



Philosophische Fakultät

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Pink, Katharina, *Identitas Oriens: Discursive Constructions of Identity and Alterity in British Orient Travelogues* / [reviewed by] Anna Maria Reimer

Suggested citation referring to the original publication:  
Zeitschrift für Anglistik und Amerikanistik 64(1) (2016), pp. 112–114  
DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/zaa-2016-0010>  
ISSN (print) 0044-2305  
ISSN (online) 2196-4726

Postprint archived at the Institutional Repository of the Potsdam University in:  
Postprints der Universität Potsdam  
Philosophische Reihe ; 126  
ISSN 1866-8380  
<http://nbn-resolving.de/urn:nbn:de:kobv:517-opus4-397856>



**Katharina Pink**, *Identitas Oriens: Diskursive Konstruktionen von Identität und Alterität in britischer Orient-Reiseliteratur [Identitas Oriens: Discursive Constructions of Identity and Alterity in British Orient Travelogues]*. Literatur Kultur Theorie, 19. Würzburg: Ergon Verlag, 2014. Hb. 337 pp. € 49,00. ISBN 978-3-95650-070-1.

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DOI 10.1515/zaa-2016-0010

In revisiting Charles M. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, Gertrude Bell's *The Desert and the Sown* and T.E. Lawrence's *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, *Identitas Oriens* enters a field so comprehensively mapped it seems to hold little promise of innovation. All three texts discussed here are integral to Said's argument in *Orientalism* (1978) and in so far lend themselves to discussing the construction of identity and alterity. But instead of simply annotating Said's discussion of the texts, Katharina Pink mounts a rigorous analysis of the discursive ambivalences and slippages in the travelogues. Departing from Christoph Bode's postulation of an acute textual analysis of colonial texts, Pink submits the entire "textual weave," rather than only its "Orientalist thread" (18) to scrutiny. Yet the author makes it clear from the outset that she does not discuss *whether* the texts qualify as Orientalist, but *in how far* they do so. Nonetheless, the epistemological gain of Pink's book, the revised version of her dissertation, is not restricted to a qualitative reassessment. For if the current moment in postcolonial studies is marked by the recognition of the need "to move from the 'negative' moment of critique to the more 'positive' moment of reconstruction," as Neil Lazarus argues in the *Postcolonial Unconscious* (2011), Pink's study offers a welcome intervention.

Beginning the discussion of each travelogue with a detailed biographic sketch, Pink does not so much ask readers to empathize with the authors than to recognize how (much) their individual circumstances factor into narrative

discourse. Consequently, she focuses on why Doughty, Bell, and Lawrence were driven into the Orient. While drawing extensively on existent studies and author biographies, Pink buttresses or questions their arguments with textual evidence and thereby simultaneously provides a critical index. By distinguishing the three entities of the traveler, the narrator, and the author, Pink proceeds to disentangle the narrative-discursive layers of the three texts while simultaneously probing into the authors' psychologies through a close reading.

Charles M. Doughty's *Travels in Arabia Deserta* (1888) was a literary touchstone in the field of Orient travelogues and is referenced by both Bell and Lawrence, rendering it an ideal point of entry. Financially troubled, Doughty relied entirely upon the mercy of his Bedouin hosts during his travels on the Arabic peninsula – a fact which left him in a vulnerable position. But while the narrating agent *Khalil Nasrany*, the Arabic alter ego assumed by Doughty, strikes the pose of the Christian martyr enduring continuous harassment and hardship with equanimity, the traveler's emotional experience reflects a less secure position. On this level, Pink's reading thus reveals an ongoing oscillation between rejection and fraternization, alienation, and appropriation of the Other. Moreover, the text's medieval, lyrical idiom, rich in Arabic vocabulary, is evidence not only of the author's romantic disposition but also of his intent to immerse the reader in a cultural zone of encounter. According to Pink, the text ultimately functions as a "Claude Glass" (113) in which the space of the Other is simultaneously distant and close because it is reworked in such a fashion as to obliquely reflect the author's past.

Gertrude Bell's *The Desert and the Sown* of 1907 emerges as no less ambivalent than Doughty's text, if for a different reason. The suppression of the author's innate intellectual curiosity and adventurous spirit by her parents and British society renders the Orient a place of freedom for Bell. Only here is she, an archeologist and informant of the Empire, able to indulge her passions legitimately. Recognizing the unwritten rules of female authorship, the author states that she will not challenge the male prerogative of scientific observation to then break this promise by routinely mixing private insight with scientific observation and political analysis. Following Sara Mills, Pink asserts that the discursive relation of the narrator Bell with the Orient is categorically different from that of male narrators (179). Hence, wherever she presents a generalized view of "the Orientals," this is done in the interest of showcasing her scientific rigor as a neutral, i.e. male observer. The narrator thus assumes imperial superiority through the male gaze, if only in perfunctory performances of scientific expertise. And while Pink's reading is largely consonant with that of scholars like Pallavi Pandit, Gretchen K. Fallon, and Gabriele Habinger, she distinguishes her discussion by stating that the oscillation between alignment and non-alignment effects the "dissolution

and transcending of the boundary between self and Other” (180), rather than its affirmation. *The Desert and the Sown* thus occupies precisely that ill-defined intermediate zone between total freedom (the desert) and the sphere of civilization (the sown) referenced in the title.

*Seven Pillars of Wisdom* (1935) marks not only the most widely known, but also the psychologically most ambivalent of the texts. T.E. Lawrence, an archaeologist and officer in the British army, successfully instigated a revolt against the Turkish occupants among the Arab tribes – an adventure ideally suited to a literary treatment it would seem. However, Stephen E. Tabachnick observes in T.E. Lawrence that the narrator’s emotional reactions often show little correlation with the events narrated (cf. Tabachnick 1997, 105). Pink, on the other hand, succeeds in rendering this apparent caveat intelligible. Her mode of reading the narrating subject *in* and *through* the representation of events, people, and landscapes presents paradox as the inevitable result of the disconnect between experience and logos. Hence, the teleological quest form chosen by the author functions as a funnel for the ill-defined, elusive character that Lawrence is. Similarly, the waywardness the narrator diagnoses his Arab allies with reflects his own incalculability. Lawrence’s brutal abuse by the Turkish at Deraa – largely deemed the anticlimax of the narrative – marks an attack upon his bodily integrity that galvanizes his latent identity crisis and confronts the narrator with his masochist disposition. The sense of emptiness pervading the text after the victory at Aqaba thus becomes comprehensible as the ultimate loss of a sense of purpose. The utter disillusionment thus emerges as consistent with the traveler’s experience and the narrator’s psychology.

If her very brief concluding remarks appear to cut short Pink’s discussion, the results of the analyses validate the study’s epistemological pledge as the social formations and psychological dispositions of the authors account for the voltes and voids of narrative discourse. The textual performance of the Self in the Orient thus assumes new relevance as it is viewed in light of the social/gender status of the authors in the imperial center. Far from simply redeeming Daughy’s, Bell’s, and Lawrence’s texts, the close reading illuminates the profoundly performative nature of the travelogue, as well as the systemic nature of marginalization as a self-reproducing process. In studying how imperialism and resistance to it simultaneously shape narrative discourse, Pink could be said to conduct nothing less than a “contrapuntal reading” – a concept Said elaborated in *Culture and Imperialism* (1994). Ultimately, *Identitas Oriens* reads as a compelling recuperation of literary-psychological individuality vis-à-vis sustained binary constructivism and ideological appropriation and as such marks a truly *post*-postcolonial contribution to the field of literary discourse analyses.