’s] high-minded inaccessibility. “That is all too foreign to me”, one hears constantly.’⁹⁶

And that was, of course, precisely the problem: as scholars and art connoisseurs continued to emphasize the historical Orient – and to underscore the specificities of each eastern nation’s history – western Europeans no longer felt they could or should know the scholars’ Asia. Their stereotypes of

⁹⁵ R. Breuer, ‘Die ostasiatische Ausstellung der Berliner Akademie’, *Weimarerische Landeszeitung*, 29 September 1912, cit. Walravens, *Ostasienausstellung*, 40.

⁹⁶ M. von Bunsen, ‘Ostasiatische Kunst’, *Die Zukunft*, 21 (1913), cit. Walravens, ed. *Ostasienausstellung*, 149.

the East were diverging more and more from the image the academics – and even that of the academic ‘popularizers’ – wanted them to adopt, and thanks to the wider public’s new purchasing power, and cultural self-confidence, many felt they could simply choose the Orient (or bits thereof) that suited them best.⁹⁷ State patronage helped to fund new excavations and a few new academic positions, but it could not keep pace with the booming open marketplace. No museums for Islamic or East Asian art were built until the post-45 period; but *Bazaarkräm* and tea sets abounded. Some people surely read Deussen’s work on Indian philosophy, and more read the pamphlets issued by the RGV. But how many more went to see orientaling silent movies, which were based, of course, not on the new scholarship, but on the old ‘harem interior’ stereotypes? Sven Hedin’s travelogues and Karl May’s novels continued to sell briskly, but Hedin’s ‘scientific’ work and the excavations in Hattusa were ignored. Even the big archaeological digs in Babylon dragged on so long, and the material was so slow in reaching Berlin’s museums, that the subject gradually lost its luster – and its non-governmental patrons. The one line of orientaling popularization that, regrettably, stuck fast, was Chamberlain’s championing of Aryan India, and his critique of the overly ‘Jewish’ aspects of western culture; but even this did not make for a run on Indological works. The reading public, by the *Kaiserreich*’s end, knew a great deal more about the Orient than a smaller public had known at the Empire’s founding – but what they knew was, not surprisingly, contradictory, fragmentary, and strongly related to their already established tastes and interests. The images they consumed were much less historical ones, as in the days of Ebers, than stereotypical exotic or primitivized ones. The universities, on the other hand, did not become any more receptive to or respectful of popularizers; indeed, quite the contrary. This was not the ‘oriental Renaissance’ *fin de siècle* specialists wanted; but it was the ‘orientalism’ they got.

CONCLUSION

What are we to make of this? First: German ‘Orientalism’ was not one thing, distributed by one set of hegemonic producers and consumed by the population as a whole. There was a brief moment during which scholars could ‘steer’ public taste; but by the 1890s, there were both too many would-be helmsmen and too many self-willed sailors for one group to successfully chart a consistent cultural course. Second: the onset of the imperial age helped to give orientalists more confidence, and more prestige, but it did not transform or unite the discourse; scholars on the whole remained preoccupied with the ancient and biblical Near East, while the public actually seem to have lost interest in the historical Orient. Third: even those who tried to control the discourse were unable to do so. The university elite in the late nineteenth century could hardly control the popularizing efforts of their students, much less contain the spread of information and images. In part this is explained by the intervention of commercial interests, and of culture-producers who were either (a) weary of taking dictation about proper ‘taste’ from the elite; or (b) eager to earn fame or fortune by appealing more directly to the wider reading public. Even those willing to break with liberal, specialized practices and to speak to the wider public were discovering, as Leopold von Schroeder wrote, something quite ominous about the generation coming of age after 1900: ‘In the German states, the younger generation is emancipating itself from the intellectual ascendancy of science, and from the universities.’⁹⁸ Fourth: although the Reich’s institutions (universities, museums, libraries) did adapt to some extent, they did not abandon their traditional focus on the ancient and religious Orient, nor did they welcome popularizers with open arms. The students of Deussen, Schroeder and Bousset who emphasized outreach over philological exactitude found themselves in the 1920s even more marginalized than before.⁹⁹ Indeed, when

⁹⁷ See Erman on interpretations of Egyptian religion.

⁹⁸ Schroeder, *Reden und Aufsätze*, 312, 314.

⁹⁹ To offer just two examples; Heinrich Zimmer was strongly discouraged to take up the study of Indian art and mythology by his philologist-mentor Heinrich Lüders, and Betty Heimann, who took Deussen as her model, failed to obtain a tenured professorship in 1929 because she lacked ‘eigentliche philologische Arbeit’. On Zimmer, see S. Marchand, ‘Philhellenism and the *Furor Orientalis*’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 1 (2004), 331–58. On Heimann see J. H. Voigt and G. Kreisel, *An Indiens Tempelstätten: Fotoimpressionen der Indologin Betty Heimann* (Stuttgart: Linden Museum, 2003), 18–24 (22).

Germany's imperial dreams collapsed in 1918, many of the fledgling institutions devoted to the study of the modern Orient disappeared; archaeological activity virtually ceased, and in general, one might argue that in the Weimar era, German cultural politics became much less 'global' than it had been during Wilhelm II's reign.

Just as in the case of Beth Lewis's modern artists, who eventually abandoned the hope that they might both push forward the boundaries of art *and* appeal to the public at large, German orientalists, by the Weimar era, had realized that their science wasn't for everyone. Nor, in an era of vastly expanded cultural citizenship and a booming and unrestricted market for cultural goods, was it going to be possible for one group to dominate national cultural production as had been the case in previous centuries. There was also a limit to how interested in the Orient – ancient or modern – the German masses could be; it was simply not as relevant to most peoples' lives as was the history of Central Europe, or the European events of the day. In the next decades, both classical humanism and Protestant theology continued to lose cultural market share, and even institutional clout; but the beneficiaries were surely less the orientalists than the natural and social scientists, and scholars whose work focused on the modern world. Orientalists in the 1900s and 1910s had some impact on colonial policy; but these tended to be, again, younger or marginal scholars, not the most respected university professors.¹⁰⁰ The humanist mandarins had failed even to educate the Foreign Ministry, as Arabist Friedrich Rosen reflected, recalling the disastrous decision to declare jihad in 1914. 'Just as Voltaire can be seen as the father of the French Revolution, Karl May can be seen as the father of the Oriental policy of this era. The knowledge that existed about the Orient [in the Ministry] in any event, hardly ranged beyond this one source.'¹⁰¹ In yet another field, the dream that avant-garde knowledge and popular understanding could be united was over. The sobering truth these German orientalists learned is that the language scholars speak is often not, in fact, the same as that spoken by the people or by the politicians, and even when some images are the same, the intention behind their dispersal and usage may be entirely different. German 'orientalism' was not a single discourse – but perhaps that is what makes it so interesting, historically, and much more useful, too, in understanding another form of 'orientalism' – our own.

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¹⁰⁰ There is much more to be said on this point; it should also be understood that I do not hold with claims that the professoriate was 'apolitical,' as I intend to show in the book that I am completing on German orientalism, 1780–1918.

¹⁰¹ F. Rosen, *Aus einem diplomatischen Wanderleben* (Wiesbaden: Limes Verlag, 1959), 54–5.