Since the late 1970s a growing field of inquiry within studies of colonialism has been trying to locate Germany’s role in strengthening the cultural hegemony of European imperialism in Asia and Africa. One important example of this research trend is the debate about German scholarship on the ‘Orient’ and its relationship to (colonial) structures of knowledge and power that was started off by the publication of Edward Said’s *Orientalism* in 1978. Much of the debate about European scholarship on Asia and the ‘East’ has predictably focused on British and French scholarship, with Germany by virtue of its late entry into the scramble for colonies and the consequently small size of its empire drawing comparatively less interest. Nevertheless, by the mid 1990s attention focused increasingly on what came to be known as ‘German Orientalism’. The three books under review, two monographs and one collection of essays, mark a significant contribution to this field of research.
Review Article

Orientalism, Colonialism and the German Case

Over the past three decades, research on colonialism has been greatly influenced by cultural theory and has increasingly focused on the cultural dimensions of colonialism. Crucial to this shift in colonial studies was the influence of the thesis postulated by the American cultural theorist Edward Said, primarily in his two works *Orientalism* (1978) and *Culture and Imperialism* (1988). In the first Said drew on the Foucauldian notion of discourse and the Gramscian idea of cultural hegemony operating within civil society to develop a knowledge-power mode of analysis to understand what he described as the West’s hegemony over the Orient. Orientalism, in Said’s view, is ‘a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident”’.1 Said asserted that Western scholarship on the Orient has been intimately linked to Western political power over the Orient, especially in the age of European colonialism. Orientalism, according to Said, ‘can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’.2 It is ‘the ensemble of relationships between works, audiences and some particular aspects of the Orient’ which ‘constitutes an analyzable formation . . . whose presence in time, in discourse, in institutions . . . gives it its strength and authority’.3 In this sense, European scholarship on the Orient, by carrying within it the authority of ‘superior’ knowledge, became a collaborator in the hegemonizing project of colonialism. Of course, Said was not the first scholar to write on Europe’s cultural relations with the East, a subject that has long been a favourite, mainly with scholars of Oriental studies trying to trace the intellectual and cultural origins of their discipline, and literary historians keen to problematize European literature’s fascination with Eastern cultures.4 However, it was Said’s analytical framework of (Western,
hegemonic) knowledge and (European, imperial) power and the weight attached to what he described as a hegemonic discourse on the Orient that gave a fresh angle to approaching colonialism as a cultural phenomenon and provided a significant impetus to post-colonial studies.

As has been remarked, Said was essentially concerned with Orientalism in the context of European colonialism and therefore drew his examples mainly from the history of the British and French empires from the eighteenth century onwards. Hence he only cursorily dealt with German Oriental scholarship, defending his decision with the fairly obvious argument that despite the ‘great scientific prestige that accrued to German scholarship by the middle of the nineteenth century’, German national interest was in no way involved in the pursuit of Oriental studies in Germany:

At no time in German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century could a close partnership have developed between Orientalists and a protracted, sustained national interest in the Orient. There was nothing in Germany to correspond to the Anglo-French presence in India, the Levant, North Africa. Moreover, the German Orient was almost exclusively a scholarly, or at least a classical, Orient: it was made the subject of lyrics, fantasies, and even novels, but it was never actual . . . What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France.5

Further, Said argued, ‘the sheer quality, consistency, and mass of British, French and American writing on the Orient’ distinguished the Orientalism of these countries from that of other European nations, including Germany.6

on Europe’s engagement with the East that in many ways pre-empted Said’s arguments, but came to be overshadowed by Orientalism, was Raymond Schwab’s magnum opus, written in the 1950s. See Raymond Schwab, The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880 (New York, 1984; 1st pub. in French, 1950).

5 Said, Orientalism, 18–19.
6 Ibid. 17.
Said’s general thesis of Orientalism has long since been criticized, modified, and revised in a long-running debate that has been as much academic as political and ideological. The intensity that characterized the reception of and subsequent engagement with Said remained until the early 1990s largely confined to post-colonial studies on the British Empire. German Oriental scholarship, significant for its sheer volume and the respect it commanded in British and French academic circles continued, by and large, to be ignored by cultural theorists. Certainly, this was largely the result of Said’s own

7 The bulk of scholarly engagement with Said’s Orientalism has come from Middle Eastern and South Asian studies. Some of the main points of criticism of Said’s thesis are the following: Said’s disinclination to historicize the phenomenon and his consequent willingness to oversimplify complex historical processes by means of theory; his attempt to reduce the whole gamut of relations between Europe and the East to power structures, and all forms of Western scholarship on the East to hegemonic discourses, leaving no room for any other kind of encounter except one based on power relations; and his inability to reflect (self-)critically on the ambivalent position of the critic who himself is situated in Western knowledge systems and structures. While the debate is too vast to be discussed here, some useful insights into Orientalism as a historical process of cultural domination are provided by Bassam Tibi, ‘Orient und Okzident: Feindschaft oder interkulturelle Kommunikation? Anmerkungen zur Orientalismus-Debatte’, Neue Politische Literatur, 29 (1984), 267–86; Bernard Lewis, Islam and the West (Oxford, 1993) for the Middle East; Gyan Prakash, ‘Orientalism Now’, History and Theory, 34/3 (Oct. 1995), 199–212; and the early essay by Ronald Inden, ‘Orientalist Constructions of India’, Modern Asian Studies, 20/3 (1986), 401–46 for South Asia. For an early critique of the inherent tensions in Said’s thesis of a hegemonic Western scholarship, also written from a South Asian, but Marxist, perspective, see Aijaz Ahmad, ‘Between Orientalism and Historicism’, Studies in History, 7/1 (1991), 135–63. John MacKenzie’s work on Orientalism in British culture is a particularly vital contribution to a field of scholarship which has traditionally been treated as a perspective from the ‘periphery’ and far removed from the metropolitan ‘centre’ of the British Empire; see John MacKenzie, Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts (Manchester, 1995). A recent long-durée overview of Orientalist scholarship in Europe and the debate surrounding Orientalism can be found in Robert Irwin, For Lust of Knowing: The Orientalists and their Enemies (London, 2006).
Orientalism and the German Predicament

... reticence on the German case. However, this is not to say that German Oriental scholarship, or the place of the East in German literature, did not receive any attention. On the contrary, long before Said German (apolitical) ‘interest’ in the East had consistently drawn scholarly attention and resulted in a large number of studies ranging from the history of Oriental studies in Germany to representations of the East in German literature. Further, earlier scholarship had not fought shy of examining the connections between German interest in the East and the formulation of anti-Semitic racial theories at home, as, for example, in the work of Léon Poliakov. However, since the early 1990s, and parallel to a rise in interest in the practice and ideology of German colonialism—a subject that, by virtue of its relative insignificance compared to the French and British cases, had largely been ignored in scholarship—there has been considerable interest in conceptualizing German Orientalism within the Saidian analytical framework. Much of the writing on German Orientalism that has emerged since has been the work of scholars of Oriental studies, Germanists, literary theorists, and literary historians, but also cultural historians. It is in the context of this new literature on German...

8 See e.g. Theodor Benfey, Geschichte der Sprachwissenschaft und orientalischen Philologie in Deutschland seit dem Anfang des 19. Jahrhunderts mit einem Rückblick auf die früheren Zeiten (Munich, 1869); or Johann Fück, Die arabischen Studien in Europa bis in den Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts (Leipzig, 1955) for the history of Oriental studies in Germany. For studies of representations of the East in German literature, see e.g. Ernst Behler, ‘Das Indienbild der deutschen Romantik’, Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, 49 (1968), 21–37.


10 See e.g. the influential and much-reproduced essay by the Chicago Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock on the links between the products of German Sanskrit scholarship and an inward-looking colonialism, directed at exterminating Jews in the Third Reich. Sheldon Pollock, ‘Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj’, in Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer (eds.), Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament: Perspectives on South Asia (Philadelphia, 1993), 76–133. Also Nina Berman, Orientalismus, Kolonialismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900 (Stuttgart, 1997); and ead., ‘Thoughts on Zionism in the Context of German–Middle Eastern Relations’, in Jennifer Jenkins (ed.), Comparative...
Orientalism and its conceptualization in the Saidian framework of power and knowledge that the books under review must be read.

It must be remembered here that Said himself was not unaware of the potential of German Orientalist scholarship for his analysis. He was aware of the force of authority that German scholarship enjoyed, even though it was not directly rooted in any obvious colonial project. Thus he said: ‘what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual authority over the Orient within Western culture. This authority must in large part be the subject of any description of Orientalism.’\(^\text{11}\) Nevertheless, he himself refused to get drawn into the debate, while repeatedly acknowledging the close links between German and British and French Orientalist scholarship and scholarly networks.

In historical research critiques and modifications of Said’s hesitant postulations on German Orientalism have taken two main directions. The first espouses the view that if one isolates the conceptual component of Said’s thesis from the historical context of colonialism to which Said attaches such centrality and examines German Orientalism not in a colonial, but a national and nationalist-imperialist context, then it, too, is as much a system of knowledge for political power as the kind of Orientalism that was generated in colonial systems. An early and provocative example of this kind of engagement with Said’s omission of the German case is the influential essay by the Chicago Sanskritist Sheldon Pollock on the politics of German Indology that was published in 1993, in which he stressed that the sheer size of state investment in Indology and the ‘volume of the production of German orientalist knowledge’ meant that ‘no serious encounter with Orientalism as it relates to traditional India can avoid the case of Germany’.\(^\text{12}\) Conceding that Said’s omission of German Oriental scholarship was obviously due to the difficulty of accommodating it ‘within an explanatory framework of colonial instrumentality’, he went on to argue that it nevertheless exemplified Said’s ground-breaking thesis of Orientalism as ‘a complex of knowledge and power . . . vectored not outward to the Orient but inward


\(^{12}\) Pollock, ‘Deep Orientalism?’, 82.
Orientalism and the German Predicament

to Europe itself. Thus, to Pollock, German Indological scholarship was an essential component of the kind of ‘scientific’ knowledge that provided the Nazi regime with its hegemonic power within the German nation and in Europe, and provided the intellectual authority to exterminate Germany’s Jewish population.

This kind of nation-oriented thesis of German Orientalism has recently received renewed attention. The contributors to the special edition of Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East (2004) dedicated to German Orientalism, for example, agree that by breaking the ‘connection between Orientalism and European empire’ and looking at ‘a different set of dynamics’, such as ‘those between Orientalism, nationalism and imperialism’, the German case is perfectly compatible with Said’s analysis of the nexus between Western knowledge and colonial power: ‘the Orient was the site upon which and through which the German national and imperial visions were articulated and acted upon.’ Thus the focus is on Islam, the Ottoman Empire, and Central Asia, all of which were sites of hegemony for German Orientalist scholarship and thus became the stage for enacting Germany’s national-imperial ambitions, even in the absence of a formal empire.

The second line of critique of Said in the context of German Orientalism has argued that German Orientalist scholarship, far from being historically disengaged from colonialism, in fact gave colonialism its intellectual force and thus strengthened hegemonic power structures in the Orient, as, for example, in British India. Thus, Rosane Rocher, for example, refers to the significant intellectual

13 Ibid. 83.
14 Jennifer Jenkins, ‘German Orientalism: Introduction’, Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East, 24/2 (2004), 98. See also the article by Tuska Benes in the same volume, in which she locates Central Asia as the site of both the German scholarly interest and national-imperial aspirations. Tuska Benes, ‘Comparative Linguistics as Ethnology: In Search of Indo-Germans in Central Asia, 1770–1830’, ibid. 117–32. The Germanist Kamakshi Murti has shown, with reference to the writings of the Oxford-based German Indologist Max Müller, how German Indologists in the middle and late nineteenth century shared the faith of the British in their moral right to rule India. See Kamakshi P. Murti, India: The Seductive and Seduced ‘Other’ of German Orientalism (Westport, Conn., 2001).

41
authority that accrued to German Indological scholarship in colonial India from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, which left a deep mark on British educational policy-making in India and was instrumental to the strengthening of cultural colonialism in British India.15

‘Das Land der Mitte’: East and West in German Literature

The response to Said from literary studies was much greater and more immediate than the response of German historians. The first two of the books under review can be located in this tradition and they engage with Said’s thesis of Orientalism by drawing on German literature. Aware of Said’s reticence on German Oriental scholarship, the volume of essays edited by Lee M. Roberts and the monograph by Todd Kontje both attempt to fill the gap in a fuller understanding of Orientalism by focusing on Germany’s cultural specificity and its geographical position. The latter, according to the main thesis of both studies, defined the spatial-cultural imagination of German literature. The volumes engage with Orientalism from a literary (Roberts) and a literary-historical (Kontje) perspective respectively and take their inspiration from the topos of the ‘land in the middle’ in German literary production since the eighteenth century. Both are dedicated to exploring what Kontje describes in his opening sentence as ‘the role of symbolic geography in German literature’, to understanding how East and West were conceptualized in a literary tradition that saw the German nation, by virtue of its geographical location in central Europe, as situated precisely between the two (in their understanding mutually opposed) cultural entities. But Germany’s geographical location itself is less relevant than the spatial imagination of its literary canon. As Kontje explains: ‘Because Orientalism has more to do with Western ideology than Eastern geography, the actual location of “the Orient” matters less than the consistency of a certain Orientalizing discourse’ (p. 12). These words are strongly remi-

Orientalism and the German Predicament

Orientalism includes the following programmatic statement in the opening paragraph: ‘The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences’, ibid. 1.

However, Kontje’s aim is to take the argument of Orientalism further. Using the notion of the ‘land in the middle’ in texts that, in his view, form the core of Germany’s national literary canon, Kontje seeks to do this in two interrelated ways. First, he wishes to open up the concept of Orientalism to more fluidity than Said has allowed in his conceptualization of an essentially hegemonic discourse. Second, he attempts to give what Said has treated as a historically unchanging phenomenon a historical context. Kontje’s choice of texts has a scope of epic dimensions, spanning seven centuries from the thirteenth to the twentieth (to Germany post 9/11), and ranges from Wolfram von Eschenbach’s Parzival through the works of Herder, Novalis, Goethe, and Thomas Mann to Günter Grass, Emine Sevgi Özdamar, and Michael Roes. The complexity, ambivalence and tensions that quite obviously characterize the hugely varying texts in their construction of symbolic geography also explain the choice of the plural ‘Orientalisms’ in the title, since texts so far apart from each other both in theme and time can hardly be united by a single, homogeneous discourse on the East. The East itself, as the texts Kontje has chosen indicate, is varied and encompasses, at various points and in various texts, the Ottoman Empire, the Holy Land of the Bible, India, and even the eastern borders of Europe. But then, as has been said before, the geography of this East is irrelevant; Kontje’s central concern is its complexity. The Orientalisms of these texts are characterized both by a conservative intolerance of, and an openness towards, the East. The first of these trends ‘oscillates between a compensatory Eurocentrism’ (the result of a late start in the race for colonies) and ‘an anti-Western, anti-Semitic Indo-Germanicism’ (p. 8), which had disastrous consequences in the Third Reich. The openness is more elusive to grasp conceptually and Kontje is satisfied to describe its appearance in unexpected places (such as in Herder’s openness to cultural difference and Novalis’s cosmopolitanism), rather than to theorize about it.

16 Said’s Orientalism includes the following programmatic statement in the opening paragraph: ‘The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences’, ibid. 1.
Kontje’s work is a rich contribution to the field of study of German Orientalism, covering as it does a vast range of the canonical works of German literature and discussing them in the analytical framework of Orientalism. The strength of the work lies in the detailed reading of the texts and the willingness to engage with Said with the help of cultural theory after Said. In an age when the study of literature appears to be buckling under the impact of cultural studies, Kontje pleads for a re-reading of the history of national literatures, but ‘from today’s decentered, diasporic, postcolonial perspective’ without compromising the place for literary imagination (p. 244). This is evident in the last chapter and conclusion of the book, in which Kontje draws upon post-colonial theory on migration and diasporas to show the shift in symbolic geography that is taking place in parts of modern German literature. As the movement of groups and individuals in a globalized world has become easier, so, too, are the boundaries between East and West becoming increasingly fuzzy and the notion of place increasingly unstable. Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei and Die Brücke vom Goldenen Horn and Michael Roes’s Leeres Viertel, Rub’ Al-Khali: Invention über das Spiel are used as examples of such clouded boundaries and shifting places.

Notwithstanding the richness and breadth of the book, some questions remain less than adequately answered. While Kontje’s attempt to reconcile a traditional reading of the history of literature with cultural theory is commendable, the engagement with the theoretical assumptions of Said’s Orientalism is fairly superficial. The point about the need to accommodate the unexpected and the inexplicable in cultural theory and the place of literary imagination that uncomfortably lends itself to theorizing is well worth emphasizing, but where does that leave Said’s thesis of a hegemonic Western discourse? The book touches on the question, but fleetingly. Similarly, for a work that is dedicated to reading canonical texts in a historical perspective, there is little evidence of context. For all Kontje’s protestations of the need to provide a historical context for Orientalism in German literature, this is exactly where the book falls short. In fact, in this respect, Kontje’s greatest strength—his detailed engagement with the text—turns out to be his shortcoming. Within what structures were the texts that Kontje deals with in such detail produced, and how do the texts relate to them? Further, Kontje’s Orientalisms appear to
remain static and unchangeable throughout the seven hundred years in which they were produced. Surely, when trying to accommodate a vast span of time within the same analytical framework, one has to be particularly careful about changing contexts. Otherwise it is difficult to escape precisely the charge of ahistoricity that has been levelled at Said himself. These are certainly the reservations of a historian, but there is no denying that the volume would have gained further nuances had German Orientalism also been treated in relation to the structures that have historically engendered it.

In many ways Lee M. Roberts’s volume picks up where Kontje leaves off. It develops Kontje’s notion of spatial imagination in national literatures. Like Kontje, Roberts draws on Said and post-colonial studies to problematize Germany’s ‘imagined East’ and ‘highlight how easily artistic and everyday expression can impose a hierarchy on the world that otherwise might not exist’ (p. xiv). Drawing on a wide range of cultural productions from film and literature to philosophy, history, music, and architecture, contributors to the volume focus on Germany’s ‘middle’ position by analysing how the conceptualizing of East and West defined and sharpened this position. Unlike Kontje’s monograph, however, this volume does not purport to adhere to a chronological framework (in fact, the essays in the volume are arranged with no regard to chronology whatsoever), or to understand the historical–national contexts of cultural production. Instead, it seeks to locate certain themes in German culture that their producers associate with particular regions of the world east of Germany. What follows is a conceptual framework in which these regions are arranged into a system of relationships with Germany’s national identity that is defined by what the contributors to this volume tend to see as varying degrees, akin to a typology of ‘Easthood’ in Germany’s literary and cultural canon.

The choice of such a conceptual framework lies at the basis of the structure of the book, which is divided into four parts, each dedicated to a precise geographical ‘East’, loaded with a specific cultural meaning that sets it apart from the remaining sections. Thus the first section, ‘Eastern “Germanies”’, consisting of four essays ranging from an analysis of the disappearance and re-appearance of the GDR in the film Goodbye Lenin! (by Wendy Graham Westphal) to the Utopian construction of Bohemia in Ingeborg Bachmann’s poem ‘Böhmen liegt am Meer’ (Sarah Painitz), sets out to explore the East with-
in the German-speaking lands. The second section moves on to eastern Europe and examines how both eastern European nations such as Yugoslavia and Russia, but also eastern Europeans writing in German (as in the essay by Maria S. Grewe) can be conceptualized as the Other within the Self in cultural production in Germany. The third and final sections deal with the more conventional and historically constructed Orient, namely, the Middle East (Turkey and Persia), India, and the Far East.

As in Kontje’s analysis, the use of imaginative geography and de-homogenization of the East in German literature in the volume enable a more nuanced conceptualization of the East in German culture and thus add a very useful dimension to our understanding of what was specific about German Orientalism. Studies of British or French Orientalism have tended to use a monolithic notion of the Orient without distinguishing between the cultural attributes of geographical locations in the spatial imagination. Following from Said’s analysis, this tendency has resulted in understanding Orientalism purely in terms of binaries such as the Self and the Other or the hegemonic Western knowledge and colonized non-European cultures. In these studies, there is only a single West, just as there is a single East. The conceptualization of Germany’s geographical and cultural position as that of a ‘middle land’ allows the watering-down of these binary relationships: seen from the middle, there is both East and West. This position results, as Kontje says, in the oscillation of German Orientalism between ‘a compensatory Euro-centrism’ (p. 8), which ‘compensated for (Germany’s) inability to be a real player on the international scene’ (p. 6) and an Indo-Germanicism, which by virtue of its claims to Eastern, Aryan origins, was essentially anti-Western and anti-Semitic. Equally, the conceptualization of the East in the German spatial imagination in terms of varying degrees of cultural familiarity and alienation breaks the notion of a homogenous discourse on the East that so strongly dominates the engagement with Said’s thesis in the context of France and Britain. Further, consciously moving away from the established literary traditions of German studies, both volumes reveal an awareness of the need for literary studies to respond to the challenge posed to their discipline in recent times by cultural studies and post-colonial theory. Both are representative of the response of German literary studies to some of the central questions about culture and identity in Europe and Asia that
have been raised by these comparatively new fields of study. It is hardly surprising—and, indeed, very refreshing—that the volumes use and engage with the analytical categories commonly associated with the latter disciplines (for example, cultural displacement and multiple identities).

The Discipline of Research: Oriental Studies at the University

Sabine Mangold’s monograph, originally her Ph.D. thesis, examines German Oriental studies from an entirely different perspective. The only really historical work of the three books being reviewed, her study addresses the close relationship between the academic disciplines that went by the name of Oriental studies at German universities and questions of culture. She thereby effectively links the history of science or disciplines (Wissenschaftsgeschichte) with some of the central questions posed in recent years by cultural studies. Recognizing that the rebuttal of Edward Said’s thesis of the complicity of Orientalist scholarship with power structures had taken place at a discursive level, Mangold emphasizes the need to engage with it at the level of institutions and organizational structures in order to map out the precise way in which power could operate in the production of Oriental scholarship. By thus taking issue with Said by examining the structures and institutions that were instrumental to the development of Oriental studies in Germany, Mangold’s book is an invaluable contribution to an overwhelmingly discourse-ridden field, which has traditionally been dominated by internal debates amongst Orientalists or by literary scholars, but rarely by historians.

The book engages with the basic premise of Said’s thesis of the close involvement of Oriental scholarship in imperial power structures by starting with the obvious argument of Germany’s late entry to colonialism and relatively insignificant overseas territorial possessions when compared with Britain and France. However, Mangold’s study goes a step further by asking a question that addresses Germany’s specific national context. Why and how was it that a discipline such as Oriental studies, which had no practical value whatsoever, a Luxusfach in fact, managed to establish itself and remain part of the academic canon in nineteenth-century German universities? It was not a requirement for school-teaching, which in turn pro-
vided a major incentive for the choice of subjects read by students at university and determined the popularity of particular disciplines. Mangold attempts to answer this question by focusing on the internal, German academic context of Oriental studies from the beginning of the nineteenth century through the post-unification phase to the beginning of the First World War. She identifies three central lines of inquiry: first, the academic, cultural, and political-structural context that shaped the development of Oriental studies from 1800 to 1914; second, the position of Orientalists and Oriental scholarship within the constellation of disciplines at the university; and, third, the function and significance of the international context of Oriental studies for the discipline in Germany. These three questions define the underlying structure of her book.

Of the six main sections (excluding the introduction and conclusion), the first three are dedicated to the disciplinary history of Oriental studies in the context of the university in pre- and post-unification Germany. Mangold traces the turning point in Oriental studies to the emancipation of the discipline from its traditional status as a subsidiary discipline (*Hilfswissenschaft*) to theology and its gradual reorientation as a linguistic science, a development that she quite rightly locates in the early years of the nineteenth century. The second phase of the discipline’s evolution, between 1835 and 1880, was marked by the increasing tendency to model Oriental studies along the lines of classical studies, which centred on the employment of stringent methods of text emendation. As is well known to scholars of the history of disciplines, the struggle to establish clear disciplinary identities is rarely free of conflict and Mangold provides some insightful examples of disputes on methodological rigour that became of utmost importance to Orientalists in establishing the legitimacy of their discipline. This phase also saw the increasing specialization of the discipline into its many branches and Mangold deals with this in great detail. Equally detailed is her treatment of the process of the institutionalization of Oriental studies into university chairs.

The following two sections of the book take the narrative to 1914, focusing on the Kaiserreich period and dwelling at great length on two of the most significant institutions of Oriental studies in Germany, ones that have hardly been dealt with in critical historical scholarship. These were the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Mor-
Orientalism and the German Predicament

genländische Gesellschaft), which developed outside the university, and the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen of the University of Berlin. In very different ways, these chapters provide useful insights into the working of Oriental studies in nineteenth-century Germany. The Society’s main aim was to be, and appear to be, the united face of Oriental studies in Germany at a time when the discipline was actually becoming highly diversified. Throughout its history, Mangold takes pains to show, the Society remained a politically neutral body, by and large unsympathetic to Wilhelmine Germany’s territorial ambitions. The Seminar, on the other hand, was drawn willy-nilly into the German colonial enterprise by serving as the training-ground of many a colonial officer.

The final section before the conclusion, which in the opinion of this reviewer constitutes the strongest part of the study, focuses on the turn away from linguistic studies in the Wilhelmine period to the study of cultures, especially the study of Islam, and to practice-oriented research. The section focusing on the beginning of historical and cultural studies of Islamic societies is obviously the author’s métier as a scholar of Islam. The new trend, still fairly limited in scope, marked in Mangold’s view a small but significant break with the text-oriented, antiquarian tradition of Oriental studies and a turn towards the ‘modern’ Orient. The traditional disdain for politics as something that would dilute scientific objectivity gave way to an increased interest in academics for a practical purpose, for a goal. This was a trend which, argues Mangold, must be understood in the context of the growing imperial interests of Wilhelmine Germany.

Sabine Mangold’s study is a fine combination of solid empirical research on the structural history of Oriental studies and a readiness to engage with recent debates in cultural theory on the subject. Her response to Edward Said is nuanced. In general, Oriental studies in Germany was far too deeply wedded to the notion of objectivity and value-neutral, antiquarian scholarship, and Germany itself far too late and insignificant in its quest for colonies, for the discipline to be implicated in political agendas. Yet German Oriental scholarship was not free of the attitude of cultural superiority towards non-European peoples that was expressed in the civilizing mission of Europe’s colonial powers, Britain, France, and the Netherlands. The desire to reform and revitalize the Orient by means of a Christian Occident underlay many of the assumptions of German Orientalist scholars.
The colonial ambitions of the Wilhelmine Reich provided the foil for at least some of these aspirations. Nevertheless, in Mangold’s view, the relationship between Oriental studies in Germany and cultural colonialism remained vague and not lacking in ambivalence. She demonstrates this with the brilliant example of the commemorative coin struck by the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft to celebrate its silver jubilee in 1870 which, in a reversal of the gendering of the Orient in colonial discourses, depicted the Orient as a man and the West as a woman (pp. 114–15). (Developing this point a little further than she has done would certainly have added an exciting dimension to the study.) Further, even in the Wilhelmine period, instances of the direct involvement of Orientalist scholars in Germany’s programme of imperial expansion were few and far between, unlike in the case of the Dutch in Indonesia or the British. In both of these empires, Mangold argues, the complicity of Orientalists with the colonial enterprise was much more immediate, as many of them were, in fact, colonial functionaries. This is certainly a point worth stressing. At the same time, it is also worth noting at least in the case of the British Empire that, while training in local languages and cultures was a prerequisite for recruitment into the colonial civil services, British colonial officers were frequently inclined to learn local languages and customs while in service. The case of William Jones, renowned comparative philologist and founder of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, who was sent to India as judge and became a prominent Orientalist while there is one, but certainly not the only, example.

The strength of Sabine Mangold’s study lies in the fact that it is the work of a historian who is also a scholar of Islam. While her canvas is large enough to include all the various branches of study that made up Oriental studies, her most convincing examples are, quite logically, drawn from Islamic studies. Indeed, this is her métier, but it is also a limitation. While her argument about the politics of German Oriental studies is extremely convincing and backed up with solid empirical research, it also focuses heavily on Islamic studies. Other research areas within Oriental studies tend to become less relevant, especially in the last few sections of the book. It is true that the Seminar für Orientalische Sprachen and the increased interest in the Ottoman Empire as possible areas of German imperial expansion dominate her story and, in view of the importance of the Middle East and the Balkans for German foreign policy in the late nineteenth and
early twentieth centuries, this preference is entirely justifiable. But what happened to related disciplines at this time? In less tangible ways they, too, were drawn into the politics of imperial Germany. At least one branch of Indology or Sanskrit studies, for example, was appropriated by comparative Indo-Germanic studies in the post-unification period, which in turn had much to do with the self-consciousness of the 'Reich-nation'. Mangold convincingly argues that it was the harmony and homogeneity amongst the various constituent sub-disciplines of Oriental studies that ensured the continued survival of the discipline. Nevertheless, such a view tends to gloss over the conflicts amongst, and uneven development of, the various branches of Oriental studies. It ignores, for example, the significance of the bitter debate over the supremacy of Arabic versus Sanskrit at the university of Bonn in the 1840s. It also assumes a certain homogeneity of methodological orientation amongst all the sub-disciplines in all the German states at the same time. While the shift from theology to philology was a dominant feature of nineteenth-century Oriental studies in Germany, smaller non-Prussian universities such as Tübingen, for example, continued to pursue a religious, cultural, and historical line of Orientalist research throughout this period.

Notwithstanding these issues, Sabine Mangold’s study is groundbreaking in many respects. While this is by no means the first study of German Oriental scholarship, it is certainly one of the most comprehensive, covering all the individual research fields (from Arabic and later Islamic studies to Sinology, Assyriology, and Indology, to name but a few) that together constituted Oriental studies. More importantly, hers is probably the first historical study from a German academic context that engages with what has traditionally been an Anglo-American debate. Her extensive use of the archival sources of German universities, learned societies, and government and private papers lends her study much substance and depth and enables us to look beyond literary discourses into the operation of German Orientalist scholarship in its own institutional context. As a result, her conclusion that German Oriental scholarship, while reflecting much of the cultural arrogance of British, French, or Dutch Oriental studies and even supporting Germany’s imperial ambitions, was a product of much more than power relations is convincing. That the German pursuit of such an exotic discipline was part of the idea of Bildung, of all-comprising general knowledge that did not necessari-
Review Article

ly have any pragmatic use, but was part of an educated person’s repertoire, corroborates the findings of related studies in the area. What remains slightly underemphasized in the process is the main frame of reference, that is, the cultural colonialism of the established empires. French and (especially) British Oriental scholarship receive short shrift. Obviously, these are not the subject of Mangold’s study, but they do provide its frame of reference and they certainly formed the basis of Said’s theoretical formulations. But, in view of the overall scope and range of her study, this lack may be excused. By providing such insight into the precise historical context of its evolution as a discipline in the nineteenth century, the study fills a major gap in studies of Oriental scholarship and its relationship with Western cultural hegemony in the non-Western world.

Taken together, the three books discussed here are rich additions to our understanding of German Orientalism, as they shed much light on an extremely under-researched aspect of the topic. The importance of their contribution can really be appreciated in the context of the sheer volume of German Orientalist scholarship in the nineteenth century, the prestige it enjoyed internationally, and the consistent presence of German Orientalists in academic contexts beyond Germany’s boundaries. At the same time, the volumes also shed light on added dimensions of Orientalism and its more nuanced ways of operating than has resulted from the scholarship on British and French Orientalism. In Sabine Mangold’s case, this has taken the form of looking beyond Said to other, less well-examined, cultural components of Orientalist scholarship in Germany and examining Orientalism’s historical context. In the case of Kontje and Roberts, it has succeeded in paring down Orientalism to a differentiation of the spatial imagination rather than a monolithic discourse in the West on the East.

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17 I have come to similar conclusions in my own work. See Indra Sengupta, *From Salon to Discipline: State, University and Indology in Germany, 1821–1914* (Würzburg, 2005).
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