

**‘The Indispensable East’ in Decadent
Literature in England and Germany
1880–1920**



KATHARINA HEROLD

Pembroke College

University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in English Literature

Trinity 2018

I declare that all of the work presented in this thesis is my own.

Katharina Herold

July 2018

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the role of the East in British and German literary Decadence. It reaches from the high point of Victorian Decadence in the 1880s to high point of Modernism at the beginning of the Weimar Republic in 1918–1920 in Germany. My central concern is to argue that the East is a major characteristic of *fin-de-siècle* European Decadence. In bringing together two European literatures, this comparative thesis makes a case for Decadence's transnational if not global nature. England and Germany serve as examples to consider Decadence beyond the Anglo-French model still dominating the field. The thesis examines the role of the East with specific reference to two British and two German authors: starting from Oscar Wilde's (1854–1900) Victorian vision of Egypt and Arthur Symonds's (1865–1945) post-Romantic fascination with the 'Gypsy', it moves to Paul Scheerbart's (1863–1915) Decadent Babylon and Assyria, read as being in opposition to a modern Europeanism, and concludes by turning to Stefan George's (1868–1933) exclusion of the East from his poetic practice. The geographical reach of the East focuses on regions of the Eastern Mediterranean and Northern Africa. The cultural translation of specifically the Middle East into different national contexts gains new – sometimes oppositional – meanings, avoiding a one-sided representation of both the East and the two national literatures that absorbed it. In arguing for a Decadent cosmopolitanism as a model of heterogeneous inclusivity that reaches beyond the binaries Edward Said established in his *Orientalism*, this thesis brings together postcolonial theory, theories of cosmopolitanism, art history and literature in a comparative study allowing for an analysis of synergies and interdependences of European literary movements. The thesis thus chronologically traces how the literary treatment of the East changed Decadent literature: initially defined as a cosmopolitan network of artists and as an aesthetically inclusive concept, Decadence in the early twentieth century evolved to denote the decay of Western socio-political culture. In my conclusion I argue that the renewed attention to the East was 'indispensable' to the formation of Decadence and crystallized the need for literary 'cosmopolitics' in order to overcome Europe's cultural crisis of modernization at the turn of the twentieth century.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My heartfelt thanks go to my two fantastic supervisors Dr. Stefano Evangelista and Prof. Ritchie Robertson at Oxford. They have guided me wisely, inspired and supported me throughout my journey in the best possible way. I feel incredibly honoured and lucky to have been their student and only for this reason I wish this thesis would never be finished. I will be ever grateful for their tireless encouragement, the exciting discussions and extra-long tutorials. The many ‘cosmopolitan’ conference trips to Venice, Paris, Berlin, Helsinki, Les Treilles and New York enabled me to meet my ‘decadent heroes’ (Matthew Potolsky, Kristin Mahoney, Joseph Bristow) and discuss their and my work. This would not have been possible without Stefano, so thank you. Special thanks go to Prof. Ray Ockenden who was very kind to advise me on my chapters on Scheerbart and George. I would also like to thank Prof. Helen Small, Prof. Lynda Mugglestone and Dr. Sos Eltis, three scholars I highly respect and admire because of their dedicated commitment to their students. They all made the promise of Oxford come true – it was indeed a very special place to study. Lastly, I would like to thank the AHRC, Pembroke College, the English Faculty and TORCH who have generously supported my studies throughout.

I would also like to thank Prof. Jane Desmarais at Goldsmiths. She has been my tutor, mentor, friend and colleague over the last eight years. With her passion and knowledge of Symons and all things Decadent she has inspired me to take up Decadence as a field of study and to become a teacher myself. I also am most grateful to Prof. Frank Krause for proxy supervisions on Scheerbart and many hot chocolates. Thanks also to Prof. Gesa Stedman who academically adopted me during my wonderful stay at the Centre for British Studies at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

This thesis makes extensive use of archival material of the Gypsy Lore Society Archive at the University of Liverpool. I would like to thank Katy Hooper, keeper of the Special Collections, who was a huge support during my visit. Many thanks go also to Dr. Maik Bozza, Director of the Stefan George Archiv in Stuttgart. I would like to thank the librarians of the Bodleian Libraries Oxford (UK), the Robert Ross Memorial Collection, University College Oxford (UK), The British Library (UK), and the Staatsbibliothek Berlin (Germany).

My main thanks go to my family and friends for their never-ending support: to my mum who with her love and kindness carried me through the whole process; to my dad for inciting my early passion for learning and scholarship, and to my lovely brother who is always there for me; to my various English ‘surrogate’ families: the Youngs, especially Nev and Deb who are the best, I am very happy to have you in my life; to the Salverdas, especially Josephine, to Dan and Claude, to Sarah and Callum, to Sarah and Peter, to Ama and John, to Minna and Yates; to my extended ‘cosmopolitan’ Decadent family Dr. Sandra Mayer, Dr. Leire Barrera-Medrano (my beloved Spanish twin), Jessica Davies for their friendship and intellectual inspiration.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	7
<i>List of Illustrations</i>	7
INTRODUCTION: The Indispensable East	8
Definitions of <i>Fin-de-Siècle</i> Decadence: The Politics of Aesthetics	9
The Pluralities of the East	19
Beyond Said: Decadent Cosmopolitanism	28
Nineteenth-Century Literary Exoticism in France, England and Germany	32
Literary Collections of the East	39
The Two Critical Traditions of Decadence in England and Germany	42
Methodology: Comparative Approach	47
Outline of Chapters	49
I. CHAPTER	
‘Away to Egypt!’: Cosmopolitan Conglomeration and Orientalist Appropriation in Oscar Wilde’s Victorian Middle East	54
Introduction	54
Sir William Wilde: From Greece to the Orient	60
Wilde and the French Orient: Literary Mixing of the Disciplines	67
Icon of East and West: An Archaeology of <i>Salome</i>	73
The East as Mosaic: Objectification and Cosmopolitan Colouring	76
Wilde and <i>The Sphinx</i>	90
Conclusion	116
II. CHAPTER	
‘Against civilisation’: Arthur Symons, Gypsyism and Politicized Decadence Post 1890	119
Introduction	119
The Gypsy as the Oriental <i>Flâneur</i>	123
The East as Kaleidoscope to the West in <i>Cities</i>	126
A Brief History of Gypsyism	135
‘In Praise of Gypsies’: Symons and the Gypsy Lore Society	142
The Politics of Decadent Journalism: <i>The Gypsy</i> and <i>Simplicissimus</i>	153
Alan Odle’s Beardsleyesque Orientalism in <i>The Gypsy</i>	162
Edmund Gosse’s Review of Anglo-German Foreign Policies	171
Conclusion	179

III. CHAPTER	
‘Feeling Oriental’: Literary <i>Anti-Europäertum</i> in the Decadent Works of Paul Scheerbart	181
Introduction	181
Scheerbart and the Berlin Bohème in the 1890s	187
In Search of German Decadence: Scheerbart in Dialogue with Predecessors and Contemporaries	192
Oriental ‘Genuß’ and Pater’s Definition of Aesthetic Experience in <i>Tarub</i>	201
Nietzsche’s Orientalism and Critique of Europe	206
<i>Der Tod der Barmekiden</i> : The Decadent East as Mirror of Europe’s Cultural Decay	210
<i>Der Alte Orient</i> : A Decadent Self-Parody	220
Scheerbart’s Journalism: The East as the Way into Modernity	224
<i>Glasarchitektur</i>	233
Conclusion	239
IV. CHAPTER	
‘Ex septentrione lux’: From Stefan George’s Cosmopolitan Empire to <i>Das Neue Reich</i>	242
Introduction	242
George’s Cosmopolitanism	247
George’s Decadent East	256
Despot and Dandy: <i>Algabal</i>	266
The Exclusion of the East: Early Beginnings of the German Conservative Revolution	290
The Decline of Decadence: <i>Der Siebente Ring</i> und ‘Der Brand des Tempels’	297
Conclusion	309
CONCLUSION: Orientalism and Decadent Politics of Opposition	312
BIBLIOGRAPHY	329

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>WW</i>	=	<i>Woman's World</i>
GLS	=	Gypsy Lore Society, Liverpool
<i>JGLS</i>	=	<i>Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society</i>
<i>BfdK</i>	=	<i>Blätter für die Kunst</i>
StGA	=	Stefan George Archiv Stuttgart, Germany

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1:	Map of the Middle East	18
Fig. 2:	Aubrey Beardsley, 'Tailpiece: The Burial of Salome', (1894)	82
Fig. 3:	Charles Ricketts, <i>The Toilet of a Lady of Ancient Egypt</i> , (1888)	89
Fig. 4:	Edward Tennyson Reed, <i>The Minx – A Poem in Prose</i> , (1894)	103
Fig. 5, 6:	Charles Ricketts, <i>The Sphinx</i> , (1894)	110–111
Fig. 7, 8:	Arthur Symons posing with his Romani friends	140–141
Fig. 9:	Alan Odle, frontispiece for <i>The Gypsy</i> , (1915)	168
Fig. 10:	Aubrey Beardsley, 'The Climax', <i>The Studio</i> , (1893)	169
Fig. 11:	Alan Odle, frontispiece for <i>The Gypsy</i> , (1916)	170
Fig. 12:	Thomas Theodor Heine, <i>Der Engländer und seine Weltkugel</i>	176
Fig. 13:	Olaf Gulbransson, <i>England und der Islam</i> , (1914)	177
Fig. 14:	Oskar Kokoschka, <i>Portrait of Paul Scheerbart</i> , (1915)	186
Fig. 15:	<i>Die Modernen an ihrem Stammtisch im Café des Westens</i> , (1905)	190
Fig. 16:	Ornamentsaal of the <i>Glashaus</i> , Cologne Werkbund Exhibition	235
Fig. 17:	Carl Rouge, <i>Vivant Cosmopolitani</i> , (1889)	258
Fig. 18:	Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, <i>The Roses of Heliogabalus</i> , (1888)	270
Fig. 19, 20:	<i>Moorish Kiosk</i> (1867) and <i>Peacock Throne</i> (1876) at Linderhof	247
Fig. 21:	Stefan George, 'Gelbe Rose', (1889)	281
Fig. 22:	Oscar Wilde, 'Symphony in Yellow', (1889)	282

Introduction: The Indispensable East

There is an unknown land full of strange flowers and subtle perfumes, a land of which it is joy of all joys to dream, a land where all things are perfect and poisonous.¹
Oscar Wilde (1885)

In his 1908 edition of Oscar Wilde's essay 'The Decay of Lying' (1889/1891), Robert Ross subtitled a section of the essay 'The Indispensable East'. Through this minor editorial intervention, Ross paid tribute to the importance of Eastern arts to Wilde's aesthetics. In a key passage in the section isolated by Ross, Wilde stresses the evolution of Western arts in its dependency on the East:

What is true about the drama and the novel is no less true about those arts that we call the decorative arts. The whole history of these arts in Europe is the record of the struggle between Orientalism, with its frank rejection of imitation, its love of artistic convention, its dislike to the actual representation of any object in Nature, and our own imitative spirit.²

As a champion of British Aestheticism and French Decadence, Wilde applauds the East's 'rejection of imitation' with direct reference to Europe's century-long struggle with 'Orientalism'. European art relied heavily on the imitation of nature, a view opposed to Wilde's own agenda that stated that 'Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life'.³ In contrast, Oriental art achieved originality by rejecting realism and favouring symbols, patterns and abstraction. The East therefore plays a decisive role in the creation of non-mimetic art, a concept reverberating with Decadent, Symbolist and

¹ Oscar Wilde to Henry C. Marillier, 12 December 1885, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 272.

² Oscar Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', in *Intentions*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV Criticism*, ed. by Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 72–103 (p. 86). In case of 'The Decay of Lying' there is no complete manuscript as used by the editor of *The Nineteenth Century*, in which Wilde's essay first appeared in January 1889, pp. 35–56. The passage on Orientalism is however already included on p. 44. The subheading 'The Indispensable East' was first added by Robert Ross in his collected works edition of Wilde's writings in 1908.

³ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p. 94.

Aestheticist philosophy. At the turn of the twentieth century these emerging strands of European literature favoured an anti-realist stance and the celebration of artifice, generated by looking eastwards. This extract is therefore essential in understanding the formation of a new tendency of European literature between 1880 and 1920 referred to as Decadence. Wilde's attention to the East illustrates the contention of this thesis, which argues that European Decadence's engagement with the 'East' was its most defining element as a literary movement. This thesis will demonstrate the vital influence of the East on European Decadence by focusing on a selection of writers from two representative European traditions: Britain and Germany. In their heavily stylized Decadent poetry as well as in their non-fictional and fictional prose writings, the artistic East emerges as a catalyst to shape political and literary developments in these two countries.

Definitions of *Fin-de-Siècle* Decadence: The Politics of Aesthetics

The political dimension of Decadence as a literary movement has received growing attention over the last decades. Nowhere is it more poignantly captured than in European Decadence's treatment of the East. Rejecting a definition of Decadence purely as style, my thesis conceives of Decadence as a political network of cosmopolitan artistic exchange.⁴ Decadence is built on personal and international relationships; it depends on the encounter between different cultures, a fact that demands that Decadence be studied comparatively. Existing studies explore the French Decadent tradition of Oriental writing in the context of imperialism and colonialism,

⁴ Charles Bernheimer, *Decadent Subjects – The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002). I use 'decadence' to designate processes of cultural or socio-political disintegration; 'Decadence' capitalized to identify the European literary movement.

especially works by Gustave Flaubert.⁵ The spectrum of criticism evinces a global European picture on Decadence, in which France dominates as the original home of Decadence. Works by Théophile Gautier, Charles Baudelaire, and Flaubert are widely regarded as the foundational texts for Decadence, which was later developed in the poetics of decay and disintegration in the verse of Paul Verlaine and Stéphane Mallarmé, and in the fiction of Joris-Karl Huysmans.

In the 1860s Algernon Charles Swinburne was instrumental in promoting these new French aesthetics in Britain, complementing homegrown artistic tendencies such as Pre-Raphaelitism and, later, Aestheticism. In the 1880s and 1890s, Decadence reached its highpoint in the form of a wider cultural debate on degeneration and Western cultural decay across Europe. While this thesis acknowledges the importance of French influence, it reaches beyond the boundaries of a mono-cultural perspective. It shifts the focus to consider less-covered ground: English and German Decadence. My aim is to suggest that the repurposing of the East derived from French sources in England and Germany offers new, essential perspectives to be able to speak of Decadence as a truly cosmopolitan concept.

Historically, Decadence has been a problematic term to define due to its fluctuating meanings and national contexts. Flourishing at the turn of the twentieth century, Decadence was a progressive movement built on the ideas of disintegration and decay derived from its Latin origins in the verb *decadere*, which translates as ‘falling from, falling away from’. By the end of the nineteenth century, especially in Germany, definitions ranged from Friedrich Nietzsche’s appraisal of decadence and degeneration

⁵ Jennifer Yee, *Exotic Subversions in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Oxford: Legenda, 2008).

as ‘a natural consequence of life and growth’⁶ in 1887 to Max Nordau’s polemic *Entartung* (1892, translated into English as *Degeneration* in 1895). More broadly, the term decadence captured a historical anxiety of cultural decay in the face of modernity. As a result, ‘decadence’ was originally applied as a term of critical abuse rather than as a label authors used to identify themselves as belonging to a particular group of artists.

Decadence encompasses a social phenomenon, as well as a literary and artistic style. The contradictory nature of Decadence and its resistance to exact definition are ‘among the most important elements of its meaning’ as David Weir put it.⁷ In 1893 Arthur Symons’s defining essay, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, subsumed a variety of literary developments such as Impressionism and French Symbolism under the broader term Decadence.⁸ His choice to revise the title of the article to ‘The Symbolist Movement in Literature’ in 1899 and to publish the text as a book in 1908 (re-issued in 1919) indicates Decadence’s resistance to a clear definition. Symbolism, which was for Symons ‘something more serious’,⁹ was self-defined in a French tradition with many authors proudly declaring themselves to be Symbolist. Its English relative, Aestheticism, originated from a group of literati and artists in the circle of Walter Pater, who taught Classics at Oxford. Pater’s advocacy of Gautier’s principle of *l’art pour l’art* and his promotion of Aestheticism in England, which was rooted in a Hellenist understanding of art and beauty, insisted on the independence of art from

⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power: Selections from the Notebooks of the 1880s*, ed. by R. Kevin Hill, trans. by R. Kevin Hill and Michael A. Scarpitti (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 32.

⁷ David Weir, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995), p. 2.

⁸ Arthur Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (November 1893), 858–68 (p. 858).

⁹ Arthur Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, ed. by Matthew Creasy (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014), p. 7.

social purpose. In German literary discourse it is common practice to refer to the texts I discuss in this thesis under the literary label of ‘Expressionism’ or ‘Symbolism’.

Overall, the different strands of turn-of-the-century literatures associated with Decadence overlap and can be found side by side in any one author’s body of work. Accordingly, Decadence, as a movement, did not occur as a result of a single unified programme, but is a term that can be used to describe an international exchange of ideas. For my thesis, then, Decadence is the most suitable working term due to its promise of inclusivity and its detachment from any fixed national identity. Its heterogeneity encompasses a body of literature that originated in an international community and a set of tropes, subject matter and style that transcended national boundaries.

The last four decades have seen an increasing research interest in Decadence and a productive re-evaluation of the term for literary studies. Richard Gilman provided one of the first historical surveys on the ‘biography or career’ of the term decadence. His study concludes with the image of decadence as a ‘portmanteau stuffed with emptiness’ whose description ‘will continue to be complicated’.¹⁰ John Reed’s study extended Gilman’s research by emphasizing the self-consciousness of Decadent poetics that celebrate processes of ‘annihilation and re-creation’.¹¹ Decadence’s precious style came to ‘embody the meanings conveyed in the subjects and materials of its art.’¹² My thesis goes further in an investigation of the material aspect of Decadent poetics. With a focus on Eastern art, it analyses how language is perceived as an object in Decadence, and

¹⁰ Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979), p. 157; p. 180.

¹¹ John Robert Reed, *Decadent Style* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 12; See also Alex Murray and Jason D. Hall, *Decadent Poetics: Literature and Form at the British Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹² Reed, p. 9.

how in turn language is key in the process of objectification. Following a shift in Decadence studies in the 1990s, focused on the historical and political dimension of Decadence, the editors of *Perennial Decay* warn against limiting Decadence to a ‘mere compendium of transgressive themes’ characterized by its treatment of ‘morbidly, a cult of artificiality, exoticism, or sexual nonconformism’.¹³ Crucially for my argument, their study examines Decadence’s interference with ‘boundaries and borders [...] that criticism normally relies upon to make its judgments’.¹⁴ It highlights the necessity to ‘interrogate the strategies of decadent texts’ rather than catalogue and taxonomize its traits.¹⁵ This thesis does exactly that: it traces the role of the East as one such strategy in Decadent texts in order to reveal their transgressive political potential.

More recently, a number of publications have assessed the relationship between Decadence and Modernism.¹⁶ Decadence has emerged as a concept transcending literary periodization, a notion which is also central to my study. Following the lead of David Weir, who described Decadence not as a period but as a ‘dynamics of transition’¹⁷ from Romanticism to Modernism, Laura Marcus, Michèle Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr theorize Decadence as the directional aesthetic bridge in this ‘gradual changeover’¹⁸ from the 1880s to the 1920s. Kristin Mary Mahoney delineates the temporal transitory nature of Decadence in examples of Decadent

¹³ Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky, eds., *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics & Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), p. 2.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁶ Marja Härmänmaa and Christopher Nissen, eds., *Decadence, Degeneration, and the End. Studies in the European Fin de Siècle* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Vincent B. Sherry, *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Kristin Mary Mahoney, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ Weir, p. 15.

¹⁸ Laura Marcus, Michèle Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, eds., *Late Victorian into Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 1.

discourse in early Modernism. She situates her definition of Decadence between a 'loosely connected set of aesthetic practices and political postures' rather than perceiving it as one coherent movement.¹⁹ Kirsten MacLeod outlines the extremes of contradiction that are negotiated by Decadence, which is described as neo-Romantic and proto-Modernist, liberal yet proto-fascist, primitive and over-civilized, reactionary yet radical.²⁰ My thesis adds to these pairs of paradoxes, a Decadence defined by its cosmopolitanism and Orientalism, a political paradox which crucially determined the narrative of Decadence between 1880 and 1920. Mahoney's study does no more than touch on the importance of the decline of imperialism and the resurgence of nationalism at the turn of the century, which my thesis explores more fully. Vincent B. Sherry's study defies structures of temporality that he identifies as inherent to the paradox of Decadence. Whilst it celebrates various modes of disintegration, degeneration and decay, nineteenth-century Decadence is a generator for the progressive aesthetics of modernity. The paradoxical notion of Decadence as cultural decline and a motor for progress will be further explored in this thesis.

In addition to the debates on the temporal fluidity of Decadence, international networking, cosmopolitanism and political activism emerge as centres of critical attention within Decadence studies. Matthew Potolsky, Leela Gandhi, and Regenia Gagnier have made readers aware of the extensiveness of Decadent networks on a global scale. Potolsky's work on the interdependence of politics and Decadent literature provides the starting point for my argument. Potolsky describes Decadence as a

¹⁹ Mahoney, p. 4.

²⁰ Kirsten MacLeod, *Fictions of British Decadence: High Art, Popular Writing and the fin de siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 18–19.

‘characteristic mode of reception’.²¹ He evaluates Decadence as a ‘revitalized ideology’²² with a fundamentally international and anti-national counter-culture, ‘defined by a radically cosmopolitan ideal of literary sociability rather than an inward turn toward private aesthetics and exotic sensation’.²³ International communities are formed through the circulation of art and, therefore, defined by artistic tastes rather than by language, geography or ethnic identity. Through the formation of ‘cosmopolitan communities of taste’, Potolsky continues, writers were ‘posing the decadent counterpublic as a subversion of and alternative to received ideas of political community, particularly the nation.’²⁴ In such cosmopolitan networks, Decadent texts share a *lingua franca* in various national literatures.

Whilst Potolsky’s investigation focuses on the movement’s disseminations through ‘translations, imitations, and critical appreciations – all techniques designed to provide a new context for the foreign and unfamiliar’,²⁵ I am interested in the indirect artistic dialogue that took place between European cultures and the East, in the mobility and recycling of Eastern tropes in Decadent fiction, travel writing and periodical publications in England and Germany. Whilst studies on French, English and more recently even Nordic Decadence have produced a large body of criticism, transnational studies on German Decadence have largely been neglected.²⁶ The work undertaken in

²¹ Matthew Potolsky, *The Decadent Republic of Letters: Taste, Politics, and Cosmopolitan Community from Baudelaire to Beardsley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 1.

²² Melanie Hawthorne, ‘Review of Potolsky’s *Decadent Republic*’, on publisher’s website [<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15048.html>] [accessed: 14/04/2017].

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Matthew Potolsky, ‘The Decadent Counterpublic’, *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 48 (2007), 1–25 (p. 25).

²⁵ Potolsky, *The Decadent Republic of Letters*, p. 2.

²⁶ Raymond Furness, ed., *Voices of the Abyss: The Deadalus Book of German Decadence*, trans. by Furness and Mike Mitchell (New York: Hippocrene, 1994) presents a selection of primary texts yet lacks an introduction or contextualization; Robert Vilain, ‘Temporary Aesthetes: Decadence and Symbolism in Germany and Austria’, in *Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and*

this thesis redresses this imbalance by uncovering the indirect dialogues between English and German Decadence. Conditioned by a shared cultural history and philosophical tradition throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, an examination of the perception of the East in these particular two literatures reveals the different roles and purposes of the East in Decadence's encounter with modernity in times of expanding global perspectives in each country's literature.

Leela Gandhi's *Affective Communities* delivers an important contribution to the exploration of the exchange between colonial and European writers. Gandhi rejects imperial binaries of East and West and instead values the cosmopolitan "literariness" in 'late Victorian aestheticism' as an anti-colonial 'critique of Empire'.²⁷ In contrast to imperialist fiction, Oriental Decadence performs an 'unexpected "gesture" of friendship towards all those on the other side of the fence.'²⁸ Whilst Gandhi portrays the collaboration between colonizers and the colonized, this thesis focuses on an inter-European exchange with the East. Building on Gandhi's study, I examine how Decadent literature employed Oriental tropes, not only, as Edward Said claimed, to identify the 'West' and denounce the 'East', but also to build 'New Empires' – imaginative and real communities – that aimed to promote cultural exchange instead of cultural classification.

As part of the scholarly effort to redraw the boundaries of Decadence and literary culture at the turn of the century, Regenia Gagnier has extended the field by considering transnational, transtemporal perspectives reaching beyond a European focus. She conceptualizes Decadence as a 'thought-experiments on the limits of self and

European Perspectives, ed. by Patrick McGuinness (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), pp. 209–24, provides a solid introduction.

²⁷ Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 12.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

other'²⁹ in a global context. Adding to the transnational discourse, the thesis considers not only the European reception of Eastern influence, but also representations of the European other as a figure of cultural resistance; this is the case with Arthur Symons's focus on Gypsies, which is the subject of chapter two. Gagnier defines Decadence as an artistic reaction 'in response to changes or crises *within* various nations and cultures', especially processes of modernization.³⁰ Accordingly, and taking a cue from Gagnier who defines 'Europe as a functional relation rather than an identity',³¹ I will consider Europe as much of a plural entity as the East.

Decadence remains a field open to definition. Contributing to the on-going effort to delineate Decadence's multiplicity, my thesis suggests that the temporally and geographically remote East – despite its subaltern position – offers a key focal point through which major networks of European literatures corresponded, especially at the *fin de siècle*. Orientalism, I argue, constitutes a major part of the definition of Decadence and a point at which Decadence's idiosyncratic style and political dimension meet.

²⁹ Regenia Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization: On the Relationship of Part to Whole, 1859–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 2.

³⁰ Regenia Gagnier, 'Global Literatures of Decadence', in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 11–28 (14). See also Regenia Gagnier, 'The Decadence of the West in Huysmans and Houellebecq: Decadence in the Longue Durée', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 60 (2017), 419–30.

³¹ Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*, p. 26.

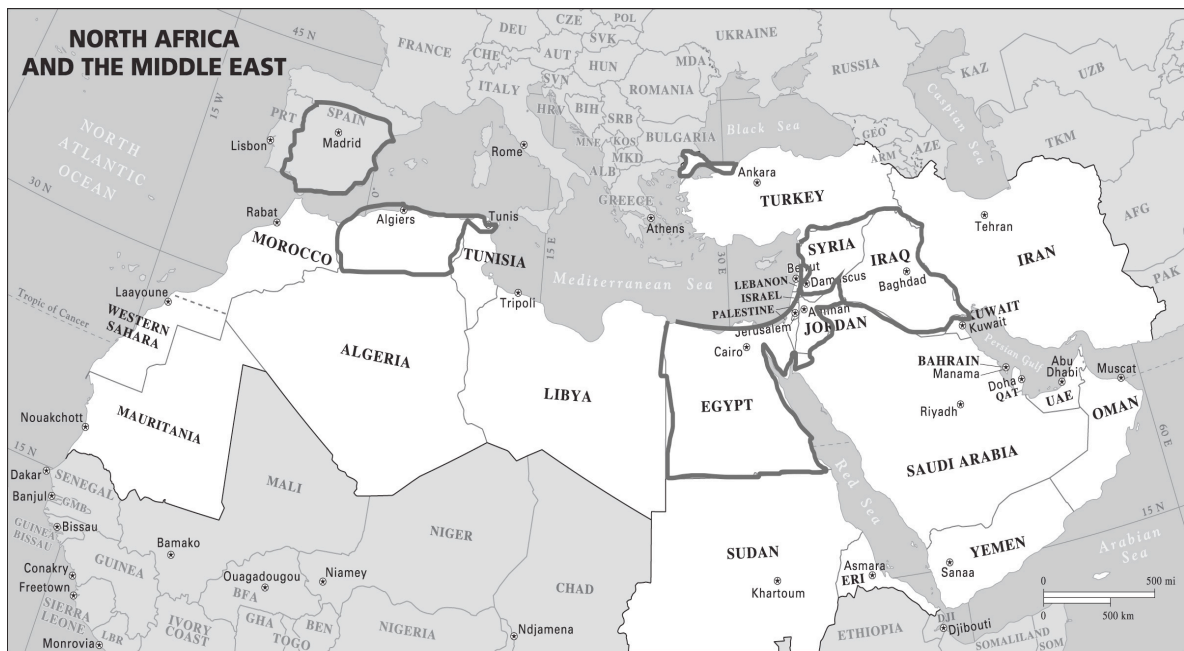


Fig. 1 Map of geographical and historical ‘East’ covered by this thesis: Moorish Spain, Algeria, Egypt, Palestine/Israel (The Holy Land), Iraq/Syria (Babylonia, Assyria), Istanbul (Byzantium; Constantinople)/Turkey (Ottoman Empire, 1299–1922).

The Pluralities of the East

I take a special interest in the literary function of the East in Decadent literature, specifically in its use of ideas and motifs originating from the Middle Eastern and North African regions. Yet the East examined in this study is a cultural category; it defies geographical boundaries. The term 'East', with its aesthetic focus, is preferred to 'Orient' with its more historical, political, and sociological connotations. It is not a geographical entity but a cultural construct, an international meeting point for the Decadent imagination. The term 'the East' denotes a collective cosmopolitan concept. As a melting pot of cultures, languages as varied as Persian, Arabic, Greek and Turkish, and historical periodizations including Jewish, Islamic and pre-Islamic Arabic cultural histories, the East is a transnational and ahistorical concept. The multiple changes the term underwent are evident in its ever-changing definitions through the centuries from 'Byzantium', the 'Levant', the 'Holy Land', and the 'Orient' to the 'Middle East' (fig. 1).

As such, the consideration of the plurality of the East(s) plays an important role in understanding the hybrid character of Decadent literature. Literary figures such as Cleopatra, a cosmopolitan go-between connecting East and West, the Gypsy, the eternal Oriental wanderer, and the Jew, as 'Europe's own Orientals',³² embody this mobility and the impossibility of national fixity. Even Venice, Spain, and Vienna, despite the lack of a geographical pattern to connect them, were frequently conceptualized as meeting points of East and West by various writers including John Ruskin, Arthur Symons, Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Thomas Mann due to their

³² John M. Efron, 'From Mitteleuropa to the Middle East: Orientalism through a Jewish Lens', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 94:3 (2004), 490–520 (p. 491).

historical links with the Arab world.³³ Even though my argument hinges on an East-West opposition, it aims to emphasize the hybridity favoured by Decadent writing in its many versions of the East. I therefore situate this thesis in a framework of cosmopolitan theory that dovetails with postcolonial criticism but represents the European angle of my project. Supplementing Edward Said's critique of the Western fabrication of 'the Orient', this thesis highlights the active role played by the East in engendering European culture.

Since its first publication in 1978, Said's *Orientalism*, reinforced by the subsequent publication of *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), has caused generations of critical commentators to dissect and debate its originality and its limiting bias. Yet, even today Said's scholarship has lost none of its relevance.³⁴ Said's work provides a definition of the East as an 'other place', a mirror to the European identity. Questioning this strict dichotomy, my thesis shows a plurality of Easts that emerge from a comparative study of several European identities. As much as Said made 'the West' responsible for universalising the East without discrimination of historical and cultural difference, his argument subsumed the West and Western receptions of the East into the notion of a universal Orient.³⁵ My thesis addresses and corrects this perceived homogeneity of the East in the context of Decadent literature.

Said's primary focus on literature from the late eighteenth century to mid-nineteenth century bypassed a focused examination of Orientalism in Decadent

³³ James R. Hodkinson and John Walker, eds., *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013).

³⁴ Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003); Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Random House, 1993).

³⁵ Abdulla Al-Dabbagh, *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010); Edmund Burke III, and David Prochaska, eds., *Genealogies of Orientalism: History, Theory, Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008); Ziad Elmarsafy, Anna Bernard, and David Attwell, eds., *Debating Orientalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

literature. As a ‘marginalized’ sub-strand of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century canonized strands of Victorian and Modernist literature, Decadence’s encounter with the East complicates notions of the ‘other’ and of simple binaries. Whilst being imbued with European prejudices about the East, Decadent writing arguably embraces Orientalism as a form of cosmopolitan outreach between different national literary traditions. The East in Decadent literature provided a space for the development of an aesthetic, but also for social critique. It is a means to express difference, anti-realism, the grotesque, the ornamental, in short a way of ‘otherness’ many Decadents assumed as ‘the ongoing space for oppositional discourse.’³⁶

What are the implications of Said’s Orientalist critique in the context of Decadent literature at the *fin de siècle*? What is the relationship between aesthetics, criticism and political engagement in Decadent texts? Recent publications addressing these questions have dealt with actual (post)colonial encounters with Decadent literature. Elleke Boehmer examines the ‘cross-border poetics’ and ‘self-orientalization’ in the Anglo-Indian Decadence of Sarojini Naidu and Manmohan Ghose.³⁷ Exploring the postcolonial legacy of *fin-de-siècle* culture, Robert Stilling investigates the politics of aestheticism in the service of anticolonial critique in works by Agha Shahid Ali, Derek Walcott, Bernardine Evaristo and others. He argues that ‘decadence persists as a key term in the ongoing development of postcolonial thought’.³⁸ Stefano Evangelista’s reevaluation of *Japonisme* in the reception of European Decadence in Japan exemplified by Lafcadio Hearn, translator of Gautier, illuminates a reciprocal exchange between the

³⁶ Potolsky, ‘The Decadent Counterpublic’, p. 3.

³⁷ Elleke Boehmer, *Indian Arrivals 1870–1915 Networks of British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 13; p. 23.

³⁸ Robert Stilling, *Beginning at the End: Decadence, Modernism, and Postcolonial Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), p. 21.

Far East and Western cultures.³⁹ Linda Zatlin's study of the influence of Japanese printing techniques on Aubrey Beardsley's drawings demonstrates this East-West interrelation for the arts and material culture.⁴⁰ Regenia Gagnier's explorations of the Chinese decadence of the T'ang period widens our understanding of Decadence's dependence on the oppositional 'other'.⁴¹ Even Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) has been examined as a commentary on anxieties sparked by migration from Eastern Europe into Britain at the *fin de siècle*, a development which threatened to transform the imperial body of Britain through the mixing with foreign blood.⁴²

While many scholars have addressed the literary encounters with colonial cultures at the *fin de siècle*, the vital influence of the Middle East on Decadent writing, specifically, has so far been neglected. My study contributes to the postcolonial assessment of Decadence in so far as it provides a perspective on the European treatment of the Middle East in Decadent writing. It also, and more importantly, scrutinizes Decadence as a cosmopolitan literature of exchange. Its uses of Orientalism aim at inclusivity and not necessarily at the domination of foreign cultures.⁴³

³⁹ Stefano Evangelista, *The Love of Strangers: Literary Cosmopolitanism in the English Fin de Siècle* (forthcoming, 2019).

⁴⁰ Linda Zatlin, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁴¹ Gagnier, 'Global Literatures of Decadence', p.15.

⁴² Stephen D. Arata, 'The Occidental Tourist: "Dracula" and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization', *Victorian Studies*, 33: 4 (1990), 621–645.

⁴³ See Bryan S. Turner's defence of 'cosmopolitanism as the ethical world-view of scholars in a global context, where cultural hybridity and multiculturalism are beginning to re-write the traditional Orientalist agenda. Cosmopolitanism can be defended morally, because exclusive national loyalties and ethnic solidarities are more likely to be points of conflict and violence in culturally diverse societies. We need an ideology of membership, therefore, which will celebrate the uncertainty of belonging, where our "final vocabularies" are never final. One can suggest that the components of cosmopolitan virtue are as follows: irony both as a method and as a mentality; emotional distance and reflexivity with respect to our own cultural values; scepticism towards grand narratives of modern ideologies; transcultural sympathies and interests; care for other cultures arising from an awareness of their precarious condition and acceptance of cultural hybridization; support for positive programmes of multiculturalism; and an ecumenical appreciation of other religions. Intercultural sensitivities and the need to interact constantly with strangers promote irony as the most prized norm of wit and principle of taste. For Said [...], irony is a useful word to use alongside "oppositional" and "critical".'

Likewise, the German contribution of Orientalizing works to a European canon of Decadence has not received enough critical attention. Over the last three decades, German criticism has reacted to Said's omission of a discussion of German Orientalism more broadly. In 1982, Bernard Lewis had already confronted Said for this very reason claiming that 'a history of Arabic studies in Europe without the Germans makes as much sense as would a history of European music or philosophy with the same omission', an attack which struck Said in 1985 as 'superficial'.⁴⁴ Since then, numerous studies have outlined the contribution of German Orientalist scholarship to the European imperial project.

Nina Berman has considered Germany's history from the crusades to Germany's colonial possessions in Africa in the nineteenth century and, as a result, has shown that Said's claim that Germany's relation to the East was 'never actual' is not tenable.⁴⁵ She recovers the 'complex interaction between various forces' in Germany's intercultural contact with the Middle East.⁴⁶ Andrea Polaschegg's study emphasizes the emergence of a particular German literary aesthetic of the East in the nineteenth century, most prominently represented by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's artistic flight to the Persian Orient, in dialogue with the classical texts of the fourteenth-century poet Hāfiz.⁴⁷ I will use her observation that Orientalism is nationally specific yet 'gesamteuropäisch' [pan-European] as a premise for the analysis of my German authors, arguing that German

See Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism: Early Sources Volume I, Readings in Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 25–26.

⁴⁴ Bernard Lewis, 'The Question of Orientalism', *The New York Review of Books*, (24 June 1982), pp. 49–56 (p. 51). Edward Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', *Cultural Critique*, 1 (1985), 89–107 (p. 90).

⁴⁵ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011), p. 239.

⁴⁷ Andrea Polaschegg, *Der andere Orientalismus. Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 1–6. See also: Katharina Mommsen, *Goethe and the Poets of Arabia*, trans. by Michael Metzger (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014).

Decadents from 1880 to 1920 engaged in what Said had identified in the work of their French predecessors.

Whilst Said's postcolonial theory is merely a springboard for this thesis, my argument considers Decadent writing under three premises initially set out in *Orientalism*: First, it explores the notion of blurred boundaries and the transformation of aesthetic writing into political ideology and agendas. Can Decadent Orientalism be considered a purely aesthetic project or are socio-political undercurrents present? How do Decadent texts construct the East and do they make use of resistance to the 'othering' of the East in these constructions? Second, the thesis examines the composite nature of the images of the East. What images represent the East? How do national histories influence and radicalize aesthetic notions of inclusivity and exclusivity? What characterizes the relationship between English and German Decadent Orientalism?

In the period under consideration, several historical events condition the perception of what can be understood by the term 'East'. The definitions of the East vary considerably in England and Germany, its geographical demarcation shifting from the 'Middle' to the 'Near' East. Situated at the heart of the European continent, Germany took on the role of mediator between East and West by emphasizing the continuity of cultural convergence. Germany maintained, as Suzanne L. Marchand confirms, religious, ethnic and political links between the East and Europe 'from the earliest times', deflating a simplistic binary perception of East and West.⁴⁸ My

⁴⁸ Suzanne L. Marchand, *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. xxii. The following is a selection of studies responding to Said's omission of German Orientalism: Andrea Fuchs-Sumiyoshi, *Orientalismus in der deutschen Literatur: Untersuchungen zu Werken des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, von Goethes "West-östlichem Divan" bis Thomas Manns "Joseph"-Tetralogie* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984); Nina Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonismus und Moderne: Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997); Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004); Andrea Polaschegg (2005); Ursula Wokoeck, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800–1945* (London: Routledge,

understanding of German Orientalism follows Marchand in the emphasis on an East-West relationship, which shares a common cultural and economic history. While Said claims that Germany's interest in the East was of lesser economic urgency than that of England, Marchand maintains that 'German-speaking polities have had a very long and important relationship with both the Holy Land and the Ottoman Empire, and the Wilhelmine Empire did have colonial interests, and even colonial territories [...] in the East.'⁴⁹ Moreover, Germany had a strong interest in developing the study of Oriental linguistics and Islamic studies during the years 1890 to 1914.⁵⁰ Marchand maintains that 'Germans set the pace in the most prestigious of [humanities], classics, theology, history, archaeology, oriental studies, and philosophy'.⁵¹ Whilst Germany had largely been locked out of the competitive struggle for major treasures in Egypt, Syria and India under British rule, it nevertheless participated in the European antiquities rush. While Marchand's study concentrates on scholars and intellectuals, my thesis looks at writers who perceived themselves to be artists and journalists. For these Decadents, it was less a scholarly interest in ancient manuscripts or theological texts that captured their imagination, but a more a general Decadent 'curiosity without wisdom'⁵² in the East that was transmitted through literature, fine arts, Oriental decorative arts and material objects.

England's relationship to the Middle East in the long nineteenth century is defined by three major historical events: the explorations of the Holy Land in the 1860s, the British annexation of Cyprus (in agreement with the Ottoman Empire) in 1878, and

2009); Robert Lemon, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-critique in the Habsburg Fin de siècle* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 2011); Debra N. Prager, *Orienting the Self: The German Literary Encounter with the Eastern Other* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014).

⁴⁹ Marchand, *German Orientalism*, p. xix

⁵⁰ Wokoeck, p. 14.

⁵¹ Suzanne L. Marchand, 'Central Europe', in *The Fin-de-siècle World*, pp. 131–49 (p. 146).

⁵² Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', p. 859.

the Anglo-Egyptian War in 1882 that established British rule in Egypt until 1936. Germany's imperial involvement in Middle Eastern politics started slightly later. Following the unification of Germany after the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-1871, Germany's military mission began a more active political and economic engagement with the Eastern question. The so-called *Drang nach Osten* [Drive to the East], promoted in the early 1880s, advocated cultural and economic penetration of the Ottoman realm to achieve imperial parity with France and Britain in Germany. The Ottoman Sultan Abdülhamid II (1842–1918), who ruled from 1876 to 1909, turned to the Germans as a protective force against the British after the British occupied the Ottoman territories of Cyprus and Egypt. Kaiser Wilhelm's intention to expand German influences overseas through the construction of a naval fleet irritated Britain, which feared for its colonies in North Africa and India. From 1880 to 1918, German Middle-Eastern policy fostered close bonds with the Turkish state. Germany supported the Ottomans in the Turkish-Greek War over Crete in 1897, an affront to Britain. The Kaiser corroborated this provocation a year later during a state visit to the Ottoman Empire in late 1898:

the Kaiser even went so far as to proclaim himself the protector of the world's three hundred million Muslims, thus allying the German Empire with a Pan-Islamism that he hoped would incite revolts against Britain's global empire by the ninety-six million Muslims living within it.⁵³

After the turn of the century and with Queen Victoria's death in 1901, the British Empire was already beginning to weaken, whilst Germany was rapidly rising in its military and economic power in the 1910s.⁵⁴ Planning a connection between Berlin and

⁵³ Alexander M. Zukas, 'Germany and the Middle East', in *Encyclopaedia of Western Colonialism since 1450, Vol. II*, ed. by Thomas Benjamin (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), pp. 513–517 (p. 515).

⁵⁴ E. J. Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), pp. 104–8.

Baghdad through an Imperial Railway Project, the Wilhelmine Empire established even stronger political ties with the Ottoman Empire. Accordingly, Marchand and David Lindenfeld argue that Germany actually experienced a “*commencement*” rather than a “*fin*” *de siècle*’.⁵⁵ German images of the ‘East’ seem more detached from an expansionist colonial history in comparison to their English counterexamples. Germany’s comparatively late leap into the colonial race favoured an economic, as well as political, allegiance outside of European ties. Threatened by these developments, which were considered by the British as opening an easy passageway to India, Egypt became the main site from which Britain attacked the Ottoman forces and Germany in 1914. As much as the Middle East was created as a new political battleground by European external conflicts at the turn of the century, it increasingly also became a treasure trove for European cultural productions.

The mobility of, and alienation caused by, the exchange of non-economic goods had a prominent visual presence, providing a material metaphor for the displacement of Eastern images that reoccurs in Decadent literature: in 1896 the German Colonial Exhibition brought the East to Germany through the exhibition of a large-scale reproduction of Cairo city and the pyramids in the Berlin suburb of Treptow. Equally, the visual consequences of the wave of Egyptomania that swept through England after the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian war fascinated and alienated European audiences. In a comparable way, the placement of the pyramids in Treptow and the Egyptian monuments in the British Museum embodied the way in which Eastern tropes travelled and were integrated into European literatures through aesthetic translations.

⁵⁵ Marchand and David F. Lindenfeld, eds., *Germany at the Fin de Siècle: Culture, Politics, and Ideas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), p. 1.

Beyond Said: Decadent Cosmopolitanism

Despite the everlasting topicality of Said's observations, critical discourse in the last two decades has progressed to consider cosmopolitanism as a theoretical framework that elaborates on the shortcomings of Said's arguments and aims to pull down cultural hierarchies. Abandoning a colonial perspective, Gandhi, in her emphasis on 'affective communities' beyond the nation, shifts the focus of her argument to a consideration of 'forms of anti-imperialism that emerged in Europe.'⁵⁶ More recently, a rethinking of cosmopolitanism has led a number of scholars to redefine its eighteenth-century roots. Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta review cosmopolitanism on the basis of class and migration. Opposing a nineteenth-century model based on the detachment of nationality by choice, as Amanda Anderson explained, they argue for a revision of cosmopolitanism as a condition resulting of economic and political hardship.⁵⁷ Overcoming the binary setup of West and East, universal cosmopolitanism becomes a critical concept defined by an investment in national pluralism, multiculturalism and anti-imperial thought.

Critics such as John MacKenzie, Aijaz Ahmad and Ali Behdad have questioned Said's tendency to generalize, to assume a single European identity as well as a unified Oriental identity. They have challenged the notion that the keen fascination with the East has always been motivated by imperialist intentions alone.⁵⁸ As Alexander Lyon

⁵⁶ Gandhi, p. 1.

⁵⁷ Amanda Anderson, *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001); Potolsky (2012); the 'Fin-de-Siècle Cosmopolitanism' issue in *Comparative Critical Studies* 10:2 (2013), ed. by Stefano Evangelista and Richard Hibbit; Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta, eds., *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York: New York University Press, 2017).

⁵⁸ Aijaz Ahmad, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992). Ali Behdad, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994). John

Macfie and many before him realized, ‘European images of the Orient were far more complex, irregular, discontinuous and heterogeneous than Said appears at times to suppose.’⁵⁹ In juxtaposing Orientalism and cosmopolitanism as two concepts of cultural inclusion, this thesis demonstrates how the acceptance of an inherent hybrid composition of any one culture complicates the notions of belonging and nationalism. The works of literature and journalism analysed in this thesis are composites of cultural fragments. Decadent literature emerges as a quintessentially cosmopolitan literature.

Rebecca L. Walkowitz’s understanding of Decadence as a mediator of Modernism through its cosmopolitan style and attitude reflects my approach. Walkowitz establishes critical cosmopolitanism as a concept that reinforces a self-reflexive aversion to notions of cosmopolitan superiority and the natural assumption of a centre-periphery trajectory. From this, my thesis infers Decadent cosmopolitan to mean a ‘cosmopolitanism of dissenting individualism and decadent refusal’, a refusal to be limited by national, racial, or ethical or even moral belonging.⁶⁰

Walkowitz applies the phrase ‘critical cosmopolitanism’ to denote a threefold model of, firstly, a Kantian philosophy of supra-national detachment from the ideal of nationhood in favour of a universal and global community; secondly, an anthropological model explicating the individual’s voluntary attachment to multiple cultures; and lastly, a vernacular cosmopolitanism that implies an exploration of social deviance and affiliation with otherness in urban sub-cultures. Walkowitz defines ‘critical

M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 211: ‘[...] the influence of those oriental arts was at its most radical at precisely the supposed high point of European imperialism in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries. Indeed, they were often embraced by artists, [...] who were most out of sympathy with dominant political ideas.’

⁵⁹ Alexander Lyon Macfie, *Orientalism* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), p. 215.

⁶⁰ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 5.

cosmopolitanism’ to include such ‘practices as *flânerie*, dance hall entertainment, department store shopping and cultural exhibitions.’⁶¹ Decadent cosmopolitanism consists of a syncretic blend of all three models, providing the foundation for the arguments in each of my chapters.

The case of Decadent cosmopolitanism is intriguing because it raises questions about inclusivity and exclusivity that the widely accepted Kantian model of universalism ignores. As Walkowitz puts it, ‘the decadent tradition of aestheticism, dandyism, and flirtation has involved gestures of Eurocentrism and frivolity’, which oppose a wholesome Enlightenment model of cosmopolitanism.⁶² East-West binaries are still in place. Yet, under the umbrella of aesthetic creation, they do not operate in opposition, but are subsumed into one artwork.

The idea of a hierarchy of cultures inherent in the term hybridity was extensively explored in postcolonial theory. Defined by Homi K. Bhabha as a colonial ‘metonymy of presence’,⁶³ hybridity is considered interchangeable with Orientalist exploitation. Yet as I argue, a self-imposed cosmopolitan hybridity, as practised by authors such as Oscar Wilde, is not necessarily a tool of imperial domination. Todd Kontje suggests a revision of Orientalism through a rethinking of ‘the essentialism of ethnic nationalism’. He argues that Orientalism provides the space for ‘cross-cultural contact as a series of collisions between self-contained units.’ These units, nations, are engaged in an ‘ongoing process of global exchange’, which brings forth endless forms of new hybridity, new spaces that Michel Foucault described as heterotopia.⁶⁴ In my study, the

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 12; p. 9.

⁶² Ibid., p. 14.

⁶³ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 89–90.

⁶⁴ Todd Kontje, ‘Germany’s Local Orientalisms’, in *Deploying Orientalism*, pp. 55–78 (p. 55).

East and Decadent literature provide exactly these heterotopic spaces in which the boundaries of nationality are porous.

Wilde voiced a Kantian stance in his universalist view of cosmopolitanism, questioning the idea of a uniformity of national identity:

It is Criticism that makes us cosmopolitan. [...] [T]he emotions will not make us cosmopolitan, any more than the greed for gain could do so. It is only by the cultivation of the habit of intellectual criticism that we shall be able to rise superior to race prejudices. Goethe – you will not misunderstand what I say – was a German of the Germans. He loved his country – no man more so. Its people were dear to him; and he led them. Yet, when the iron hoof of Napoleon trampled upon vineyard and cornfield, his lips were silent. “How can one write songs of hatred without hating?” he said to Eckermann, “and how could I, to whom culture and barbarism are alone of importance, hate a nation which is among the most cultivated of the earth, and to which I owe so great a part of my own cultivation.” This note, sounded in the modern world by Goethe first, will become, I think, the starting point for the cosmopolitanism of the future. Criticism will annihilate race-prejudices, by insisting upon the unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms. [...] Intellectual criticism will bind Europe together in bonds far closer than those that can be forged by shopman or sentimentalist.⁶⁵

Arguing from a nineteenth-century perspective, Wilde advocated a ‘unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms’, a cosmopolitanism of the future in which intellectual belonging would bring down cultural boundaries. Nationality is thus a composite, cosmopolitan concept. To Wilde, nationality must be understood as a hybrid whole sprung from several shared European traditions. This conflation of specific national traits, however, challenges the independent identity of cultures subject to European imperialism that Said’s work ventured to reclaim. Wilde’s idea of a fluid cosmopolitan identity is visible in his Orientalising Decadent texts.

The first forays into the Orient by French Romanticism, which Said critically reviewed in *Orientalism*, opened the East to the later generations of English and

⁶⁵ Oscar Wilde, ‘The Critic as Artist’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV, Criticism*, pp. 124–206 (pp. 202–03). Wilde writes of: ‘[...] that Aufklärung, that enlightening which dawned on Germany in the last century, and to which our own culture owes so great a debt’, p. 186.

German Decadents of the 1880 and 1890s.⁶⁶ Their cosmopolitan enthusiasm to roam and explore foreign cultures, both physically and imaginatively, pairs Decadent cosmopolitanism uncomfortably with Orientalism. In comparison to the Romantic enthusiasm for Oriental subjects, the twinship of these concepts in Decadence raises questions about the artistic purity of an art for art's sake principle, questions which this thesis addresses. Considering Walkowitz's recovery of the fundamental importance of cosmopolitan Decadence for the emergence of 'established' movements, this thesis reconsiders the position of Decadence as a minor sub-strand at the periphery of literary history or as a colony of larger literary categories such as Romanticism and international Modernism. A comparison of England and Germany, countries with very different colonial histories, will distil the very different characters of European Easts in *fin-de-siècle* Decadent writing and thereby demonstrate Said's postulation of a 'decentred consciousness', which his own critique, despite its best efforts, fails to fully deliver.⁶⁷

Nineteenth-Century Literary Exoticism in France, England and Germany

The reception of French notions of the Orient was fundamental for the creation of literary exoticism in England and Germany. Long before English and German Decadents took an interest in the Orient, French authors and artists of the mid-nineteenth century feasted on the cultural imports brought to France through Napoleon's

⁶⁶ Specifically Napoleon's campaign in Egypt and Syria (1798–1801).

⁶⁷ Said, 'Orientalism Reconsidered', p. 105. See also Behdad, *Belated Travelers*, pp. 10–12: '[...] the formalization of Orientalism as a coherent and stable system of representations unwittingly functions as a reification of unequal power relations between Europe and the Orient [...]. Said's postcolonial discourse of victimhood paradoxically positions itself within the confining matrix of identification it strives to subvert [...].'

Campaign. In the first half of the nineteenth century, many French writers, including Gautier (Spain 1843 and Constantinople 1853) and Flaubert (Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, Turkey 1849–1851; Egypt, Algeria and Levant 1858), travelled throughout the Orient and captured their ‘hunger for the East’, as Gilman puts it, in their travelogues and fiction tinged by sensationalism, nostalgia and exoticism.⁶⁸

In 1930, Mario Praz examined the French roots of the Decadent exploration of the East in his book *The Romantic Agony*. Praz locates the recurrent ‘voluptuous, gory exoticism’⁶⁹ of Decadence in a genealogy of superhuman images and types such as Hérodiade, Salome, Salammbô, Cleopatra, the Sphinx, Carmen, the Queen of Sheba, Semiramis, Heliogabalus, the Gypsy, and the Jew as imagined by Baudelaire, Gustave Moreau, Marcel Schwob, the Brothers Goncourt, Gautier, Flaubert, Huysmans, Mallarmé, and also writers from the next generation such as Swinburne, Gabriele D’Annunzio, André Gide, and of course Wilde. Due to its French legacy, Decadence was considered a ‘foreign commodity’ in nineteenth-century English and German literature.⁷⁰ With a focus on French literature, Said has demonstrated the complicity of culture in the European imperial project. In *Orientalism*, he takes up Praz’s study and points to examples in French Decadent literature such as Flaubert’s escapism into sexual fantasies in *Salammbô* (1862), which helped to promote the cliché of a debauched hyper-sexualized Orient.⁷¹

In England, a wave of publications rekindled interest in literary Orientalism from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Edward FitzGerald’s 1859 translation of the

⁶⁸ Gilman, p. 94.

⁶⁹ Mario Praz, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. by Angus Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 322.

⁷⁰ Constable, Denisoff and Potolsky, *Perennial Decay*, p. 10.

⁷¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 180.

Persian poetry by Omar Khayyám gained wide popularity. With over three hundred separate editions counted in England alone before 1929,⁷² it sparked a true Orient cult at the *fin de siècle* that was perpetuated by partial translations through Richard Le Gallienne, Frederick Rolfe (Baron Corvo) and Justin Huntly McCarthy, Wilde's friend. Marina Warner relates, that in the same way as their French predecessors, English *fin-de-siècle* editions of the proto-Orientalist reference book, *The Arabian Nights*, were 'stuffed' with added material by 'excited heady orientalist fantasists',⁷³ for example by Richard Burton, Edward W. Lane, and J. C. V. Mardrus, a Cairo-born aesthete and friend of Gide.⁷⁴ The new translations of these Eastern stories have, as Warner explicates, a 'decidedly decadent and Symbolist character, striking the French Orientalist note of Gustave Flaubert in *Salammbô*, and of Oscar Wilde in *Salome*.' Many images revelled in and exacerbated Oriental metaphors known from the Biblical Song of Solomon:

a woman's breasts can be round like pomegranates, her sex like 'a husked sesame', her neck 'a cake for a king', her teeth 'a row of pearls set in coral'; lips are sugared and skin perfumed [...], the local market overflows with scented oils and waters [...].⁷⁵

Without question, these images came to cement Decadence's reputation as a literature indulging in risqué representations of eroticism and sexuality drawing on (mainly male) Orientalist fantasies.

Yet, arguing against Said, John MacKenzie observes that the late nineteenth-century literary Decadents, and Orientalists for that matter, freely acknowledged that

⁷² Ambrose George Potter, *A Bibliography of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (London: Ingpen and Grant, 1929), p. 123.

⁷³ Marina Warner, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States & the Arabian Nights* (London: Vintage, 2012), p. 18.

⁷⁴ For a more detailed analysis of the role print culture played in the perception of Arabia in Britain, see: Andrew C. Long, *Reading Arabia: British Orientalism in the Age of Mass Publication, 1880–1930* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014).

⁷⁵ Warner, p. 19.

they were operating on ‘perception rather than actuality’.⁷⁶ Wilde, for example, analysed the mechanism of Western cultural projection of the East long before Said; to him ‘the whole of Japan is pure invention. [...] the Japanese people are [...] simply a mode of style, an exquisite fancy of art.’⁷⁷ Unlike other prominent Orientalists such as Edward Henry Palmer, Gertrude Bell, Flinders Petrie, and T. E. Lawrence, to name only a few, the authors discussed in this thesis were ‘armchair cosmopolitans’,⁷⁸ who judged the ‘East’ from a distance or through an artistic filter. Despite being keen travellers, mostly within the limits of Europe, their writing imagined the East (or multiple Easts) not to ‘facilitate rule, but to encourage an invigorating contamination.’⁷⁹ While this does not remedy the fact that they *were* Orientalists, their works are not imported texts nor do they claim to portray the East to a Western audience in the form of a reliable, differentiated, realistic travel-inventory of the Orient. Rather, they intentionally employ images of heightened eroticism, violence and material excess, those criticized by Said in *Orientalism*, as an aesthetic concept of resistance.

In contrast to the writings of the French Romantics or (pre-)Victorian writers examined by Said, Decadent discourse imaginatively inhabited quasi-subaltern perspectives. Despite their often privileged societal positions as public intellectuals, critics, editors and playwrights, Decadent writers positioned themselves, to borrow Bhabha’s phrase, ‘in-between’ – however not in-between the imperial ranking of cultures but between the accepted conventions and the bohemian fringes of their own

⁷⁶ MacKenzie, p. 210.

⁷⁷ Wilde, ‘The Decay of Lying’, p. 98.

⁷⁸ Michèle Mendelssohn, ‘Reading Aestheticism, Decadence, and Cosmopolitanism’, in *Late Victorian into Modern*, pp. 482–96 (p. 494).

⁷⁹ MacKenzie, p. 211.

societies.⁸⁰ Decadent circles formed and analysed marginal groups predominantly within metropolitan cultures. Decadence's self-positioning as a 'counterculture', which is characterized by a deliberate self-orientalising or self-exotization, was a proactive method of 'othering'. As a result, the exotic attracted bourgeois resistance and made Decadence, as Julia Brown notes, a reflection of 'the rage of the philistine against the unfamiliar.'⁸¹ Decadent exoticism, therefore, can be understood as a space for drafting selfhood through deliberate affiliation with elements that exist outside the boundaries of accepted norms, such as the nation.

Whilst moving in the avant-garde circles of the *fin-de-siècle* capitals of Paris, London and Berlin, the Decadent writers this study examines are authors who chose to write from the periphery of society, either belonging to or seeking affiliation with minorities and outsider groups such as homosexuals, foreigners, travelling communities and artistic metropolitan sub-cultures. Unlike colonial authors such as Rudyard Kipling, Joseph Conrad or Robert Louis Stevenson, who upheld and promoted the values of Englishness, Decadents, whilst being part of the intellectual elite of their day, held the status of the nineteenth-century 'other', threatening the integrity of a healthy nation.

In his polemic *Entartung* of 1892/93 (translated into English in 1895 as *Degeneration*),⁸² Max Nordau contributed to the conflation of the artistic Decadence with the notion of cultural decline. Embodying the 'dusk of the nations' (2), as Nordau labelled Baudelaire, Wagner, Ruskin, Rossetti, Zola, Nietzsche and Wilde, these 'degenerates' lacked, comparable to Said's description of Eurocentric stereotypes of the 'Orientals', all 'sense of morality and of right or wrong. For them there exists no law,

⁸⁰ Bhabha, p. 1.

⁸¹ Julia Prewitt Brown, *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1997), p. 30.

⁸² Max Nordau, *Degeneration*, translated from the 2nd German ed. (London: William Heinemann, 1896). Page numbers are given in brackets and relate to this edition.

no decency, no modesty' (18) but rather a disproportional 'emotionalism' (26). As Nordau put it, the Decadents 'try to present something that they are not' (9), seeking refuge in a post-Romantic 'East' (74) and in its decorations. It is easy to identify a degenerate if his house resembles 'an Oriental bazaar with Kurd carpets, Bedouin chests, Circassian narghilehs and Indian lacquered caskets' (10).⁸³

In an inversion of Eastern and Western clichés, Nordau accused Richard Wagner of initiating 'hysterically-minded Germans into the mysteries of Turkish Kef [merriment]' and, as Nordau goes on, 'the Oriental knows how favourable the sight of his arabesques is to "Kef"—that dreamy state in which Reason is lulled to sleep, and crazy Imagination alone rules as mistress of the house' (211). The Decadent pilgrim to Bayreuth 'became a hadji! Oriental sages so well know the peculiar vanity of the hadjis, that one of their proverbs contains an express warning against the pious man who has been thrice to Mecca' (213). Through this comparison, Nordau echoed contemporary fears of a downfall of Western culture. Nordau anticipated an immanent self-afflicted disintegration of European society through Aestheticism and Decadence marked by an unhealthy perversity and exoticism, which could only be overcome by a vitalist programme.⁸⁴

In an interesting parallel, the defenders of the Arabic cultural renaissance, the so-called Al-Nahda occurring in 1892 almost simultaneously with debates about cultural degeneration in Europe, were keen to cleanse their literary canons of explicit, 'decadent' material. The supporters of Al-Nahda condemned the European Decadents

⁸³ Josephine M. Guy notes in 'Commentary', *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV, Criticism*, p. 382, that Wilde's 'sense of the importance of Islamic decorative art also found expression in his Tite Street home; Vyvyan Wilde recalled that the "general décor" of the smoking room was a "mixture of the Far East and Morocco".'

⁸⁴ Walter Pache, *Degeneration-Regeneration: Beiträge zur Literatur-und Kulturgeschichte zwischen Dekadenz und Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000), p. 1.

who were attracted to the Arabic classics, for example the Abbasids' 'love-and-debauchery poetry', which featured accounts of homosexuality and pederasty. New and erotically explicit translations of *The Arabian Nights* from the French into English by the Arabist Richard Burton in 1885–1887 were published by Leonard Smithers and caused a scandal in Victorian England.⁸⁵ The translation into German by Felix Paul Greve in 1912–1913, translator of Wilde's works, helped to manifest its reputation as a source book for Oriental stereotypes adopted by the European Decadence. Conversely, these stereotypes were largely projected back onto the Europeans travelling the Orient like Gautier, Flaubert, and Burton; or, in the 1890s, like Gide and Wilde, who were seeking sexual adventures and illicit pleasures. These 'decadents' came to define an image of the decaying West, which opposed the image of the Arabic culture the leaders of the Al-Nahda sought to foster.⁸⁶

The complexities of questions such as who is the discriminator and when do aesthetics gain political significance are not always as easy to explain in a binary East-West model as Said liked to suggest, especially in the context of Decadence. The previous example in which Nordau, a Hungarian Jew and co-founder of the World Zionist Organization, attacks the decline of Western culture, successfully subverts the roles of subaltern victimhood and mechanisms of Western hegemony. The same is true for the Decadents' identification with the 'other'. I want to suggest that the Decadents, despite being active Orientalists, also tried to recover and include the 'other' on grounds that they themselves held a twofold position in their respective societies. Attributes commonly assigned to the 'Oriental' as found in Said are traditional characteristics with

⁸⁵ Colette Colligan, "'Esoteric Pornography': Sir Richard Burton's Arabian Nights and the origins of Pornography", *Victorian Review*, 28:2 (2002), 31–64. Smithers also published Wilde, and Beardsley's and Symons's journal *The Savoy*.

⁸⁶ Jens Hanssen, 'The Middle East', in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, pp. 266–83 (p. 277).

which the nature of the Decadent degenerate is described: the ‘underground version’ of civilized society, ‘irrational, aberrant, backward, [...] inauthentic, passive, feminine and sexually corrupt.’⁸⁷ Hema Chari notes that ‘[...] *decadence* and *Orientalism* – have become interchangeable signifiers, defining and decoding each other in literary and critical theories’.⁸⁸ The registers of Decadent, Aestheticist, Symbolist and Saidian Orientalist discourse therefore often intertwine.

Literary Collections of the East

At the turn of the century, Decadent writers collecting the ‘exotic’ (be it words or objects) were heavily involved in cultural stereotyping and Orientalist practice. I examine this reception of Eastern influence in the work of four authors linked to the European Decadence: as cosmopolitan aesthetes, Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), Arthur Symons (1865–1945) and their German counterparts Paul Scheerbart (1863–1915) and Stefan George (1868–1933), based their writing on the collecting and consumption of Eastern cultures. Decadent Orientalism practised by these writers thus eclectically combined a range of historical periods (Old Assyrian Empire, Roman Decadence, Byzantine periods (330–1475)) as well as geographical regions (Greece, the Holy Land and North Africa). These four Decadent authors use the East to write in opposition to their political realities. In this way, they politicized their writing through the images and ideological conceptualizations of ‘the East’, or multiple ‘Easts’.

⁸⁷ Macfie, p. 8. See also Rana Kabbani, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986), p. 6; republished as *Imperial Fictions* in 1994.

⁸⁸ Hema Chari, ‘Imperial Dependency, Addiction, and the Decadent Body’, in *Perennial Decay*, pp. 215–32 (p. 216). Emphasis in the original.

The choice of writers this thesis considers is motivated by their common zeal to research and collect foreign cultures as a statement of opposition to their own. Wilde's interest in archaeology, evolving as an Orientalist discipline at the time, reflects the way in which his texts are conceived as compositions of cosmopolitan units. Symons researches the Gypsy as an emblem of the mobility of the East and of the development of civilization. Scheerbart, in a similar way to Wilde, brings artefacts from the museum to life in his writings. Finally, George, a polyglot linguist, makes the East accessible through a profound knowledge of other European cultures and histories. All four sought an immersion in foreign cultures, if not through sympathetic affiliation or their own travel experience, then indirectly through books, cultural objects and art works.

The writings by all four authors share a scepticism towards the strict segregation of categories such as the national and international, aesthetic and political. To present a nuanced view of the variety and scope of Decadent writing, this thesis examines two canonical authors and two marginalized authors from England and Germany. The comparison will reveal the crucial differences in the expression of Decadence conditioned by the varying functions of the Orient. An analysis of their Decadent works allows us to understand the relationship between Decadence's three key components: cosmopolitanism, Orientalism, and national affiliation.

Oscar Wilde, the embodiment of English Decadence but also a key figure of international Decadence, defined his ideal of decorative beauty via a universal cosmopolitanism regardless of national specification. Symons, a self-declared 'Gysiologist', used Decadent aesthetics to put forward a political stance in defence of the supposedly anti-modern lifestyle of Romani cultures. Scheerbart fashioned himself as an anti-European in protest against Germany's rearmament through a self-

identification with ancient Babylonian culture. George's work shows us the transition from a Wildean cosmopolitan vision of inclusivity to an exclusion of the East in a rise of nationalism in the late 1910s.

All four authors discussed in this thesis were contributors to the *fin-de-siècle* periodical press culture in their respective countries. Besides a circulation of texts through translation, journals in Decadent circles offered a platform from which to build cosmopolitan identities, as Wilde imagined them in 'The Critic as Artist', in a 'unity of the human mind in the variety of its forms'. Wilde's contribution to prestigious publications such as the *Pall Mall Gazette* and his own editorship of the *Woman's World* magazine (1887–1889) exposed his opinions on the East to a wide and varied readership. Equally, Symons was a prolific journalist and critic. Besides writing contributions to major periodicals, Symons revived the Decadent spirit of *The Savoy*, which he co-edited together with Aubrey Beardsley in 1896, in *The Gypsy* (1915–1916). While *The Savoy* is well studied, my thesis recovers *The Gypsy* as an important yet neglected time document of late-Decadent journal culture. Published in protest against the Great War, its editorial statement claims that 'Art is more important than the fate of nations'. Moreover, Symons's membership of the Gypsy Lore Society resulted in a political article for the *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1908.

In Germany the satirical review of English foreign policies in *Simplicissimus* (1896–1967), on which Edmund Gosse, Symons's close friend, commented in *The Gypsy*, captured the tone of strained cross-channel relations. Scheerbart, who published in *Simplicissimus* and who much like Symons had to work as a journalist to secure an income, published reviews on art exhibitions for the *Berliner Tageblatt*, *Freie Bühne*, and *Das Atelier*. In contrast, George's publications were read by a select few. His

international *Blätter für die Kunst* (1892–1919), celebrating the sacred serenity of art, had a subscription-based readership, which contributed to the mystification of his persona. The issues were certainly not read widely, but they made a strong impact since they were subsequently discussed in the mass media. Findings in the Stefan George Archive, however, suggest that George was an avid reader of the international press. Whilst the four authors were concerned with the artistic East in their Decadent writing, their journalistic publications also demonstrate an awareness of the intellectual debates centred on nationalism, cosmopolitanism and Orientalism.

By focussing on Wilde, Symons, Scheerbart and George, this thesis covers a transnational space of literature defined via the East. The selection of texts and narrative of this thesis make clear that the methods of writing the Orient from the late nineteenth century up to the 1920s, in fact, outlined the literary history of European Decadence from its heyday in the 1880s to its demise in early Modernism.

The Two Critical Traditions of Decadence in England and Germany

The Indispensable East in Decadent Literature brings together two underexplored areas: the role of the East in Decadent literature and Anglo-German literary relations in the *fin de siècle*. The critical discourse on English Decadent literature has largely focused on gender and sexuality, on Decadence's affinity to the visual arts, and on Victorian metropolitan culture. Meanwhile the German critical debate struggles to agree on the existence of the term and its applications. In comparison to the many studies on the Habsburgian *fin de siècle*,⁸⁹ an analysis of German Decadence more broadly is far

⁸⁹ See Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson,

from comprehensive. To date, Caroline Pross's study remains the most complete and detailed.⁹⁰

According to George Schoolfield, 'a decadent frame of mind seemed incompatible' with the flourishing prospects of a newly united Germany in the period from 1870 to 1900 after the Franco-Prussian War.⁹¹ The rapid economic changes and an unrestrained optimism in the technological advancements of the Wilhelmine German Empire (1871–1918),⁹² paired with its imperial expansion and colonial campaigns in Africa starting from 1884 with the foundation of the German Colonial Company, and its economic alliance with the Ottoman Empire, led to a belief in social progress. However, the rise of a capitalist bourgeoisie offered an ideal platform for the artistic resistance critical of that progress, an artistic resistance which was captured by the notion of 'decadence'. The German 'decadence' was, therefore, primarily a political and secondly an artistic Decadence. It is characterized by parallel discourses on the artistic movement of the French 'décadence' and the Germanized 'Dekadenz' indicative of the cultural decline. The Dekadenz responded to an acceleration of unpredictable developments such as growing globalization, technological advancement and a rise in scepticism towards the autonomy of financial systems (anticipating their collapse in the hyperinflation during the Weimar Republic in 1923).

1979); Edward Timms, and Ritchie Robertson, eds., *Vienna 1900: From Altenberg to Wittgenstein* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); Steven Beller, *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001).

⁹⁰ Caroline Pross, *Dekadenz: Studien zu einer grossen Erzählung der frühen Moderne* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013). See also: Roger Bauer, *Die Schöne Décadence: Geschichte eines literarischen Paradoxons* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2001).

⁹¹ George Schoolfield, *A Baedeker of Decadence: Charting a Literary Fashion 1884–1927* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 268.

⁹² Jens Malte Fischer, *Fin de siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche* (Munich: Winkler, 1978), p. 12. Fischer explains that Germany was still a rural economy at the end of the 1870s whilst it had become a leading industrial nation by the mid-nineties.

In a letter of 11 August 1892, Theodor Fontane, some of whose works have been studied as examples of Decadent literature, famously heralded the arrival of the tendency in Germany: ‘Die Decadence ist da!’.⁹³ By that time, as Florian Krobb notes, decadence had become a ‘fashionable term in cultural criticism and public discourse’.⁹⁴ Although the debate on decadence reached its peak by the 1890s, it lasted until about 1912, considerably later than in France or England.⁹⁵ Jens Malte Fischer concluded his observations on the *fin de siècle* by noting that there was a ‘deutsche Décadence, allerdings mit anderen Akzenten als in Frankreich oder England’ [German Decadence, albeit with a different topical emphasis compared to France or England].⁹⁶ Willy Haas defined German Decadence as a movement less self-aware than the English Decadence, a movement that is better characterized as a literary trend pursued by individual authors in individual works:

In Deutschland, in den slawischen Ländern hat es niemals einen geistigen Zustand, eine produktive Bewegung oder auch nur eine literarische Mode gegeben, die man das ‘Zeitalter der *décadence*’ oder des *Fin de siècle* nennen könnte, wie etwa in Frankreich des Barbey d’Aurevilly, Joris-Karl Huysmans, des jüngeren Barrès und Maeterlinck, oder in England der Kreis des ‘Yellow Book’, des ‘Savoy’, der literarischen Kreise um Aubrey Beardsley. Überall in Europa gab es freilich die oder jene Gestalt, die sich dieser Zeitstimmung für eine längere oder kürzere Phase hingab. Im jungen Hofmannsthal spürt man hie und da etwas davon, etwa im ‘Märchen der 672. Nacht’ [...] und natürlich trug auch das Chamäleon der Literaturmode um 1890, Hermann Bahr, eine Zeitlang die Farben der *décadence*.⁹⁷

[In Germany, as in the Slav countries, there has never been an intellectual condition, a productive movement or even a literary fashion, which one could call ‘the age of decadence’ or the *Fin de Siècle* comparable to the France of Barbey d’Aurevilly, Joris-Karl Huysmans, or of the young Barrès and Maeterlinck; or in England the circle of *The Yellow Book*, of *The Savoy* and the circle around Aubrey

⁹³ Fontane to his son Friedrich, 11 August 1892, in *Theodor Fontane, Werke, Schriften, Briefe IV: 1890–1898*, ed. by Walter Keitel and Helmuth Nürnberger (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), pp. 203–04.

⁹⁴ Florian Krobb, “Die Kunst der Väter tödtet das Leben der Enkel”: Decadence and Crisis in Fin-de-Siècle German and Austrian Discourse’, *New Literary History*, 35:4 (2004), 547–62 (p. 547).

⁹⁵ Wolfdietrich Rasch, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986), p. 12.

⁹⁶ Fischer, p. 80.

⁹⁷ Willy Haas, ‘Geleitwort’, in *Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (Munich: Winkler, 1965), pp. 5–12 (p. 5). My translation.

Beardsley. Everywhere in Europe there can of course be found one or the other individual who was devoted to this trend for a longer or shorter period of time. The works of the young Hofmannsthal at times give a sense of it, as for example in the 'Märchen der 672. Nacht' [...] and of course Hermann Bahr, the chameleon of literary fashion of the 1890s, wore the colours of decadence for a while.]

Despite, as Dieter Kafitz notes, its intangible presence in German literary history, German Decadence can be identified by three idiosyncrasies in comparison to its European counterparts.⁹⁸ The first is its belated reception of the French sources, which only spread to a wider audience at the beginning of the 1890s due to cultural tensions in the wake of the Franco-Prussian war, when English Decadence was already reaching its turning point. William Eickhorst finds that 'Decadence as a literary phenomenon and as a conscious cultural factor came much later to Germany than to most European countries'.⁹⁹

Secondly, German Decadence was less obviously defined by a distinct group of artists or self-declaring publications. Wilde's trials in 1895 marked the decline of English Decadence, which had established its identity to a large extent through the cult around Wilde's persona. English Decadence was also distinguished by its vibrant periodical culture in the 1880s and 1890s, by its cultural meeting points for aesthetes such as Oxford or London, and not least through foundational texts such as Walter Pater's 'Conclusion' to the *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873) and Arthur Symons's essay 'The Decadent Movement in Literature'. In contrast to the self-aware and self-conceived identity of English Decadence, German Decadence lacks coherence in its expressions. German Decadents defined themselves via the negative in a distancing from the French and English movements (for example, Scheerbart's search

⁹⁸ Dieter Kafitz, *Décadence in Deutschland: Studien zu einem versunkenen Diskurs der 90er Jahre des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004).

⁹⁹ William Eickhorst, *Decadence in German Fiction* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1953), p. 15.

for a ‘Phantastische’ literature and the editorial distancing of the George circle from French Decadence) whilst dealing with the same subject matter and employing the same literary style. Conditioned by the above-mentioned delay, several opposing literary tendencies such as Naturalism, Expressionism and Symbolism were thus practised simultaneously.

Lastly, the word ‘decadence’ carried negative connotations for German readers looking to its European neighbours. In 1883 Paul Bourget described the disintegration of Western societies conditioned by the rise of individualism and on a second level that of disjointed narrative as major characteristics of Decadence: ‘Par le mot de *décadence*, on désigne volontiers l’état d’une société qui produit un trop grand nombre d’individus impropres aux travaux de la vie commune’ [The word decadence is often used to designate the state of a society that produces too few individuals suited to the labors of communal life].¹⁰⁰ Nietzsche’s reading of Bourget’s decadence suggested to the German reader the idea of cultural fragmentation, an anarchy of the parts and, as a consequence thereof, civilisatory decline. It did not suggest, as it could have done, the celebration of a controversial yet exciting new aesthetic as set out by Baudelaire and Gautier, or by Wilde. In connecting these cultural notions of English and German Decadences, this thesis reveals rarely before studied interconnections between the two cultural histories. By comparing the importance of the East in shaping the different Decadent traditions, this thesis will elucidate the ways in which the national discourses are mutually dependent.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Bourget, *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1891), p. 25. Translation by Nancy O’Connor, <<http://cat.middlebury.edu/~nereview/30-2/Bourget.htm>> [accessed: 14/04/2017].

Methodology: Comparative Approach

Richard Gilman has argued that Decadence is, by definition, a relational term, which can only be specified by constructing a comparison.¹⁰¹ In order to demonstrate the extent to which the East permeated Decadent writing and performed translations between nations and disciplines, this thesis employs a comparative approach in several ways. The first comparison comprises a juxtaposition of English and German Decadent literature. In each chapter, this comparison frames a close reading of journalistic prose texts alongside highly stylized literary texts. Taking into account the journalistic output of Wilde, Symons, Scheerbart, and George sheds new light on their approach to Orientalism in their literary works. The comparison between literary and non-literary texts brings forth their political engagement with the East, which in turn informed their literary aesthetic choices. In this way, the thesis argues that cultural journalism had a share in the creation of the aesthetic Decadent East. The illustrations considered by this thesis reflect the transitional character of Decadence; rooted in nineteenth-century aesthetics they are early forward-looking representatives of Modernism.

Despite the plethora of texts and genres discussed, the thesis cannot offer a comprehensive coverage of Decadent Orientalist literature. This study must therefore exclude a list of potentially equally-relevant *fin-de-siècle* authors and texts concerned with the East such as John Barlas, Theodor Watts-Dunton, Olive Custance or Else Lasker-Schüler. I have chosen a representative selection of authors whose works show the East as a binding factor in Decadent literature, but to different effect. Unlike Ros Ballaster in her study *Fabulous Orient*s and Marina Warner in her cultural history of

¹⁰¹ Gilman, p. 19.

The Arabian Nights, I am not primarily interested in the transmigration of texts from the East to the West but in the circulation of Orientalist motifs within Europe.¹⁰² The francophone roots of Decadence demand this thesis take a triangular shape; moving on from these French roots in the mid-nineteenth century, I will examine the English and German offspring of the exotic element in French Decadence.

A comparative methodology offers some risks, but many more opportunities. While running the risk of cutting short historical coherences, it creates the opportunity to introduce alternative perspectives on the pre-supposed oppositions between East and West, reconsiderations of European identities and the positioning of marginalized cultures within them.¹⁰³ A comparativist approach thus not only widens the limitations of a mono-cultural analysis, but also enables the application of other disciplines for the study of literature. My study takes into account the influence of Egyptology on Wilde's work, anthropological research on the 'Gypsy' in Symons's case, Scheerbart's enthusiasm for pre-Islamic Arabic art history and George's engagement with what today would be termed the field of cultural studies. As a result, the comparative nature of this thesis draws on and reflects Decadent literature's interest in other cultures, art forms and scientific disciplines.

Similar to Decadence, comparative literature operates via a juxtaposition of the one to the 'other'. As a result, in recent years, the discipline has come under attack for its pronounced eurocentrism. In the English-speaking world, Emily Apter's and David Damrosch's work has opened up comparative literature to global perspectives.¹⁰⁴ In

¹⁰² Ros Ballaster, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662–1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 16–17.

¹⁰³ Steven Tötösy de Zepetnek. *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ Emily Apter, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013); David Damrosch, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Against World Literature, Apter offers a bracing critique of the politics of translation in American literary studies. All too often, she argues, scholars and teachers of world literature assume a ready transferability across open linguistic and political borders. While this thesis deals with the reception of Eastern images in two major European literatures, it aligns itself with Apter's vision that the East in one Decadent national canon carried oppositional implications in another national context. Pascale Casanova's study on the relationship of periphery and canonicity in a globalized literary network posits Paris as the world-capital of *fin-de-siècle* cosmopolitan literary networks.¹⁰⁵ My study suggests that when taking an English-German angle to review world literature, London and Berlin emerge as centres of Decadent cosmopolitanism in their own right, though connected by a shared interest in the East in the period from 1880 to 1920. In response to her proposition, a rethinking of the relationship of centre and periphery in Orientalising Decadent writing is important and justifies the broadening of perspective to include the English and German literary encounter with the East.

Outline of Chapters

The four case studies presented in this thesis trace the East in Decadent writing from Wilde's Victorian Biblical Orient to George's proto-fascist replacement of the East by the reclaiming of national purity in the early twentieth century. In order to retrace a chronological development of Decadence, and to move from a more established field of English Decadence to a less defined field of enquiry, the examination of English Decadence precedes the one on German Decadence. I have chosen individual authors

¹⁰⁵ Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

per chapter to show that even within the body of work of one single author the East adopts a variety of forms and functions. There are no direct links such as personal correspondences, between my four authors. Yet, my comparative approach enables this thesis to reveal the East as an independent and defining link between four otherwise unrelated bodies of Decadent works.

The first chapter focuses on the dialogue between cosmopolitanism and the East, as expressed in Oscar Wilde's interest in material culture and ancient archaeology. Following theories of cosmopolitanism and Orientalism established in the introduction, it argues that Wilde's readiness to appropriate Eastern images was not exclusively Orientalist when Decadence is considered as a transnational network. The chapter reads Wilde's arguably most heavily Orientalized texts *Salomé* and *The Sphinx* (both published in 1893) alongside his lectures and pieces of journalism as examples of an attempted Decadent hybridity, fusing fragments of Eastern and Western art history. In the light of Victorian Egyptomania that swept through England after the 1882 Anglo-Egyptian war, it considers how Wilde's reception of the East crucially shaped his articulation of Decadent aesthetics. The chapter provides the theoretical narrative for the subsequent chapters by pinpointing the tensions and areas of overlap in discourses of Orientalism, cosmopolitanism and nationalism.

Chapter two continues to examine the fluidity of boundaries between cosmopolitanism and Orientalism in Symons's travelogue of Constantinople, in *Cities* (1903) and in his journalism of the early 1900s and 1910s. Taking Wilde's archaeological interest in the East one step further, Symons sought the everyday, live engagement with Romani culture, which he stylized in his writings in the figure of the Gypsy as Oriental *flâneur*. Moving from a consideration of the East in Wilde's highly

aestheticized drama and poetry, the chapter focuses on the representation of the East in Symons's prose and his controversial article 'In Praise of Gypsies' written for *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* (1908). The chapter pays special attention to magazines as a vital platform for a redrafting of Decadent self-understanding in early Modernism. In launching the magazine, *The Gypsy* (1915–1916), in wartime Britain, Symons and his fellow *Gypsy aficionados* (among them Edmund Gosse, whose essay published in *The Gypsy* on the German magazine *Simplicissimus* the chapter considers), not only paid tribute to their Decadent pasts, but also emerged as modern, politically active authors. This chapter presents unpublished archival materials from the *Gypsy Lore Society Collections*, Liverpool, which unveil Symons's lifelong commitment to the ethnographical and literary study of 'Gypsydom'.

Chapter three shifts the focus onto German Decadence. Similar to Symons's commitment to Romani culture, Paul Scheerbart, a poet of the Berlin Bohème around 1900, was devoted to early Babylonian and Assyrian art history. This chapter recovers Scheerbart's unknown Decadent Oriental fiction of the 1890s and the 1910s, which champions in its 'Anti-Europäertum' [Anti-Europeanness] an inverse form of Orientalism. The chapter places emphasis on the role of satire and irony as Decadent and not least Wildean tools, by which Scheerbart incites his readers to critical self-reflection on the self-inflicted degeneration of Europe. Rallying against the mobilization in Wilhelmine Germany, Scheerbart expressed in his journalistic writings the necessity of cosmopolitan collaboration (already in 1914 he envisions 'The United States of Europe') as a reaction against the epochal decay of the West with the arrival of the First World War. Scheerbart presented the Orient as a utopian dystopia: the East simultaneously reflected fears of decay and offered the means of cultural innovation. I

conclude my on-going analysis by claiming that the East is vital in shaping a European identity for German Decadent literature and Modernism.

The final chapter traces the development from the cosmopolitan Decadence of the 1890s to a nationalist poetry negotiated through the inclusion and exclusion of the East, evident in the works of Stefan George (1868–1933). It draws on unpublished archival material from the *Stefan George Archiv* in Stuttgart. To this day a controversial figure in the German literary canon and recognized as central to the German Decadence, George embraced Orientalism in his early works such as *Algabal* (1892) and in *Die Blätter für die Kunst*, which he published in collaboration with fellow European Decadents. At the end of the 1910s, his ideology gravitated towards a purified poetry, exclusive of foreign influences and expressive of a messianic longing. Despite his nationalistic and rather fascist inclinations, George's homosexuality and international friendships – his followers consisting mainly of Jewish intellectuals – complicate Said's idea of a binary East-West model and a 'subaltern' perspective of writing. The chapter ends with a reading of George's poems, especially 'Der Brand des Tempels' (1919), which describes the decay of Decadence by its own constituting means. In returning to poetry, the final chapter refers back to the first. The notion of a cosmopolitan Empire (or Reich) defined by the influence of the East has undergone a perversion: as the twentieth century progressed, Decadence was reduced to its meaning of Degeneration.

This thesis challenges a one-sided approach to the role of the East in Decadent literature by highlighting its politically inclusive and creative potential. A closer examination of Wilde, Symons, Scheerbarth and George reveals their consideration of global communities, ideas of hybridity, supranational affiliation and even proto-fascism. For each, the East provided scope not only for artistic innovation reaching out to other

cultures, but also for self-reflection. Their Decadent texts are mirror-exercises in which the East is displayed as much as the European identity of their writer. These authors realized that writing the East in Decadence was 'indispensable'; it contested and perverted the boundaries of terms such as the 'other', cultural progress and ultimately the distinctiveness of Decadence as a literary phenomenon.

I. 'Away to Egypt!': Cosmopolitan Conglomeration and Orientalist Appropriation in Oscar Wilde's Victorian Middle East

[The Athenians] borrowed from the Orient, from which all things have come.
Wilde, 'Dress & the Philosophy of Dress' (1884)¹

Introduction

While visiting the Birmingham Midland Institute on 13 March 1884, during the course of a lecture tour to present 'The House Beautiful', Wilde could not help but be distracted by the design of one of the lecture rooms:

his eyes frequently wandering over the fanciful mosaic patterns that adorn the walls [...] various forms that had sprung from amongst eastern nations, many designs invented by natures alien to our own, but which it seemed to us perfectly right to use. [...] after saying that there could be no anachronism, no exoticism in art, for what was a beautiful object at one time and in one country was equally pleasing to the eye centuries afterwards and in any other country, Mr. Wilde remarked that he had read a very interesting lecture written by the artist who decorated those walls, a lecture on 'Exotic Art'.²

Wilde's lack of discrimination when it came to the national origins of art goes to the core of the problematic relationship between cosmopolitanism and Orientalism. Following on from Emanuel Kant's model of a 'universal history', cosmopolitanism suggests an inclusive concept in which individual particles (nations) are subsumed into a 'world nation' for the benefit of a global commonwealth. Wilde's aestheticist cosmopolitanism, as expressed on his lecture tour, shows a lack of respect to individual cultural histories. Wilde's unifying construction of cosmopolitanism relates it to

¹ Oscar Wilde, 'Dress & the Philosophy of Dress', in Geoff Dibb, *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde's Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013), pp. 262–75 (p. 270).

² [Anon.], 'Oscar Wilde's lectures', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 March 1884, no pagination; partly reprinted in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, pp. 106–108. Wilde is referring to John Henry Chamberlain's lecture *Exotic Art: Being a Lecture Delivered before the Members of the Birmingham and Midland Institute* (Birmingham: Cornish Bros., 1883).

Orientalism: they are two sides of the same coin. Postcolonial critics such as Said and Homi K. Bhabha have pointed out the flaws of such a unifying principle as it ignores ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ in favour of international historiographies provided by Enlightenment thinkers, which dominated the discourse in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.³ Essentially, Decadence worked with a cosmopolitan, European ideal that turned a blind eye to specific histories and that promoted, in a Wildean sense, the motto ‘the cosmos is my polis’.⁴ However, if cosmopolitanism and Orientalism, as two terms marking the extreme ends on the scale of ethical and political inclusivity, are considered to be aesthetic concepts, they invite the conglomeration of different styles and national ‘ornaments’ in the service of the artwork. As Wilde proclaimed in his ‘Lecture to Art Students’ delivered to students of the Royal Academy on 30 June 1883:

such an expression as English art is a meaningless expression. One might just as well talk of English mathematics. Art is the science of beauty, and Mathematics the science of truth: there is no national school of either. Indeed, a national school is a provincial school, merely. Nor is there any such thing as a school of art even. There are merely artists, that is all. [...] And as regards the nationality of the artist, art is not national but universal.⁵

The paradoxical nature of Wilde’s conception of cosmopolitanism in relation to the East caused him to disagree with John Henry Chamberlain, professor of architecture at the Birmingham School of Art. In a proto-Saidian fashion, Chamberlain had claimed in his lecture ‘Exotic Art’ (1883) that ‘there was a plea for a national art, and also a kind of

³ Bhabha, p. 172: ‘Culture as a strategy of survival is both transnational and translational. It is transnational because contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement [...]’; Said, *Orientalism*, pp. xiii–xiv: ‘[The Orient] has been made and re-made countless times [...] In the process the uncountable sediments of history, which include innumerable histories and a dizzying variety of peoples, languages, experiences and cultures, all these are swept aside or ignored [...]’.

⁴ Prewitt Brown, p. 23.

⁵ Oscar Wilde, ‘Lecture to Art Students (Modern Art Training)’, reprinted in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, pp. 224–32 (pp. 225–26).

warning for them [the artists] to use ornament that belonged to other nations.’⁶ Wilde, as the article continues to relate:

could not acknowledge himself a convert to that view; in fact, he entirely differed from it. It was quite true that we were employing ornament the idea of which had long passed away, but that was only one of the things that showed the complete supremacy of artistic beauty over any philosophical meaning.⁷

Curtis Marez has argued that Wilde viewed such ‘appropriation of non-Western artefacts’ as an injection of ‘new life into a moribund aesthetic tradition’.⁸ According to the *Birmingham Daily Post*, Wilde maintained that ‘[...] the world and not the country was the province of the artist, and the harmony he looked for was not the harmony of the country, or of the century, or of history, but purely the harmony of the eye.’⁹

Wilde invites the foreign element into his literature to subvert fears of degeneration of English national culture. The publications of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), *Salomé* (published in French in 1893, staged in Paris at the Théâtre de l’Œuvre in 1896) and *The Sphinx* (1894) were followed by public outcry and became especially infamous for celebrating the Decadent East in its supposed violence, moral debauchery and erotic excess. The condition of Decadence to create itself out of a dialogue with past and present traditions and cultures is reflected in the increasingly cosmopolitan exchange of artistic ideals and its exploration of literally ‘strange’ influences at the *fin de siècle*.

⁶ [Anon.], ‘Oscar Wilde’s lectures’, no pagination, reprinted in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, p. 107. Wilde expressed his view on historical accuracy in ‘Pen, Pencil, and Poison’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. IV, Criticism*, pp. 104–122 (p. 108): ‘[W]e should never aim at any archaeological reconstruction of the past, nor burden ourselves with any fanciful necessity for historical accuracy.’

⁷ [Anon.], ‘Oscar Wilde’s lectures’, no pagination.

⁸ Curtis Marez, ‘The Other Addict: Reflections on Colonialism and Oscar Wilde’s Opium Smoke Screen’, *English Literary History*, 64:1 (1997), 257–87 (p. 279).

⁹ [Anon.], ‘Oscar Wilde’s lectures’, no pagination.

Wilde's editorship of the *Woman's World* [hereafter *WW*] magazine from 1887 to 1889 stoked an interest in these 'strange' influences through its emphasis on art historical articles. In an editorial review of Lefébure's 'History of Embroidery and Lace' published in the *WW*, Wilde highlights and praises the vital influence of the East: 'I think that it must be admitted that [...] [w]henver we find in European history a revival of decorative art, it has, I fancy, nearly always been due to Oriental influence and contact with Oriental nations.'¹⁰ Wilde thus inverts the nineteenth-century Hegelian view of universal history, which determined the Orient as the past of the modern West.¹¹ For Wilde, the East is not only the past but also an active and present concern. At the same time as nourishing his own writings on the influences of Eastern and Western philosophies, Wilde did not accept the dichotomy of proto-Orientalist East and West binaries. Being, himself, a hybrid product of Anglo-Irish upbringing explains (to a certain extent) Wilde's colonial subjectivity and his identity as an outsider in English society.

This chapter turns its attention to Wilde's conceptualization of the East as situated between cosmopolitan inclusivity and Orientalist ignorance. Wilde's distinctive cosmopolitan version of the East was formed through several influences and activities: impressions from his father's travels to the Middle East and North Africa in 1837; his French literary godfathers, Flaubert and Gautier; his North African sojourn in 1895 recorded by André Gide; his collaboration with designer and author Charles Ricketts, himself an art collector and expert on Egyptian and Persian artefacts; and finally Wilde's own professional interest in ancient archaeology.

¹⁰ Oscar Wilde, 'A Fascinating Book', *Woman's World*, November 1888; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 88–96 (p. 90).

¹¹ Thierry Hentsch, *L'Orient imaginaire: La Vision politique occidentale de L'Est méditerranéen* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988), pp. 197–98.

Considering the translation of Wilde's archaeological interest into literary form in his Symbolist play *Salome*, and in his poem *The Sphinx* (finally published as a single edition in 1894 with Ricketts's illustrations), this chapter interrogates the literary manifestation of Wilde's cosmopolitan ideals of appropriation and conglomeration. Examining two of the most Orientalizing texts in the Wildean canon, I demonstrate how intimately the emergence of English Decadence with the political annexation of the East were linked. The two texts, both of which attracted negative criticism for their overt exoticism and have long been regarded as anomalies in the Wildean canon, not least because of their anti-Realist illustrations by Beardsley and Ricketts, are rarely read in conjunction despite their proximity in publication. By reading *Salome* and *The Sphinx* as related texts, I suggest that Wilde's treatment of the East pursued a more ambitious project. I want to ask the question: does Wilde's resistance to nationalistic specification qualify as Orientalist because it ignores the political implications of engrossing foreign cultural traits and disconnects them from their specific histories? Or indeed, could Wilde be considered a pioneer, envisioning a multicultural fusion of national identities that results in a celebration of literature as an ideal of Decadent beauty that transcends categories of national origin?

Wilde's affinity to the East is widely defined by his fascination with the Far East, especially with the Japanese and Chinese fine arts. Certainly *The Picture of Dorian Gray* is infused with Wilde's fashionable predilection for *Japonisme*, as is some of his poetry ('Fantaisies Décoratives'), critical writing ('The Decay of Lying' claiming 'Japan is pure invention'), and even dramatic writing such as *For Love of the King – A Burmese Masque by Oscar Wilde* (1894), which he dedicated to Mrs. Chan Toon, a

friend of the Wilde family.¹² However, like Goethe, Wilde also admired ancient Persian poetry, most notably the works of fourteenth-century poet *Hafiz Shirazi*, translations of whose works Wilde sent to Douglas as love tokens. Wilde even reviewed a translation of *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* by fellow Irishman and nationalist Justin Huntly McCarthy, published in May 1889. Wilde praised Huntly's prose as being 'worthy of the sinless master whom mortals call Flaubert.' Once more he affirms that '[c]ertainly for wisdom we must go to the East, and it is pleasant to go with you as one's torch-bearer.'¹³ While Wilde's connection to the arts of the Far East have been investigated, this chapter draws out Wilde's literary interactions with images derived from cultures of the Middle East.¹⁴

Lynn Parramore's *Reading the Sphinx* argues that since the Bible and Shakespeare, Egypt in particular has been adopted as an aesthetic concept of the imaginary East. This perception of Egypt, a product of Western imagination and yet the source of philosophical insight, also served Wilde for aesthetic inspiration.¹⁵ Parramore's account provides a starting point to explore the Victorian prehistory of Said's understanding of Orientalism(s) as a fabricated reworking of the East in Western art. Wilde's Egypt can be understood as a conjoined emblem and working definition of Decadent and Symbolist poetics and their accompanying epistemological agendas.

¹² Oscar Wilde, *For Love of the King – A Burmese Masque* (London: Methuen, 1922), London, British Library [Eccles 69/70].

¹³ Wilde to Justin Huntly McCarthy, May 1889, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p. 399. Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas, 5 or 6 November 1894, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 620–21 (p. 621): 'I am sending you a copy of *Hafiz* the divinest of poets. I hope the honey of his verse may charm you'.

¹⁴ Jeffrey Nunokawa, 'Oscar Wilde in Japan: Aestheticism, Orientalism, and the Derealization of the Homosexual', *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 2:1 (1994), 44–56; Zhou Xiaoyi, 'Oscar Wilde's Orientalism and Late Nineteenth-Century European Consumer Culture', *Ariel – A Review of International English Literature*, 28:4 (1997), 49–71.

¹⁵ Lynn Parramore, *Reading the Sphinx – Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

Wilde's fascination with the Middle East, and more specifically Egypt, influenced his life and artistic *oeuvre* in a considerable fashion.¹⁶ Wilde's biography reveals key moments that mark his growing interest in the East: as an Oxford undergraduate, he started drafting *The Sphinx* alongside developing his taste for ancient archaeology; his journalistic works of the 1880s eventually lead up to the writing of *Salome*; and his travels to Arab speaking regions such as Algeria in 1895 before his fatal return to London, are testimony to Wilde's attraction to the Arabic East. In 1897, the list of books to be presented to him upon his release from prison, predominantly comprised Orientalist material, including Flaubert's

[La] *Tentation [de Saint Antoine]. Trois Contes. Salammbô.* [...] Gautier: *Émaux et Camées.* [...] A Bible. Flinders Petrie on Egypt [*Egyptian Decorative Art*, 1895]. Any good book on Ancient Egypt. Translation of Hafiz, and of oriental love-poetry. [...] Reviews of *Salomé*. *Salomé* itself.¹⁷

This list demonstrates how the Orient provided a lifelong intellectual home for Wilde.

Sir William Wilde: From Greece to the Orient

While reading Classics at Oxford, Wilde became familiar with literary representations of classical history as well with the Biblical Christian Orient. His interest in ancient Greece, which was increasingly figured as Oriental in contemporaneous scholarship, might have ignited Wilde's curiosity in the East. However, I would like to suggest that Wilde's in-depth knowledge of Hellenic culture that was, as described by Iain Ross, mediated through the work of Matthew Arnold, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, Hegel and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, was complemented by a familiarity with the ancient and Islamic Orient he encountered through the travel writing of his

¹⁶ Apart from *Salome* and *The Sphinx*, Wilde's Orientalism is visible in *Poems* (1881), *The Happy Prince and other Tales* (1888), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) and *A House of Pomegranates* (1891).

¹⁷ Wilde to Robert Ross, 6 April 1897, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 786–793 (791–793).

father, Sir William Wilde (1815–1876).¹⁸ Wilde was undoubtedly more familiar with the classical European past through his ability to read Greek and Latin. Yet, apart from Wilde’s father’s accounts, Max Müller’s publication of the *Sacred Books of the East* is another likely source to have influenced Wilde. The fifty-volume compendium of translations of major religious texts, published between 1879 and 1910 by this German-born philologist, whom Wilde encountered at Oxford, might have shaped Wilde’s early career as a cultural critic not only of Greek and Roman history but also of religious rites of the Middle East.¹⁹

In order to understand Wilde’s perception of the East, it is essential that we do not omit aspects of his biography. From an early age, Wilde accompanied his father to excavation sites across Ireland and later went on to witness excavations in Olympia in 1877. Wilde’s early contact with archaeological practice implanted in him a deep-rooted interest in the art and history of the ancient classical world, which would go on to shape his later works.

Like his literary idols Flaubert and Gautier, Wilde’s own father had undertaken an extensive journey through the Mediterranean, the Middle East and parts of North Africa. In 1837 William Wilde, as a young medical student, embarked on an eight-month cruise to the Holy Land, visiting various cities and islands. Among the places he visited on this tour were Egypt, Algeria, Palestine, and Syria. On his return to Ireland, William published an article in the *Dublin University Magazine* suggesting that one of ‘Cleopatra’s Needles’ be transported to England. Eventually, in 1878 one of the Needles was transported to London, and in 1880 the other one was brought to New York’s

¹⁸ Iain Ross, *Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

¹⁹ Philip E. Smith II, ‘Wilde and Roman History’, in *Oscar Wilde and Classical Antiquity*, ed. by Kathleen Riley, Alastair J. L. Blanshard, Iarla Manny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 289–305 (p. 290).

Central Park. William's notebooks, containing detailed descriptions of the local atmosphere, ethnological drawings and observations on the political history of ancient and modern Egypt, were published in 1840 in two volumes titled *The Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the Shores of the Mediterranean*.²⁰ In his preface, William highlights the political importance of the Middle Eastern and North African regions for British expansionist policies:

Though much has lately been written about the change now taking place in Egypt, it is a subject upon which the British public can never be too well informed, and cannot take too deep an interest, considering how materially our means of rapid communication with our Indian possessions, must be influenced by the condition of that country. (Vol. I, vii– viii)

Later on, he comments on the fragile politics in North Africa:

The present state of this country [Algeria] is but another proof of the downfall of the Ottoman empire, perhaps we may say, of Mohammadanism. In Egypt it is accomplished by the introduction of frank manners, customs, and literature, under the extraordinary man, Mohammed Alee. Persia is dwindling daily into insignificance; (Vol. I, 203)

As William reports, '[a]t the commencement of the present century, Egypt was subject to still greater desolation than it had previously experienced; for, in addition to the increasing broils and exactions of its own masters, it became the theatre of war between France and England' (Vol. II, 11). The travelogue continues with William's political reflections on mid-nineteenth century globalization in which he notably refers to the Middle East in Saidian terms as a 'theatrical stage affixed to Europe'.²¹ As a self-professed progressive Irish nationalist,²² William welcomed Mohammed Alee's

²⁰ William R. Wilde, M.R.I.A *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the Shores of the Mediterranean, including a Visit to Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Tyre, Rhodes, Telmessus, Cyprus, and Greece. With Observations on the present State and Prospects of Egypt and Palestine and on the Climate, Natural History, Antiquities, etc. of the Countries visited; 2 Vols* (Dublin: William Curry, 1840). References to this edition will be provided in brackets in the main body of the text.

Oxford Dictionary of National Biography

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29403/29403?back=,29400> [accessed: 13/11/2015].

²¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 63.

²² Richard Ellmann, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1987), p. 11.

modernization programme (1805–1882) and his dynasty's independence from the Ottoman rule, starting at the beginning of the century – ‘the affairs of the east have now become a topic of such absorbing interest’ (Vol. II, 19–20). William's concern for contemporary political developments in the Middle East and his sympathies for the colonized area (‘For centuries was this fertile land laid waste and governed by *strangers* [*sic*]’, Vol. II, 6) continued to inflect Oscar's stance as a journalist. As we will see later in the chapter, Oscar's journalism addressed not only his preoccupation with ancient Egypt, but also his engagement with modern Arab actualities.

Indeed, William's archaeological accounts of ancient monuments and architecture, as well as his commentary on the cultural and political history of the Middle East, offer multifaceted, informed and comprehensive insights. However, as a true Victorian traveller, William garnishes his scientific and political observations with classical and Biblical references as well as with fantastical elements taken straight from *The Arabian Nights*. His writing recounts adventures involving snake-eaters and the dangers of climbing the dwindling heights of the Cheops pyramid only undertaken ‘by but five or six travellers of late years’ (Vol. I, 394).

Egypt, ‘land of wonders’ (Vol. I, 408), is for the young William certainly the most impressive stop on his route. Out of twenty-two chapters, six are devoted to his memories of Egypt, captured in proto-Decadent prose:

An Arab, of most ferocious mien and appearance, presented himself one day at our hotel [...]. He had a bag full of snakes [...]. He placed the centre [of one snake] across his mouth, and with one champ bit it in two [...]. The stream of blood trickling like gravy from the corners of his mouth, and the head and tail of the snake he still held up, twining in his bloody hands – a more demoniac face I do not think I ever beheld, or a scene more sickening [...]. (Vol. I, 354–55)

Writing on Memphis, William conflates Biblical and Roman history with nineteenth-century mysticism. The passage is comparable to his son's Orientalizing lines contemplating Keats's grave in Rome:

It was here the Pharaohs reigned; it was here a Joseph ruled, and an Herodotus was initiated into the Egyptian mysteries. It was here a Sesostris and a Ramses held their court; here, perhaps within my view, were executed those signs and wonders when the Nile, now glancing in the sunbeams, ran thick and red with blood, [...]; here plague and pestilence swept off millions and those very rocks and caves that now surround me once flung back the midnight cry that rose throughout the land, when the first-born of Egypt were smitten by the angel of destruction, who breathed his deadly mandate on the host of Pharaoh [...].
(Vol. I, 385)

In particular, Cairo and Algiers are depicted as cosmopolitan melting pots comparable to Paris some forty years later:

Nothing can exceed the incongruous mixture of nations, tongues, people, and costumes, that Algiers at this moment presents. Turks, Moors, Arabs, Bedawees, Kabyles, Jews, and Negroes, of the former inhabitants; all huddled together with French, Spaniards, Germans, Italians, Maltese, Poles, and Genoese. The colour and expression of the different countenances vary from the fair French or German, to the tawny Badawee or Kabyle, or the shining black of Timbuctoo. (Vol. I, 217–218)

In Egypt, William found 'a Babel of tongues, such as can only be experienced among the Arabs' (Vol. I, 274). It is in the East, and not in Europe, where one finds the centre of cosmopolitan exchange, and William's descriptions come close to what Oscar later imagined as this cosmopolitan ideal:

If we except China and Japan, I do believe that natives of every country of the world will be met with in the streets of Cairo. Besides the resident population of Egypt, Turks, Copts, and Jews, the Greeks are, I think, the most numerous. Levantine Christians, Syrians, and Europeans, of every country, travellers to Egypt, and those passing and repassing to India. (Vol. I, 301)

Having built a considerable reputation as an archaeologist in Ireland, William was commemorated in the *Journal of the Archaeological Society* (of which he was a

member) in October 1876: '[...] he was no dry and formal writer. His love of the antique past was an enthusiasm, and all that is strange and beautiful in the ancient art and architecture of Ireland touched him deeply.'²³ Yet, his passion for the history and the 'strange and beautiful' was not restricted to Ireland: 'Egypt and Palestine had obviously been his Mecca'.²⁴

In 1875, in the earliest of preserved letters, a young and excited Oscar Wilde related his archaeological encounters with Greco-Roman antiquity in Florence to his father. As a first-year Classicist at Oxford, Wilde pits the Hellenic ideal against the Oriental: 'There is also a museum of Egyptian antiquities, but their devices and frescoes appeared to me grotesque and uncouth after the purity and sentiment of the Etruscan.'²⁵ This letter illuminates how, in line with his classical education, Wilde portrays Egypt as the 'grotesque' other, drawing in particular on Herodotus, who points to Egypt as a feminized power opposed to Greece.²⁶ In Wilde's graduate essay, 'Historical Criticism' (1879), he dismissed the East as a source for historical criticism as 'it is not to be found in the Ancient World among the material despotisms of Asia or the stationary civilization of Egypt. The clay cylinders of Assyria and Babylon, the hieroglyphics of the pyramids form not history but the material for History.'²⁷ Alexandria, 'in which

²³ Lady Wilde, 'Memoir of Gabriel Beranger, and His Labours in the Cause of Irish Art, Literature, and Antiquities from 1760 to 1780, with Illustrations (Commenced by Sir William Wilde, Vol. II., Fourth Series, p. 485)', *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, 4:28 (1876), 111–56 (p. 112).

²⁴ Iain Ross, p. 11.

²⁵ Wilde to Sir William Wilde, 15 June 1875, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 5–9 (8).

²⁶ Dominic Montserrat, 'Unidentified Human Remains: Mummies and the Erotics of Biography' in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity* (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 162–97 (p. 165).

²⁷ Wilde, 'Historical Criticism', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV, Criticism*, pp. 3–67 (p. 3).

Western and Eastern thought met’, does not hold up to Athens, from where ‘rises the man of genius’.²⁸

In 1879, Wilde’s letter of application to Archibald Henry Sayce, later professor of Assyriology at Oxford, supports the idea that Wilde had professional aspirations in the field of ancient archaeology.²⁹ Nine years onwards, in his article on decorative art in the *WW*, Wilde specified his understanding of artistic relations between the East and the West:

In Byzantium the two arts met—Greek art, with its intellectual sense of form, and its quick sympathy with humanity; Oriental art, with its gorgeous materialism, its frank rejection of imitation, its wonderful secrets of craft and colour, its splendid textures, its rare metals and jewels, its marvellous and priceless traditions. [...] The triumph of the Mussulman gave the decorative art of Europe a new departure – that very principle of their religion that forbade the actual representation of any object in nature [...] Arabic letters often took the place of letters in the Roman characters for use in inscriptions upon embroidered robes and Middle Age tapestries [...]. The nobles who left for Palestine clad in armour, came back in the rich stuffs of the East; [...] In our own day the influence of the East is strongly marked.³⁰

²⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

²⁹ Wilde to A. H. Sayce, 8 December 1879, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p. 85: ‘I think it would suit me very well as I have done a good deal of travelling already, and from my boyhood have been accustomed, through my father, to visiting and reporting on ancient sites, taking rubbings and measurements, and all the technique of ordinary *open air* archaeologia. It is of course a subject of intense interest to me, and I should give myself to it with a good deal of enthusiasm.’ In 1883, some years after this unsuccessful application, Wilde seems to have revised his idea of archaeology. In his ‘Lecture to Art Students’, he portrays archaeology as the enemy to modern art: ‘As regards archaeology, then, avoid it altogether: archaeology is merely the science of making excuses for bad art; [...] it is the abyss from which no artist, old or young, ever returns. [...] How worthless archaeology is in art you can estimate by the fact of its being so popular. Popularity is the crown of laurel which the world puts on bad art’, in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, pp. 224–32 (p. 226).

His appraisal of Oriental art in ‘The Value of Art in Modern Life’ (1885) draws a parallel between his own Celtic heritage and Islamic art, from which Wilde extracted his own aesthetics: ‘All bad art arose from nature being taken as the ideal from art: [...] Look at the examples of old Celtic art, and at Persian, Hindu, and other Oriental arts in their general characteristics. In old Celtic art there was no imitation of a single object in nature. The prohibition in the Koran of the limitation of natural objects led to an exceedingly fine school of Mohammedan decorative art. These all dealt in exquisite lines, beautiful proportions, and lovely masses of colour [...] Between examples of ancient Irish art and examples from the Alhambra, or from Oriental mosques of the Byzantine period, there would, therefore, be no discord’, in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, pp. 283–91 (pp. 285–86).

³⁰ Wilde, ‘A Fascinating Book’, pp. 90–91.

Moving into the 1880s and 1890s, the East propels Wilde's own deliberations on the reciprocity of creation and imitation (most visibly in *Salome*), a concept that will be addressed in later portions of this chapter.

Even though Wilde never directly quoted his father's publications, Sir William Wilde's influence on his son's writing is evident in four distinct areas: the historical-political, the archaeological and art historic accounts, the fantastic Orientalist prose and the embracing of a cosmopolitan ideal, all of which are to be important characteristics in Oscar Wilde's hallmark Decadent works.

Wilde and the French Orient: Literary Mixing of the Disciplines

When Wilde visited Paris in January 1883, public excitement about the East was stirring up the literary scene of France's capital and across the whole of Europe. The development of Egyptology into a specialist category of ancient classical archaeology was in full swing. Egypt was considered as an annex to Europe, itself ignorant of its Arab identity. As Said explains:

Egypt joined the Arab and Muslim world with its conquest by Amr ibn-As in 639 A.D., none of the great nineteenth-century European archaeological pioneers had anything but contempt or ignorance to show for that aspect of Egypt. [...] for almost two millennia European scientists, philosophers, painters, musicians, and poets created a fantastic myth about Egypt – its hieratic mysteries, its fabulous gods, its age-old wisdom – without even being able to decipher hieroglyphics, the language in which ancient Egypt recorded its own history.³¹

Said writes here as a territorial writer defending his heritage. However, his observation that the imperial possession of Egypt was mainly carried out by a reduction of Egyptian culture into abstracted images is vital to this discussion. Egypt's reputation as the realm

³¹ Edward Said, 'Egyptian Rites', in *Reflections on Exile* (London: Granta Books, 2000), pp. 153–64 (pp. 155–56).

of plenty and perish in particular resonated with Victorian preconceptions of cultural decline and cultural degeneracy as a threat to national integrity. Starting with the Old Testament, in which Pharaoh signals the doom of early Christianity, Egypt became a synonym of despotism and danger to Western civilization; Shakespeare's Cleopatra caused the downfall of the Roman Empire, to which Victorian imperialism looked for historical comparison; in the popular eye, the cult of Enlightenment Freemasonry equated Egyptian symbols with secrecy and the occult; the bestselling *The Arabian Nights* epitomized the fantastic, cruel, sexually charged Orient. These cultural perversions of the East, extrapolating the Western perception of Egypt as a land of cursed otherworldliness and luxurious intoxication, culminated in the nineteenth-century phenomenon of Egyptomania. This craze for all things Egyptian left traces also in Wilde's works.

Beginning with Napoleon's Egyptian and Syrian campaign, a wave of Egyptomania swept through Europe. Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century, Egypt was kept present in the public imagination of Britain through the increasing influence and availability of print media. With the discovery of the tomb of Seti I and its recreation at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly in 1821, the reconstruction of the Egyptian Court for the Crystal Palace in 1854, and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, journalists and writers began to feature archaeological subjects and objects more frequently in their works. The establishment of Egyptology as an academic discipline, as Said points out, 'corresponded exactly with the era of high European imperialism.'³²

Through the research of Emmanuel de Rougé in France, Samuel Birch in England, and Heinrich Brugsch in Germany, new insights into ancient Egyptian culture

³² Ibid.

were recorded and collected throughout Europe. In 1880, Flinders Petrie, whose books Wilde asked Robert Ross to provide for him, revolutionized the field of archaeology through controlled and scientifically recorded excavations. Petrie's insights determined that Egyptian culture dated back to as early as 4500 BCE. As a result of these discoveries, *The British Egypt Exploration Fund* was founded in 1882 to endorse Petrie's work. The acquisition and exhibition of Egyptian artefacts demonstrated Britain's capitalist wealth and imperial power. It also established a natural authority under which Britain could educate its new 'imperial citizens'. In 1896 the German Colonial Exhibition visualized the forceful displacements of Eastern cultures through the exhibition of a large-scale reproduction of Cairo and the pyramids in the suburbs of Berlin.

At the same time, archaeological showcases were soon transformed into popular spectacle, resulting in a 'fatal slippage of Egyptological knowledge out of the framework of science and political power and into the maw of mass commercial entertainment.'³³ Towards the 1890s, Egyptianate theatrical shows (Verdi's *Aida* premiered in 1871) as well as decorative objects, furniture and fashion were in high demand. At the end of the century, symbols such as Sphinxes, mummies, and Cleopatra, oscillated between seductive funfair entertainment, a 'mysterious pleasure' of a non-intellectual kind, and an object of scientific research representative of ancient Egyptian culture.

Although, as postcolonial critics remind us, 'Egyptology's past is not an attractive one',³⁴ its influence on European *fin-de-siècle* culture cannot be denied. The

³³ Roger Luckhurst, *The Mummy's Curse – The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 88.

³⁴ Said, 'Egyptian Rites', p. 155.

Egyptian monuments in the British Museum, Louvre and in Berlin's museums came to embody the imperialist displacement through which Eastern images found their way into European scholarly, artistic and literary canons.³⁵ This mixing of research and cultural fervour attracted Wilde's curiosity and influenced his literary practice. In comparison to Symons, Wilde never relied on his own travel experiences within the East. His Orient(s) were conceived from a distance through reading and through visits to the Musée du Louvre, the British Museum, and collections now exhibited at the Petrie Museum in London. Combining the popular taste of Egyptomania, his perception of the Biblical Orient, and his study of archaeology, he wrote two of the most dazzling and enigmatic works of Orientalist Decadence.

In Paris, Wilde encountered the Decadent East through French Orientalism. Most notably, his primary sources comprised the canon of early to mid nineteenth-century French Orientalist literature by Baudelaire, Gautier, and Flaubert. In savouring the Decadent Orient and Egypt, Wilde added a new global dimension to his writing. According to Joseph Bristow and John Stokes, Wilde's endeavours throughout the 1880s and 1890s to become a part of this French literary scene are testimony to his 'desire to transcend national boundaries – especially the morally narrow ones he associated with Great Britain – and become a decidedly cosmopolitan, if not world, author.'³⁶ Gautier's works – without which Wilde professed he could not travel³⁷ –

³⁵ According to Montgomery Hyde, Wilde visited the Great Exhibition in Paris in 1900 at the entrance of which 'a gigantic statue of a Parisienne [...] reminded him of Sarah Bernhardt, "that serpent of the old Nile, older than the Pyramids." Inside, he particularly liked the Café de l'Égypte, where "a slim brown Egyptian" [...], served him with drinks.' Hyde does not reference these quotations so it is questionable whether these are actually Wilde's words and whether or not Wilde attended the Exhibition (15 April – 12 November 1900) shortly before his death on 30 November 1900. See *Oscar Wilde – A Biography* (London: Methuen, 1976), p. 361.

³⁶ Joseph Bristow, ed., *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2013), p. 28; John Stokes, 'Wilde and Paris', in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. by Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 60–70.

³⁷ Wilde to Julia Ward Howe, 6 July 1882, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 175–76.

provided the perfect ‘oriental reverie full of golden scintillations, impregnated with strange perfumes and resonant with joyous sounds’.³⁸ In works such as ‘Fortunio’ (published serially in *Le Figaro* and translated by Lafcadio Hearn in 1882), his collection of short stories *Une nuit de Cléopâtre* (1845), *Le Pied de momie* (1840), ‘La Mille et Deuxième Nuit’ (1842), *Émaux et Camées* (1852), *Le Roman de La Momie* (1858), and not least his extensive travelogues, Gautier extended the exploration of the art’s for art’s sake principle to include the Orient and to make it a significant trademark of French Decadence. Likewise, Flaubert’s preoccupation with the Orient is manifest in *Salammô* (1862) and *La Tentation de Saint Antoine* (final version 1874), in his novella ‘Hérodiades’ (1877), and in his travel notes collected on his voyages to Egypt, Syria, Jerusalem, Turkey, and Greece in 1849. In Wilde’s view, Flaubert’s style transcended all national categories: ‘Flaubert did not write French prose, but the prose of a great artist who happened to be French.’³⁹ Commenting on both writers, Wilde observed that ‘Théophile Gautier once said that Flaubert’s style was meant to be read, and his own style to be looked at.’⁴⁰ Imitating his literary idols and drawing on developments in archaeology, Wilde designs his texts as monuments or mosaics. His Oriental writings appear as a collection of museal pieces with an emphasis on their materiality.

Salome and *The Sphinx* are constructed as such cosmopolitan mosaics. As many critics have noted, Flaubert served as the foundational source for *Salome* as much as Baudelaire’s treatments of the Sphinx in *Les Fleurs du mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*] (‘Spleen II’, ‘Les Chats’, ‘La Beauté’, first published 1857) provided the groundwork for Wilde’s *The Sphinx*. The idea of transcending national boundaries is prevalent in

³⁸ Théophile Gautier, ‘Fortunio’, trans. and ed. by F. C. Sumichrast (New York: George Sproul, 1901), p. 88.

³⁹ Wilde to W. E. Henley, December 1888, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 372–73 (p. 373).

⁴⁰ Oscar Wilde, ‘A Note On Some Modern Poets’, *Woman’s World*, December 1888; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, pp. 108–12 (p. 110).

Salammô, a novel set in the North African city of Carthage in 241 B.C. Returning to North Africa in 1858, to conduct ‘specific topographical research and partly to steep himself again in the atmosphere’,⁴¹ Flaubert captures in *Salammô* an otherworldly vision of antiquity as a collection of archaeological fragments. Charles Bernheimer explains how Flaubert’s ‘(anti)historical vision in *Salammô* can be understood as decadent’ in its paradoxical levelling of historical and fabricated details.⁴² Wilde shared with Flaubert this ‘decadent attitude to history’, resulting in ‘a chaotic accumulation of undigested knowledge’.⁴³

Michel Foucault reads Flaubert’s work as archaeological writing. In an afterword to ‘The Temptation of St. Anthony’, Foucault describes Flaubert’s writing as an excavation site for future generations of writers, such as Wilde. Both *Salammô* and *La Tentation* depict what Foucault calls ‘monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments’, and both relish in the archaeological precision of excavating historical detail from books (‘It recovers other books’).⁴⁴ Like Flaubert himself digging deep and revising *La Tentation* three times throughout his career – in 1849, in 1856 before *Salammô* and in 1872 – *La Tentation* provides future Decadent writers with a compendium of ‘forgotten words’.⁴⁵ Wilde copies this Decadent practice in two ways: he continues the antiquary recovery of artefacts in literature, and he perpetuates the self-conscious Decadent canon-building through imitation. By copying Flaubert’s archaeological method in writing, Wilde creates a museum of Eastern art reflected in an,

⁴¹ ‘Introduction’, in *Gustave Flaubert Salammô*, ed. and introduced by A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 7–16 (p. 7).

⁴² Bernheimer, pp. 34–35. See also Yee, *Exotic Subversions*, p. 64.

⁴³ Bernheimer., p. 35.

⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, ‘Afterword to The Temptation of St. Anthony’, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James Faubion, trans. by Donald F. Brouchard and Sherry Simon (London: Penguin, 1998), pp. 103–22 (pp. 106–07).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

what Edouard Roditi calls, ‘Asiatic Hellenism [...] borrowed from the paintings of Gustave Moreau or from the art and literature of other French decadents.’⁴⁶ As in *La Tentation*, as Foucault put it:

there immediately arises in the evening air the odors of gluttony, the scent of blood and anger, and the incense of pride, aromas worth more than their weight in gold, and the sinful perfumes of Oriental queens. [...] [a]ll of European culture is deployed in this Egyptian night, haunted by the past of the Orient.⁴⁷

Thus, in keeping with Flaubert’s example, Wilde’s ahistorical East in *Salome* ‘rebels against the present not by clearing a path for the future but by filling the present with the past’.⁴⁸ In other words, Wilde’s indiscriminating conglomeration of sources fashioned avant-garde texts exactly by confronting the classical Orient with realities of the present.

Icon of East and West: An Archaeology of *Salome*

Wilde’s *Salome* embodies the meeting of East and West, past and present.⁴⁹ It does so by excavating, collecting and exhibiting fragments of the past in new cosmopolitan constellations. The regional Mediterranean ethical and religious diversity in *Salome* is striking.⁵⁰ As Yeeyon Im points out, the cast of *Salome* is multinational and

⁴⁶ Edouard Roditi, *Oscar Wilde* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions Books, 1947), p. 24.

⁴⁷ Foucault, p. 109; p. 116.

⁴⁸ Bernheimer, p. 47.

⁴⁹ Since the rise of feminist and queer theory in the 1970s, several critics have read Wilde’s play as a homoerotic ‘closet’ narrative. See Curtis Marez, Ian Fletcher, Nicholas Mirzoeff, Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity – Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Petra Dierkes-Thrun, *Salome’s Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011).

⁵⁰ Wilde, *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act translated from the French of Oscar Wilde, pictured by Aubrey Beardsley*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. V, Plays I*, ed. by Joseph Donohue (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 703–32. trans. by Lord Alfred Douglas. All references are to this edition. Hereafter, line numbers are provided in the main body of the text. As I will consider the English translation only, I will refer to the play as *Salome*.

‘cosmopolitan’;⁵¹ Jews, Nubians, Syrians, Romans, a Cappadocian (from today’s Turkey) are all assembled at Herod’s international court. Salome describes the banquet held at the hall like as a cosmopolitan gathering at a Parisian salon. In fact, it reads like the catalogue of an anthropological exhibition, describing the guests like artefacts in their habit and customs:

Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle, with long nails of jade and russet cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords. (710)

In regards to this meeting of cultures, Richard Allen Cave argued that Wilde, the Irishman, in fact launched a hidden attack on ‘the English, whose Empire (which had colonized Ireland) was modelled on the Roman prototype.’⁵² The Romans here feature as the English Victorians unable to accept Eastern or any foreign influence into their culture despite exporting their own across the globe. Wilde’s *Salome*, as an ‘icon of Wilde’s aestheticist crusade’,⁵³ was banned by the English censorship on the grounds of indecency and blasphemy until 1931 and could only be staged abroad in France in 1896 and in Berlin in 1902 under Max Reinhardt. It was even more successful as an opera by Richard Strauss in 1905.⁵⁴ Salome’s words here are very much the author’s, arguing for

⁵¹ Yeeyon Im, ‘Oscar Wilde’s *Salomé*: Disorienting Orientalism’, *Comparative Drama*, 45:4 (2011), 361–80 (p. 364).

⁵² Richard Allen Cave, ‘Annotations’, *Salome* in *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Ernest and Other Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 378–87 (p. 383).

⁵³ Shelley I. Salamensky, ‘Oscar Wilde’s “Jewish Problem”: Salomé, the Ancient Hebrew and the Modern Jewess’, *Modern Drama*, 55:2 (2012), 197–215 (p. 210).

⁵⁴ Elaine Showalter regards the play as a catalyst for the homosexual emancipation movement at the turn of the century in Germany, sparking a ‘Salomania’ on the continent: ‘It’s still Salome’, *TLS*, 2 Sept. 1994, *Times Literary Supplement Historical Archive Online* [accessed: 28/01/2016.]. W. Eugene Davis assesses the ‘startling popularity of the play in Germany and Austria’, in ‘Oscar Wilde, Salome, and the German Press 1902–1905’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 44:2 (2001), 149–80; See also Judith Walkowitz, ‘The “Vision of Salome”: Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing

inclusivity of new and strange cultures. The Egyptians are ‘silent, subtle’ representatives of England’s colonies at the time, whilst the Romans (that is the English) are ‘common’ and unable to acknowledge otherness.

Western imperialism has a strong presence throughout the play, in which it is represented by Herod’s repeated references to Caesar and his Roman guests. Caesar, as Im points out, stands metonymically for the imperial power under whose protectorate Herod rules in Judea. Im even sees in Herod’s subjection to the Roman Empire ‘the playwright’s relationship to the English public that grants Wilde his literary “Tetrarchy”’. In her view, ‘Herod’s sudden destruction of Salome, for which no clear reason is given, can be read as the subjection of the playwright to the censoring of the English.’⁵⁵ Thus, despite being considered Wilde’s most Oriental work, the play is self-aware of its imperialist underpinnings.

Salome also comments on the limitations of Christian orthodoxy and Judaism. Sources alongside the Hebrew Bible, such as Tacitus, introduced to the Victorian Christian view an understanding of Jewish culture and writing as hyperbolic, ‘apocryphal’ or even ‘satirical’. Wilde’s play qualifies as an ‘unsceptical product of this sort of fable’ that, as Shelley I. Salamensky finds, highlights Wilde’s casual anti-Semitism.⁵⁶ The figure of the degenerate Jew, as well as the hyper-eroticized Jewess, comparable to the portrayal of Egypt, ‘serves as a fixture of the picturesque landscape

in Central London, 1908–1918’, *American History Review*, 108:2 (2003), 337–76. For a reception history and influences on the German and Austrian literary scene see: Robert Vilain, ‘Tragedy and the Apostle of Beauty: The Early Literary Reception of Oscar Wilde in Germany and Austria’, in *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, ed. by Stefano Evangelista (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 173–88.

⁵⁵ Im, pp. 374–75.

⁵⁶ Salamensky, p. 198; pp. 207–08: ‘Wilde’s treatments of the Jew throughout his *œuvre* are remarkably boorish, clumsy, and coarse [...]. While Wilde promoted a doctrine of decadence and the Jew was classed as decadent, the Jew was not the right kind of decadent for Wilde.’

of decadence'.⁵⁷ In the play, Alexandria, the seat of the Ptolemaic rulers of Egypt and, next to Rome, the capital of cosmopolitanism in the classical world, features as the source of dangerous knowledge. Alexandria and its fantastic library of classical philosophical manuscripts provides potential alternatives to (Victorian) religious piety:

A THIRD JEW: God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH JEW: Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. [...] (718)

The East, here represented by both Egypt and Greece, destabilizes rigid categories of Judeo-Christian beliefs and morality. The Eastern 'doctrine' reflects the dangerous inquisitiveness of Decadent philosophy and a way of life devoted to art instead of religion.

The East as Mosaic: Objectification and Cosmopolitan Colouring

If, as Joseph Donohue's survey suggests, *Salome* is a play about desire inspired by the gaze,⁵⁸ it is even more so a play about the act of looking itself as a strategy of appropriation. The fixation on objects and objectification of characters in the play echoes Wilde's tendency to both conglomerate particles of diverse provenance but also to appropriate the objects' histories. Salome, just like her author, appears to be consciously 'looking for dead things' (707) – in other words, artefacts or Foucault's 'forgotten words'. The absence of dynamic action – typical for a Symbolist play in the spirit of Maurice Maeterlinck – draws all its action from gazing, looking and observing.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 203.

⁵⁸ Joseph Donohue, 'Distance, Death and Desire in *Salome*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 118–42 (p. 130).

Much of the time, looks and descriptive speech replace the actual physical action on stage.

Throughout the play characters gaze at rather than interact with one another. Characters are introduced as dead objects of description and are animated purely by other characters' observations rather than through dialogue or movement. This anti-dramatic restriction of physical action therefore raises the legitimate question of its performability as a drama; it is rather an exhibition of animated artefacts. Actors' actions are distilled in words, and with dramaturgical brilliance Wilde sets up the scene as a museum of speaking objects. The expectations Wilde built before the dance and the blacked-out kissing of the head, both of which are extreme physical acts and form the climax of the play, remain unfulfilled. According to the conventions of melodrama at the time, these acts would satisfy the audience's appetite for a spectacle of supernatural dimension. As Wilde, an experienced playgoer, knew, often such spectacular effects were delivered in form of the exotic.⁵⁹

Salome herself is 'dangerous' to look at: 'Something terrible may happen.' (707). Herod concludes that 'I have looked at thee overmuch. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. [...] Neither at things, nor at people should one look' (726–27). The second soldier has to correct his comrade's observation of the Tetrarch; he is not 'looking at something', but rather looking at 'some one' (707). Through this network of gazes, Wilde skilfully keeps the theatrical viewer/reader at a distance. As if through the pane of a glass cabinet, the audience/reader is forced to watch the action unfold

⁵⁹ Donohue suggests an interpretation of *Salome* as popular drama. Despite its Symbolist appeal, the play grows out of the Victorian theatrical tradition of melodrama. Joseph Donohue, 'Finger-posts, Limelight, Staircases, and Other Delights: Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* as Popular Drama', *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 1:1 (2010), 9–25.

indirectly. Similar to an exchange of museumgoers discussing an object, the minor characters set up the protagonists in *ekphrasis* as strange monuments they cannot quite fathom or categorize:

FIRST SOLDIER: At whom is he looking?

SECOND SOLDIER: I cannot tell.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN: How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale.' (707, repeated by Herod 'Never have I seen her so pale' 717, 721)

The paleness here suggests Salome's shadowlike appearance but could also be read to evoke an image of Greek and Roman marble sculpture, the epitome of beauty in Wilde's classical understanding. Salome, therefore, is not the Oriental but has more in common with Cleopatra, the East produced by a Western imagination and inflected with Western categories of sublime beauty. Salome as conglomerate of Eastern and Western influences thus conflates their binaries. Wilde's repetitive language, for which the play received repeated criticism (Praz classified it as 'a nursery tale' and 'parody of the whole of the material used by the Decadents'),⁶⁰ is therefore not as self-indulgent as it may seem: it combines methods of description of classical artworks with Symbolist techniques of carving out the suggestive potential of language. Repetition in language thus functions as a carving out tool to bring characters of monumental size into existence.

Similar to Salome, Jokanaan is treated as an object of foreign provenance. Salamensky highlights the fact that Wilde adopted Flaubert's Greek version of the name to 'demarcate what he positions as a Jewish realm from a conjoined Greco-Christian realm'.⁶¹ Confined to his cistern, he is a curious attraction displayed at the Tetrach's court. Salome declares: 'I would but look at this strange prophet. Men have talked so

⁶⁰ Praz, p. 332.

⁶¹ Salamensky, p. 197.

much of him' (711). Like the Egyptian artefacts imported into Britain, Jokanaan is a guarded object surrounded by a mysterious air. Salome admires his body as her object of desire. His decapitation at the play's close fulfils this process of linguistic fragmentation, a process in which Salome's desire turns the Biblical into the erotic Decadent.

Salome comments on Jokanaan's bodily features by mixing imagery from West and East. Jokanaan's eyes are 'like black holes burned by torches in a tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black caverns where the dragons live, the black caverns of Egypt in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons' (713). One line on, she compares him to 'a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. [...] His flesh must be very cold, cold as ivory.... I would look closer at him [...] I must look at him closer' (713). Yet, again, a character is established as a monument by the *ekphrasis* of another one. To describe Jokanaan's body, Salome employs similes to evoke a sense of Eastern sensuality captured in a Greek statue: 'white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judaea [...] the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body' (714). After refusing to let her touch him, he appears as 'a plastered wall [...] a whited sepulchre, full of loathsome things' (714). Her description dissects Jokanaan's body into different images. She assembles an image of him by first looking, in the impulse to touch his body, then second by zooming in even further on details such as his hair and mouth.⁶²

Following Foucault's idea of an archaeology of knowledge, characters are thus presented as 'monuments reduced to infinitesimal fragments'. Jokanaan is established as a monument with the lines: 'Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver.

⁶² Wilde notes in the later version of the lecture of 1884 in 'The House Beautiful' that '[i]n the Orient, where there was every beautiful textile and delicate thing, the sense of touch was far beyond what it was in Europe', in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission*, pp. 248–61 (p. 250).

[...] It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory' (730); 'thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory' (714). Yet, it is not long before Salome verbally fragments Jokanaan and ends by physically dissecting him. She thus reduces him to an object: his severed head. Herod tries to reason with her to refrain her from demanding

this *thing* of me. This is a terrible *thing*, an awful *thing* to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut from his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a *thing* (726, my emphasis)

In exchange, he attempts to trade Jokanaan's head for precious stones ('Tell me the *thing* that thou desirest [...] (728)). Body parts and gemstones are equated as exotic objects. As Chad Bennett remarks, 'decorative details carry greater reanimating, representative power than a more precise description of the actual body.'⁶³ The objectification of Jokanaan's body and the trading that takes place between Salome and Herod refer the reader back to the imperialist nature of the play. The prophet's head is valued as a fragment equal in worth to colonial goods.

The overabundance of detail such as costume, colour and objects is a recurring characteristic in Wilde's father's travelogue and dominates Flaubert's and Gautier's memoirs of the East.⁶⁴ Locals are described through details of their physical appearance and attire, and it is the decorative and ornamental 'objectiveness' that becomes the primary means of expression. Objects of desire are reconstructed and deconstructed under the Orientalist gaze, disconnected from their original place of belonging. Jokanaan's head is dislocated from its original (Eastern) history but adopts a new cosmopolitan identity as the shocking mascot for Francophile English Decadence.

⁶³ Chad Bennett, 'Oscar Wilde's Salome: Décor, Des Corps, Desire', *English Literary History*, 77:2 (2010), 297–323 (p. 302).

⁶⁴ Donohue notes that Wilde modeled Salome on Flaubert's travel notes of Egyptian Kuchuk-Hanem dancers. 'Introduction', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. V*, pp. 325–490 (p. 449).

Ironically, *Salome*, often celebrated as Wilde's most French production, thus represents the epitome of English Decadence.

Salome herself has a double function: she is an observer and, like the Sphinx in Wilde's poem, is also a dangerous exotic object to be looked at – 'I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salome, thou art accursed' (715). Bernheimer observes that '[t]he heterogeneous is homogenized; the human is objectified'.⁶⁵ Bernheimer's identification of particularization in Flaubert holds true for Wilde, whose language redirects 'the frustrated reader to the brute materiality of the verbal signifiers [...] reduced to verbal ornaments on the page [...] saturated with particulars'.⁶⁶ This process, in turn, echoes Paul Bourget's definition of Decadence. He sees too strong an individualization as destabilizing, eventually causing the collapse of a society or, indeed, the cohesiveness of narrative. As a result, the Western 'literatures in decay', as Bourget terms them, will have no future readership as they will be required to be read by experts, those who are willing to piece together the parts. Even though Bourget predicted the marginality of Decadent literary studies to a certain extent, he underestimated the reviving nature of the Orient in these Decadent literatures. The East is what makes texts like Wilde's *Salome* the very acme of Decadence, and with it ushers in Decadence as an avant-garde tendency in English literature.

⁶⁵ Bernheimer, p. 48.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 54.



Fig. 2 Aubrey Beardsley, 'Tailpiece: The Burial of Salome', 1894, lithograph, private collection.

Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations to Wilde's play were instrumental in making *Salome* a hallmark for the evolution of Decadent literature as an avant-garde movement in England. Initially, as Peter Raby relates, Wilde discussed the realization of illustrations for *Salome* with Ricketts. However, Beardsley's black and white designs resonated more with Wilde's idea of an estrangement from realism.⁶⁷ Beardsley's and Wilde's collaboration for the play's English translation was troubled because of their competing ideas about the Orient. Despite Wilde's admiration for Beardsley's art, Wilde found Beardsley's drawings 'too Japanese', and imagined his play to be 'Byzantine' in style.⁶⁸ Despite their different visions of the play and the Orient it represents, 'The Burial of Salome' shows the emblematic birth of Decadence as a proto-Modernist tendency (fig. 2). Forming part of the illustrations for *Salome* in 1894, the drawing resumes the idea of *Salome* as the metonymic Oriental object of Decadence.

In the drawing, a nude woman is supposedly put to rest into an ornate powder box, the Decadent version of a sarcophagus. However, one could also assume that the woman is lifted from the 'decadent tomb' by both a masked Pierrot figure and a naked satyr who respectively represent the over-civilized West (France) and the Orientalized ancient East. The Decadent powder-puff or dusting brush used to excavate delicate relics is ready to rid the dusty patina of stuffiness that was seen to cloak Victorian literature. Beardsley's image shows *Salome* as the mummy 'rising from a tomb': 'She is like a woman who is dead' (*Salome*, 707). Her ancient Orientalness is meant both to disturb the European literary scene and to breathe new life into it.

⁶⁷ Peter Raby, *Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), p. 117.

⁶⁸ William Rothenstein, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein, Vol. I* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931), p. 184.

This reading enables a comparison between Salome the character and *Salome* the text ‘rising from a tomb’ (707). The nineteenth-century infatuation with *Salome* made it an icon of English, as much as cosmopolitan Decadence. In Foucault’s terms, ‘European culture [was] haunted by the past of the Orient.’ This observation is in line with Wilde’s idea of the East reviving Western cultures, as discussed in the beginning of this chapter. Decadence, as the name might suggest, a crumbling and declining movement, is thus reverted into its exact opposite; through the East, Decadence emerges as a new strand of European literature. The ‘Fin’ inscribed on the box, coupled with references to tombs at the beginning of the play, marks not the end, but the beginning of Decadence.

To return to the idea of *Salome* as a collection and exhibition of archaeological fragments, the following will consider how Wilde’s use of colour informs the notion of *Salome* as a cosmopolitan mosaic of Decadence. The arrangement of coloured particles in *Salome* to form or fragment characters follows Wilde’s personal nineteenth-century perspective on art history, as explained in Wilde’s lecture ‘The House Beautiful’ (1884). In this piece, Wilde recommends adopting the ‘lattice-work windows of the East’ and ‘Oriental carpets’:

Compare the colour schemes of Europe, in the fine coloured windows of our cathedrals and churches, by means of the primary colours being used in small masses set in a neutral background, and of the East. I would say that the former displayed most of pure colour but the best effects were produced in Eastern countries by prevailing neutral tints, as, for instance, in a Persian carpet. [...] The general effect was that of great brightness and joyousness of colour, but the primary hues were used only here and there in bright masses like jewels.⁶⁹

Wilde’s colour scheme and patterning in his play *Salome* suggests that Wilde is mixing Western and Eastern techniques; his play sets strong colours in an intricate arrangement framed by subtler hues.

⁶⁹ Wilde, ‘The House Beautiful’, pp. 253–54.

The three wines, that are imported from all over the eastern Mediterranean to showcase Herod's imperial wealth, delineate Wilde's East. They are coloured 'purple like the cloak of Cesar', 'yellow as gold' and 'red as blood' (708). These images evoke the East as a colonial territory, being rich in goods as well as a place of violence. Jokanaan, Salome's Oriental object of desire, is characterized by three colours – white, black and red –, each defined by Salome in more specific shades. His skin is as white 'as the snow that lie on the mountains of Judaea' (714); his hair is as dark as 'clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom [...] like the great cedars of Lebanon' (714); his mouth is like 'a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory. [...] a branch of coral [...] the vermillion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab' (714). In *Salome*, as in *The Sphinx* and *Dorian Gray*, Wilde maps his East through colours and material objects. This technique, evoking the East by agglomeration, makes the quintessentially Decadent 'jewelled style'.

Even in their visual presentation on the page, the many exotic gemstones form a pattern reminiscent of mosaics or Oriental carpets made of 'pearls, set in four rows' like 'moons chained with rays of silver', 'amethysts [...] black like wine and red', 'topazes [...] yellow [...] pink [...] and green', 'sapphires [...] as blue as blue flowers', the list goes on (727–28). According to Ada Leverson's memoirs, Wilde

cared little for any of his plays excepting only *Salome*. Influenced as he had been at the time by Maeterlinck, Flaubert and Huysmans, yet *Salome* expressed *himself* in his innate love of the gorgeous and the bizarre. (He said it was indeed unique: for it was written by an Irishman in French and done into English by a young Scotch friend!).⁷⁰

Leverson's comment shows that, despite its Francophile Orientalist make-up,

Salome is modelled on a typical Victorian traveller's descriptions of the Orient, which Wilde might have known through his father. The play's stylistic heterogeneity makes it

⁷⁰ Ada Leverson, *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde with Reminiscences of the Author* (London: Duckworth, 1930), p. 28, London, British Library [Eccles 445].

quintessentially cosmopolitan. It is a mosaic in which particles of the Western imagination and relics of the East merge as one Decadent showcase.

Through his interest in the East, derived from his passion for the decorative arts and especially colours, Wilde positions himself in *Salome* as a latent Orientalist. As Im has argued, '[f]ar from remaining objective' Wilde seems to identify with the Orient: 'his queer sexuality and Irishness placed him near "them," or "inferior" Others in the margin of Victorian culture.'⁷¹ In an attempt to differentiate Wilde's Orientalism one has to distinguish between Wilde the cosmopolite and Wilde the celebrated Victorian playwright. As a result, in *Salome* Wilde inhabits the pose, as Im puts it, of the 'Orientalist, *but not quite*. [*Salome*] is an Orientalist play that questions the very premises of Oriental discourse.'⁷² Wilde's only reason to use the East is, to borrow Emily Apter's phrase, a welcome opportunity to perform his homosexuality 'by the culturally exotic stereotype.'⁷³ Nicholas Mirzoeff takes this argument further, stating that Wilde's appropriation of the East is in fact a 'disidentification with Orientalism'.⁷⁴ His argument focuses on the subaltern in Victorian England more broadly, subsuming Jewish culture, colonial territories, and homosexuality as categories of the Victorian 'other'. In Wilde's works, Mirzoeff identifies 'a rhizomatic network of Orientalism',⁷⁵ an overlapping of these categories, which complicates binary models of Eastern and Western belonging.

⁷¹ Im, p. 368.

⁷² Ibid., p. 362. Emphasis in the original.

⁷³ Emily Apter, 'Acting Out Orientalism: Sapphic Theatricality in Turn-of-the-Century Paris', in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. by Elin Diamond (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 15–34 (p. 17).

⁷⁴ Nicholas Mirzoeff, 'Disorientalism: Minority and Visuality in Imperial London', *The Drama Review*, 50:2 (2006), 52–69 (p. 54).

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

Beyond reading *Salome* as a performance of Wilde's homosexuality, I contend that it is Wilde's original interest in archaeology and Eastern art history that is visible throughout the play and that shapes its Oriental nature. The East in Decadent literature is therefore 'a visual correlative' of Wilde's own position as an outsider within, just like *Salome* might be considered the 'exotic' outsider in Wilde's otherwise predominantly Victorian canon. Whilst Wilde occupied this 'in-between' status between practitioner of imperialist English culture and (queer) Irish colonial subject, he was equally an Orientalist writer. Employing techniques of conglomerating individual parts of disparate provenance in his fiction and taking into account his lectures and journalistic articles, which I neglect to consider, Wilde emerges as an Orientalist who, according to the Saidian definition, 'teaches, writes about, or researches the Orient'.⁷⁶

Reading *Salome* and *The Sphinx* in conjunction with Wilde's journalism, lectures and critical writings on the decorative arts sheds new light on his conceptions of the East in his literature. It is essential to consider these additional materials in order to situate Wilde's Decadent Oriental works not merely as a site of self-definition as an outsider, but also as works with a wider political framework. Wilde himself described *Dorian Gray* as 'an essay on decorative art',⁷⁷ full of detailed descriptions of, for example, Eastern perfume, of which Dorian has an accomplished collection and of which Wilde wrote in a more factual context in the form of journalistic contributions to the *WW*. Reading Wilde's anonymously published articles dating from the 1880s enables his fiction to be seen in a different, more cosmopolitan, light.⁷⁸ Far from being

⁷⁶ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 2.

⁷⁷ Wilde to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, 30 June 1890, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 435–436 (p. 436).

⁷⁸ Guy and Small also discuss continuities between Wilde's journalism and his later work in *Oscar Wilde's Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

one-sided, Wilde proves himself to be a politically alert observer in his review of Hugh Stutfield's 'A Ride through Morocco', published in 1886 in the *Pall Mall Gazette*.

Wilde did not close his eyes to current politics in the North Africa:

the picture [Stutfield] draws is in many respects a very tragic one. The Moors are the Masters of a beautiful country and of many beautiful arts, but they are paralyzed by their fatalism, and pillaged by their rulers. Few races, indeed, have had a more terrible fall than these Moors. Of the great intellectual civilization of the Arabs no trace remains. The names of Averroes and Almaimon, of Al Abbas and Ben Husa are quite unknown. Fez, once the Athens of Africa, the cradle of the sciences, is now a mere commercial caravanserai. Its universities have vanished, its library is almost empty. Freedom of thought has been killed by the Koran, freedom of living by bad government [...] [t]here is no doubt that in Morocco England has interests to defend [...].⁷⁹

Sounding much like his father in these lines, Wilde describes the political and cultural decline Morocco underwent in the 'general "scramble for Africa"'.⁸⁰ Starting in the 1830s with French expansion schemes showing an interest in extending already existing colonies in Algeria, the "collective European action",⁸¹ which Stutfield calls for and Wilde seconded in parts, culminated in the Moroccan crisis in 1905, in which Wilhelm II contested French claims over the region. Wilde's evocation of the twelfth-century Arabic philosopher Averroes, in connection with the supposed cultural decay of the region, is testimony to his awareness of, if not opposition to, the detrimental impact of commercialization, religious extremism and 'bad government' at the expense of the supremacy of the sciences and arts. Wilde's policies, later formulated in 'The Critic as Artist', are based on a universal liberal cosmopolitanism which bridges the East-West divide through intellectual and artistic exchange. Therefore, the perfect medium for Wilde, in which to put the disciplines of literature, politics, arts, and archaeological research into conversation, was the little magazine.

⁷⁹ Oscar Wilde, 'A Ride through Morocco', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 October 1886; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VI, Journalism Part I*, pp. 97–98 (p. 98).

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.



Fig. 3 Charles Ricketts, 'The Toilet of a Lady of Ancient Egypt', *Woman's World* (London: Cassell & Company, 1888), p. 394.

Wilde and *The Sphinx*

Wilde's editorship of the *WW* (November 1887 to July 1889) concerns itself considerably with the art history and fashion of Eastern countries throughout the late-1880s. Towards 1889, it pursues a particular focus on the Sphinx. During the 1880s and 1890s, the Sphinx became a point of interest for British mass media combining, as Iain Ross put it, 'fantasies of antique life with a scholarly alibi'.⁸² Print journalism at the time was particularly effective at disseminating archaeological novelties to a mass readership tailored to the taste of popular culture. Wilde, as author and editor, was no exception. His reviews in the 1880s frequently intervene in discussions arising from this 'conjunction of archaeology and spectacle.'⁸³ Following the heightened interest in Egypt in those decades, Wilde published two articles by Helen Mary Tirard (1854–1943), 'Lady in Ancient Egypt' (1888), which was published opposite an illustration by Charles Ricketts (fig. 3), and 'The Great Sphinx' (1889). Both emphasize the proximity of English and Ancient Egyptian cultures.

Helen Mary Tirard was one of Wilde's authors specializing in Egyptian and ancient history. Together with her husband Sir Nestor Isidore Charles, professor of Medicine at Kings College London, Tirard travelled widely in the Middle East and published, apart from her articles in Wilde's journal, a series of articles for the *Archaeological Journal*, a book *Sketches from a Nile Steamer: For the Use of Travellers in Egypt* (1891), and a translation of Adolf Erman's *Life in Ancient Egypt* (1885, translated by Tirard in 1894). Two years after the publication of Tirard's essay in the *WW*, a new edition of novelist and Egyptologist Amelia Edwards's travelogue *A*

⁸² Iain Ross, p. 98.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 100.

Thousand Miles up the Nile (first published 1876) ended with a contemplation of the Sphinx in Giza. This range of publications on Egypt suggests that Wilde chose his contributors carefully in order to avoid the impression of mere ‘scholarly alibi’.

Through his editorship, Wilde was informed about the developments of Egyptological research. Like Tirard, the young Amelia Edwards (1831–1892) sought to professionalize her interests in Ancient Egyptian archaeology and history. Similar to Wilde in 1882, she toured the United States lecturing on Egyptian explorations from 1889 to 1890. Edwards and Reginald Stuart Poole, as two field-defining Egyptologists of their time, founded *The Egypt Exploration Society* in 1882 in order to examine and excavate in areas of Egypt and Sudan. Their intent was to study and analyse the results of these excavations and publish their findings for the scholarly world. Edwards bequeathed her library and collection of Egyptian antiquities to University College London, together with a sum of two and a half thousand pounds to found an Edwards Chair of Egyptology, thereby establishing Egyptology as an academic discipline in the 1880s in England. The result was the creation of the first professorship in Egyptology in London. The first scholar to take up the position was William Flinders Petrie (1853–1942), whose books Wilde explicitly requested from Robert Ross while still in prison in 1897. As mentioned earlier, Wilde asked Ross to obtain works by ‘Flinders Petrie on Egypt [*Egyptian Decorative Art*, 1895]. Any good book on Ancient Egypt.’⁸⁴

In line with Wilde’s own interest in archaeology, Egyptologist and papyrologist Dominic Montserrat speculated that Wilde attended one of Petrie’s exhibitions at the Egyptian Hall in Piccadilly.⁸⁵ The so-called Hawara Exhibition was open for four

⁸⁴ Wilde to Robert Ross, 6 April 1897, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 786–93 (p. 792).

⁸⁵ Despite, as Montserrat admits, there being merely ‘circumstantial evidence’, his thesis is supported by Camille Paglia and Bridget Bennett, who retrace ‘possible Egyptian influences’ on *Dorian Gray*. See Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae. Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven:

weeks, from 18 June to 12 July 1888, attracting an estimated two thousand people furthering the popularization of archaeology. Montserrat was convinced that Wilde must have seen mummy portraits there, which were exhibited in London in 1888 for the first time. Wilde also may have been ‘drawing inspiration for his 1891 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from the ancient portraits’.⁸⁶ The Hawara Exhibition was advertised in *The Academy* and *The Athanaeum* and reviewed by *The Saturday Review* and *The Illustrated London News*. Montserrat argued that Wilde could not possibly have missed this exhibition of extraordinary findings since ‘these Egyptian mummy portraits were a virtually unknown genre of ancient painting’.⁸⁷ Such Roman-period funerary panels had been excavated during Petrie’s work in Hawara 1878 and 1888. Today they are kept in the Petrie Museum (UCL) as the largest collection of artefacts outside Egypt.

Furthermore, Wilde sourced his literary ‘fabrics’ from the actual fabrics of antiquity that were popularized through such exhibitions. In a review in the *WW*, Wilde mentions that ‘[n]ow and then we find in the tomb of some dead Egyptian a piece of delicate work. [...] The Egyptian Museum at the Louvre has a curious network embellished with glass beads’.⁸⁸ Iain Ross describes Wilde’s interest in real life exhibitions and their incorporation within his works:

In ‘Athanasia [Immortality]’ (1879) Wilde drew on his father’s explorations of Egyptian tombs to offer the tale of a mummified girl brought to the British Museum clutching ‘in the wasted hollow of her hand / A little seed, which sown in English ground / Did wondrous snow of starry blossoms bear’ (9–11). Wilde leavens Egyptology with allusions to Greek myth to invoke a generalised ancient world brought to life not by the text but by the excavation and museum acquisition of *Realien* (‘real things’), a life so vivid the modern world seems to drab by comparison.⁸⁹

Yale University Press, 1990). Montserrat refers to Bennett’s work at Warwick University, ‘preparing an article on this aspect of Egypt in the work of Oscar Wilde’, which could not be traced.

⁸⁶ Montserrat, pp. 178–79.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

⁸⁸ Wilde, ‘A Fascinating Book’, p. 92; p. 94.

⁸⁹ Iain Ross, p. 103.

As can be seen from these accounts, the Orientalist milieu in London blossomed in the 1880s and 1890s through the excitement of bringing history back to life. The Orient was re-imagined for the Victorians through a London circle of artists and scientist who built on French examples.⁹⁰ Adding to this, India, Asia-Minor, Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Lebanon, were among the favourite travel destinations of British Orientalists. Egyptian themes were prominently exhibited at the Academy as of the 1850s. This led John Ruskin to comment on a painting by John Frederick Lewis titled *Waiting for the Ferry Boat. — Upper Egypt* and exhibited in 1859: ‘are we never to get out of Egypt any more? nor to perceive the existence of any living creatures but Arabs and camels?’⁹¹ During the 1860s William Holman Hunt, and some decades later Frederick Leighton and Lawrence Alma-Tadema, brought the Orient into London drawing rooms. Leighton designed his home in Holland Park as an Arab Hall (1877–1879), furnished with decorative objects collected on his journeys. The hall soon became a sought-after meeting point for like-minded aesthetes, amongst them Wilde.

Charles Ricketts, Wilde’s friend and close collaborator for over seven years, was at the heart of the London Orientalist scene.⁹² He was a vital influence on Wilde’s conception of the East through his appreciation for the ‘seductive appeal of objects in museums’, reflected in his illustrations for Wilde’s poem *The Sphinx*.⁹³ As Ricketts notes, for three years Wilde’s evening visits ‘were constant, and often lasted well on

⁹⁰ For an exploration of the musical and dramatic Orientalist scene see: Martin Clayton and Bennett Zon eds., *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s: Portrayal of the East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Edward Ziter, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

⁹¹ John Ruskin, *Notes on Some of the Principal Pictures Exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy* (London: Smith, Elder and Co., 1859), p. 16.

⁹² Their collaboration includes *Intentions*, *A House of Pomegranates*, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *The Poems*, *The Sphinx*, the latter of which Ricketts considered to be his ‘best work as an illustrator’. See Charles Ricketts, *Oscar Wilde: Recollections by Jean Paul Raymond & Charles Ricketts* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1932), p. 38.

⁹³ Iain Ross, p. 103.

into the night'. Wilde in turn recalled Ricketts's house as 'the one place in London where you will never be bored.'⁹⁴ At the time of their collaboration, Ricketts was a central figure in the artistic circles of the London bohème of the 1890s, which also included Theodor Watts-Dunton, Augustus John, Thomas Hardy, Edmund Gosse, and Arthur Symons. However, it is little known, that Ricketts as one of the leading theatrical designers and illustrators working with George Bernard Shaw, W. B. Yeats and John Millington Synge, published four articles on Egyptian artefacts in the *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* in 1917 and 1918.⁹⁵ He and his partner Charles Shannon owned a collection of more than a thousand items, including Egyptian, Persian, Greek, and Roman objects, as well as hundreds of English drawings and Japanese prints, which are documented in Joseph Darracott's catalogue *All for Art* (1979).

First in 1911 and again in 1914, Ricketts and Shannon travelled to Egypt. Ricketts frequently reports in his letters from London and Cairo to his friends, amongst them Sir Sydney Carlyle Cockerell, director of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, on new purchases from 'Egyptian Sale[s]', where he obtained 'some nice odds and ends'.⁹⁶ Among the Egyptian artefacts were jars, vases, boxes, jewellery, gaming pieces, and statuettes, amounting to, as Cecil Lewis recollects, 'a small museum. Egyptian antiquities, Greek vases and figurines lived in glass cases.'⁹⁷ Ricketts and Wilde were

⁹⁴ Ricketts, p. 36; Wilde quoted by Ricketts, p. 37.

⁹⁵ 1. 'Head of Amenemmēs III in Obsidian: from the Collection of the Rev. W. MacGregor, Tamworth', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 4 (1917), 71–73.
 2. 'Head in Serpentine of Amenemmēs III in the Possession of Oscar Raphael, Esq.', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 4 (1917), 211–12.
 3. 'Bas-Relief Figure of a King of the Ptolemaic Period in Blue Faience', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 5 (1918), 77–78.
 4. 'Two Faience Chalices at Eton College from the Collection of the Late Major W. J. Myers', *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*, 5 (1918), 145–47.

⁹⁶ Ricketts to Sydney Cockerell, 13 and 19 July 1911, in *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, ed. by Cecil Lewis (London: T. & A. Constable, 1939), p. 165.

⁹⁷ Cecil Lewis, 'Preface', in *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, pp. v–xv (p. ix).

united by the zeal to innovate Western, and especially English, art through the incorporation of Eastern characteristics. Ricketts admits, without any imperialist qualms, that ‘if asked to collect Egyptian, Asian, or modern French art, I would do it with some pleasure and without a sense of guilt; there is no love for these arts in England.’⁹⁸

As a painter and illustrator, Ricketts was familiar with Alma-Tadema’s and Leighton’s representations of the East as part ethnological study and part romanticized fiction. Only at second glance do his own abstracted illustrations (figs. 3, 5, 6) recover the spectacular impressions he paints with words in his letters from Cairo and Luxor in 1911:

A kindly tram wafts us along a dusty road, the Pyramids appear quite suddenly, and for a long while they remain always the same height, till the ridge of sand appears on which they are pedestalled. The rich chocolate-coloured ground and parrot-green grass ceases abruptly at the touch of the sand; one could count the straggling tufts of grass at one’s feet which strive to pass the line where life must cease and we enter the kingdom of the dead.⁹⁹

In comparison to Leighton’s and Alma-Tadema’s romanticized antiquity, Ricketts was, in a similar way to Wilde, acutely aware of modern actualities. He continues his letter:

This phrase is pompous and in a sense untrue, since shrieking, ignoble, intolerable Arab life surrounds you, clamouring to sell sham scarabs or imploring you to ride camels or donkeys [...] the Sphinx is smaller than one thought, and suffers from the crowd which gathers here and shrieks [...] Allah is dying to-day slowly and more certainly than Ammon.¹⁰⁰

In this passage, Ricketts points to the sell-out of Egypt as a land of mysterious allure (Ammon) which already Wilde’s father had encounter in the 1830s. Not only the West

⁹⁸ Ricketts’s diary entry 4 April 1916, in *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, p. 255.

⁹⁹ Ricketts to Gordon Bottomley, 7 and 31 January 1911, in *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, pp. 156–59.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

but also the local population prioritize capital gain over traditional custom and values (Allah). Ricketts's own illustrations for the *WW* 'offered antiquity as a realm of desirable objects',¹⁰¹ but they nevertheless provided an abstracted, distanced and critical view on the East. Figure three demonstrates how Ricketts located Egypt in the realm of artifice, instead of trying, like many of his contemporaries, to reproduce a supposed authentic East. Like Wilde, Ricketts was not interested in portraying an Eastern reality. However, like Wilde, he acknowledged the conscious distortion of Eastern realities in the service of art.

Wilde's poem *The Sphinx* reflects the attraction of Egyptomania mentioned earlier in this chapter. Statuettes of Sphinxes were desired decorative objects and exhibited not only in London but also at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to which Wilde would have had easy access. The composition of *The Sphinx*, begun in 1874, when Wilde was an Oxford undergraduate, and developed in Paris in 1883,¹⁰² coincided with the excavations of the Great Sphinx of Giza, a period when English Egyptological research reached its peak.¹⁰³ As seen in the *WW* in the 1880s, the popular taste for Egypt sparked a literary interest in one of its central symbols: the Sphinx. Wilde's poem followed suit. Reviewing Wilfrid Scawen Blunt's *A New Pilgrimage* (1889) for the *Pall Mall Gazette* in 1890, Wilde praises Blunt's 'eastern love-poems professedly "from the Arabic," [...]. The Oriental pieces have something of the charm of Eastern poetry – an exquisite delicacy, a soft charm, with the surprise of unfamiliar imagery.'¹⁰⁴ Wilde translated these qualities into his own poem *The Sphinx*. Comparable to Pater's

¹⁰¹ Iain Ross, p. 4.

¹⁰² Ian Fletcher, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979).

¹⁰³ Nicholas Frankel, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), p. 168.

¹⁰⁴ Oscar Wilde, 'A New Pilgrimage', *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 January 1890; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, pp. 311–12 (p. 312).

enigmatic Gioconda, ‘older than the rocks among which she sits,’¹⁰⁵ Wilde’s Sphinx is, to borrow Amelia Edwards’s expression, ‘[o]lder than the Pyramids, older than history, the monster lies couchant like a watch-dog, looking ever to the east, as if for some dawn that has not yet risen.’¹⁰⁶

Since antiquity the Sphinx had remained ‘a symbol that means it hides meaning.’¹⁰⁷ Due to its ambiguity as the Hegelian ‘symbol of symbols’ (its very name translates as ‘living image’), and thanks to its paradoxical nature, the Sphinx served nineteenth-century Symbolists and Decadents as a compendium of their poetic ideals.¹⁰⁸ Venerated as a male benevolent divinity in Egyptian religious tradition and appearing in Greek mythology as half a winged lion and half woman, a man-eating, omniscient ‘daimon’ who fatally quizzes travellers on their way to Thebes, the Sphinx is the epitome of antithetical hybridity, the Orient’s appropriation of Greece.¹⁰⁹

Wilde’s poem *The Sphinx* combines the Symbolist fascination with the body–mind dialectic encountered in *Salome* with the dialogic interaction between reader and text that Swinburne had introduced with his *Poems and Ballads, First Series* (‘Cleopatra’, ‘Anactoria’ (1866)), and *The Heptalogia* (1880). Wilde was well versed in Symbolist literary trends, having met some of the most influential Symbolist poets during his first stay in Paris and his second visit to Mallarmé’s *mardis* in 1891. As with *Salome*, imported intellectual treasures collected in the Parisian literary scene decisively shaped the cosmopolitan exoticism of his poem.

¹⁰⁵ Walter Pater, ‘Leonardo da Vinci’, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 56–72 (p. 70).

¹⁰⁶ Amelia Edwards, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1888), p. 490.

¹⁰⁷ Willis Goth Regier, *Book of the Sphinx* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005), p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹⁰⁹ Greece was under Turkish influence being part of the Ottoman Empire until its independence in 1822.

In the poem, a stone-carved Sphinx entices the speaker, a student in his Oxford den, to a nightmarish evocation of, in Pater's words, 'fantastic reveries and exquisite passions.'¹¹⁰ The speaker, a youth in his/her dim study, is fascinated by the Sphinx as an '[i]nviolable and immobile' (l. 3)¹¹¹ object sitting in the corner of his/her room. Drawn towards the mythic object, the speaker starts to 'excavate' the Sphinx's secret stories buried in the hypertextual surface of the poem.¹¹² The poem progresses in three acts. In the first part, the speaker describes the Sphinx, enumerating attributes that refer to her monumental stillness: 'she does not stir' (l. 3) 'lies couching [...] so somnolent, so statuesque' (ll. 8–11). In the second part, the rhythm accelerates as the speaker starts to interpret the 'curious cat' (l. 7), demanding her to 'sing me all your memories' (l. 30). Thirdly, in a shower of anaphoric questions – 'And did you watch [...] And did you mark [...] And did you follow [...] And did you talk [...]' (ll. 22–27) – the speaker offers a series of alternative narratives about the object. He/she is driven by Orientalist curiosity and, as Nicholas Frankel observes, by 'a basic archaeological impulse'¹¹³ to 'dig' beneath the surface. In the speaker's imagination, Wilde parades a series of possible lovers of the Sphinx such as 'giant Lizards' (l. 47), a 'swarthy Ethiop' (l. 57) or the 'hawk-faced' 'God of the Assyrian' (l. 68). Words such as 'porphyry' (l. 95), a red crystal found in Egypt, appear already in their typography as precious, exotic objects, metaphorical stumbling blocks. They serve as Eastern artefacts that irritate but pique the

¹¹⁰ Pater, p. 70.

¹¹¹ Wilde, *The Sphinx*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. I, Poems and Poems in Prose*, eds. Bobby Fong and Karl Beckson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 180–194. All references are to this edition. Hereafter, line numbers are provided in the main body of the text. The editors note that the history of composition of the poem with eleven surviving manuscript sources is complex. For purpose of this discussion, I will follow the standardized spelling of the title and refer to the poem as *The Sphinx*.

¹¹² Frankel, p. 215.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

reader's exploratory spirit. Wilde's archaeological conquest of the East thus uses Orientalism to spin a new network of cosmopolitan references.

As the poem unfolds, this act of excavation of narratives is on a second level mirrored by the reader, who tries to decode the material aspects of the text. Like Salome, desiring to touch Jokanaan, the speaker in the poem desires to touch the exotic object: 'let me stroke your throat and see your body [...] let me touch those curving claws of yellow ivory' (ll. 13–15). As if mentally leafing through all the stories he/she ever heard associated with the Sphinx ('or' is used as another anaphora nine times alone on one page), the speaker's imagination, made breathless through enjambments that connect whole stanzas, produces a plethora of mythological and exotic imagery, culminating in the poem's climax in part three. Here the speaker revels in the Sphinx's and Ammon's Oriental beauty and sexual briskness, until the Christian vocabulary intervenes and dominates the final stage, the denouement of the scene ('you wake foul dreams of sensual life' (l. 169)). Through this double act of interpretation, Wilde turns both the speaker and the reader into Orientalist researchers deciphering the Sphinx as a relic. Thus the Sphinx comprises a compendium of alternative histories of the East. It is Wilde's proto-Modernist attempt to 'unify the fragmented modern world' in an Oriental image of eternal wisdom.¹¹⁴

In its materiality, the poem is an archaeological site of cultural and erotic consumption of the East. In line with Wilde's venture into the world of interior design and decoration, the poem is a literary mirror of the consumption of Eastern material culture in which consumerism and archaeology go hand in hand. The sexually suggestive imagery of watery fluids ('slimy tears' (l. 41), 'the steaming Nile' (l. 85))

¹¹⁴ Said, 'Introduction', in Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. ix–xxxii (p. xxix).

and snakes ('the priests cursed you with shrill psalms as in your claws you / seized their Snake / And crept away with it to slake your passion by the shuddering / palms!' (ll. 43–44)) is counterbalanced by the heaviness of an excessive catalogue of mythological, gemmological and botanical references. The eroticization of sun-God Ammon showcases a Swinburnian 'predilection for a beautiful religion based on the ancient principle of corporeal consummation.'¹¹⁵ As in Swinburne's poems, the dramatic speaker imagines the physical fragmentation of the lover into material units:

Go, seek his fragments on the moor and wash
them in the evening dew,
And from their pieces make anew thy mutilated
paramour!

Go, seek them where they lie alone and from their
broken pieces make
Thy bruised bedfellow! and wake mad passions in
the senseless stone!

(ll. 121–124)

This passage not only refers to the Sphinx's endeavours to recover her beloved Ammon, but is also descriptive of the East's history with Europe. Repulsive yet attractive, the East is Europe's 'mutilated paramour' and 'bruised bedfellow' 'scattered here and there: deep hidden in the windy sand' (l. 115), which Wilde pieced together in his conglomerative artistic philosophy. It is also Wilde's address to the reader to 'go, seek' the East is a vital tool for understanding his or her own European identity. In order to revive the 'senseless stone', the over-chiselled text, overladen with embellishment and at times 'senseless', the Decadent reader needs to put the pieces of the identity riddle together in order to experience a cohesive narrative, just like an archaeologist. Reading

¹¹⁵ Norbert Lennartz, 'Oscar Wilde's "The Sphinx" – A Dramatic Monologue of the Dandy as a Young Man?', *Philological Quarterly*, 83:4 (2004), 415–30 (p. 421).

Decadent texts is a dangerous yet rewarding activity, an act of losing oneself in the other; its consumption can evoke ‘mad passions’. Responding to Victorian fears of *bovaryism*, a term T. S. Eliot later used to denote Flaubert’s heroine’s momentous detachment from reality, Decadence consciously seeks the liminal space between life and art. It also seeks to transgress cultural boundaries at the expense of political correctness.

The poem’s many transnational sources celebrate hybridity as a compositional principle. Freely mixing gothic elements from Edgar Allen Poe’s poem ‘The Raven’ (1845) and his short story ‘The Sphinx’ (1850), the metre of Alfred Lord Tennyson’s *In Memoriam* (1850) as well as incorporating a ‘variety of mythologies’,¹¹⁶ it probes tensions between Christian and Pagan beliefs. A further site of literary excavation for Wilde was Gautier’s *Emaux et camées*, which thematically links the poem to Wilde’s short story ‘The Happy Prince’ (1888). In this story, a swallow is on its way ‘[a]way to Egypt!’, repeatedly evoking Egypt as a magical wonderland inhabited by ‘the Second Cataract. The river-horse couches there among the bulrushes, and on a great granite throne sits the God Memnon’. As Josephine Guy and Ian Small point out, this section anticipates analogue lines in *The Sphinx*: ‘Still from his chair of porphyry gaunt Memnon strains his lidless eyes / Across the empty land, and cries each yellow morning unto Thee’ (ll. 133–35).¹¹⁷

Joseph Bristow further lists Flaubert’s *La Tentation* (1874) as one of Wilde’s main sources, which provided him with a pool of exotic words.¹¹⁸ In ‘The Decay of

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 420.

¹¹⁷ Josephine Guy and Ian Small, eds., *Studying Oscar Wilde: History, Criticism, and Myth* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2006), p. 171.

¹¹⁸ Joseph Bristow, ‘Oscar Wilde’s poetic traditions: from Aristophanes’s *Clouds* to *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*’, in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, pp. 73–87 (83).

Lying’, Wilde refers to this source, explaining: ‘The solid stolid British intellect lies in the desert sands like the Sphinx in Flaubert’s marvellous tale’.¹¹⁹ Wilde’s sarcastic comment on the intellectual inflexibility of his Victorian contemporaries targets their reluctance to accept anything but realistic representation: ‘fantasy [...] dances around [the British intellect] and calls to it [...]. It may not hear her now, but surely some day, when we are all bored to death with the commonplace character of modern fiction’. The poem’s dedication to Marcel Schwob, a master of the French Symbolist short story and in 1891 Wilde’s guide through the Parisian salons, reinforces the intercultural character of *The Sphinx* and its appeal to readers to investigate other cultures, ways of living and modes of representation. Unsurprisingly upon its publication in 1894, the sexualized exoticism of Wilde’s poem was greeted with similar scepticism to Swinburne’s dramatic monologue, ‘Anactoria’. Similar to *The Sphinx*, it stirred public controversy in 1866 with regards to Swinburne’s poetic treatment of cannibalism and lesbianism.

¹¹⁹ Wilde, ‘The Decay of Lying’, p. 101.

THE MINX.—A POEM IN PROSE.

Poet. It's so good of you to see me. I merely wished to ask one or two questions as to your career. You must have led a most interesting life.

Sphinx. You are very inquisitive and extremely indiscreet, and I have always carefully avoided being interviewed. However, go on.

Poet. I believe you can read hieroglyphs?

Sphinx. Oh yes; I can, fluently. But I never do. I assure you they are not in the least amusing.

Poet. No doubt you have talked with hippogriffs and basilisks?

Sphinx (modestly). I certainly was in rather a smart set at one time. As they say, I have "known better days."

Poet. Did you ever have any conversation with THORN?

Sphinx (loftily). Oh, dear no! (*Mimicking.*) Thoth he wath not conthidered quite a nice perthon. I would not allow him to be introduced to me.

Poet. You were very particular?

Sphinx. One has to be careful. The world is so censorious.

Poet. I wonder, would you give me the pleasure of singing to me? "*Adrian's Gilded Barge*," for instance?

Sphinx. You must really excuse me. I am not in good voice. By the way, the "*Gilded Barge*," as you call it, was merely a shabby sort of punt. It would have had no effect whatever at the Henley Regatta.

Poet. Dear me! Is it true you played golf among the Pyramids?

Sphinx (emphatically). Perfectly untrue. You see what absurd reports get about!



Poet (softly). They do. What was that story about the Lyrian?

Sphinx. Merely gossip. There was nothing in it, I assure you.

Poet. And APIS?

Sphinx. Oh, he sent me some flowers, and there were paragraphs about it—in hieroglyphs—in the society papers. That was all. But they were contradicted.

Poet. You knew AMMON very well, I believe?

Sphinx (frankly). AMMON and I were great pals. I used to see a good deal of him. He came in to tea very often—he was quite interesting. But I have not seen him for a long time. He had one fault—he would smoke in the drawing-room. And though I hope I am not too conventional, I really could not allow that.

Poet. How pleased they would all be to see you again! Why do you not go over to Egypt for the winter?

Sphinx. The hotels at Cairo are so dreadfully expensive.

Poet. Is it true you went tunny-fishing with ANTONY?

Sphinx. One must draw the line somewhere! CLEOPATRA was so cross. She was horribly jealous, and not nearly so handsome as you might suppose, though she was photographed as a "type of Egyptian Beauty!"

Poet. I must thank you very much for the courteous way in which you have replied to my questions. And now will you forgive me if I make an observation? In my opinion you are not a Sphinx at all.

Sphinx (indignantly). What am I, then? *Poet.* A Minx.

THE LAY OF THE EXPLORER.

I USED to think that if a man
In any character could score a
Distinctly leonine success,
'T would be as a returned explorer.
So, when by sixteen tigers tree'd,
Or when mad elephants were charging,
I joyed to say—"On this, some day,
My countrymen will be enlarging."
And when mosquitoes buzzed and bit
(For 'tis their pleasing nature to),
Or fevers floored me, still this dream
Helped me to suffer and to do.
I have returned! Whole dusky tribes [is!—
I've wiped right out—such labour sweet
And with innumerable chiefs
Arranged unconscionable treaties.
What's the result? I have become
A butt for each humanitarian,
Who call my exploits in the chase
The work of a "confessed barbarian."
And, worst of all, my rival, JONES,
Who'd any trick that's low and mean dare,
Cries—"Equatorial jungles! Pish!
I don't believe he's ever been there!"
So now I just "explore" Herne Bay,
With trippers, niggers, nurses, babies:
I've tried for fame. I've gained it, too:
I share it with the vanished JABEZ!

NOTE AND QUERY.—At Aldershot the QUEEN expressed herself much pleased with the "tattoo" all round. "IGNORAMUS" writes to inquire "if 'tattoo-ing' is done in Indian ink or with gunpowder?"

RULE, "BRITANNIA."

(New Yachtical Version.)

H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES sings:—
WHEN *Vigilant*, at Gouln's command,
Came over here to sweep the main,
This was the lay that thrilled the land,
And Yankee Doodle loved the strain—
Lick *Britannia!* the fleet *Britannia* lick!
And JOHNNY BULL may cut his stick.
But *Vigilant*, less fast than thee,
Must in her turn before thee fall,
Britannia, who hast kept the sea,
The dread and envy of them all.
Win, *Britannia!* *Britannia* rules the waves!
(Though by the narrowest of shaves.)
Six races in succession show
The Yankee yacht has met her match;
Though she was hailed, not long ago,
The swiftest clipper of the batch.
Rule, *Britannia!* *Britannia* rule the waves!
The most appropriate of staves!
I'm sorry poor DUNRAVEN's crack
So prematurely has gone down;
But mine has kept the winning tack,
And well upheld the isle's renown.
Rule, *Britannia!* &c.
When JONATHAN thy match hath found,
He'll to our coasts again repair.
We'll have another friendly round,
With manly hearts and all things fair.
Rule, *Britannia!* *Britannia* rules the waves,
Six sequent wins BULL's honour saves!

TO ALTHEA IN THE STALLS.

FROM the Orchestra as I was staring
So wearily down at the hall,
The programme I held hardly caring
To turn, I was tired of it all!
For I knew 'twas a futile endeavour
With music my trouble to drown,
And I'd made up my mind that you never,
Ah, never, would come back to town!
When suddenly, there I beheld you
Yourself—ah, the joyous amazement!
I wonder what instinct impelled you
Your dreamy dark eyes to upraise,
That for one happy second's communing
Met mine that had waited so long—
And the wail of the violins tuning
It turned to a jubilant song!
'Mid organ-chords sombre and mellow
There breaks out a ripple of glee,
And the voice of the violoncello,
ALTHEA, is pleading for me!
The music is beating and surging
With joy no *adagio* can drown,
In ecstasy all things are merging—
Because you have come back to town!
THE COREAN DIFFICULTY.—"*Japan declines to withdraw.*"—(*Telegram, Thursday, July 12.*)—"Ah," observed Miss QUOTER, who is ever ready, "that reminds me of BYRON's line in *Mazeppa*, quite applicable to the present situation—
'Again he urges on his mild Corea.'"

NEW WORK (by the Chief Druid Minstrel at the Eisteddfod, dedicated to their Royal Highnesses).—"How to be Happy in Wales."

Fig. 4 Edward Tennyson Reed, 'The Minx - A Poem in Prose', *Punch*, 21 July 1894, p. 33.

Jewish novelist and satirist Ada Levenson picked up on *The Sphinx's* Oriental transgressions. As Wilde's close friend, she contributed a spoof of the poem to *Punch* magazine in 1894 (fig. 4). It implies that Wilde's poem treats the Sphinx not as a *femme fatale* character but as an allusion to the author's homoerotic escapades. Wilde's delight in Levenson's literary 'minx' ('*Punch* is delightful and the drawing a masterpiece')¹²⁰ cannot hide the fact that the caricature and text conflate Wilde with the degenerated Sphinx. Wilde's reference to French literary sources like Gautier and to Egypt's role as a *chiffre* for foreign licentiousness were not lost on the Victorian reader. In fact, the amalgamation of French sources with far-away Egypt brought the 'Eastern exoticism progressively closer' and made the poem as dangerous as its 'Sinburnian' [*sic*] precursors.¹²¹

The cartoon by Edward Tennyson Reed (fig. 4) shows a grotesque Pre-Raphaelite, degenerate version of Ricketts's Sphinx, half woman with male features. The stones in the background form faces symbolizing the watchful public eye observant of the Sphinx bending over. Equally, the accompanying text prefigured Wilde's impending downfall a year after the poem's publication. Asked 'Why do you not go over to Egypt for the winter?', the Sphinx retorts: 'The hotels at Cairo are so dreadfully expensive.' 'Bosie', featuring as the jealous Cleopatra, plays his part in exposing the mysterious Sphinx, that is Wilde's public image of a sophisticated artist, as being a rather debased 'minx'. In 1893, Lady Queensberry had arranged for her son to stay with the family of Cromer, Consul-General in Cairo, in order to quiet rumours surrounding the relationship between Wilde and Douglas. In *De Profundis*, written in 1897 as a letter from prison to Lord Alfred Douglas, Wilde recollects, that '[o]n my side, and along

¹²⁰ Wilde to Ada Levenson, 20 July 1894, in *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde*, p. 51.

¹²¹ Guy and Small, *Studying Oscar Wilde*, p. 176.

with my intellectual attractions, were the fleshpots of Egypt. When you could not find me to be with, the companions whom you chose as substitutes were not flattering.’¹²² Public controversy over Wilde’s homosexuality would culminate in his spectacular trials in April and May 1895, which came to mark the end of his career and, to a certain extent, the decline of literary Decadence in England.

Reading the poem for its cultural transgressiveness, the poem’s – according to some critics – ‘weak ending’ is, rather, a clue pointing towards an artistic salvation that lies in the disintegration of demarcations.¹²³ Despite humbly returning to the safe haven of Christianity (‘leave me to my Crucifix’ (l. 172)), appearing to the speaker in the face of the splendid power of pagan mythology a mere ‘barren sham’ (l. 169), the speaker’s final line confesses Wilde’s conviction: Christ on the crucifix ‘weeps for every soul in vain’ (l. 174). The term ‘in vain’ suggests that only a universal concept of art, not religious belief, can transcend the parameters of belonging. According to Wilde, it is art that can safeguard man’s immortality and perpetuate creativity. Hence, Wilde’s poem is ultimately a promise to the Decadent readership: it provides the possibility of intellectual insight in which literature, like a drug, can be addictive yet liberating, can wake ‘each bestial sense’ and allow the reader to take on the role of an artist, enacting for himself ‘what [he/she] would not be’ (l. 168). In other words, by taking on the role of ‘the other’ in reading Decadent Oriental texts, the reader connects to a wider cosmopolitan readership. To Wilde at this time, a community of Decadent readers appears a more promising salvation than that gained by religion.

¹²² Wilde to Lord Alfred Douglas, January–March 1897, in *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 683–780 (p. 704).

¹²³ Donald Ericksen and Edouardo Roditi cited in Patricia Flanagan Behrendt, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), p. 61.

The Sphinx thus perpetuates the didactic element of Wilde's criticism, stressing the importance of otherness. Norbert Lennartz accordingly concludes that it is a 'seminal and programmatic poem', unjustly neglected by critics as solely a manifesto of Decadent morbidity.¹²⁴ In line with Pater's theory exploring the mutual penetration of the arts, at the end of the poem both the speaker and the reader gain knowledge through the intellectual and physical experience of the act of reading. The statue of a Sphinx inspired literature through 'reading' an artefact. In turn literature was made into a precious object: Wilde's poem was published as an exquisite book-object. The appropriation and consumption of the East through material objects, as well as through reading, helped engender a new European aesthetic of Decadence.

Crucial for the fragmentation and reconstruction of the East is the architectural element in Wilde's poem and in Ricketts's illustrations. The poem represents the East in architectural artefacts, as seen in *Salome*. These references are also common in Wilde's prose writings, for example in *Dorian Gray*'s reveries 'of the Obelisk in the Place de la Concorde that weeps tears of granite' and 'the hot lotus-covered Nile, where there are Sphinxes'.¹²⁵ In an early 1877 article for *The Irish Monthly*, Wilde, on visiting Keats's grave in Rome, describes the awe-inspiring obelisks as 'snake-like spires of red sandstone, mottled with strange writings' and the pyramids as 'unshattered amid the ruins and wrecks of time [...], like terrible impassiveness turned to stone.'¹²⁶ Where

¹²⁴ Lennartz, p. 426.

¹²⁵ Oscar Wilde, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890), in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. III*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 144. According to Bristow, '[m]any of Wilde's writings show his fascination with Egyptian and Greek representations of this mythical beast', p. 423.

¹²⁶ Oscar Wilde, 'The Tomb of Keats', *The Irish Monthly*, 5 July 1877, pp. 476–78; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VI, Journalism Part I*, pp. 11–13 (p. 11).

Note the similarity to his father's description of Cleopatra's needle and Pompey's pillar: 'Blocks of stone of such magnitude must ever excite wonder, how much more so when we know they contain a record of some of the mysteries of the religion of the most extraordinary, the most enlightened, as well as the most ancient people of the world'. See *Narrative of a Voyage Vol. I*, p. 250.

architecture inspired prose and poetry, *The Sphinx* does the opposite, too: it turns poetic language into verbal artefacts. Peter Sprengel refers to this technique as ‘Museums poesie’ with regard to Scheerbart’s writing,¹²⁷ as we will see in chapter three.

Wilde’s poem conjures a monumental East, as a review of the poem in the *Pall Mall Budget* testifies: ‘The monsters of the Egyptian room at the British Museum live again in his weird, sometimes repulsive, but all the same stately and impressive lines.’¹²⁸ Wilde, here, continues his work of appropriation by repurposing architectural metaphors as poetic technique. Both poetry and the monument are artistic forms intended for memorization. The Sphinx in Wilde’s Orientalist poem forms a texture built out of cosmopolitan particles. As a composite ‘word-object’, the new Decadent monument, that is the poem *The Sphinx*, is detached from its original history. The process of objectification of the East in the literal and figurative sense is here even more pronounced than in *Salome*.

Wilde’s *The Sphinx* is a ‘stone-fashioned dream’ and, as the title indicates, an artefact built from verbosity. Wilde practises what he observed in Thomas Griffiths Wainwright’s writing, ‘Asiatic prose’: a delight in ‘pictorial epithets and pompous exaggerations.’¹²⁹ Wilde’s taste for architecture is reflected in the poem’s geometrical construction and its excess of stone imagery. Constructed from eighty-seven sixteen-syllable iambic couplets and engaging with a ‘fascination with exotic words for their own sake [...] scholarly in its arcane knowledges undivested of their enigmas’,¹³⁰ the

¹²⁷ Peter Sprengel, ‘Museums-Poesie. Archäologie und Ästhetik in Scheerbarts assyrisch-babylonischen Novellen’, in *Literatur im Kaiserreich: Studien zur Moderne* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1993), pp. 209–33.

¹²⁸ [Anon.], *Pall Mall Budget*, 21 June 1894; reprinted in *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde with a Note by Robert Ross, Vol. II*, ed. by Stuart Mason (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914), p. 393.

¹²⁹ Wilde, ‘Pen, Pencil, and Poison’, p. 114.

¹³⁰ Ellis Hanson, ‘Style at the fin de siècle: aestheticist, decadent, symbolist’, in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, pp. 150–58 (p. 154).

clear emphasis lies on workmanship, skilled versification and prosody borrowed from ancient Greek forms, which Wilde keenly adapted for his own vision of merging of East and West. Reprimanding poet W. E. Henley, Wilde defends the power of versification:

Rhyme gives architecture as well as melody to verse; it gives that delightful sense of limitation which in all the arts is so pleasurable, and is, indeed, one of the secrets of perfection; it will whisper, as a French critic has said, “things unexpected and charming, things with strange and remote relations to each other,” and bind them together in indissoluble bonds of beauty.¹³¹

While poetically negotiating Wilde’s aesthetic theory of beauty as a binding cosmopolitan element, *The Sphinx* is arguably Wilde’s most Decadent poem because it plunges the reader into an excess of sensual experiences in, what Stokes calls, an ‘anthropological archive’.¹³² Through its incantatory structure and enthralling imagery, the reader is ‘devoured’ by the sensuality of the Orient while simultaneously conducting an intellectual dialogue with the text.

While critics praised the poem’s technical integrity, the centrality of the reader’s role as partner and as ‘the other’ in a dialogue with the text has been widely neglected. In 1907, critic Leonard Cresswell Ingleby described his Orientalist reading experience: ‘[W]hilst we are alternately fascinated and repulsed by the subject, we are lost in admiration of the decorative treatment of the theme.’ The poem ‘attract[s] where it most repels’ and thus represents an ‘esoteric gem for all those who have brains to think.’¹³³ The poem is a development of Wilde’s endeavour to create a new cosmopolitan aesthetic in which individual parts align to form a new architecture of poetry. In an inversion of Bourget’s vision of the disintegration of Decadent organisms, the parts of

¹³¹ Wilde, ‘A Note On Some Modern Poets’, p. 109.

¹³² Stokes, ‘Wilde and Paris’, p. 65.

¹³³ Leonard Cresswell Ingleby, *Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1907), p. 282.

the East, symbolized by the hybridity of the Sphinx, help to formulate Wilde's notion of the arts and literature as a supranational, yet heterogeneous entity.

THE SPHINX BY OSCAR WILDE



WITH DECORATIONS BY CHARLES RICKETTS
LONDON MDCCCXCIV
ELKIN MATHEWS AND JOHN LANE . AT THE SIGN OF THE BODLEY HEAD.

Fig. 5 Charles Ricketts, *The Sphinx* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).



Fig. 6 Charles Ricketts, *The Sphinx* (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane at the Bodley Head, 1894).

Similar to Beardsley's iconic designs for *Salome*, Charles Ricketts's architectural illustrations for *The Sphinx* form an important side narrative to the poem. The spatial layout of the poem's luxury edition visually recreates the interactive dialogue between the text and the reader. As in a suggestive *art nouveau* picture puzzle, the Sphinx is always hidden, cut off by the margin or interlaced in the structural arrangement of proliferating garlands (fig. 5). The poem and its illustrations need to be palpated: 'with the eye and the hand, not with [the] mind alone'.¹³⁴ The poem's 'archaeological aspirations'¹³⁵ then invite the reader to inspect Ricketts's architectural composition and to discover the East embodied by the Sphinx.

The frontispiece (fig. 5) shows Melancholia and the Sphinx arching her body in an effort to reach the grapes dangling from a garland of acanthous proliferating foliage sprung from melancholy's ribs. The image is a visual expression of Wilde's and Ricketts's endeavours to revitalize Western art. Allegorized by a downward gazing Melancholia, the West is characterized by stagnation and depression. She rests her feet on a heap of harvested fruit. Melancholia's wistful look directed towards the Sphinx suggests that the future of the West seems to lie behind it. In contrast, the Sphinx, symbolising the aspirational East and the enjoyment of Dionysian intoxications, is reaching upwards for the vine's fruits, symbols of progress and fertility. The images thus visualize Wilde's epistemology of reading the East: the labyrinthine process of interpretation creates a visualization of the speaker's 'mad passions' and yet summons the reader to intellectually '[g]o seek'. Throughout the unnumbered twenty folios of the book the sequence of catchwords, single words or phrases isolated on the right bottom

¹³⁴ Frankel, pp. 173–74.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 157.

of the pages in green ink constitute this imperative. It instructs the reader to investigate the ruins and follow, like Melancholia, the lead of the East (fig. 6).

Wilde's preoccupation with the Sphinx, as Nils Clausson suggests, is an 'example of Wilde's aesthetic defiance', challenging the Victorian orthodoxy of realism and the belief that art reveals the true nature of things.¹³⁶ This is expressed in Beardsley's as well as Ricketts' anti-Realist illustrations, which highlight the provocative nature of Wilde's texts. By conflating East and West through the symbol of the Sphinx, Wilde realized his own aphorism. Life imitates art the same way in which Decadent literary cosmopolitanism embraced Orientalist practice, to transcend the restrictions of national literary categories. The East, embodied by the Sphinx in Wilde's poem, 'poses a question about how best to organize knowledge in a world whose "unknowability" stands figured by the sphinx itself.'¹³⁷ As much as the Sphinx defies a demarcation of meaning, the poem exposes Wilde's belief in the incorporation, indebtedness and interdependence of different cultures as Wilde argued in 'The Critic as Artist'.

As the anglicized Irishman, Wilde himself appeared as a Sphinx to many of his contemporaries and represented an intriguing irritation to the English national body. After Wilde's death, contemporaries and friends did not hesitate to stylize Wilde into the epitome of an Orientalist cliché.¹³⁸ Once appropriating the East for his art, Wilde was posthumously turned into an exotic artefact himself as the 'the lyrical madman of

¹³⁶ Nils Clausson, 'Lady Alroy's Secret – "Surface and Symbol"', in Wilde's "The Sphinx without a Secret", *The Wildean*, 28 (2006), 24–33 (p. 25).

¹³⁷ Frankel, p. 174.

¹³⁸ Robert Ross, 'A Note of Explanation', in *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar*, pp. 13–16: Wilde was 'a conjurer. To talk with him was to be translated to an enchanted island or to palaces of the *Fata Morgana*. [...] Who would not kneel in the chapels of that Rimmon [Syrian cult image]?'; Ada Leverson was nicknamed 'The Sphinx' by Wilde. Ricketts mentions Wilde's 'scarab ring', in *Oscar Wilde: Recollections*, p. 29.

Algeria'.¹³⁹ Wilde's only face-to-face encounter with the East (North Africa) was captured in André Gide's biographical writing on Wilde, most notably in *Si le grain ne meurt* (1924). Wilde is portrayed as an 'Asiatic Bacchus', wearing rings with 'a setting of an Egyptian scarab in lapis-lazuli.'¹⁴⁰ Wilde had met Gide during his stay in Paris in 1892. Three years later Wilde accompanied Douglas to Algiers (from 17 until 31 January 1895), where they met coincidentally, as Gide relates, both staying at the Hotel d'Orient at Bildah. His sojourn in Algiers is documented by only one letter addressed to Ross, in which Wilde presents himself as the Orientalist traveller seeking sexual adventures:

There is a great deal of beauty here. The Kabyle boys are quite lovely. At first we had some difficulty in procuring a proper civilised guide. But now it is all right, and Bosie and I have taken to haschish: it is quite exquisite: three puffs of smoke and then peace and love. [...] We have been on an excursion into the mountains of Kabylia – full of villages peopled by fauns. Several shepherds fluted on reeds for us. We were followed by lovely brown things from forest to forest. The beggars here have profiles, so the problem of poverty is easily solved. [...] The most beautiful boy in Algiers is said by the guide to be 'deceitful': isn't it sad? Bosie and I are awfully upset about it.¹⁴¹

Gide's accounts and Wilde's letter leave little room for speculation. In modern terms, Wilde might have taken advantage of the sex tourism industry in Algeria, a fact 'conveniently overlooked by Ellmann' as Josephine Guy and Ian Small point out.¹⁴² This other form of sexual consumption and imperial exploitation presents yet another facet of Wilde's engagement with the East.

Up until the end of Wilde's life, Egypt remained prominent in his thinking. His correspondence with Robert Ross and Ricketts show that Wilde intended further work

¹³⁹ André Gide, *Oscar Wilde*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (London: W. Kimber, 1951), p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15; p. 32.

¹⁴¹ Wilde to Robert Ross, 25 January 1895, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, p. 629.

¹⁴² André Gide, *If It Die*, trans. by Dorothy Bussy (London: Martin Secker, 1950), pp. 266–81. Guy and Small, *Studying Oscar Wilde*, p. 26.

on a play about Pharaoh.¹⁴³ Rickett's recollected Wilde's words in their last encounter in 1897: 'I must have books about Egypt, full of the names of beautiful things, rare and curious meat for the feast [...] At night, in the cold...when I felt hungry... I have often thought of fantastic feasts.'¹⁴⁴ Wilde's use of the word 'meat' refers not only to the malnutrition he suffered in prison or to erotic fleshliness, but, on a figurative level, also refers to 'artistic material'. The food metaphor points to the idea of the consumption of Eastern materials as a 'feast' for the mind and senses, a sensual feast Wilde had created successfully in *Salome* and *The Sphinx*.

The many biographical accounts show how English Decadence in particular, with Wilde as its uncontested mascot, is defined by the East. It is characterized by a daring otherness, which found much more resistance (embodied in Wilde's writing and life) than Decadence in France. English Decadence needed to look to the East much more in order to shape and justify its own identity. Wilde's Oriental fiction can therefore be considered an act of archaeological digging since it concerns itself with deconstruction and reconstruction: the research of crumbling histories, the piecing together of heterogenic objects into new cosmopolitan works of beauty. The East thus defines Decadence in its discrepancy between the poles of originality and fake, between life and art, and between cosmopolitanism and Orientalism.

¹⁴³ Wilde to Robert Ross, 1 October 1897, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 949–50 (p. 950): 'Tomorrow I begin the *Florentine Tragedy*. After that I must tackle *Pharaoh*.'

¹⁴⁴ Ricketts, *Oscar Wilde: Recollections*, p. 48.

Conclusion

Wilde's use of Eastern images as a mechanism of self-exoticism set European Decadence apart as a marginalized tendency in literary history. However, despite the marginality of an Orientalising text such as *The Sphinx*, which is considered 'exotic' even within the Wildean canon, the East came to define Decadence as a Western literary tradition. The Orientalist lexicon of gemstones, non-western flora and fauna, colours, strange peoples, artefacts and mysterious architecture became the trademark for European Decadent texts. As Wilde remarked in 'The Decay of Lying', the East provided the artistic agenda for the anti-Naturalist quality which Decadent writing sought to define:

Orientalism, with its frank rejection of imitation, [...] its dislike to the actual representation of any object in Nature [...] had beautiful and imaginative work in which the visible things of life are transmuted into artistic conventions, and the things that Life has not are invented and fashioned for her delight. [...] We are beginning to weave possible carpets in England, but only because we have returned to the method and spirit of the East.¹⁴⁵

By excavating and incorporating Eastern tropes, Wilde's 'purple prose' wove such a 'possible carpet' of literary text for England, a progressive instead of decaying thread between the East and the West. Even though *Salome* and *The Sphinx* conjure up Orientalist imagery, their appropriation of the East cannot be classified in a straightforward fashion as Orientalist since Wilde, as much as his most important illustrators Beardsley and Ricketts, acknowledged very clearly the act of imitation and appropriation. In the texts I have discussed, Wilde invites the reader into a cosmopolitan dialogue between East and West, a conversation that does not exclude imperialist gestures. Commenting on Wilde's relationship to race and imperialism, Ian Fletcher

¹⁴⁵ Wilde, 'The Decay of Lying', p. 86.

suggests that, in regards to his debatable anti-Semitic attitudes,¹⁴⁶ and racist remarks in his letter from Algiers, it is ‘hard, very hard, to grant a measure of good faith to Wilde’.¹⁴⁷ Yet, reading Wilde’s works in conjunction with his journalistic writings of the East, reveals him to be an early advocate of the permeable nature of East–West binaries in favour of cosmopolitan exchange.

Instead of carrying green carnations as secret signs of fraternization worn by gay men in Paris for mutual recognition, the Sphinx and other Orientalist tropes engendered a literary, immaterial *lingua franca* amongst Decadent writers and their readership. Following Potolsky’s argument, the Decadents cultivated a ‘particularly self-conscious’¹⁴⁸ relationship with their readers, which upheld exclusivity yet challenged categorical thinking. The roles of artist and reader became interchangeable. As disciples of the French Symbolists, actively engaging the reader in the act of intellectually seeking out hidden meaning, Wilde’s play and poetry, despite its hermetic poetics, actually questions the idea of Decadence’s apolitical ‘art for art’s sake’ agenda. In Wilde’s universe, art becomes an inquisitive, critical practice.¹⁴⁹ Thus, through the Decadents’ cosmopolitan involvement with ‘the foreign’ and ‘remote pasts’, even a literature intended to have no intended meaning had a forthright and real (political) impact on Victorian social realities. Embodying a symbol paradoxically founded ‘on

¹⁴⁶ Jonathan Freedman (University of Michigan) outlined the importance of Jewish intellectual and artistic circles on Oscar Wilde’s life and work. Drawing parallels between the supposed outsider status of Jews and the Irish in English society, Freedman examined the shaping influence of Wilde’s collaborators such as Simeon Solomon and Levenson, as well as Jewish literary and political responses to Wilde’s work. Katharina Herold and Eleanor Reeds, ‘Conference Report: Cosmopolitanism, Aestheticism, and Decadence, 1860–1920’, *Journal of Victorian Culture Online*, 24 July 2014, <<http://jvc.oup.com/2014/07/24/conference-report-cosmopolitanism-aestheticism-and-decadence-1860-1920/>> [accessed: 14/04/2015].

¹⁴⁷ Ian Christopher Fletcher, ‘The Soul of Man Under Imperialism: Oscar Wilde, Race, and Empire’, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 5:2 (2000), 334–41 (p. 339).

¹⁴⁸ Potolsky, ‘The Decadent Counterpublic’, p. 25.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

disintegration, on national, linguistic, and historical hybridity'¹⁵⁰ the Sphinx provoked questions concerning sexual anxieties, imperial superiority and cultural purity.

Wilde's *The Sphinx* and *Salome* remain a 'terrible paradox of privileged transgression.'¹⁵¹ Wilde's innovative integration of the East into Decadent writing and his portrayal of conglomeration and consumption of 'the other' not only involve the reader as the artistic interlocutor and co-creator; the absorption of the East also transgresses the limitations of nationhood, displacement and belonging. In contrast to Said's scepticism towards a unified vision of the Orient built upon an East–West binary, Wilde celebrated Orientalism as much as he did cosmopolitanism, both offering a way to overcome a fixation on national convention. To Wilde, nationalism meant provincialism. Wilde acknowledged the European East's interdisciplinary nature through art history, archaeology and literature, and, more importantly, as an integral 'part of [his] own cultivation'. Arthur Symons's affiliation with the Romani presents a similar Orientalist transgression of cultural boundaries. Moreover, Symons's 'Gypsyism' protests against a civilization that threatens an extinction of Decadent sensuality, as the following chapter will explore.

¹⁵⁰ Matthew Potolsky, 'Decadence, Nationalism, and the Logic of Canon Formation', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67:2 (2006), 213–44 (p. 242).

¹⁵¹ Ian Christopher Fletcher, p. 339.

II. ‘Against civilisation’: Arthur Symons, Gypsyism and Politicized Decadence Post 1890

[W]as it not the all-embracing pessimism [...] which is the wisdom of the East [...]?¹
Symons, *Studies in Two Literatures*

Introduction

In a 1919 letter to Ezra Pound’s friend and art patron John Quinn, Symons recounts a sojourn in Oxford as an exotic adventure:

I have spent a week here – an absolute enchantment – these marvellous gardens, the ancient colleges: I saw Brasenose where Pater lived, right on the Bodleian. I spent yesterday with Robin de la Condamine;² spent several hours with Robert Bridges in his house and on a bench under the sun – where I write now – Worcester Gardens. A wild Arab boy has taken me over Oxford – we boated down the river [...].³

Symons’s roaming description of Oxford’s lush gardens, historic sites and prominent figures reflects his personal taste for travelling and the East. Symons’s fascination with the ‘other’ and foreign cultures, in his letter allegorized as ‘a wild Arab boy’, is prominent throughout his body of writing and particularly in his identification with the figure of the Gypsy. Symons’s literary Gypsyism questions the notion of defined cultural belonging, a concept that Decadent texts also challenge in their cosmopolitanism.⁴ At the turn of the century Romani cultures and the Jewish

¹ Arthur Symons, *Studies in Two Literatures* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1897), p. 286.

² Spanish Actor, who used the name ‘Robert Farquharson’ on the English stage. In 1918 Symons wrote that Farquharson’s performance showed ‘a kind of rare and wandering genius, sinister, sombre, perverse and passionate’, in *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters 1880–1935*, ed. by Karl Beckson and John M. Munro (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 245.

³ Arthur Symons to John Quinn, late September 1919, in *Selected Letters*, pp. 244–45.

⁴ Hitomi Shoji, ‘The Cosmopolitanism of Arthur Symons, 1880–1910’, Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of London, King’s College, 2013. Shoji only discusses Symons’s Gypsyism in passing, pp. 46 – 48.

communities, derogatively referred to as ‘the Arabs of pastoral England’⁵ were classed as ‘the original cosmopolitans’⁶ as well as ‘the Orientals within’, blamed for their ‘failure’ to belong.⁷ The Orientalist interest in these marginalized groups enabled the formation of a new community of artists. To these ‘Gypsyorists’, the concept of the Gypsy provided a cultural space in which to re-negotiate definitions of cultural progress versus decadence, civilization, modernity and the nation.

Symons himself was a rootless vagabond and cultural mediator between the centuries.⁸ Symons’s travel writing maps the fluidity of his identity. His many translations from French, Spanish, Italian and even Romani were instrumental in bridging different national literary traditions. Symons’s restless mind never tired detecting new literary talent and trends. His influence supported James Joyce’s early career. His friendship with Joseph Conrad and William Butler Yeats helped fashion their literary reputations. Whilst outliving most of his contemporaries (he lived until 1945), he was part of the inner circle of the 1890s avant-garde. Symons was acquainted and corresponded with key Decadent figures such as Wilde, Verlaine, Mallarmé, and Beardsley. Despite his undoubted status as one of the most influential English critics of Decadence and author of ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ (1893), his literary achievements are all too often limited to his collections of dance-hall poetry and urban Modernist Impressionism. As a result, his life-long fascination with the East’s

⁵ B. C. Smart and Henry T. Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (London: Asher, 1875), p. xvi. I will use the term ‘Gypsy’ to refer to the nineteenth-century cultural myth; I will use ‘Romani’ to refer to the ethnic group of travelling communities in Europe.

⁶ Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*, p. 126.

⁷ For a thorough discussion of the parallels of the theoretical concepts see Ken Lee, ‘Orientalism and Gypsyorism’, *Social Analysis*, 44:2 (2000), 129–56 (p. 130).

⁸ Elisa Bizzotto and Stefano Evangelista, eds., *Arthur Symons: Poet, Critic, Vagabond* (Oxford: Legenda, 2018).

promising mysteries of ‘Oriental heat’⁹ and travelling communities, ‘the wandering, wise, outcast sons / Of Pharaoh’,¹⁰ remain unexplored.

Apart from his extended travels within Europe, reaching as far as Constantinople, this predilection manifested early in his life in what he called ‘Gypsyism’. Gypsyism, as a Romantic longing for the foreign ‘other’ encapsulates Symons’s curiosity in strange and exotic sensuality, and marks his Decadent Orientalist poetry, prose and journalism. Spanning the whole of his career, this interest in the Gypsies revealed to him and many of his fellow Decadent ‘Gypsyists’ an alternative, transnational community to conventional society:

I realised that there were other people in the world besides the conventional people I knew [...]. And I realised that there was another escape from these people besides a solitary flight in books.¹¹

Symons’s passion for live encounter with other cultures which sets ‘[t]he blood [...] on fire for wandering’¹² not merely mediated by literature and the traveling of the mind, makes Symons stand out as an active if not activist aesthete. Symons sought the first-hand experience of other cultures. His wandering imagination originated in childhood rootlessness and yearning for belonging to an ancient Celtic notion of countryside. His openness to other cultures was a symptom of his roving mind and sense of restlessness, which is captured by his countryside poems of the 1890s but also in his travel writing of the early twentieth century.

⁹ Arthur Symons, ‘Alvisi Contarini’, *Arthur Symons Collected Works, Vol. II* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 271.

¹⁰ Arthur Symons, ‘Perfect Grief’, *Arthur Symons Collected Works Vol. II*, p. 111.

¹¹ Arthur Symons, *Spiritual Adventures* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905), pp. 32–33.

¹² Arthur Symons, ‘The Gypsy’s Song’, *Arthur Symons Collected Works, Vol. III* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 227.

This chapter investigates Symons's Gypsyism as an engagement with the East in his travel writing and some of his magazine publications.¹³ Building on Wilde's ideas of cosmopolitanism, it asks: how does aesthetic literature deploy Orientalist tropes to foster imagined and real communities that aim to politically promote cultural exchange instead of cultural classification? To answer this question, the first half of this chapter focuses on Symons's wanderings in Constantinople, recorded in his travelogue *Cities* (1903). The second half of the chapter is devoted to Symons's involvement in the post-1890s Decadent journal culture. It considers his membership of the *Gypsy Lore Society* and his controversial article 'In Praise of Gypsies' written for the society's publication *The Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society* in 1908, and his contribution to *The Gypsy* (1915–1916).

The chapter's double focus on highly stylized prose and journalism highlights the generic clash of Symons's writing on the East. Through a tension defined by repulsion and attraction, Symons challenges his reader: as a Baudelairean 'passionate spectator' rather than a passive consumer, the reader is positioned between extremes of aesthetic sensual enjoyment and political responsibility. Through the figure of the Gypsy the East is represented as a utopian refuge from contemporary political conflicts arising from an acceleration of technological development, augmenting social segregation caused by the rise of industrial capitalism and the increasing hegemonic tensions between the European nations. Edmund Gosse, Symons's close friend, also

¹³ Symons's poetical works reflect his fascination with Eastern themes and figures and documents a topical shift from purely Decadent themes ('Cleopatra' (1890)) to a modernist reconsideration of the East with a much more political sensitivity ('The Jew' (1906)). The 'Gypsy' reappears as a trope throughout his poetic collection developing after the turn of the century. This thesis can only address a fraction of Symons's Oriental materials. It has to omit a discussion of a number of poems relating to the Gypsy ('White Magic' (1894), 'The Tarot Cards' (1908,) and 'The Gypsy's Song' (1917)) and two of Symons's dramas devoted to Oriental subjects (*The Lover of the Queen of Sheba* (1898); *Cleopatra in Judaea* (1910)).

contributed to *The Gypsy*. His review of Jakob Christoffel von Grimmelshausen's seventeenth-century vagabond epic called *Simplicius Simplicissimus* (1668) and his praise for the satirical cartoons printed in the eponymous nineteenth-century magazine captured the tone of strained Anglo-German relations in the Middle East. The Middle East here is still the focus of aesthetic interest. The figure of the Gypsy brings the East to the heart of Europe. As the chapter demonstrates, one of the crucial functions of the East in Decadent literature became its role as an artistic platform for international political debate.

The Gypsy as the Oriental *Flâneur*

Symons's conceptualization of the Gypsy finds parallels in Baudelaire's portrait of the *flâneur*. Symons detects 'something Oriental in Baudelaire's genius; a nostalgia that never left him after he had seen the East: there where one finds hot midnights, feverish days, strange sensations; for only the East, when one has lived in it, can excite one's vision to a point of ardent ecstasy'.¹⁴ Symons projects this Eastern ecstasy onto the Gypsy as an Orientalized version of Baudelaire's *flâneur*. Both depart from mere Enlightenment uniformitarianism to embody a 'philosophical aesthetic cosmopolitanism'.¹⁵ As such, the Gypsy is for Symons 'the wanderer whom all of us who are poets, or love the wind, are summed up in. He does what we dream. He is the last romance left in the world'.¹⁶ The Gypsy's Oriental otherness is thus associated with the Decadent's otherness in modernity described by Baudelaire in 'The Painter of

¹⁴ Arthur Symons, *Charles Baudelaire – A Study* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1920), p. 39.

¹⁵ Nicholas Saul, *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007), p. 15.

¹⁶ Arthur Symons, 'In Praise of Gypsies', *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 4:1 (1908), 294–99 (p. 296).

Modern Life' (published in 1863 in *Le Figaro*). Baudelaire defines the *flâneur* as an '[o]bserver, philosopher [...] he is the painter of the passing moment and of all suggestions of eternity that it contains'.¹⁷ The *flâneur* is 'not precisely an *artist*, but rather a *man of the world*'.¹⁸ Equally, Symons ascribes to the Gypsies the possession of the qualities of a *flâneurial* artwork: eternal wisdom, the independence of society, a radical separatism and cosmopolitan mobility.

In comparison to the passive 'opposition and revolt'¹⁹ in the dandy's indifference, the perfect *flâneur* in Baudelaire's sense is the 'passionate spectator'.²⁰ Marked by 'an immense joy to set up house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of movement' it is his innate disposition '[t]o be away from home and yet to feel oneself everywhere at home; to see the world, to be at the centre of the world, and yet to remain hidden from the world [...]'.²¹ While both the *flâneur* and the Gypsy share an ephemeral, yet eternal quality, Symons's *Gypsy-flâneur* differs crucially from Baudelaire's concept in two aspects. The Gypsy is an object of study and source of inspiration for literary creation. Unlike the Baudelairean *flâneur*, the Gypsy facilitates literary invention but never creates. Departing from Baudelaire's enjoyment of urban roaming, Symons's Oriental *flâneur* is a primitivist child of nature, who struggles to cope with modernity's 'unwholesome city cages'.²² According to Deborah Epstein Nord, English renderings of Gypsyism contrast with the French Bohemian-Gypsy who generically represents 'an urban type who leans toward, rather than away from, the

¹⁷ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Painter of Modern Life', *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. and ed. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995), pp.1–42 (pp. 4–5).

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 6–7. Emphasis in the original.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 28.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 9.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Symons, 'In Praise of Gypsies', p. 298.

modernity of the metropolis'.²³ Lisa Tickner emphasizes that 'the *flânerie* of the urban bohemian has its pastoral analogue in the "tramping" or caravanning of the Gypsy Lorist'.²⁴ In mixing both traditions, Symons's adapts Baudelaire's statement that 'the external world is reborn upon his paper, natural and more than natural, beautiful and more than beautiful, strange and endowed with an impulsive life'.²⁵ Drawing on his own experience having 'never been able to root [him]self in any one place in the world',²⁶ for Symons, a nomadic life between the artificiality of the metropolis and the countryside is the ideal precondition for the artist.

In developing Baudelaire's proto-Modernist ideas, Symons introduces a political momentum into his Decadent principles. Even though Symons distanced himself from the Decadent movement after Wilde's trials in 1895, he persisted in revising fundamental ideals of Decadence after the turn of the century. For example, in *Studies in Seven Arts* (1906), Symons rekindles a Decadent dialectic between art and life in the context of modernity:

beauty and the modern world are in open and inevitable war; life is a thing to be escaped from, not turned to one's purpose; [...] the modern world is a thing to struggle with, to conquer in fair fight, to compel to one's purpose, no matter at what cost.²⁷

A contention of modernity is characteristic of Symons's treatment of the East. As Patricia Clements observes the conflict with modernity is both Symons's 'subject and method' as we will see in an examination of *Cities* in the following section.²⁸ Exploring

²³ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 131–32.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

²⁵ Baudelaire, p. 11.

²⁶ Symons, *Spiritual Adventures*, p. 4.

²⁷ Symons, *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906), p. 108.

²⁸ Patricia Clements, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 187.

‘strangeness’ in its double meaning of being unfamiliar and abnormal, the East, embodied by the Gypsy becomes a vital catalyst for the formation of Symons’s post-1890s style. Through an identification with the Gypsy both the author, and the reader, position themselves as *flâneurs*, as ‘decoder[s] of experience’, in an attempt to decipher the secrets of a mythical world obstructed by modern civilization. Wandering through the Eastern city, Symons’s travelogues seek to recover this hidden layer of Decadent enchantment.²⁹

The East as Kaleidoscope to the West in *Cities*

In his travelogue *Cities*, Symons’s idea of the East as a kaleidoscope becomes apparent in the constant change of literary style. To fathom the East’s extremes, as the following analysis will show, Symons draws on Romantic, Decadent, Impressionist and Modernist techniques. In this wandering of style, the reader encounters a blurred vision of the East, consisting of poeticized life writing as well as factual ethnographic reports. Constantinople is:

disturbing, alluring, so violent and seductive at once in its appeal. It is, as the East is to the West, a kaleidoscope; but you must be prepared for the sudden shaking of the colours, and it will be well if you can look at the picture merely as a picture.³⁰

Unlike Wilde’s syncretic monumental cosmopolitanism comparable to a mosaic display, Symons’s East is a kaleidoscope that allows for ever-changing configurations of contradictory images. It presents ‘a mingling of elements that do not unite’ (205). Constantinople paints a picture of ‘indistinguishable people of indistinguishable nationalities’ (207). The ‘units’ of the East are not static but are quintessentially mobile

²⁹ Ibid., p. 197.

³⁰ Arthur Symons, *Cities* (London: J. M. Dent, 1903), p. 231. All references are to this edition. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

and dynamic. As a result Symons's prose questions the stability of concepts such as foreignness, cultural decadence, and the value of Western civilization itself.

Similar to Wilde, Symons's depictions of the East reinvent the post-Romantic Orient by Gautier, Flaubert, and Baudelaire. As well as Gautier's extensive travelogue *Constantinople*, published in 1854, Baudelaire became Symons's trusted travel companion.³¹ In *Cities* Symons continues the narrative of the popular tales of the *Thousand and One Nights* that in his eyes 'are not yet over' (219). Previously published as separate articles in *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* and *Saturday Review*, this collection of essays records Symons's experiences whilst en route through southern Europe to the Middle East. In contrast to other travelling aesthetes' destinations, such as John Ruskin's and Henry James's, Italy and Greece alone did not ease Symons's *Wanderlust*. Symons explored remote locations on several journeys eastward in 1897 (Moscow, Munich, Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Prague, Budapest, Vienna, and Cologne), followed by trips to the south in Spain and Italy between 1898 and 1899, and a two-month expedition together with his wife Rhoda in 1902 to Budapest, Belgrade, Sophia and Constantinople. The structure of *Cities* maps out an itinerary from Rome to Constantinople, today's Istanbul. It juxtaposes styles of political report, anthropological analysis and poeticized narrative, making it difficult to categorize or 'estimate the value of the book [which] must very much depend on the mood of the reader'³² as one reviewer in *The Spectator* in 1903 maintained.

Symons evokes the East by a 'continual interchange of luxuriance and savagery' (203). For Symons the East begins in Budapest ('the East has begun') where he enters 'another world, in which people live with a more vivid and a quite incalculable life'

³¹ Clements, p. 214.

³² [Anon.], 'Mr. Arthur Symons's "Cities"', *The Spectator*, 21 November 1903, p. 849.

(190). Apart from the 'local colour' (193), the East's 'bright strangeness' (191) manifests itself in 'piles and pyramids, overflowing from vast baskets, brimming over the sides of carts, multitudes of plums, grapes, peaches, apples, pears, melons, with some fiery-coloured vegetables, glow[ing] in the sunlight' (191) and '[t]he sunset sky [...] like a crimson and orange and purple moth, barred with colours as hard and clear as enamel' (195). The description of the market scene, a standard feature of the Victorian and Edwardian travelogue, unites Romantic and Decadent elements. Nature is artificially beautified and estranged, as the sunset sky turns into enamel.

Symons repeatedly uses hyperbolic exaggerations to capture his ambiguous fascination with the strange environment. The East provides 'the sharpest contrasts I have ever seen' (203), 'the most childish sports I have ever seen' (207). Watching an Armenian dancer's performance appears as 'the most elaborate pantomime of sex that I have ever seen' (209). The encounter with 'a gigantic negro' leaves a lasting impression as 'the most horrible thing I have ever seen' (250). In order to render the East's vibrancy on paper Symons hyperbolically inflates the Orient with a Decadent sensationalism.

Symons's rendering of Constantinople is fragmented, Impressionistic and indeed Modernist in style:

A dense smell, dogs, houses, then an actual seashore [...] then streets of houses, with fragments of turreted walls [...] faces of many colours, strange clothes; then, over the roofs, but close, the water, houses, domes, minarets of the city, in a flash, veiled suddenly by the walls of the station. (213)

As the acceleration of abstracted elliptical language in this passage suggests, inspired *flânerie* turns slowly into a 'fierce and active struggle' (215), for the writer as much as for the reader. Symons presents the Eastern city as a 'fluid spectacle' (214). The reader thus shares in the narrator's sensation of being 'blown through a whirlwind, out of

which [he] can clutch nothing tangible' (214). The travelogue at this point changes from a Romantic account of local flair to a rather sobering Modernist manual of how to navigate a foreign city. To walk the streets of 'Stamboul' is to 'climb and zigzag [...] to crawl like a maggot in rotting cheese' (219). The tram is the only civilizing 'distracti[on]' (219) in the turmoil of the city. Despite its irritations, Symons is attracted to it and entices the reader into the oscillating nature of Constantinople: 'this fierce and enigmatical East, made fiercer and more enigmatical by the West, comes with a kind of repulsion and attraction at once. It hurts you, and then it enchants you [...] you succumb to it, and struggle against it' (261). The beauty of the East is similar to that of Decadence, in its paradoxical make-up of repulsion and attraction. Both are defined by the other in a counterpointed relationship. In this instance, both Decadence and the Orient provide metaphors to depict the writer's conflicted experience of modernity.

In addition to Symons's search for an appropriate literary style with which to pen the East, his travelogue provides ethnographical reports of the locals. Symons's anthropological research is a dialectic response to the concept of foreignness. His literary exhibition of the Gypsies as objects of study resembles nineteenth-century European colonial exhibitions, which were highly popular from the 1860s to the 1930s.³³ In *Cities*, the Gypsies are evoked through images of hybridity: '[...] the Servian gipsies are remarkable even among gipsies, [...] [they] are sometimes like savage chiefs, sometimes like ancient Greeks, with their fine, dark, regular faces, black eyes and hair, straight slim figures and wonderful clothes' (199–200). Here, Symons's fascination for the Gypsies' hybrid nature between Hellenic cultural superiority and Eastern primitivism exposes his writing as Edwardian and of his time. Yet beyond that

³³ Pascal Blanchard, *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, trans. by Deke Dusinberre (Arles: Actes Sud, 2011).

they also describe the attraction of opposites inherent in Decadence and Orientalism. To Symons, Sir Richard Burton, an associate of the 1890s Decadent circles in London, embodied the essence of this paradoxical synergy of ‘the noble savage’ like no other. In his essay on Burton (1923), Symons depicts the ‘neglected genius’ as a polyglot ‘devil’ of Oxonian making. Burton is the absolute Decadent Gypsy-cosmopolite, a hybrid of the best taken from Western and Eastern features:

Evidently, also, besides his mixture of races, he was a mixture of the normal and the abnormal; he was perverse and passionate; he was imaginative and cruel [...] Nearly six feet in height, he had, together with his broad shoulders, the small hands and feet of the Orientals; he was Arab in his prominent cheek-bones; he was gypsy in his terrible, magnetic eyes – the sullen eyes of a stinging serpent. [...] Wherever he went he was welcomed by the gypsies.³⁴

As in this depiction of Burton, Symons goes to some detail in anthropologically dissecting the Gypsies in the East. Outward attire and physical attractiveness are of prime concern to Symons and a major criterion of acceptance into his catalogue of precious Decadent *objets trouvés*. Symons never ceases to laud the qualities of the Gypsies who are ‘full of humour, vivacity, and bright instinctive intelligence’ (202). Yet simultaneously his account joins a long tradition of casting the Gypsies as feral. While mild in comparison to some other contemporary accounts, Symons’s writing leaves a bitter imperial aftertaste.

As much as Symons perceives the Eastern city as colourful spectacle, Symons himself is made an object of study by the locals: ‘The narrow eyes, half shut, turned sideways, in the stealthy immobility of the face [...] a dart of eyes which bored into you, screwing their way in with a child’s eagerness’ (222); ‘as a stranger passes, all eyes turn on him, with that doubtful, not hostile, but ready to be hostile look which I have

³⁴ Arthur Symons, ‘A Neglected Genius: Sir Richard Burton’, in *Dramatis Personae* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1925), pp. 241–62 (p. 249).

come to know so well' (221). In this 'real' scenario, Symons clearly feels uncomfortable with his status as the outsider. Upon meeting 'a company of gypsies' at the Sublime Porte in Constantinople, he seeks refuge with his cosmopolitan family as they 'marched through the street like an army in the midst of a hostile town' (233). Ironically, abroad, the Gypsies become Symons's comforting source of familiarity. The Gypsy provides a tangible link to that East, which Symons forges in his writing in order to shape his identity as a wander between cultures. This role reversal from foreigner to member of other cultural communities then emphasizes again the fluidity between cosmopolitan and Orientalist attachment.

Just as the boundaries between these two concepts disappear in Symons's writing, the indistinguishable mix of elements that unite to create a shifting 'picture' of the East is reflected in Symons's artistic preoccupation with dance. Symons's interest in Eastern dance encompassed Salome's dance of the veils derived from Wilde's play and Beardsley's art, his poem 'Javanese Dancers' inspired by a visit to the 1889 Exposition Universelle in Paris, exotically themed dance-hall performances at the Empire and Alhambra in London, Spanish flamenco dancers and eventually the religious dance of the dervishes he encountered in the Middle East. Witnessing the ceremonial dances performed by dervishes, 'the monks of the East' (243), in the Grande Rue de Péra and in Scutari, crossing the Bosphorus over to Asia, Symons finds: '[...] the ultimate, because the most animal, the most irrational, the most insane, form of Eastern ecstasy.'³⁵ Dance reveals to him 'the whole difference between the consciousness of the East and what seems to us most like the Eastern point of view among Western nations. A kind of mongrel East was visibly upon me' (209). Despite the pejorative description

³⁵ Ibid., p. 254.

(‘mongrel East’), Symons distinguishes between a real Eastern identity and the Western view of it, which creates the ‘mongrel East’, a distorted aestheticized and imagined imitation of in this case, Muslim Sufi religious practice.

Symons’s contradictory response to the East is visible in the comparison of the *tekké* (the monastery) with a ‘Paris dancing-hall’ (244). Symons extracts the dance’s ‘frenzy’ which is ‘yet a part of religion’ and pairs it with the excitement he sensed in the dance-hall watching French ballet-girls. In a similar way both spaces become ‘strange’. The discourses of Decadence and Orientalism inform one another in this example. The ‘strangeness’ of the entertainment venue is exposed through its comparison with religious Eastern ritual. In the steamy atmosphere of a Parisian dance-hall as well as in the mosque, in Symons’s words, ‘reason is forgotten, and the senses are petted like slaves [...]’ (252).

Despite imperialist undertones, Symons’s prose elicits a notion of dialectic exchange between East and West. Frequently he measures East against West and vice versa. Along with his stereotyping of the ‘Easterners’ as ‘fatalists’ and ‘creatures of instinct’ (257), Symons’s cultural curiosity also finds more nuanced expression in his cultural empathy. Visiting Eyoub, a suburb of Constantinople, Symons writes:

The Christian is unwelcome there; and why should he not be unwelcome? The mosque is the most sacred mosque in Constantinople, one of the two mosques which no Christian is allowed to enter; and is there anything unreasonable in this reticence? It is his association with other races, his struggle against alien forces in his midst that degrades the Turk; he learns craft from the Jew and greed from the Christian. [...] Never had these enemies, the Turks, seemed to me so sympathetic, so reasonable; only, I could not help feeling that some apology was needed for my being there at all. (229–231)

The following example gives a matter-of-fact account of the significance of the mosque in Islamic cultures:

The mosque is to the Turk this world and the next, equally. [...] Courtyard within courtyard, the mosque itself is a kind of inner court, or patio of heaven. Its architecture, the dome and minaret, suggests growing things, the palm tree and the cypress; and

around it, beyond its first court or *harem* [...] It is the mosque, which is set on the highest hill, and seems to crown the city [...] Nietzsche has said of Christian churches that they are like caverns, with clammy odours, in which the free soul cannot rise to its full height. The mosque is spacious, empty for God and man, arched with a great dome, like the earth itself; and it is open to all [...] it liberates, does not overwhelm. (239–41)

Far from connecting the word *harem* to any eroticising Orientalist implications, Symons uses in its religious connotation, derived from the Arabic حرام [haram] primarily meaning ‘forbidden’. This subtle awareness of linguistic difference and his acknowledgment of the sense of welcoming freedom in Islamic religious practices – in contrast to a Nietzschean notion of the oppressiveness of Western Christianity – testify to his cultural sensitivity.

Ultimately, Symons shows sympathy for the Ottoman resentment of an increasing Westernization:

In that still hostile corner of Europe, the East still has to fight for foothold; it has never been let alone long enough to give itself up to its own leisure [...] [the Turk] has settled now into a tragic, not satisfied, unstirred immobility; he desires no change, but things as they are do not give him happiness. Under his acceptance of them he has a few fierce ideas, held like swords. Religion which becomes fanaticism; fatalism which becomes inertia [...] In his rejection of the West he has not been able to keep the West out of his city, and the West is beginning to soak into his soul. (260)

As much as Symons draws attention to the encroachment of Western imperialism on Turkish heritage, we can see how in turn the East is colouring Symons’s identity as a Decadent writer. In search of a new, post-1890s aesthetic, the East in Symons’s prose serves two purposes: Firstly, it tries to anchor Decadent philosophy which aims to ‘pet the senses’ in seeking an art form that is ‘delicately depraved’ in a real live encounter with Eastern cultures.³⁶ In the encounter with the East, Symons aligns Orientalist stereotypes with Decadent virtues as summarized in his essay ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’ and in his essay on Burton. He praises ‘the Arabs’ for their irony: ‘Burton,

³⁶ Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, p. 866.

who found the Arabs, in their delicate depravity, ironical – irony being their breath of life [...].³⁷ In Symons's interpretations Arab 'depravity' and 'irony' are analogous to the idiosyncrasies of Decadent writing. Therefore and secondly, Symons's writings aim not to discriminate against but to affiliate with the East. The Gypsy, as well as 'the Arab' and 'the Turk' are set as examples to which to aspire.

In recognizing the potential to be gained by cultural difference, Symons formulates an open-minded artistic agenda. Like Wilde, he acknowledges the dependency of the West on the East:

The attraction of the East for the West is after all nostalgia; it is as if, when we are awakened by dreams, we remember that forgotten country out of which we came. We came out of the East, and we return to the East; all our civilisation has been but an attempt at forgetting, and, in spite of that long attempt, we still remember. When we first approach it, the East seems nothing more than a great enigma, presented to us almost on the terrifying terms of the Sphinx [...] We are on the threshold of a mystery, a curtain trembles over some veiled image, perhaps the image of wisdom [...] (259).

The juxtaposition of the East as the origin and source of culture and the Western civilization as a palliative for the senses, points towards Symons's redefinition of Decadent aesthetics in 1899. While Wilde's Decadence is defined by the excavating of an ancient Eastern civilization and neo-classical historicism, Symons's Decadence is invigorated by a focus on the immaterialism and spiritualism of the East. This is mirrored in his turn from Decadence to Symbolism, which opposes materialism as limiting to artistic creation. For Symons the Gypsy synthesizes the promise of spiritual wisdom, archaic instinctiveness and political radicalness pitted against *fin-de-siècle* anxieties about a degenerate civilization. Symons's nostalgic view on the East projects unto the Gypsy as an antidote to home-grown social and cultural ills.

³⁷ Symons, 'A Neglected Genius', p. 262.

A Brief History of Gypsyism

Symons's view is rooted in the historical narrative of European Gypsyism.³⁸ Dating back to the seventeenth century, the term 'Gypsy' was in literary use by many early modern writers, and most prominently by Shakespeare. Towards the end of the nineteenth century British 'Gypsiologists' embraced German advances in the field of 'Gypsy-studies'. In the German tradition, the 'Gypsy nation' was long believed to derive from Egyptian tribes immigrating to Europe. In his doctoral thesis *Dissertation de Cingaris* (1652) Jacob Thomasius attributed the connection between 'Egyptian' and 'Gypsy' to its origin from the German *Egyptianer* 'connoting their claimed provenance from Egypt, or Nubia'.³⁹ Linguistically it is interesting to note that the French term *Bohème*, translating as Gypsydom or *Zigeunertum*, derives from a different East, namely today's Czech Republic [Bohemia]. This differentiation again demonstrates the relativity of the term 'East'. At the end of the eighteenth century, Heinrich Grellmann, one of the earliest and most influential chroniclers of the European Gypsies, identifies northwest India to be the provenance of the 'genuine Oriental'.⁴⁰ The translation of Grellmann's ethnological study into English in 1807, helped to perpetuate the popularity of the Gypsy trope in British literature.

European artists took 'liberties with the lush mode of the arabesque'⁴¹ interlacing Western and Eastern imaginations. Coinciding with the formation of anthropology and ethnography as academic disciplines at the beginning of the nineteenth century, artistic Gypsyism provided a supplementary narrative which built

³⁸ Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt, eds., *The Role of the Romanies – Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/Romanies in European Cultures* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005).

³⁹ Saul, *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature*, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

⁴¹ Warner, p. 19.

‘a chain of associations creat[ing] an imaginary geography and genealogy for magical lore, the wisdom of Ancient Egypt transmitted to Gypsies, “internal Others”, foreign exotics in Europe who were notorious for their fortune-telling, love spells and siren enchantments’.⁴²

Shakespeare’s *Antony and Cleopatra* (1606) established the literary myth of the fateful encounter with the lure of the East, which nineteenth-century Decadence readily adapted. Cleopatra, the ‘Egyptian dish’ (II. 6, 144), brings about the downfall of the Roman Empire. Georges Bizet resumed the narrative of fatal encounter with the East in his opera *Carmen* (premiered in 1875). The opera, with a libretto written by Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy, and based on a semi-fictional travelogue by Prosper Mérimée, is in itself an imperialist art form and similar to Verdi’s *Aida* a hybrid ‘*article de luxe*’ according to Said.⁴³ In the opera, officer Don José sets out to ‘cool a gipsy’s lust’ (I.1 10) but finally realizes, like Shakespeare’s Anthony, that: ‘This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me [...] O this false soul of Egypt! [...] Like a right gipsy hath at fast and loose / Beguiled me to the very heart of loss.’ (IV. 12, ll. 12–31).⁴⁴ Since the opera’s premiere at the Opéra Comique in Paris in 1875, it remains the epitome of nineteenth-century Gypsy Lore.

Carmen was Symons’s favourite opera as it introduced a new element of political radicalness to the Romantic transfiguration of Romani culture. *Carmen*, next to *Cleopatra* and *Salome* (another version of the Orientalized *femme fatale*), resists societal expectations. The musical score of *Carmen* highlights the political subversion

⁴² Ibid., p. 113.

⁴³ Edward W. Said, ‘The Empire at Work: Verdi’s *Aida*’, in *Culture & Imperialism* (London: Random House, 1993), pp. 133–59 (p. 156).

⁴⁴ William Shakespeare, ‘*Antony and Cleopatra*’, in *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 2158–240.

underlying the exotic setting. Carmen's feverish flamenco rhythms interrupt the monotony of the military marches of José's regiment. The tension in the composition thus reveals the Gypsy's anarchical and rebellious potential, which also nurtured Symons's identification with Gypsy culture. Symons's Gypsyism fuses real-life cosmopolitan encounter with fiction:

I had a splendid holiday in North Wales with John Sampson and the Gypsies at the end of September. From youth I have had a passion for them. And twice have I seen *Carmen* a ballet with Bizet's music, and at the first rehearsal talked as well as I could in Spanish with several of the Spanish dancers.⁴⁵

Symons actively sought the affiliation with Romani communities to foster his cosmopolitan as well as Decadent identity on the borders of culture and society. In his early writings of the 1880s, Symons casts himself as a Gypsy-lover both in his life writings, his poetry and his fiction. In an 1888 letter to his friend James Dykes Campbell,⁴⁶ Symons declared himself to be a 'fervent Borrovian' following widespread Romantic notions of Gypsyism generated by the poet George Henry Borrow (1803–1881). Through Borrow's influential mid-century publications, most famously *Lavengro: The Scholar, the Gypsy, the Priest* (1851) and its sequence *The Romani Rye* (1857), the Gypsy was firmly established as an artistic metaphor for 'otherness' in late-Victorian literary circles. During the second half of the nineteenth century, these works acquired the status of a breviary for the 'Gypsyists', inspiring Symons to take up the study of Romani.⁴⁷ Both works refer back to German sources and in turn became widely acknowledged in Germany as well.⁴⁸ In 1893 and 1900 Theodore Watts-Dunton, another successful Gypsy-writer and Symons's acquaintance, edited both of Borrow's

⁴⁵ Symons to Julia Marlowe, 17 February 1912, *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters*, pp. 121–22.

⁴⁶ Symons to James Dykes Campbell, 2 January 1888, London, British Library [Add. MS 49522].

⁴⁷ Karl Beckson, *Arthur Symons: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 13.

⁴⁸ Saul, p. 5.

works.⁴⁹ According to Catherine Maxwell, Watts-Dunton was ‘well-read in Middle-Eastern and Indian literature’.⁵⁰ This interest might have influenced Watts-Dunton’s own Gypsy-novel *Aylwin* (1898), which sparked a literary sensation, selling over a hundred thousand copies by 1914.

Symons’s own writings, especially *Mes Souvenirs* (1929), illustrate the Orientalist attraction defining his Gypsyism:

a race I have always admired beyond all other races, and which I have often come into contact with almost all over Europe: they are the Eternal Wanderers, and they are our only link with the East with Magic, and with Mystery.⁵¹

The Gypsy as ‘the only link’, an expression charged with Darwinian implications, brings together discourses of degeneration and Oriental mysticism. According to this portrayal, the Gypsy is in touch with sensual inclinations rather than with the intellectual endeavours of modernity.⁵² In Symons’s case, the conceptual kinship between Orientalism and Gypsyism externally constructs European Romani cultures as the Orientals within. The Gypsy is poeticized by representing ‘the last picturesque relics of another age in today’s prosaic epoch of steam and iron’,⁵³ deliberately constructed as an image ‘against Progress’.⁵⁴ Consequently, Symons’s cultural

⁴⁹ Catherine Maxwell, ‘Theodore Watts-Dunton’s *Aylwin* and the Reduplications of Romanticism’, in *Second Sight – The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 166–97 (p. 170). Wilde was familiar with Borrow’s works. In 1886, he criticized mistakes in an article on Borrow in a letter to ‘The Editor of the Pall Mall Gazette’, *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, pp. 274–75.

⁵⁰ Maxwell, p. 170.

⁵¹ Symons, *Mes Souvenirs* (Chapelle-Réanville: Hours, 1929), p. 38.

⁵² Saul, p. 6.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

philanthropy hovers between a romanticization of the Gypsy's exotic charisma and its Orientalist exploitation which Symons uses to criticize Europe's cultural decay.⁵⁵

Symons's Gypsyism glamorizes the Romani in his many Gypsy-themed poems such as 'White Magic' (1894), 'The Tarot Cards' (1908), and 'The Gypsy's Song' (1917), which are saturated with Decadent Orientalism and in particular with regressive images of female sexuality. Whilst rehearsing clichés such as 'the legend of Egyptian origin, the palm reading, the claim of magic powers, [...] flamboyant dance, the improvised violin music, the physical beauty and sexual allure'⁵⁶ in his poetry, Symons's prose writings, though, speak a different language. Here he defends, yet also stylizes, the Gypsies' Edenic existence as an exemplary primitive people. In his semi-autobiographical story 'A Prelude to Life' in *Spiritual Adventures* (1905), Symons reassesses his reading of Borrow as a quasi-spiritual experience:

I got my first taste of a sort of gipsy element in literature which was to become a passion when, later on, 'Lavengro' fell into my hands. The reading of 'Lavengro' did many things for me. It absorbed me from the first page, [...] 'Lavengro' [meaning: master of words in Romany] took my thoughts into the open air, and gave me my first conscious desire to wander. I learned a little Romany, and was always on the lookout for gipsies. [...] Humanity began to exist for me.⁵⁷

Symons's enthusiasm became even more pronounced in the later phase of his life throughout which he compiled a 'Gypsy portfolio, where I keep notes and letters and all scraps relating to the subject'.⁵⁸ In November 1907, he joined the Gypsy Lore Society [hereafter GLS].

⁵⁵ Saul notes that even Herder was 'close to contempt and far from understanding' which helped foster a 'Germanic anti-Gypsyism' reaching its peak in the Romani Holocaust under National Socialism in the twentieth century, in *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature*, p. 1.

⁵⁶ Saul, p. 3.

⁵⁷ Symons, *Spiritual Adventures*, pp. 32–33.

⁵⁸ Symons to Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, 1 April 1908, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS A4 (537)].



Fig. 7 Arthur Symons (left) posing with his Romani friends [‘Snapshots of Arthur Symons, with wife Rhoda, & with Gs.’ In Macfie’s hand], Liverpool, GLS Archive [GLS C1/13 [18]].



Fig. 8 Arthur Symons (second from right) posing with his Romani friends [*'Snapshots of Arthur Symons, with wife Rhoda, & with Gs.'* In Macfie's hand], Liverpool, GLS Archive [GLS C1/13 [19]].

‘In Praise of Gypsies’: Symons and the Gypsy Lore Society

A closer examination of Symons’s membership of the GLS is important to understand how his anthropological research of Romani culture influenced his writing of the East. Together with his fellow ‘Gypsiologists’, as members referred to themselves, Symons and his wife Rhoda undertook field trips to socialise with Romani travellers in Wales and Cornwall (figs. 7, 8). Symons’s extensive correspondence with members of the society, John Sampson and Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, which are archived in the GLS collections at the University of Liverpool, documents the society’s zealous endeavour both to fathom Romani culture intellectually and experience it through live encounter. Symons signed a postcard sent to Sampson, reporting a chance meeting with two Romani girls, simply with ‘Love the Romani!!’.⁵⁹ In a letter to Sampson, he declares his admiration for the Romani once again: ‘It has always been one of my desires to go with you amongst the Gypsies in Wales. It would not only be magnificent, but transcendent [*sic*]’.⁶⁰ In a letter to Macfie he reiterates his temptation to become part of the travelling community:

I was coming up from London the other day and just before Orpington I saw a big encampment, in a lane and two fishers’ tents up, cooking utensils on the van, men, women, and children cowering and lying about. I was very much minded to jump out at the station, but should have lost my last train home, and so I refrained.⁶¹

While Symons professed his fervent interest in the transliteration and documentation of Romani dialects (he claimed to possess over ‘a hundred books on this subject’), his childlike fascination for the people conflicts with his dandified pose as a Romani Ray

⁵⁹ Symons to John Sampson 16 August 1911, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS C1/13 (10)].

⁶⁰ Symons to John Sampson, 27 August 1910, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS C1/13 (11)].

⁶¹ Symons to Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, 1 July 1908, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS A6 (736)].

(also 'Rye' or 'Rai').⁶² The relationship between such 'Gypsy gentlemen' and the travelling communities was marked by an Orientalist belief in privileged dependency; denominating themselves as friends and benefactors of the local Romani community, this unbalanced 'friendship' model was not always reciprocated or appreciated.⁶³

By the end of the nineteenth century, societies conducting scientific studies of the Gypsies were flourishing. As Deborah Epstein Nord argues, the declared goal of these societies was to explore and record racial, linguistic, and cultural differences, yet also to draw out intercultural similarities in a 'mix of serious scholarship and nostalgia'.⁶⁴ The GLS, as one such group, grew from a mere collection of enthusiasts to an internationally recognized institution and self-declared authority on 'Romany matters'.⁶⁵ Founded in 1888, its members counted among them Edward Henry Palmer, Professor of Arabic at Cambridge, the 'Gypsy Archduke' Joseph Karl of Austria, and Sir Richard Burton, whom Symons admired. Symons's circle of correspondents included Watts-Dunton, who acted as president of the society from 1909 to 1910; painter Augustus John, president from 1937 to 1961; and Townley Searle, an illustrator and bookseller, who joined the GLS in 1911 and in 1912 hosted an artistic splinter group of the GLS called the 'Gypsy Salon'.⁶⁶ Searle's 'Salon', renamed the 'Gypsy and Folklore Club', provided the platform for the editors and contributors of the magazine *The Gypsy* (1915–1916) to meet (fig. 9). Symons was one of the contributors.

⁶² Symons to Dora Yates, undated, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS C1/13 (14)].

⁶³ Lee, p. 139.

⁶⁴ Epstein, p. 126.

⁶⁵ Watts-Dunton to John Sampson, 5 May 1908, Liverpool, GLS Archive [MS GLS B15 (59)]. For a more detailed history of the GLS see Angus Fraser, 'A Rum Lot', in *100 Years of Gypsy Studies*, ed. by Matt T. Salo (Cheverly, MD: Gypsy Lore Society, 1990), pp. 1–15; Katharine Hooper, 'The Gypsy Collection at Liverpool', in *The Role of the Romanies*, pp. 21–31.

⁶⁶ See <<http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/sca/colldescs/gypsy/index.html>> [accessed: 06/03/2015].

Macfie's record of news clippings concerning Romani communities, compiled throughout the year 1908, provides unparalleled insight into the workings of the *GLS*. On the one hand the compilation is witness to an exploitative fascination and sensationalism; on the other hand it also documents the society's political concern for the Romanies' civil rights. Examining the newspaper clippings it becomes clear that the Romani were regarded as a domestic security risk by many European nations. As a statement by the linguist Henry T. Crofton suggests — 'Gypsies are the Arabs of Pastoral England' — the Romani were demonized as a potential danger lurking in the midst of society.⁶⁷ They were associated with crime and illegal activities such as theft and fortune telling. Headlines about elopements and unorthodox family affairs caused moral outcries not only within England but also in Switzerland ('gypsi banditti'), France, Germany, Austria ('Poisoning Gypsies — Appalling Acts of Revenge by Croatian Peasants'), and even New York ('Shall We Abolish Gypsies? — How Can You Catch the Children?').⁶⁸

The nineteenth-century attempts to define the Gypsies, or even to establish them as the Darwinian 'missing link', resulted in waves of literary and non-literary publications by Gypsy-anthropologists.⁶⁹ These publications contributed to the stigmatization of the Romani as a community of outsiders who were unfit for civilization. Nord observes that the Romani suffered from 'persistent efforts to outlaw and destroy their way of life'.⁷⁰ The *GLS*'s aim was to prevent the decline of a culture that was directly identified as a threat to English society. Indeed and paradoxically, as

⁶⁷ Smart and Crofton, p. xvi.

⁶⁸ [Anon.], 'Poisoning Gypsies — Appalling Acts of Revenge by Croatian peasants', *Morning Reader* (26 February 1908); and [Anon.], 'Shall We Abolish Gypsies? — How Can You Catch the Children?', *Public Opinion* (10 April 1908), cuttings albums (1907–1913), Liverpool University, Scott Macfie Gypsy Collections [SMGC 5/2].

⁶⁹ Saul, p. 9.

⁷⁰ Epstein, p. 3.

Nord points out, the ‘Gypsylorists’ and Gypsiologists were concerned to ‘preserve the “purity” of Gypsy culture and to protect the pure-blooded Gypsies who best exemplified it’ whilst undercutting their intention by embarking on first-hand ‘field research’ and mingling with travelling communities.⁷¹ The interest in the Romani people was comparable to the hype of Egyptomania in the 1880s and 1890s, expanding into a pan-European sport of researching the Gypsy as a cultural phenomenon. This anthropological exploitation conflates, as Katie Trumpener remarks, ‘literary traditions with living people’; this reached its climax in the Holocaust during the Second World War, with lasting tension felt up to the present day.⁷²

At the turn of the century, these political controversies and the results of Gypsiologist research were debated in the *JGLS*. The journal’s distribution was ensured by the society’s affiliation with a number of universities, public libraries, and other anthropological societies. After its brief publication success from 1888 to 1892, the GLS and its journal folded. From 1906 Sampson and Macfie became the driving force behind the research work and publication of the *JGLS*. David MacRitchie, president of the GLS and the journal’s chief editor from 1907 to 1908, resumed the society’s activities until its second decline at the beginning of the First World War. From 1922 to 1974 the GLS was once more revived and thrived under its Honorary Secretary Dora Yates. Whilst fading out in the UK, an American branch of the association continues to grow today and twice yearly publishes the *JGLS* under its revised name *Romani Studies*.⁷³

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 150.

⁷² Katie Trumpener, ‘The Time of the Gypsies: A “People Without History”’, in *Identities*, ed. by Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 338–80 (p. 344).

⁷³ See <<http://www.gypsyloresociety.org>> [accessed: 15/03/2017].

In 1908, the *JGLS* printed Symons's controversial article 'In Praise of Gypsies'. In the same year governmental measures to solve the so-called 'Gypsy Question' intensified, bringing about an extensive series of legislative actions against travelling communities. Symons took initiative for his Romani friends in reaction against the Moveable Dwellings Act and Children's Act passed in 1908, which imposed a limitation on the right to move and settle freely. The Children's Act introduced compulsory schooling for children. Moreover, the *JGLS*'s editorial note establishes the 'Gypsy Question' as a pan-European concern. The nineteenth-century *aficionados* of Gypsydom lobbied for the protection of the Gypsy 'species', threatened by industrial progress and the institutionalization of culture through governmental schooling.

In his article, Symons argues against a sterile modernity ('civilisation') by glorifying the 'Gypsy way of living' as the way to counteract the 'decadence' of the senses. Symons, once the advocate of 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', in 1908 ironically argues against 'decadent internalism and separation'.⁷⁴ His article, written in one evening 'with great heat', as he recalls, transfigures the Gypsy into a means by which to recover sensual experience in modernity.⁷⁵ The Gypsies are the remains of a past Edenic existence of humankind which is out of touch with the contemporary political world. In contrast to the strategy of dialectical representation in his travelogues, the tone describing the East applied here is didactical. Despite the attempt to root his argument in historical and linguistic scholarly detachment, the fast-paced opening of the article reflects the hot-headedness in which it was conceived. The vicarious indignation upon the discrimination of the Romanies suggests that the article

⁷⁴ Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*, p. 129.

⁷⁵ Symons to Edward Hutton, 16 April 1908, cited by Beckson in *Arthur Symons: A Life*, p. 251.

is not only a political outcry, but also Symons's personal defence of his identification with them.

A shower of indefinite pronouns — 'these' and 'them' — opens the article, introducing a polemical tone from the outset. At times, this has the effect of making the opposed parties, the establishment and the travellers, indistinguishable. Symons commences the debate by pitting the 'reproving voice' of pamphleteer Samuel Roberts, an individualist and the spokesman of 'all wise men', against the nameless voice of the 'hateful' mass of technocrats:

The people who hate *them* [the Gypsies], and would control *them* and banish *them* [...]. The lawgivers hate *them*, the stationary powers hate *them*, the people who wear uniform and take wages hate *them*. *Those* who do not understand *them*, that is to say the main part of the civilised world, hate *them*.⁷⁶

This generalization of oppositions becomes full-fledged hyperbole: 'From the *first* entry of the Gypsies into Europe, the hand of *every* man has been against them' (298, my emphasis). As if looking for the right word to express his agitation, Symons lists in quick succession the assumed enemies in a series of alliterations: 'the officials, the prose people, the mechanical minds' (294). From the start Symons's prose merges political intention with poetic form. In this way, he achieves a beautification of the Gypsy that underscores his criticism of the marginalization of travelling communities. The poeticization of the Gypsies as decaying species renders them once more passive objects in an Orientalist debate on the progressiveness of European civilization.

Symons's portrayal of the Gypsies is racist and degrading despite his best efforts to elevate the Romanies' cause. Nord argues that 'Symons's vision [...] amounts ultimately to a defence of his own social and cultural stance as a man prominently

⁷⁶ Symons, 'In Praise of Gypsies', pp. 294–95, my emphasis. Further references to this article are made in the main body of the text.

associated with the Decadent movement and French Symbolism'.⁷⁷ While Lyon regards Symons's 'agitated essay' as 'deficient as a piece of activist journalism' and as a 'romanticized example of racist practices', I want to draw attention to the ambivalence of Symons's portrayal of the Gypsy in the context of Decadence.⁷⁸ While the racialization of Gypsies was common practice in Edwardian texts, Decadent Orientalism occupies a special position. Through identification with the subject under scrutiny an opposition between East and West is increasingly broken down.

While Symons objectifies the Romani, he associates with their status as outsiders within by inverting imperial binaries. Drawing on his observations from his travelogues of Belgrade and Constantinople, Symons deems England not the land of the 'Turks', to be the cruel and suppressive power ('our barbarous land') (295). The text regards Western capitalism as the demise of civilization. Symons makes clear that England's very own political and social system is cause for the anxieties about the cultural degeneration into an industrialized profit-driven society:

There has been great talk of late of degeneracy, decadence, and what are supposed to be perversities: such as religion, art, genius, individuality. But it is the millionaire, the merchant, the money-maker, the sweater, who are the degenerates of civilisation, and as the power comes into their hands all noble and beautiful things are being crushed out one after another. ('In Praise of Gypsies', p. 298)

While Symons's antagonism suggests that recovering the 'Gypsy way of living' may be a remedy against such cultural decay of the West that is degenerating into 'the likeness of a vast machine' (298). By rendering the Gypsy as a meta-national 'link with the East' (296), Symons represents the supposedly primitivist culture of the Romani as closer to human progress than the West. Through the inversion of the expected association

⁷⁷ Epstein, p. 137.

⁷⁸ Janet Lyon, 'Gadže Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, 11 (2004), 517–38 (p. 520).

between technology and progress, Symons plays with the reader's preconceptions of modernity and decadence. Unlike Wilde's socialist critique of charity in 'The Soul of Man under Socialism' (1891) written seventeen years earlier, Symons's foray into politics is coloured by sentimental attachment rather than wit. His empathy with the Gypsy challenges the definitions of 'progress' and 'degeneration'. The text asks: who are the 'barbarians'? Does modernity actually signify a setback in a teleologically perceived development of culture?

The article can be read as a pamphlet for a revival of the emphasis on sensual experience in *fin-de-siècle* Decadent culture. For Symons the civilization promoted by Decadence which is built on the refinement of the senses, can only be preserved by a radical return to nature. Through primitive ways of living far removed from the cult of artifice, the Gypsies alike act as pioneers. The poets of the early twentieth century must show a Paterian ambition to rediscover the instincts. Unlike in the 1890s, this does not happen through an over-stimulation of the nerves through art, à la Des Esseintes or Dorian Gray, who are representative of 'a civilisation grown over-luxurious'.⁷⁹ Instead, a reconnection to the animalistic senses is required in order to protect 'nature before civilisation' (296). This re-naturalization in the wake of artistic primitivism, was a prominent subject of contemporary research conducted by sociologists and philosophers such as Georg Simmel, whose essay 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben' [The Metropolis and Mental Life] was published in 1903 in Dresden. Like Symons, Simmel is concerned about the increase of mechanization and the onslaught of urban sensations on

⁷⁹ Symons, 'The Decadent Movement in Literature', p. 859.

the human psyche. A restoration of natural instincts is called for, if man is to preserve his or her individuality from the 'sovereign powers' of modern society.⁸⁰

At the climax of Symons's article, the use of anaphora positions the Gypsy as a focal point at which the two narratives of artistic and political defence meet:

The Gypsy represents nature before civilisation. [...] His is the only free race, and the tyranny of law and progress would suppress his liberty. That is the curse of all civilisation, it is a tyranny, it is the force of repression. To try to repress the Gypsies is to fight against instinct, to try to cut out of humanity its rarest impulse. ('In Praise of Gypsies', p. 296)

Symons's concept of 'humanity's rarest impulse' reinterprets Pater's 'gem-like flame'.⁸¹ Once the source of Decadent sensual inquisitiveness, Symons now sees it turning to cinders and at risk of being stifled by modernity. In an apologetic tone Symons adds in praise of the Gypsies and poets that 'their secrecy is a fine art'; lying is 'a sign of what is imaginative in them' (297). While Wilde playfully teased his readers with this moral paradox in 'The Decay of Lying', Symons's defence of lying as the art of Gypsies leaves the reader with a sense of the Orientalist uneasiness of the text as it tries to situate itself between political and artistic manifesto. Indeed, it may be argued that is where the article's true political potential lies: in discomfiting, and conflicting its readership.

In comparison to Wilde's ambiguous aphorisms, Symons is clear about the unsettling analogies between literary and political reality. Like the Gypsies, the Decadents are a cosmopolitan travelling community:

Here to-day and there to-morrow; you cannot follow them, for all the leafy tracks that they leave for each other on the ground. They are distinguishable from the people of every land which they inhabit; there is something in them finer, stranger, more

⁸⁰ Georg Simmel, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. by Kurt H. Wolff (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1950), pp. 409–24 (p. 409).

⁸¹ Pater, p. 120.

primitive, something baffling to all who do not understand them through a natural sympathy. [They] are to be found wherever one travels, east or west. ('In Praise of Gypsies', p. 297)

In this passage, Symons once more conflates the Gypsies and the Decadent artists. He quotes Pater: "Like one on a secret errand," as Walter Pater said of the mysterious Leonardo, they pass through the world' (p. 296). Symons equates Pater's Leonardo, a symbol of Western artistic ingenuity who, in Pater's description, drew inspiration for his *Gioconda* from Eastern and Western mythologies, with the Gypsy. As post-Renaissance men, the Decadent artists also need to resort to the East — to take inspiration from Gypsy culture — in order for Decadence and Aestheticism to survive in modernity: 'It is eastward that one must go to find their least touched beauty, their original splendour' (297). The ambiguity of the text is also apparent in Symons's self-plagiarism from passages already used in *Cities*; not an unusual habit after his often-cited breakdown in 1908, Symons recycles material from his travels to the East, during which he 'saw the beauty of the Gypsies in its most exact form' (297). Read in this way, artistic and imperialist discourses are palimpsestically superimposed.

The article addresses the global significance of 'the Gypsy Question'. In line with Orientalist practice, Symons aggrandises the East and admonishes the Western world's ignorance of its merits:

Civilisation, as it was thousands of years ago, in China, in India, [which] was an art of living, beside whose lofty beauty *we* are like street urchins scrambling in a gutter. *We* live to pick up scraps; *they* lived a tranquil and rational existence. The secret is lost to all the nations of Europe, squabbling about trade, prattling about precedence. ('In Praise of Gypsies', pp. 298–99, my emphasis)

Symons's article thus demonstrates the fluidity of the word 'decadent'. The reader is left wondering which process is signified as 'decadent'. Does Symons refer to the impending disappearance of Gypsy culture, or to Britain which in his eyes is in cultural decline? Or

is the article to be understood as testimony to Symons's own Decadent career in decline, a statement on the future of Decadent writing composed by a writer who represents a nostalgic remnant of the 1890 set? How can Symons's appeal for a progressive liberalism appear conservative and even anti-modern in tone and style?

Symons's 'In Praise of Gypsies' must be read as a politically liberal intervention as well as an attempt to rehabilitate Decadence based on shared principles of individualism, cosmopolitan exchange and cultural opposition. Starting from an anthropological examination in *Cities*, Symons styles the Gypsy as an abstract, post-Romantic, immaterial, and immortal principle. While still championing Decadent depictions of the Gypsies as the 'eternal wanderers', Symons writes a timely manifesto with immediate political appeal. Yet at the same time, his defence of what he regarded as the Gypsy philosophy voices strong anti-modern tendencies. The conceptualization of the Gypsy in the text as the alter ego of Decadence thus emphasises the importance of co-operation between its writers and readers: the text wanders in a Paterian sense between aestheticism and criticism. The Gypsy assumes the role of communicator between not only the imagined Orient and Europe but also Decadence and modernity.

The Politics of Decadent Journalism: *The Gypsy* and *Simplicissimus*

The following examination of Symons's involvement in the creation of the magazine *The Gypsy* (1915–1916) shifts the focus further to the importance of journalism in

Decadence. While Gautier, as the father of French Decadence, had shunned journalism as a profanation of poetry and looked down on the critics of his days with ‘great remorse and apprehension’,⁸² most major *fin-de-siècle* Decadents were prolific critics and art journalists. Decadent periodical and magazine culture took the important role of facilitator and mobilizer of artistic as well as transnational exchange. Especially during the 1880s and 1890s, the Decadent periodical as a conglomerate of literature, art and politics brought together authors from different countries, a variety of artistic genres and a specialist readership. Similar to the function of nineteenth-century salons and clubs, Janet Lyon describes magazines as a ‘form of sociability [...] inseparable from the transmission and production of modernist aesthetics’. Reminiscent of Symons’s definition of the East as kaleidoscopic, the periodical or little magazines in their ‘kaleidoscopic forms [...] made and unmade from fragments of personalities in recombinant relations’,⁸³ facilitated aesthetic encounter between cultures.

The Gypsy, a magazine that has received little critical attention, crosses the boundaries between literary periodicals of the 1890s and Modernist little magazines. In the following pages I will examine the three key aspects that render the magazine a great example of post-1890s Decadent culture in relation to its Eastern themes. Firstly, the focus is on the editorial mission of *The Gypsy* that outlines the artist’s role in times of war. Secondly, an analysis of Alan Odle’s⁸⁴ striking Oriental plates in the magazine will point to their significance in the politicization of post-Beardsley Decadent aesthetics. Finally, Edmund Gosse’s essay ‘Simplicissimus’ critically comments on the

⁸² Théophile Gautier, ‘Preface’, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (London: Gibbings, 1899), pp. 9–46 (p. 18).

⁸³ Lyon, p. 529.

⁸⁴ Spellings of Alan Odle’s names vary according to the various sources. For this discussion I will prefer ‘Alan Odle’.

role of political cartoons explicating Anglo-German foreign politics in Egypt during the First World War.

Denominating itself as the inheritor to its 1890s predecessors *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, *The Gypsy* forms a vital platform for the redrafting of Decadent self-understanding post 1900. The contents, similar to its nineteenth-century models, contain general literary reviews, poems by Walter de la Mare, Herbert Shaw, Henry Savage, Symons, Gosse, Arthur Machen, Theodore Watts-Dunton, Richard Le Gallienne, Katharine Tynan and others. Symons and his co-contributors paid tribute to their Decadent pasts but reinvented themselves as modern, politically active writers. In the 1890s, *The Yellow Book* had already evoked a Francophile and therefore transgressive sympathy with the foreign. *The Gypsy's* editors embrace Decadent provocation by poignantly launching a consciously reactionary, yet highly political art magazine, in the midst of the First World War in 1915.

The editorial board consisted of book trader Townley Searle,⁸⁵ publisher and poet Henry Savage⁸⁶ and artist Alan Odle (1888–1948) who joined forces in 1915 as a splinter group of artists associated with the *GLS*. Their programmatic editorial recalls Wilde's universalist definition of art. *The Gypsy* was dedicated to 'Art [that] is of more importance than the fate of nations'.⁸⁷ The first volume credits contributions by Decadents from the first hour and Gypsiologists such as Watts-Dunton, who contributed a poem called 'The Gypsy Girl and the Nightingale'. In it, Watts-Dunton provocatively

⁸⁵ In 1923, Searle published a book-collector's magazine edited by T. W. H. Crosland, he compiled a biography of Gilbert and Sullivan (1931), wrote a book on Chinese cookery (1932), and edited and illustrated a selection of Gilbert's ballads.

⁸⁶ Henry Savage was Arthur Machen's agent and socialized with Frank Harris and Lord Alfred Douglas. He founded the New Bohemians Tavern Society. He edited *The Academy* in 1915 following Douglas's editorship (1907–1910).

⁸⁷ Editorial note 'Foreword', *The Gypsy*, 1 (1915), (London: Pomegranate Press, 1915), p. 6; Oxford, Bodleian Libraries [Per. 2705 d.316 (1/1915)].

praised the Gypsy's '[s]trange signs – strange cryptic words' capturing 'that divinest song / Not Keats, not Swinburne's self could syllable!'. Symons contributed his poem 'Nini Patte-en-l'air' written in 1892, a decisive appeal to resurrect the 'art of knowing how to be / Part lewd, aesthetical in part, / And *fin de siècle* essentially.'⁸⁸

The magazine is extraordinary in that it tried to revive the air of 1890s Decadence. Symons's editorship of *The Savoy* in 1896 in collaboration with 1890s icon Aubrey Beardsley was a success if not, according to Beckson and Munro, the 'high point in Symons's career'.⁸⁹ In contrast, *The Gypsy*, published in only two numbers, in May 1915 and May 1916 has gone almost unnoticed in publishing history.⁹⁰ According to David Miller and Richard Price, *The Gypsy* was initially issued by the Pomegranate Press. By the publication of the second issue the press was renamed Gypsy Press and moved from London to Dublin. In 1916, the *Daily Sketch* announced the 'new and deeply interesting quarterly 'The Gypsy', the first number of which created a genuine sensation in the literary world.'⁹¹ For reviewers of the *New Witness* it is '[a] feast of good things'.⁹²

⁸⁸ Symons, 'Nini Patte-en-l'air' in *The Gypsy*, 1, p. 11.

⁸⁹ Beckson and Munro, *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters*, p. 59.

⁹⁰ *The Gypsy* is mentioned in David Miller and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914–2000 – A History and Bibliography of 'Little Magazines'* (London: The British Library, Oak Knoll Press, 2006), p. 23. Apart from crediting Symons as a prolific writer contributing to 'over 35 periodicals between 1885–1934', there is no entry regarding *The Gypsy* in the following volumes: *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism In Great Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Laurel Brake & Marysa Demoor (London: The British Library, Academia Press, 2009), p. 612; Laurel Brake, *Print in Transition, 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Peter Brooker and Andrew Thacker, eds., *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol. I Britain and Ireland 1880–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Peter McDonald, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice, 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Ian Fletcher, 'Decadence and the Little Magazines', in *Decadence and the 1890s*, pp. 173–203.

⁹¹ Reviews on the back of the front cover, *The Gypsy*, 2 (Dublin: Gypsy Press, 1916), no pagination; Oxford, Bodleian Libraries [Per. 2705 d.316 (2/1916)].

⁹² Ibid.

Maura Ives alerts us to the fact that descriptive bibliographies of periodicals have been and still are ‘regarded as bibliographical troublemakers’.⁹³ The periodical’s title thus not only allegorises the supposed characteristics of the Gypsy as a literary trope of ‘dual citizenship’.⁹⁴ It also highlights the qualities of magazines as ‘transitory anthologies’ being characteristically ephemeral, built by collaborative effort and addressed to an ‘outsider’ readership.⁹⁵ In order to facilitate a description of such a hybrid format, she concludes quoting Scott Bennett that ‘the next bibliographic horizon for periodicals will involve analytical bibliography and textual criticism’.⁹⁶

The first volume of the quarterly, published on 17 May 1915 at five shillings, consists of ninety-four pages. With measurements of 278 × 215 mm the format follows its predecessor of connoisseur magazines *The Savoy*. Both numbers are impressively illustrated by Alan Odle, Nina Hamnett, Albert Rothenstein, Alfred Allinson, William Small, Charles Conder, and Ambrose McEvoy. The binding is buff paper-covered boards with cover designs by Odle (the first volume included a red-coloured title page) and printed on wove paper. The second volume’s measurements of 280 × 220 mm exceed the first slightly in dimension. The second volume is even more extensively decorated by drawings and inserted illustrated plates. Printed copies exist in the Bodleian Library, The British Library, Cambridge University Library, National Library of Scotland, The National Art Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum and Trinity College Dublin.⁹⁷ Both volumes do not state the names of editors, which have been

⁹³ Maura Ives, ‘Descriptive Bibliography and the Victorian Periodical’, *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996), 61–94 (p. 62).

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁹⁷ David Miller and Richard Price, p. 23.

identified as Henry Savage and ‘Alan Odle – art editor of “The Gypsey [*sic*]”’.⁹⁸ Henry Savage, today an unknown figure, is praised by critics and fellow writers such as Ford Madox Ford, who in writing for *The Outlook*, advertised in *The Gypsey* thus: ‘Mr Savage is almost as good as Heine [...]. Mr Savage is rather a remarkable personality’. Arthur Machen in a review for the *Evening News* even compares him ‘with the philosophical poets, that is with Keats; and with Tennyson’.⁹⁹ The fact that Savage is frequently placed in proximity to political artists such as Heine, supports the idea that the magazine was motivated by artistic as well as political, if not anarchic ambition.

Reactions towards the magazine were not all welcoming, bearing in mind that this post-1890s enterprise was created to blossom in the midst of one of the most atrocious wars the world had seen so far. The new avant-garde specifically struggled to accept the magazine’s nostalgia for outworn Decadent aesthetics. On 11 August 1915 in a letter to Symons’s friend John Quinn, Ezra Pound finds explicit words to express his frustration with *The Gypsey* which he associated with Wilde’s circles:

Now as to the bloody paper. [...] I had the offer of a weekly with a bad name, I.e. [*sic*], the ‘Academy’ [...] I would have had whatever the paper made during that year to go on with. That particular chance is gone. The paper has been taken by the adulators of Oscar, the proprietors of the grave-cloth (alias ‘The Gypsey’, a bone-phosphate depot full of Gosse, the lates Middleton, Condor, Watts-Dunton etc. etc. and the youngs nonentity & Co.).¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Dorothy Richardson to Edward Garnett, 7 March 1919, in *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson*, ed. by Gloria G. Fromm (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995), p. 24; In a letter to novelist and editor Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), Richardson writes in 1946: ‘Did you ever happen to run into Henry Savage, quite a good minor satirical poet, friend of Richard Middleton & Crosland & originator of The Gypsey [*sic*] of which Alan, bless him, was Art editor until it was killed by 1914–1918?’, p. 545.

⁹⁹ *The Gypsey*, 2 (1916), p. 1.

¹⁰⁰ Ezra Pound to John Quinn, 11 August 1915, *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn: 1915–1924*, ed. by Timothy Materer (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), pp. 31–32.

In Pound's place, Savage took up the editorship of *The Academy* in 1915. Pound's rejection of the magazine poignantly captures Savage's endeavour to resurrect what Peter Sprengel calls the 'Poetik der Boheme' [poetics of the boheme] of the 1890s.¹⁰¹

The editorial is written in style and content like a resurrection manifesto. Whilst dismissing Wilde, it advocates Wilde's 'supremacy of art', which must ignore political 'actualities' by a retreat into the 'sense of greatness and mystery and miracle' found in *The Gypsy*, or in other terms the East. The editorial note is worth quoting in length:

In presenting to the public a new Quarterly Magazine we are aware of the fact, of which doubtless we shall be reminded, that in these days half the world is at war. We are also aware however, that the first duty of an artist is to express as best he can whatever ideas may occur to him. He will not be obsessed by actuality any more than he will say foolishly, as Wilde once said foolishly, that 'nothing that happens is of the slightest importance.' He will just go on working, dreaming, marvelling – and marvelling not so much at the ways of human action as at the overwhelming, stupendous miracle of Action itself. And it is good for England, it is good for all countries [...] Think of it, you sceptics who doubt all things, you pessimists with no faith in Infinite Wisdom. [...] And out of this sense of greatness and mystery and miracle comes all that makes life worth the living. Expressed in many forms Art had this plain moral: we must have it, we cannot do without it. [...] Each to his vocation. Ours is to do our best for the cause we believe in. We shall do so until convinced that we should 'return to our gallipots'; and if we return our bitterness will be assuaged by the faith that others will not.¹⁰²

According to the editors of *The Gypsy* then, art is a duty to country and the world. It is political in its claim to be apolitical. The appeal of the editorial, despite its defence of the artist's prerogative to ignore current political affairs, has, in a way that is comparable to Symons's article in defence of the Gypsies, a political message. In calling the reader to take sides much like Baudelaire's address to his reader ('mon semblable, – mon frère!') in the opening poem of *Les Fleurs du mal*, the editorial, demands the reader to join in identification with the editors, who perceive of themselves

¹⁰¹ Peter Sprengel, 'Exotismus bei Paul Scheerbart und Else Lasker-Schüler: Zur Literatur der Boheme', in *Literatur im Kaiserreich: Studien zur Moderne* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1993), pp. 201–08 (p. 201).

¹⁰² *The Gypsy*, 1 (1915), p. 5.

as heirs of a Baudelairean ‘tribu prophétique’ [tribe of prophets].¹⁰³ The reader is asked to identify with *The Gypsy* as a cosmopolitan ethnos of artists. In doing so his or her takes actions to become part of a Modernist revival of the 1890s, which Mahoney and Sherry identified in their work.

The magazine’s structure and overall visual appeal recall *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy*, reviving, as a contemporary reviewer finds, ‘[v]ery much ‘the *Savoy*’s atmosphere of artistic naughtiness’.¹⁰⁴ However, *The Gypsy* offers its readers ‘naughtiness’ with a political edge. Its explicitly graphic violence and grotesqueness is directly inspired by the omnipresent military conflict. Its frivolous ‘Easternness’ (visualized by severed heads, Oriental fans and palaces, bejewelled, turbaned figures wearing harem pants), relates to its programmatic title. The magazine *The Gypsy* as well as the artistic trope of the Gypsy stands as the eternal Eastern constant in times of tumultuous modernity.

In comparison to contemporary Modernist magazines such as *BLAST* (1914–1915) or Ford Madox Ford’s transitory *The English Review* (1908–1937), *The Gypsy* does not identify itself as Modernist. A more appropriate term is post-1890s Decadent. As a representative of the new generation of avant-garde writers Pound leaves no doubt about the magazine’s intellectual parentage. He is not convinced of its contradictory ambition of trying to debate timely politics, while looking backwards to the 1890s. Pound is however right to describe the discrepancy between its purist intentions and the actual format of the journal. The reader of *The Gypsy* witnesses the swan-song nostalgia of the 1890s which William Orlo saw as ‘comfortably dead and

¹⁰³ Charles Baudelaire, ‘Gypsies Travelling’, in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33.

¹⁰⁴ [Anon.], ‘Review’, *TLS*, 20 May 1915, p. 171.

buried'.¹⁰⁵ As the reviewer of the *New Age* finds, *The Gypsy* produces 'style in the manner, let us say, of Pater or of the writers of the 'Gypsy'-style, that is, without any matter at all.' The *Times Literary Supplement* finds that:

Those who are old enough to remember *The Savoy* will feel at home with *The Gypsy* a new quarterly magazine of pictures and literature. [...] there are poems about courtesans, and strange pictures with a good deal of the nude in them, and an 'impression' of Baudelaire and a paper on the beneficent effects of drugs and whisky. Even some of the old names reappear – Arthur Seymons [*sic*] and Richard Le Gallienne. But those who are old enough to remember *The Savoy* will vow that Beardsley was an artist with a subtler imagination than this violent and various Mr. Allan [*sic*] Odle, who flings his riotous brutalities so hotly upon so many of its pages [...]; and the literary matter includes an interesting essay by Mr. Edmund Gosse on the 17th and 20th Simplicissimus; a charming poem by Mr. Walter de la Mare, and a poem and some letters of Richard Middleton.¹⁰⁶

The paratextual materials accompanying the Bodleian's copies of No 1 and 2 give insight into the production of the magazine, which was hampered by historical circumstance. Founding member Townley Searle, who was married to a Romani woman, was an ardent Gypsiologist of the GLS. His 'Gipsy [*sic*] Club' formed the core of the Pomegranate Press, respectively the Gypsy Press, located in 8 and 9 St. James' Market from where *The Gypsy* was first published in 1915. Martin Steenson, the biographer of Odle, reconstructs the conditions of the publication and the press:

The financial state of the operation was previously precarious, however, for the second (and last) number was not issued until May 1916 and then under a different imprint, that of the Gypsy Press, [...] in Dublin, whither Townley Searle had fled to avoid conscription. [...] The prospectus for the Gypsy Press lists, as 'In the Press', a new edition of Henry Savage's *Escapes and Escapades* with a frontis by Odle, and African Fairy tales re-told by Odette St Lys' neither of which were published.¹⁰⁷

The biographer of Odle's wife, Dorothy Richardson, describes the establishment of *The Gypsy* as follows:

¹⁰⁵ Orlo Williams, 'The Yellow Book', *London Mercury*, 2:11 (1920), 567–77 (p. 567).

¹⁰⁶ [Anon.], 'Review', *TLS*, 20 May 1915, p. 171.

¹⁰⁷ Martin Steenson, *The Life and Work of Alan Odle* (Stroud: Books & Things, 2012), p. 13.

Some time before the war, he [Searle] and [T. W. H.] Crosland, with Allan [*sic*] Odle and Henry Savage, had formed the Gipsy Club, out of which a few years later came the magazine. [...] Before the war and during its first year or so, the quartet of friends [...] could often be found on the first floor of the old Apple Market, off Piccadilly Circus, where they had tumbledown offices. They were thus not very far from the Café Royal or, for that matter, from Soho.¹⁰⁸

Searle's flight to Dublin explains the press's two locations in Dublin and London. The Bodleian's copy of issue No 2 contains a separate notice from 1 May 1916 supporting this theory. Coinciding with the tellingly anti-colonial independence efforts by the republican Irish national forces in the Easter Risings in 1916, the editor apologizes to the reader that 'owing to the rebellion in Dublin, the Editor asks the indulgence of his readers for the cover and 'make-up' of the present number, the Dublin house of the Gypsy Press being situated in the heart of the affected area.'¹⁰⁹ Despite its purely aesthetic ambition as stated in the editorial, political conflict is fundamental to the publication history of this journal.

In an analogy to real threats of 'extinction' faced by Romani communities at that time, a public funding request further underlines just how severely *The Gypsy's* literary existence was encroached by political conflict:

In presenting the second number of 'The Gypsy,' the proprietors of the Gypsy Press, who have taken over the late Pomegranate Press, make known to their subscribers and to those readers who have shown keen interest in this new literary and artistic venture their desire to place the publication on a firmer financial basis. The unprecedented increase in the cost of production, the scarcity of paper, and consequent necessity of making heavy purchases in advance, coupled with the lamentable events in Dublin. Where the premises of the Gypsy Press are situated in the very heart of the affected area; all this is a sudden and heavy strain upon a small capital. An additional £100 – which would mean no more than 20 subscribers of £5 each – will provide sufficient additional capital. The proprietors of the Gypsy Press, therefore, encouraged by the many expressions of goodwill received at the reappearance of 'The Gypsy,' venture to invite the co-operation of subscribers and others to tide them over a difficult time.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ Gloria Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson – A Biography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp. 89–90.

¹⁰⁹ Inlay note, *The Gypsy*, 2 (1916).

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Alan Odle's Beardsleyesque Orientalism in *The Gypsy*

The violent interactions between politics and art expressed in the journal's paratexts are strikingly captured in Alan Odle's illustrations. His Beardsleyesque black-and-white ink designs radicalize and innovate the political implications of the periodical. Visually playing with the Decadent connotations of Eastern allure, his illustrations deliver 'an epic aside' in addition to the literary pieces.¹¹¹ Odle's work, often described as the 'missing link' between Beardsley and the Surrealists, takes Beardsley's subversiveness of implied homoeroticism and witty Decadent playfulness further towards a visual political statement. By situating the drawings in Oriental contexts, Odle exposes the brutality of current events. The East and grotesque satire become two defining elements of his Decadent visuals.

Today Odle is mostly remembered in conjunction with his wife and Modernist novelist Dorothy Richardson. He was born in 1888, and trained as an illustrator first in Canterbury and London at St John's Wood School of Art. Like Symons, he drew inspiration from low-life entertainments. He lists Lord George Sanger's Circus, social satirist Honoré Daumier and literature by Rabelais and Blake as 'decisive events' in his life and 'helpful friends'¹¹² throughout his career. In a letter to John Lane, in which he unsuccessfully offers his Rabelais designs for publication, Odle mentions further authors of interest amongst them 'Grimms Fairy tales, Flaubert's short stories, [...] Balzac's *Contes Drolatiques*.'¹¹³ Like the Symonses, the Odles commuted between

¹¹¹ John Austen, *The ABC of Pen and Ink Rendering* (London: Isaac Pitman, 1937), p. 42.

¹¹² Austen, p. 43; Steenson, p. 16.

¹¹³ Alan Odle to John Lane, 18 February 1919, reprinted in *The Life and Work of Alan Odle*, p. 68.

Cornwall and London due to financial difficulties, where they socialized with Ford Madox Ford, Violet Hunt and Symons's friends Havelock Ellis and Joseph Conrad.

As an artist he received commissions to produce illustrations for the New York *Vanity Fair* and the short-lived periodical *The Golden Hind* among other smaller commissions. His works were shown to the public in an exhibition with fellow artists Harry Clarke and John Austen in May 1925 at the St. George's Gallery.¹¹⁴ In keeping with the Decadent lifestyle Odle was a heavy drinker and insisted on wearing 'his usual shabby velvet jacket, with a large black bow at the throat. [...] His long bony hands, their tapering accentuated by half inch long nails, impossible to keep clean [...]', which earned him the nickname 'Prince of Bohemia'.¹¹⁵ Rose Odle, his sister in law, recalls his appearance being a 'constant eyesore to his father', a bank manager. He identified with the Decadents through his fascination with '[t]he exotic and macabre – Poe, Baudelaire, Beardsley were their current gods, and *The Yellow Book* their Bible'.¹¹⁶

Odle was part of Symons's circle frequenting 'The Crab-tree Club' set up as a nightclub by Augustus John in 1914 at the Café Royal, which hosted a famous lineage of artistic visitors from Wilde to Sickert. It continued to be home to various artistic circles well into the twentieth century.¹¹⁷ This bohemian institution, 'a kaleidoscope of celebrities' as described in a 1915 issue of *The Colour* magazine by M. J. Woddis, also hosted *The Gypsy* collective 'under the able guidance of Mr Savage, the editor of the *Gypsy*. A frequent companion of his is Mr Allan [*sic*] Odle his art editor, who sits in a

¹¹⁴ H. B. G. 'An Exhibition by Three Book Illustrators', *The Studio*, 386 (1925), 260–63 (p. 261).

¹¹⁵ Rose Odle, *Salt of Our Youth* (Penzance: Wordens of Cornwall, 1972), p. 109; p. 122.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

¹¹⁷ Guy Deghy and Keith Waterhouse devoted a whole book to the history of the café as metropolitan meeting point of the cosmopolitan avant-garde: *Café Royal: Ninety Years of Bohemia* (London: Hutchinson, 1955).

prosaic bowler hat and black gloves, in profound sphinx-like slumber [...].¹¹⁸ A reviewer for *The Observer* visiting an exhibition at the Bruton Galleries in 1919, sums up man and work as ‘extravagantly original. If he recalls now Albrecht Durer, now Aubrey Beardsley, there is never a hint of conscious imitation. [...] His extravaganzas are so steeped in grotesque coarseness that they would be intolerable were it not for the entrancing beauty of his pen-broidery with its easy flowing, swinging rhythm and sensuous richness.’¹¹⁹

John Austen, Odle’s friend and one of the few peers to honour his extraordinary talent (he is ‘the world’s supreme master of the pen’)¹²⁰ described Odle’s style as ‘emotional, wayward, and dictated by his restless imagination’.¹²¹ *The Studio* commends Odle for his ‘elaboration of weird and strangely attractive motives’,¹²² a description which echoes Symons’s response to the East. Austen draws on a comparison full of Eastern metaphors to praise Odle’s ability to communicate with the viewer of his works through innovating bygone traditions:

All art, even the latest and most abstract, tells a story. A draughtsman cannot make a mark on paper without telling some tale. [...] He simply can’t escape the story. ‘Nothing new under the sun,’ said Solomon: and the Egyptians who decorated their temples with symbols and abstractions were, I dare say, merely repeating the manner of some previous outmoded civilization. All modes are imitations of, or derivations from, other modes.¹²³

Austen does not tire of emphasising the rhythm of Odle’s lines, which are echoed by Marina Warner’s definition of the arabesque. She contrasts ‘Hogarth’s “line of beauty” and its sinuous symmetry’ with the arabesque, which ‘intrinsically involves a pattern

¹¹⁸ Steenson, p. 13. Fromm gives more details on the significance of the café in *Dorothy Richardson – A Biography*, p. 88.

¹¹⁹ Steenson, p. 137. Rose Odle recalls the exhibition to have been in 1916, p. 125.

¹²⁰ Austen, p. 42.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹²² H. B. G., 261.

¹²³ Austen, p. 69.

efflorescing on all sides'.¹²⁴ Austen quotes Odle highlighting the kinetic qualities of his own work: “in drawings containing a great deal of concentrated ornament, I frequently leave the more elaborate parts blank, only outlining the forms, preferring to invent with the pen as I go, and encouraging the design to throw up the kind of detail that would emerge most naturally from its forms”.¹²⁵ Even the process of illustration becomes a flâneurial event, in which the illustrator captures the spontaneity of the line in an adventurous discovery of the page.

In his illustrations for *The Gypsy* Odle combines Decadent beauty and political satire. The reader cannot ignore the ‘vital power of his arabesque’.¹²⁶ Fromm explains this observation further:

the magazine was saturated with Allan [*sic*] Odle. With every stroke of the pen, he revealed that though he subscribed to the view of art expressed in the foreword [to *The Gypsy*] (which he had no doubt helped to write) and was not concerned with the fate of nations, he was positively obsessed with the fate of mankind. As he saw them, human beings had little to hope for in the face of their own cruelty, vanity, and grossness. [...] The first impression one has of an Odle drawing [...] is of bestiality, ugliness and violence leap out at the viewer. But by degrees, as one moves through the hectic scene, the first impression gives way to an understanding of an absolutely controlled and literary nightmare. [...] The comparison with Beardsley had to be made, given their strange appearance and art [...] Beardsley was at heart an ironist with a brilliant sense of life as decorative fantasy. Allan Odle was satirist with an eye fixed unblinkingly on man. In Beardsley’s designs the details are often *things* mockingly conceived and executed; in Odle’s they are nearly always human (or inhuman) figures.¹²⁷

In addition, Steenson points towards the ‘oriental feel’ of Odle’s drawings ‘often with turbaned men and exotic women. Some were more macabre – skulls, serpents, and

¹²⁴ Warner, p. 7.

¹²⁵ Austen does not provide a source for this passage. Most of Odle’s correspondence is believed to be lost. Some manuscripts by Odle are housed at the Paterno Library, University of Pennsylvania: ‘A Lecture on Humour’; ‘Rabelais and His Modern Readers’; ‘The Man Who Killed Time’; and ‘The House of Clothes’. See Austen, pp. 45–46.

¹²⁶ P. Konody, ‘Drawing & Design’, in *The Life and Work of Alan Odle*, p. 21.

¹²⁷ Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson – A Biography*, pp. 92–93. Like Steenson, Fromm does not provide a scholarly apparatus.

demons all start to appear'.¹²⁸ Odle's fascination with dissections, the grotesque, and mobility of line are reminiscent of Beardsley's *Salome* and Ricketts's fragmented Sphinxes.

Linda Zatlin observes how the study of Japanese art allowed Beardsley to experiment with Victorian conventions of national identity, sexuality and gender.¹²⁹ In a similar way, Odle's artistic wanderings towards the Middle East explore the East as a space of political confrontation (figs. 10, 11). Zatlin notes that 'Beardsley rebelled against certain aspects of late-Victorian xenophobia. The success of British imperialism had reinforced the myth of British cultural and racial superiority and predisposed the British middle class towards patronizing foreign cultures'.¹³⁰ Beardsley's critics used Darwinian language to critique his renderings of the human subject, as for example in reaction to *The Wagnerites* (1894). Odle's exaggeration of primitivist and racial Darwinist stereotypes puts forward a similar implied critique of post-Victorian anxieties. By orientalizing his illustrations Odle provokes political discourse on the dangers of affiliation with 'the other', degeneration of race and gender.

The reviews of the first volume reflect Odle's provocative potential. Much like Symons's travelogue and his article in defence of the Gypsies, the reader is challenged to take a position. Odle himself confesses that as the design is almost finished it gains 'an organic life of its own [...] a point is reached where detachment is no longer possible'.¹³¹ The *Observer* states that the magazine deserves 'credit for revealing to the world an artist of unquestionable genius', the *Daily Mirror* finding Odle's designs

¹²⁸ Steenson, p. 102.

¹²⁹ Zatlin, p. 2.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Austen, pp. 46–47.

‘certainly very startling’, and the *Daily News* remarking upon the ‘[d]aring and artistic pictures’.¹³²

Odle addresses the problematic representation of the East as a female, eroticized object of scientific examination strapped to the cultural dissection table. The inner frontispiece for *The Gypsy*’s first volume shows a bound dark-haired, dark-eyed woman in an overtly pornographic pose. Like Salome, her gaze is challenging the reader yet her arms are strapped behind her head, and her body is defencelessly exposed to the onlooker. Scrutinizing the female figure with magnifying glasses are three baboon-faced turbaned pseudo-scientists. Odle visualizes the act of observation and exhibition of the allegorical sexualized East encountered in Symons’s travelogue depicting the Gypsies and Wilde’s play *Salome*, in which, as we have seen, bodies are referred to as and dissected into objects. The severed head, as a sign of the objectified East in *Decadence* by Wilde and Beardsley (fig. 10), reappears in Odle’s designs. Yet in his depiction, several heads are used as juggling balls (fig. 11). The East in Odle’s drawing is presented in Said’s words as a ‘stage affixed to Europe’. It has become the plaything of the European forces at war.

¹³² Fromm wrongly accredits Odle’s illustrations to an 1910 edition of Wilde’s *The Sphinx*: ‘The first issue of *The Gypsy*, which appeared in May 1915, contained more of his work than had ever been produced before. (A tiny edition of Wilde’s *The Sphinx*, which he had illustrated five years earlier, went almost unnoticed).’ Steenson notes that ‘I can find no trace of this’, p. 12. Archivists at the Robert Ross Memorial Collection, University College Oxford, are unaware of the existence of this edition. See Fromm, *Dorothy Richardson – A Biography*, p. 92;

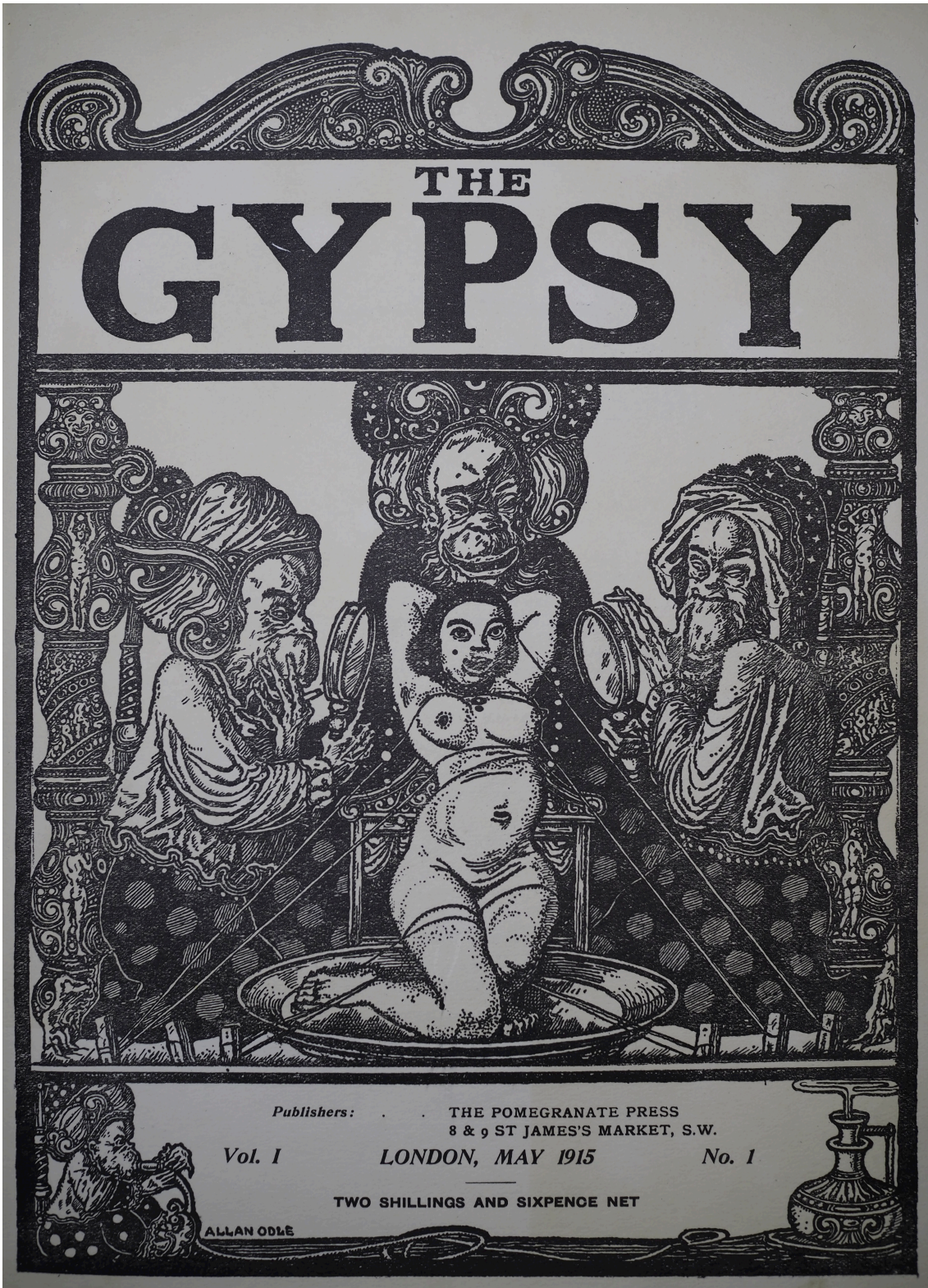


Fig. 9 Alan Odle, 'Inner Frontispiece', *The Gypsy*, 1 (1915).

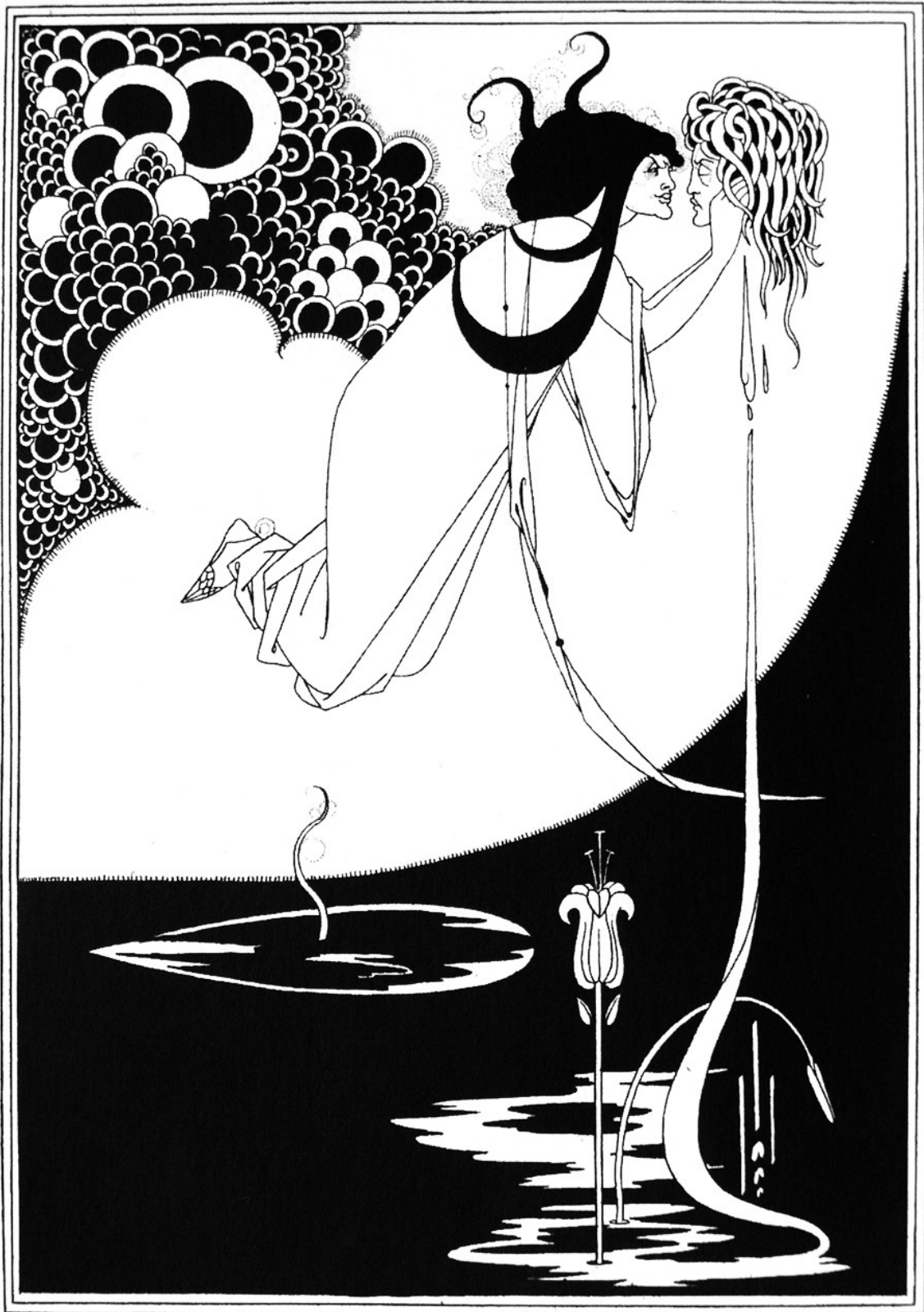


Fig. 10 Aubrey Beardsley, 'The Climax', *The Studio*, 1 (1893).

MAY, 1916

Price 5/- net



Fig. 11 Alan Odle, 'Inner Frontispiece', *The Gypsy*, 2 (1916).

Edmund Gosse's Review of Anglo-German Foreign Policies

Apart from Odle's provocative juxtapositions of Eastern-themed art and violence, Edmund Gosse's article published in *The Gypsy* views the East as the centre of political and artistic interaction. Ives reminds us that the periodical itself is not only a disposable ephemeron, but that 'the historical value of periodicals is unquestionable, and there are any number of scholarly uses to which even the most insignificant-seeming article [...] might someday be put'.¹³³ One such overlooked article is Gosse's essay 'Simplicissimus' on the German satire magazine *Simplicissimus*.¹³⁴ It is no coincidence that Gosse and Symons published their work in the same magazine. Gosse and Symons shared a passion for Eastern themes. In 1895 they introduced Indian poet Sarojini Naidu into English Decadent circles and Symons published Naidu's 'Eastern Dancers' (later renamed 'Indian Dancers') in *The Savoy* in 1896. Gosse and Symons had been corresponding since the early 1890s and after Symons's breakdown in 1908, Gosse secured Symons a grant from the Royal Literary Fund.

Gosse's contribution to *The Gypsy* is interesting because it analysed the national German character through political caricature and satire. The *Pall Mall Gazette's* review of *The Gypsy's* first issue highlights this 'very valuable article on the Munich journal "Simplicissimus"'. In it Gosse explicates Anglo-German tensions in the Middle East during the first years of the First World War. Catherine Brown notes that Egypt became the basis from which British military operations against Ottoman forces were launched:

¹³³ Ives, p. 66.

¹³⁴ Edmund Gosse, 'Simplicissimus', *The Gypsy*, 1 (1915), 20–29. Further references to this article are provided in brackets in the main body of the text.

The Sinai temples of Isis were surrounded by the dismembered bodies not of Osiris, but of English and German soldiers.¹³⁵

Gosse reviews the German magazine's satirical illustrations of English foreign policies in Egypt. It is remarkable that Gosse was able to obtain a copy of *Simplicissimus* as foreign circulation of the paper was restricted. Gosse opens his article by provokingly challenging the censorship to have made it 'impossible to get sight of German papers' with the fatal consequence that this measure 'prevented English eyes from resting on the extraordinary emanations of German periodical art at the moment that the ripe bud of "militarism" burst into blossom' (20). Breaking with this 'cessation of all traffic in periodicals between Germany and the Allies', Gosse explores *Simplicissimus*, this 'all-powerful Bavarian newspaper' (21) as a medium of national characterization 'throw[ing] a very interesting light upon the temper of the nations which they illustrate' (20). Gosse's writing refers to numbers appearing between May and October 1914 that repeatedly satirized England's self-understanding as world power (he implicitly refers to Heft 22, 1 September 1914). The issues also advocated an Arab resistance with ensuing detrimental effects for British foreign policies in opposition to the German alliance with the Ottoman forces.

The weekly journal had its first publication four years later than Stefan George's Symbolist journal *Blätter für die Kunst* (1892) and appeared in the same year as Albert Langen's *Jugend* (1896). It continued to appear until 1970 with several intervals and changing titles and during its lifetime featured all-important German and Austrian literati and avant-garde theorists from Frank Wedekind, Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Rainer Maria Rilke, Robert Walser, Otto Julius Bierbaum, Richard Dehmel, Hermann

¹³⁵ Catherine Brown, 'Anglo-German Relations and D. H. Lawrence's "All of Us"', lecture 11 September 2014, <<http://catherinebrown.org/anglo-german-relations-and-d-h-lawrences-all-of-us/>>, [accessed: 14/04/2015].

Hesse, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, and Karl Kraus. While Scheerbart submitted his own work to be published, George's persona was frequently debated in the *Simplicissimus*.¹³⁶ Deriving its name from yet another outsider figure and variation on the Gypsy, the 'vagabond soldier' (23) taken from the seventeenth-century epic *Der Abentheuerliche Simplicissimus Teutsch* (1668), the magazine thrived beyond its national boundaries.

While commenting on parallels between Grimmelshausen's work dealing with the commotions of the Thirty Year's War and world politics in 1915, Gosse singles out the Munich-based publication for its 'daring, originality and real satiric power [...] leaving a very extraordinary effect upon the mind' (20). By accrediting a periodical run by the enemy and known for its offensive satire of English foreign policy, Gosse clearly makes use of his right as artist as stated in the *The Gypsy's* manifesto: he elevates artistic matters over political segregation. Again, the East and Oriental images play a key role in this transgression. Comparing the reading of the *Simplicissimus* to the 'admiration or repulsion' when watching 'great poison snakes [...] coiling their red, black and yellow bodies [...] in the sunlight' (21) recalls Symons's sensations when walking through Constantinople captured in 'brilliant and detestable conceptions' (23) typically ascribed to the East. The journal in itself becomes an Orientalized trope a 'beautiful king cobra or venomous *elaps*' (21) whose 'dreadful ability' (21) is not to be underrated.

Despite paying fair tribute to the 'sheer artistic ability' of the *Simplicissimus*, Gosse stereotypes the Germans as the humourless Easterners ('No touch of humour softens the violence of the invective, no laughter turns off the edge of the attack' (21)).

¹³⁶ Further information on the *Simplicissimus* and archived issues can be found on the website of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft and the Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach: <<http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=9>> [accessed: 15/03/2017].

Their art is, ‘in its purely murderous objective, sharpened and polished with the purpose of killing’ (21). Analogous to Symons’s negative experience of Germany when travelling to Berlin in 1891, the ‘arrogance of the Teutonic nations’ (21) is equated with the barbarous Easterners and their ‘fondness of gore, the devilish obsession of torture’ (21). Gosse, clearly fascinated by what he identifies as Teutonic impetus, spends the first part of his essay describing the ‘savage cartoons’ bitterly polemicizing the course of the war. John Bull, Britannia and London Bridge are allegorical targets of this satirical assault from the Teutonic savage East. In spite of Gosse’s disapproval of German politics, he acknowledged the Wildean cosmopolitan supremacy of art: the contents of the cartoons stand in ‘strange and sinister contrast with the beauty and power of the designs’ (21). As in Symons’s article, European politics are negotiated via the East and Decadent art.

Gosse reviews the illustration in figure twelve, entitled ‘The Englishman and his globe. Oh damn, blood is more slithery than water after all!’ soberly: ‘England, a despicable and craven figure, hangs precariously to a huge crimson globe, that drips with gouts of blood, and reels to its destiny against a coal-black sky’ (22). Gosse does not comment on the provocative subtitle which plays on the idiom ‘Blut ist dicker als Wasser’ [Blood is thicker than water] suggesting that English imperial ambitions were in fact deeply intertwined with Germany’s. The blood ties of European nations, which were reinforced in a *fin-de-siècle* cosmopolitanism, did not stop them engaging in a brotherly war at the beginning of the twentieth century. The allegory of Britain’s imperialism, with its right hand clutching Germany and with its left Egypt (fig. 12) is depicted as scrupulous in showing no hesitancy when it comes to plunging its own ‘relatives’, the Germans, into destruction and a global decadence of civilization.

Germany's premature confidence in winning the war, according to Gosse, was 'shown in nothing so preposterously as in the cartoons about Turkey' (22). He describes the effect of a cartoon in the issue of 29 September 1914 (fig. 13):

[t]he cafés of Munich were comforted by a really superb plate of the East rising unanimously, in a whirl of purple storm, to overwhelm the cowering English soldiery in Egypt. In perhaps the finest design of all, on a sky of primrose-coloured twilight, the hand of Islam, grasping the blood-red scimitar, is seen rising behind the Great Pyramid, and threatening a wretched life-guardsmen, who huddles for shelter in the shadow of the Sphinx. (22)

München, 13. Oktober 1914

Preis 30 Pfg.

19. Jahrgang Nr. 28

SIMPLICISSIMUS

Abonnement vierteljährlich 3 Mk. 60 Pfg.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Begründet von Albert Langen und Th. Th. Heine

In Österreich-Ungarn vierteljährlich K 4.4
Copyright 1914 by Simplicissimus-Verlag G. m. b. H. & Co., München

Der Engländer und seine Weltkugel

(Th. Th. Heine)



„Oh verflucht, Blut ist doch schlüpfriger als Wasser!“

Fig. 12 Thomas Theodor Heine, 'Der Engländer und seine Weltkugel', subtitled 'Oh verflucht, Blut ist doch schlüpfriger als Wasser!', *Simplicissimus*, 19:28 (1914).

München, 29. September 1914

Preis 30 Pfg.

19. Jahrgang Nr. 26

SIMPLICISSIMUS

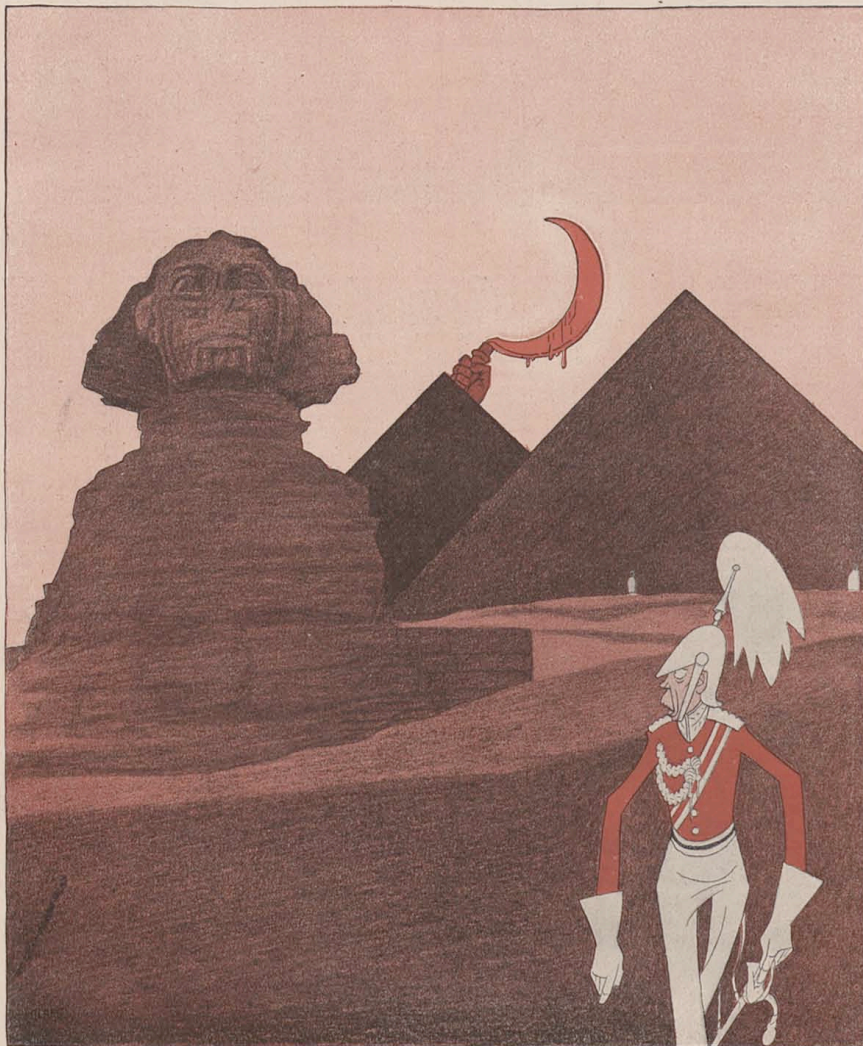
Abonnement vierteljährlich 3 Mk. 60 Pfg.
Alle Rechte vorbehalten

Begründet von Albert Langen und Th. Th. Weise

In Österreich-Ungarn vierteljährlich K 4.40
Copyright 1914 by Simplicissimus-Verlag G.m.b.H. & Co., München

England und der Islam

Zeichnung von D. Gulbrandsen



„Ich fürchte, das Wetter ändert sich! Der Mond sieht bedenklich aus!“

Fig. 13 Olaf Gulbrandsen, 'England und der Islam' subtitled 'Ich fürchte, das Wetter ändert sich! Der Mond sieht bedenklich aus!', *Simplicissimus*, 19:26 (1914).

Referring to the periodical's name and its eponym, Gosse concludes that the savage character of the German race never seems to have changed since the seventeenth century, more precisely since the Thirty Years' War (1618–1648), which serves as backdrop to Grimmelshausen's novel:

We see for ourselves, almost as though we were spectators or victims, how the whole civic life of Germany was crippled by these violent and senseless dissensions, and by the strange element of perfidy and savagery which permeated the entire nation, from its electors and princes palatine down to its grooms and *landknechts* [lansquenet]. We can but consider, with amazement, how little the course of the centuries and the abundance of instruction has been able to modify the essential character of the German. (26)

In this passage, Gosse demonstrates the flexibility of the East in what he calls 'elasticity of human nature' (26). Gosse concludes by criticising the magazine's inconsistency in not pursuing the same literary agenda as its namesake:

in adopting to itself the name of the hero of *Simplicissimus*, [the satiric sheet of the Bavarians] makes no effort to reproduce the characteristics of that adventurer [...] The Munich newspaper would doubtless have enjoyed no success under the ineffective title of 'Oliver', but it would have been more consistent with the story than its present one. [...] A handsome world it is which this romance of German ruthlessness displays before us, and a scene worthy of some reflection in these critical days. (28–29)

Whilst attempting to uphold a cosmopolitan ideal of a universal art 'more important than fate of nations', *The Gypsy* is reflective of the climate of nationalism pervading the early decades of the twentieth century. Symons's nostalgic view of the Gypsy as a cosmopolitan figure representative of a primitivist and sensual Decadence is displaced in the conflicts of modernity. The East has turned into a battlefield of imperial national competition. Literary Decadence adopts the format of political journalism that challenges its artistic nineteenth-century roots. *The Gypsy* did not survive the war. However this little Orientalized magazine had a vital role as the communicator between the imagined East and British artists, as well as between the arts in England and Germany. It also positioned post-1890s Decadent aesthetics in a Modernist framework.

Conclusion

This chapter examined how the East, through an identification with the Gypsy and Decadent Bohemianism, becomes a vehicle with which Symons formulated a political argument 'against civilisation' in the early twentieth century. Symons's Gypsyism provided a means to interrogate the identity and cultural politics of Decadence. Increasingly this personal search finds political expression in Symons's writing. Symons's post-1900 writings generated a journalistic interaction between Decadence and political agendas long seen as programmatically in opposition: by 1908, Symons wrote not like Huysmans and Wilde 'against nature' but 'against civilisation'. As a result, late nineteenth-century and early-Modernist Gypsyism enabled Symons and many of his fellow writers and artists to reflect on the link between past and present, establishment and counterculture and cosmopolitan exchange versus national classification.

In contrast to Wilde's monumental East, Symons's kaleidoscopic vision of the East allows for an ever-changing, ephemeral image of the East. Symons's dialectic response towards the Eastern cities, which are at once attractive and repulsive, is captured by a constant experimentation of styles in his travelogue. Symons's ambivalent attitude towards the figure of the Gypsy, in which the Gypsy is both lauded and racially prejudged, tells us about the universal importance of the Gypsy as trope of opposition for nineteenth-century avant-gardes in general. What is more, for Symons, writing the Gypsy in the early twentieth century means the recovery of his Decadent past. Decadence and Orientalism help to define a cultural home outside societal restriction and beyond the nation. Symons's article 'In Praise of Gypsies' and his membership of the GLS are testimony to his understanding of Decadent cosmopolitanism as a form of

auto-exoticism. Motivated by his restless anthropological interest in Romani cultures, Symons's recovery of a post-Romantic Decadence therefore prefigures the Orientalist discourses which Said criticized.

In attempting a re-positioning of Decadence in Modernism, *The Gypsy's* decisive appeal to resurrect the 'art of knowing how to be / Part lewd, aesthetical in part, / And *fin de siècle* essentially', stresses the vital importance of artistic and political interaction which Symons envisioned through his Gypsyism. Odle's drawings and Gosse's review clearly demonstrate the way in which artistic representations of the East were used to provoke political discussion. The East and Decadence become shields of resistance against a modern world in disarray. In the midst of the First World War, in which Britain and its North African colony Egypt were pitted as enemies against Wilhelmine Germany and its Ottoman alliance in Turkey, the exaltation of art above global politics challenged a radical manifestation of politics in post-1890s Decadent prose writing and journalism. However, considering German Decadence, the East – while still in response to the war – assumes a function beyond that of opposition. Moreover, it presents a utopian draft of a cosmopolitan society based on ancient Eastern principles, as I move on to examine in the next chapter of this thesis.

III. 'Feeling Oriental': Literary *Anti-Europäertum* in the Decadent Works of Paul Scheerbart

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, the way Egypt and Syria were actual for Chateaubriand, Lane, Lamartine, Burton, Disraeli, or Nerval.¹

Edward Said, *Orientalism*

Introduction

In an autobiographical note from 1904 Paul Scheerbart encapsulates the Decadent attitude towards the East–West dichotomy that Said defined in his benchmark work

Orientalism:

Hellenisch habe ich niemals empfunden – wohl aber orientalisches – der Orient war eben den Göttern und Ungeheuern näher als den 'Menschen' – mir gings ebenso. Und deshalb wars mir höchst peinlich, daß ich am 8. Januar 1863 post Christum natum in meiner sogenannten Vaterstadt Danzig geboren wurde – als Landsmann des trübsinnigen Schopenhauer.²

[I never felt Hellenic – but most certainly Oriental – the East was simply closer to the gods and monsters than to 'humankind' – that was just how I felt. That is the reason why I was most embarrassed to be born on 8 January 1863 post Christum natum in my so-called hometown Danzig – as a compatriot of the funereal Schopenhauer.]

Scheerbart's resentment at being born into a pessimistic German nation, and his satirical comment on the circumstance, make him a useful case study for the relationship between German Decadence and the East. Scheerbart (1863–1915), who also published under the pseudonym Kuno Küfer, is often discussed as an architectural theorist and Surrealist or Expressionist writer of fantastic literature, but rarely as a literary figure and Orientalist who helped to shape the face of German Decadence through his engagement

¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 19.

² Paul Scheerbart, 'Autobiographisches', in *Paul Scheerbart – Bibliographie mit einer Autobiographie des Dichters*, ed. by Kurt Lubasch und Alfred Richard Meyer (Berlin: Privatdruck, 1930), pp. 14–15.

with the ancient Orient. Scholarly interest in German literary Orientalism has augmented since the 1980s with a renewed focus on its Romantic heritage, and on Goethe's *Der West-Östliche Divan* (1814–1819).³ However, little attention has been paid to the importance of the East for German Decadent writing.⁴ While the travel writing of literary figures and media coverage on the Middle East in the modern era has been treated in recent studies,⁵ the Decadent East has been omitted from this discussion.

Two Oriental phases define Scheerbart's development as a Decadent author, the first at the beginning of his writing career (1894–1897), and the second towards the end (1910–1911). Scheerbart was convinced that '[d]er Orient muss den Europäern stets zum Muster dienen' [the Orient must always serve as an example to the Europeans].⁶ Scheerbart's East is a means of criticizing European progress, or, from Scheerbart's point of view, the cultural decay of Europe. Hellmut Draws-Tychsen, Scheerbart's literary executor, recapitulates Scheerbart's elective affinity with Islamic culture: 'arabisch und niemals statisch humanistisch war die gesamte Weltanschauung unseres Dichters zeitlebens ausgerichtet' [all his life our poet's world view was Arabic and never statically humanist].⁷ Scheerbart confirms that view in an autobiographical note: 'im Jahre 1884 [kam] der Übergang zur Kunst, die mit einer Leidenschaft für die

³ Despite its Orientalism, Goethe's work is regarded as a seminal collection of poems in which East and West meet on equal terms. See Fuchs-Sumiyoshi (1984), Mommsen ([1988] 2014), Polaschegg (2005), Wokoeck (2009).

⁴ The focus of discussions of Orientalism and German-speaking literary Decadence are limited to Hugo von Hofmannsthal and Else Lasker-Schüler, see Fuchs-Sumiyoshi, chapter six and Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonismus und Moderne*, chapter three (Hofmannsthal) and four (Lasker-Schüler); Lemon chapter one (Hofmannsthal), chapter two (Musil), chapters three and four (Kafka).

⁵ Scheerbart's work is briefly mentioned in Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East*, p. 172.

⁶ Paul Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden – Arabischer Haremsroman*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1992), p. 101.

⁷ Hellmut Draws-Tychsen, 'Zum Gedächtnis von Paul Scheerbart', in *Über Paul Scheerbart I – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. I: Einführungen, Vorworte, Nachworte*, ed. by Berni Lörwald and Michael M. Schardt (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1992), pp. 20–25 (p. 22).

Orientalistik die erste farbenfreudige Basis erhielt' [in 1884 I made the transition to art to which a passion for Orientalism gave a first colourful basis].⁸

The Decadent East in Paul Scheerbart's writing provides both a source of apprehension and a source of inspiration. Scheerbart's work is remarkable because it consciously exploits the historic notion of a threatening Orient in order to expose European anxieties about Europe's own cultural decay. Walter Benjamin recognized Scheerbart's ability to describe the fear of decay of Western culture and humanist values, which coloured the cultural climate at the turn of the century: '[People] have "devoured" everything, both "culture and people", and they have had such a surfeit that it has exhausted them. No one feels more caught out than they by Scheerbart's words: "You are all so tired, just because you have failed to concentrate your thoughts on a simple but ambitious plan"'.⁹ Similar to Symons, Scheerbart's 'simple but ambitious plan' refers to the detrimental effects of modernity and consumerism on the senses. Scheerbart's writing responded to the supposed decay of civilization with a form of inverse literary Orientalism. In contrast to Wilde's and Symons's writings, Scheerbart's Decadence contains the appraisal of the East's achievements on the one hand and the uncovering of Europe's cultural arrogance through irony on the other.

For Scheerbart the grand, global, cosmopolitan and indeed universal plan to remedy Europe's fatigue finds its origins therefore in the East. In his prose and dramatic writings on the ancient Orient, more specifically on Assyrian and Babylonian art

⁸ Scheerbart, 'Autobiographische Notiz', in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.1.*, ed. by Thomas Bürk, Joachim Körber, Ulrich Kohnle (Linkenheim: Edition Phantasia, 1986), pp. 314–315 (314). Rausch speculates that Scheerbart's 'passion for the Orient' must have originated whilst studying in Leipzig. At the time writer Georg Moritz Ebers was an Egyptologist at the university. Mechthild Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall – Paul Scheerbarts Anfangsjahre 1863–1895* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1997), p. 73.

⁹ Walter Benjamin, 'Experience and Poverty', in *Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 2: 1931–1934*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 731–36 (p. 734).

history, the East presents an alternative image to a disintegrating modernity and the increasing emphasis on nationalism. As a leitmotif, the East pervades not only Scheerbart's fictional work but also his theoretical writings and journalistic output. This chapter examines Scheerbart's twofold usage of the East: his Decadent Orientalism represents a dystopian critique of (and a flight from) Wilhelmine Germany, while his later Modernist Orientalism is a constructive, utopian response.

Other than Scheerbart's writings on architecture, his profile as a cultural critic and Orientalist and, as I argue, Decadent author, are largely forgotten.¹⁰ Scheerbart was a keen Orientalist, astronomer, phantasmagorical poet and playwright, journalist and illustrator associated with the Berlin Bohème around 1900. Scheerbart was esteemed by major cultural critics of the twentieth century such as Benjamin who placed him as one of the precursors of Surrealism, which Benjamin saw as 'the last trickle of French decadence'.¹¹

In order to illuminate how German Decadence adapted the East as method and motif, this chapter first gives an overview of the literary scene in Berlin from the 1890s to situate Scheerbart's Orientalist writing in the context of German Decadence.¹² Secondly, it will consider how Scheerbart's aesthetics were influenced by English (Pater and Wilde) and German (Nietzsche) sources. To that end, it analyses aspects of Scheerbart's Orientalist novels *Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin – Ein arabischer Kulturroman* (1897), *Der Tod der Barmekiden – Arabischer Haremsroman* (1897), and *Machtspässe. Arabische Novellen* (1904), and the short story 'Von Leuten, die den

¹⁰ Roland Innerhofer covers some aspects of Scheerbart's Orient in "'Mir ist so Orientalisch zu Muth'" – 1897: Paul Scheerbarts arabische Romane', in *Mit Deutschland um die Welt. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Fremden in der Kolonialzeit*, ed. by Alexander Honold and Klaus R. Scherpe (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), pp. 209–16.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism', *Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 1: 1927–1934*, pp. 207–22 (p. 207).

¹² Sprengel, 'Exotismus bei Paul Scheerbart', p. 201.

Kopf verloren: Palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novelle¹³ taken from the collection of short stories *Der Alte Orient – Kulturnovellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon* (1910–1911). In these examples Scheerbart uses the East to position himself as an ‘Anti-Europäer’ [Anti-European]. While Scheerbart is pessimistic about the state of Europe, he sees Decadence as a renewing force. Thus his Orientalized Decadent writing served to express his political discontent as well as the hope for an invigoration of German culture.

The second half of this chapter considers the East in some of Scheerbart’s journalism. Similar to Wilde, his understanding of the East is shaped by Eastern art history and architecture that he encountered in the museums of Berlin at the time of the ‘Babylon-Boom’. His articles on anti-militarism and his reception of the Arts and Crafts movement in Germany demonstrate, that in an even more radical way than the English Decadents Scheerbart ironized the East in order to mobilise and politicize his readership. His critical works on architecture, most of all *Glasarchitektur* (1914), consider new, cosmopolitan spaces fusing Modernist technology and Eastern craftsmanship. In contrast to Symons, Scheerbart saw technology and progress not in opposition to a primitivist East. In Scheerbart’s view, the advancements of ancient civilizations such as Babylon and Assyria provided the tools that could spark literary, cultural and indeed political innovation in early twentieth-century Europe.

¹³ First published in *Die Aktion*, 13 March 1911, 113–16; reprinted in *Der Alte Orient – Kulturnovellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon* (1910–1911), ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1999), pp. 55–59.

DER STURM

HALBMONATSSCHRIFT FÜR KULTUR UND DIE KÜNSTE

Redaktion und Verlag
Berlin W9/ Potsdamer Straße 134 a

Herausgeber und Schriftleiter
HERWARTH WALDEN

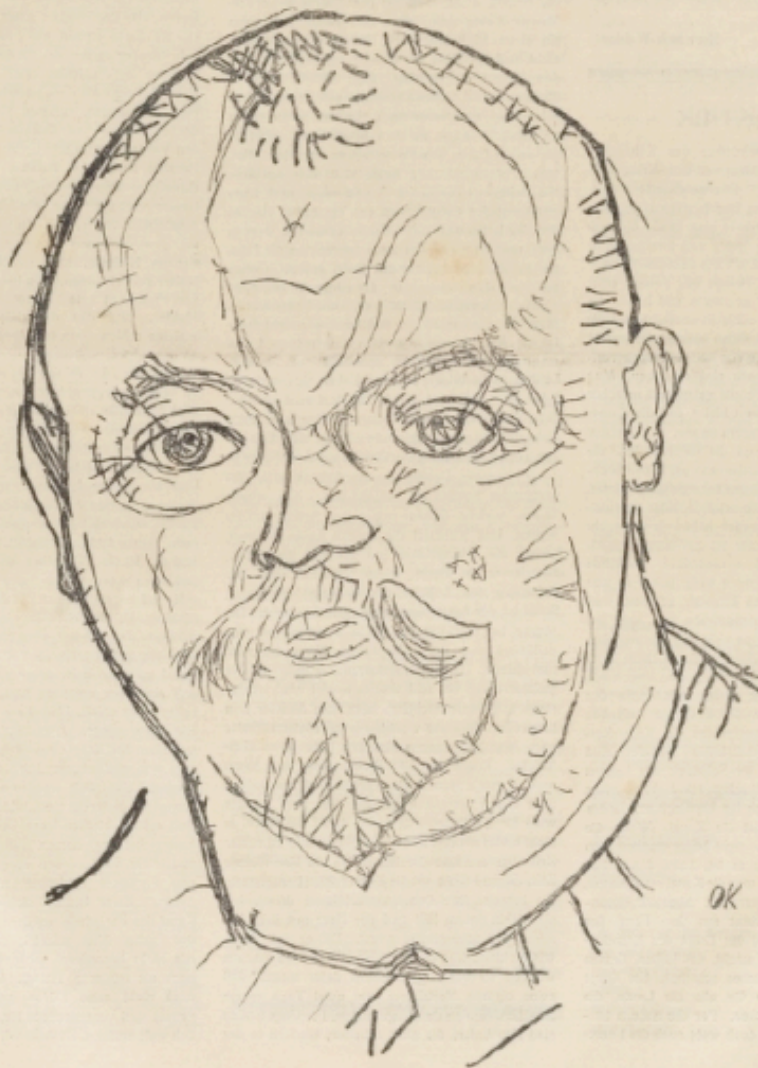
Ausstellungsräume
Berlin W9/ Potsdamer Straße 134 a

SECHSTER JAHRGANG 1915

BERLIN ERSTES UND ZWEITES NOVEMBERHEFT

NUMMER 15/16

Inhalt: Herwarth Walden: Paul Scheerbart / Herwarth Walden: Die fernste Kritik / Sophie van Leer: Gedichte / Kurt Haysicke: Gedichte / S. Friedländer: Nachwals Polach's / Adolf Knoblauch: Frühe Gedichte III / Herwarth Walden: Wichtige Leute / Oskar Kokoschka: Paul Scheerbart / Zeichnung / Jacobs van Honskerck: Holzschnitt / Vom Stock gedruckt / Maria Ulden: Holzschnitt / Vom Stock gedruckt



Paul Scheerbart / gestorben am 13. Oktober 1915 / Zeichnung von Oskar Kokoschka

Fig.14 Oskar Kokoschka, 'Portrait of Paul Scheerbart', *Der Sturm*, 6:15/16 (1915), Archive Marzona, Berlin.

Scheerbart and the Berlin Bohème in the 1890s

Scheerbart is remembered as an author associated with the artistic circles in Berlin in the 1890s. In his memoirs of the Berlin Bohème titled *Stilpe: Roman aus der Froschperspektive* of 1897, Otto Julius Bierbaum pays homage to his friend and fellow writer Scheerbart as a

wunderlicher Mensch, der mitten in Berlin mit dem Gleichmut eines orientalischen Weisen lebte und, arm wie ein persischer Bettelmönch, sich mit einer köstlichen Grazie des Geistes aushalten ließ. [...] Ein Fakir mit Humor.¹⁴

[whimsical man, who lived in the midst of Berlin with the stoicism of an Oriental sage and, poor as a Persian mendicant friar, lived on other people's charity with a delightful spiritual grace. [...] A fakir with a sense of humour.]

Born in West Prussia, part of today's Poland, Scheerbart and his wife Anna settled from 1885 to 1900 mainly in Berlin which together with Vienna and Munich, was one of the cultural capitals of the German-speaking *fin de siècle*.¹⁵ Emerging at the beginning of the 1880s and throughout the 1890s, the German intelligentsia, amongst them Scheerbart, criticized the accelerating capitalism and imperialism of Wilhelmine Germany, which were especially visible in Berlin. Scheerbart was well connected within the cosmopolitan networks of Berlin, which he referred to in 1898 as 'das Temperament des Weltgehirns' [the temperament of the world's brain].¹⁶

Many artists in these circles indeed identified with a protest against an overly rigid cultural segregation, pursuing partly socialist and partly anarchic tendencies. Scheerbart's taste for provocative irony and satire gained him a reputation as a political

¹⁴ Otto Julius Bierbaum, *Stilpe: Roman aus der Froschperspektive* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1897), pp. 330–31.

¹⁵ For the purpose of this discussion I will concentrate on the Berlin Bohème and neglect Viennese and Munich circles. Both strands of the German-speaking Decadence are however inseparable. Most Austrian authors of the 'Junges Wien' considered themselves to be German authors and were published in Germany. See Jens Malte Fischer, p. 11.

¹⁶ Paul Scheerbart, 'Berlins literarische Bohème. Eine Studie nach dem Leben', in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. VII*, pp. 503–09 (p. 503).

author. Walter Benjamin was impressed by Scheerbart's pacifist stance in response to the rearmament of Germany. In disapproving of the term 'World War', for example, Scheerbart redefines its absurdity through irony. If it were a true World War it needed to include extra-terrestrial planets as well. Benjamin quotes Scheerbart's rejection of the term, published in an article in the *Zeitecho* (August, 1914), in his essay 'On Scheerbart' (1940): "Let me protest first against the expression 'world war'. I am sure that no heavenly body, however near, will involve itself in the affair in which we are embroiled. Everything leads me to believe that deep peace still reigns in interstellar space".¹⁷ In many instances Scheerbart's aestheticized writing uses satire to expose the absurdity of political deficiencies. Scheerbart's strategic use of irony and satire comes to the forefront especially when pitting the Orient against Europe in his literature, as we will see later in the chapter.

Scheerbart's own anti-militarist stance and the glorification of the East are strongly connected. For Scheerbart the Orient is more than just a utopian sanctuary, a Baudelairean *paradis artificiel* to escape a more industrialized and sterile modernity. Even more so than the Gypsylore for Symons as discussed in the previous chapter, it provides arguments for political debate. Like Symons, Scheerbart fears the fragility of modernity endangered by a fast-paced capitalization and militarization: 'Der ganze Capitalismus scheint mir oft wie ein Nachtwandler auf einer Dachkante herumzuklettern – ein ordentlicher Schreckschuß, und die ganze Herrlichkeit fällt!' [The whole of capitalism seems to me often like a somnambulist balancing on the edge

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, 'On Scheerbart', in *Selected Writings, Vol. IV: 1938–1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and others (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 386–89 (p. 386).

of a rooftop – one warning shot and the whole splendour falls down].¹⁸ The politicization of artistic circles was significantly shaped by their reception of Friedrich Nietzsche's appraisal of individualism, as well as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' ideas on class struggle in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848).¹⁹ These new radical theories were in competition with a prevalent Wilhelmine Social Darwinism, an ideology of racial superiority often used to justify the expansion of the German Empire. Germany's imperialist ambitions were among the factors which led to the outbreak of the First World War, which also marked the decline of Bohemian *fin de siècle* culture in Berlin.

¹⁸ Paul Scheerbart, *Ich liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahnroman mit 66 Intermezzos*, in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I*, pp. 319–615 (p. 354).

¹⁹ Khoder Popiol, *Kunst und Genialität: eine Interpretation des Werkes "Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin" von Paul Scheerbart*, Doctoral Thesis (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 1988), pp. 213–16.

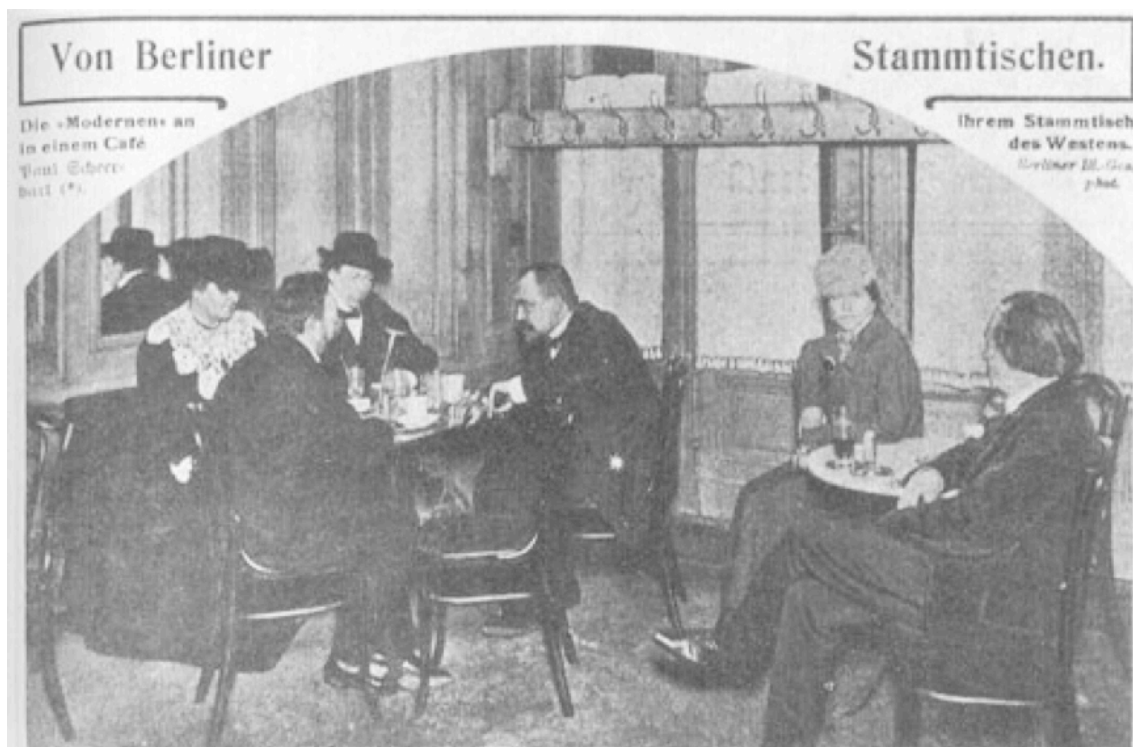


Fig. 15 Anonymous photographer, 'Die Modernen an ihrem Stammtisch im Café des Westens' [The Moderns at their regular's table at the Café of the West], *Der Welt-Spiegel. Illustrierte Halbwochen-Chronik des Berliner Tageblatts*, May 1905 (from left to right: Anna Scheerbart, Samuel Lubinski, Salomo Friedlaender, Paul Scheerbart, Else Lasker-Schüler, Herwarth Walden).

The Berlin Bohème defined a counterculture that used its anarchic potential to oppose conventional society.²⁰ This aspect makes it comparable to its European counterparts of the 1860s and 1870s – left-bank intellectuals and writers as described by Paul Verlaine in his biographical sketches *Les Poètes maudits* (1884–1886) – and the English artistic societies spearheaded by Oscar Wilde and Arthur Symonds based at the Café Royal in London. Yet the Berlin Bohème was also formed of several affluent bourgeois associations such as Der Idealistenklub, Die Freie Bühne, Die Freie literarische Gesellschaft, Der Genieklub, and Der Friedrichshagener Kreis. These clubs brought forth a flourishing magazine culture, run by leading publicists and critics, with most of whom Scheerbart was acquainted.

As evident from his correspondence, Scheerbart socialized with Stanisław Przybyszewski, one of the most influential and most extreme writers of Polish-German Decadence; Richard Dehmel, Stefan George's literary rival and co-founder of *Pan* magazine in 1895; the critics and publishers Heinrich and Julius Hart; Franz Servaes, Willy Pastor, Detlev von Liliencron, Peter Hille, Herwarth Walden (founder of the Expressionist magazine *Der Sturm* to which Scheerbart contributed more than twenty articles from 1910 to 1912), who from 1903 to 1912 was married to Else Lasker-Schüler; Else Lasker-Schüler herself (fig. 15); Frank Wedekind, Johannes Schlaf, Otto Julius Bierbaum, August Stramm, Oskar Kokoschka (fig. 14) and occasionally Alfred Döblin. His correspondents include the artist Alfred Kubin, the publisher Ernst Rowohlt, the anarchist writer Erich Mühsam, the satirist Karl Kraus and Richard Strauss, the composer of Wilde's *Salome*, who in 1899 even commissioned Scheerbart to write a libretto for him.

²⁰ Helmut Kreuzer, *Die Bohème. Beiträge zu ihrer Beschreibung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968), p. 170; pp. 256–58.

At the café called Schwarzes Ferkel, the Neue Gemeinschaft and the Friedrichshagener Kreis also hosted eminent Scandinavian artists such as August Strindberg and Edvard Munch, Knut Hamsun, Ola Hansson and his wife Laura Marholm, who in turn was well connected to English Decadent circles through John Lane, publisher of *The Yellow Book* in London from 1894 to 1897, and the feminist author and translator who used the pseudonym George Egerton.²¹ As a result the influence of Scandinavian Naturalism was acutely felt in Berlin and also delayed the discourse of anti-Naturalist literary innovations such as Decadence and Aestheticism, which had already widely evolved in England since the 1860s. Scheerbart's exposure to political and cosmopolitan circles in Berlin shaped his literary identity. His wish to depart from nineteenth-century Naturalism initiated his search to find modern means of counteracting Europe's decline through literature.

In Search of German Decadence: Scheerbart in Dialogue with Predecessors and Contemporaries

From the early 1890s onwards, Scheerbart was keen to produce anti-Naturalist works and test the boundaries of narrative representation. Scheerbart's work opposed Naturalism by borrowing from foreign literary trends. In 1901 the translator and author Paul Wiegler characterized Scheerbart as a 'Parodist mit [...] einer immer fanatischeren Sucht nach knalligen Feuerwerkseffekten und sonderbaren Innendekorationen in einem an sich selbst irren *à rebours*-Geschmack. [Scheerbart] rivalisiert mit den dekadentesten

²¹ Egerton is one of the few writers associated with the English Decadence who appeared on the best-seller list of foreign authors in 1897 by the Verlag S. Fischer, Berlin. See Fischer, *Fin de siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche*, p. 36.

Franzosen. [...] Hier wird Huysmans *Des Esseintes* ein Schulknabe. [Parodist with [...]] an increasingly fanatical addiction to gaudy special effects and eccentric interior decoration combined with an in itself absurd taste recalling *À rebours*. [Scheerbart] rivals the most decadent French writers. [...] He makes Huysmans's *Des Esseintes* look like a schoolboy].²² Wiegler's description encompasses three core ingredients of Scheerbart's aesthetics: Scheerbart's embrace of French Symbolist-Decadent tradition, his use of satire as found in the English Aestheticist tradition (Wilde, Beardsley), and his very own notion of 'Phantastik' as a distinctly German art form.²³

In 1892 Scheerbart was one of the joint founders of the Verlag deutscher Phantasten [Publishers of German Fantasists] whose aim it was to centralize and publicize a 'neue[n] phantastische[n] Richtung' [new fantastical movement]. In the advertising prospectus for the new press Scheerbart names a range of contemporary writers who departed from Naturalism towards a new aesthetic of 'Phantastik'. The programme further announces the translation of the major French and Belgian Decadent and Symbolist authors Albert Giraud, Jules Laforgue, Stéphane Mallarmé, and Paul Verlaine.²⁴ In his letters Scheerbart, like Symons, Wilde and George, views himself as an heir to the French Decadence, citing Baudelaire²⁵ and Flaubert as particularly relevant to his own work, especially the latter's *Salammbô* (1862).²⁶

Scheerbart's aesthetic programme formulated in his novel *Ich liebe Dich!* (1897) resonates with Mallarmé's 'Crise de vers' in which Mallarmé declares that words

²² Paul Wiegler, 'Ohne Titel', *Das litterarische Echo*, 3:16, May 1901; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart, Vol. III*, pp. 48–49.

²³ Scheerbart published three programmatic essays on 'Phantastik': 'Die Phantastik im Kunstgewerbe' (1891), 'Die Phantastik in der Malerei' (1891), 'Die Ästhetik der Phantastik' (1894).

²⁴ Mechthild Rausch, *Paul Scheerbart – 70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse: Eine Biographie in Briefen 1889–1915* (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1991), p. 481.

²⁵ Scheerbart to Max Bruns, 18 November 1901, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 156.

²⁶ Scheerbart to Rosa Gerlach, 13 December 1904, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, pp. 273–74.

‘through their colliding inequality [...] light up with reciprocal reflections like a virtual train of fire on gemstones’.²⁷ Scheerbart adopts Mallarmé’s gemstone metaphor to suit his own vision:

Ein Kunstwerk soll wie ein Opal sein, auf jeder Seite muß man ein neues Farbenblättchen sehen [...] doch müssen alle die flimmernden bunten Geschichten von einer einfacheren Masse eingeschlossen sein. Ich möchte immer um einen ganzen Knäuel von Kunstwerken einen ideelichen Rahmen rumschließen. Meine Idee von Weltgeist soll ein solcher Rahmen sein.²⁸

[A work of art should be like an opal; on every side one should be able to see spots of colour [...] however all these glimmering colourful stories need to be embedded in a more simpler mass, I should like always to enclose a wad of artworks within a conceptual frame. This frame is my idea of the spirit of the world.]

His friend and fellow writer Franz Servaes extends the Mallarméan simile of words appearing like gemstones to another Eastern symbol, the carpet. The carpet, an object made of individual threads, is comparable to Wilde’s mosaic and Symons’s kaleidoscope – another cosmopolitan symbol connected to the East. Servaes uses it to describe Scheerbart’s concept of the East as binding principle and his cosmopolitan idea of *Weltgeist* [spirit of the world]:

Man betrachte einen persischen Teppich: diese scheinbare Wirrnis, dieses Liniengeflirr und Farbgetaumel, und doch diese überlegene Gebundenheit, diese sichere Struktur, die dekorative Stilisierung. Scheerbarts poetische Kunstwerke sind sprachlich und kompositionell solche persischen Teppiche: durch all die farbige Willkür und extravagante Verrücktheit, durch hänselnde Späße und himmelnde Schwärmerei, blickt kühl und streng eine feste Gesetzmäßigkeit, die niemals die Zügel aus der Hand gibt. [...] Die einzelnen Worte sind Perlen, und die funkeln und blitzen, wie man sie auch wenden mag.²⁹

[If one looks at a Persian carpet: this ostensible confusion, this criss-cross of lines and play of colour, and yet this superior coherence, this reliable structure, the decorative style. Scheerbart’s poetic artworks are such Persian carpets in their language and

²⁷ Stéphane Mallarmé, ‘Crisis in Verse’, in *Symbolism: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 1–12 (p. 8).

²⁸ Scheerbart, *Ich liebe Dich!*, p. 505.

²⁹ Franz Servaes, ‘Der Anti-Europäer’, *Die Zeit* (Vienna), 25 June 1898; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart Scheerbart III – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. III: Rezensionen. Artikel zu Leben und Werk*, ed. by Paul Kaltefleiter (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1998), pp. 68–76 (pp. 74–75).

composition: through all the chequered arbitrariness and extravagant folly, through teasing irony and sky-high enthusiasm, there coolly and strictly watches a stern principle which never allows the reins to slip out of its hands. [...] The individual words are pearls, and they shimmer and glitter, in whatever direction one turns them.]

Przybyszewski even remembered Scheerbart in his memoirs as one of the first to overcome Naturalism: ‘schon um 1890 begann man von der Überwindung des Naturalismus zu träumen, und der erste, der ihn überwand, war Paul Scheerbart’ [already around 1890 people started to dream of overcoming Naturalism, and the first one to overcome it was Paul Scheerbart].³⁰ While Przybyszewski overstates Scheerbart’s importance as a pioneer of the anti-Naturalist movement in Germany, Scheerbart absorbed international developments of Decadence into his own aesthetic theory of ‘Phantastik’.

In his programmatic essay ‘Die Ästhetik der Phantastik’³¹ (1894) Scheerbart postulates a new art form that resists the mimetic effects of Realism and Naturalism. Bypassing Impressionism as merely another form of aestheticized Realism and hence a stagnation of artistic production, he argues ‘[h]aben wir aber nur Sinneseindrücke, an die wir uns halten müssen [...], so liegt es wohl nahe, diese Sinneseindrücke mit ganzer Kraft auskosten zu wollen’ [if we have got to rely on sensual impressions only [...], it seems obvious that we should savour them to the full].³² Even Symbolist aesthetics cannot satisfy the need for a ‘free art’ which the ‘Phantastik’ provides. Therefore Scheerbart classifies Symbolism only as a sub-category of the ‘Phantastik’.

Taking the French Symbolist tradition a step further, the Orient, as the aesthetic other-place, is Scheerbart’s resource to counteract Naturalism and mimetic art. The East

³⁰ Stanisław Przybyszewski, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (Munich: Winkler, 1965), p. 152.

³¹ Paul Scheerbart, ‘Die Ästhetik der Phantastik’, in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.1*, pp. 163–79.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 167.

functions as a new aesthetic category that is able to transgress the boundaries of all current literary schools:

im Mystischen und wohl auch im Spiritistischen finden wir neue Darstellungsmotive [...]. Gerade der Mysterienkultus des Orients dürfte die Künstlerphantasie, wenn sie sich einmal diesem Stoffgebiet zuwendet, sehr kräftig befruchten.³³

[In mysticism and in spiritualism we find new modes of expression [...] Especially the mysticism of the Orient will certainly fertilise the imagination of the artist, once it has started to engage with this area of interest].

Scheerbart consequently condemns literary Realism as ‘in erster Linie ein Trivial-Realismus, der ein Pendant bildet zu dem durch Aufschwung der Naturwissenschaften erzeugten, philosophisch sein wollenden Materialismus’ [first and foremost a trivial form of Realism, the counterpart to a pseudo-philosophical materialism brought forth by the rise of the natural sciences].³⁴ Nineteenth-century Decadence coincided with a resurgence of esotericism, spiritualism, and a belief in magic as a rejection of secularism and science. Scheerbart’s ideal of literature is invested in a Decadent aesthetic infused by these tendencies. While embracing the supernaturalism of Decadence, he advocated the use of new technology. In addition, Scheerbart believed that a sterile Aestheticism could be reanimated by an introduction of satire and an aphoristic style (which brings him in proximity to Wilde and Beardsley), and on a second level through a focus on the Orient’s sensuality.

Scheerbart’s satire, which marks his narrative tone as much as in the juxtaposition of paradoxical content, is a Decadent technique to overcome Naturalism. Arthur Moeller van den Bruck championed Scheerbart in his book *Der neue Humor Varietetestil* (1902) as the ‘potenziertesten Aestheten unserer Tage’ [most promising

³³ Ibid., p. 175.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 165.

contemporary aesthete]³⁵ praising him for his innovative usage of humour. Moeller van den Bruck recognises the subversive and political element of irony in aestheticized literature that was popularized by Wilde's aphorisms and Beardsley's mock interviews on art.³⁶ His review summarizes Scheerbart's Decadent aesthetics:

Naturgemäss sind es zweierlei Waffen, die Scheerbart führt. Im ästhetischen Falle solche der reinen Phantasie [...]. Und im ethischen Falle solche der Ironie und der Satire, der Erdbeleuchtung, Durchleuchtung, Verzerrung, Verschiebung – des Grotesken. [...] Da ist der rettende Gedanke selbstverständlich, dass es doch Alles so schön wäre, wenn nicht Alles – so hässlich [*sic*] wäre.³⁷

[Naturally Scheerbart bears two sets of arms. In terms of aesthetics, that of pure imagination. [...] With regard to ethics of irony and satire, of the investigation of the world, of illumination, contortion, dislocation – the grotesque. [...] The saving grace of this idea is of course, that everything could be so beautiful, if only things were not so ugly.]

Julius Hart in his essay 'Der ironische Ästhetizismus Paul Scheerbarts' (1897) also commented on Scheerbart's innovative style, which he claims to be independent of influence:

Er machte nicht deshalb Ästhetizismus, weil die Mode so kam [...]. Weder die englischen noch die französischen Archaisten, Dekadenten und Symbolisten übten irgendwelchen Einfluß auf ihn aus [...].³⁸

[He did not follow Aestheticism because it was the fashion [...] neither the English nor the French archaists, decadents and symbolists had any influence on him [...].]

Hart and Moeller van den Bruck are in their interpretation only partly right, as Scheerbart's aesthetics are not isolated from foreign influence. As we have seen, Scheerbart drew on French concepts of Decadence and Symbolism to override the

³⁵ Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Der neue Humor Varietetestil* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1902), p. 22.

³⁶ Aubrey Beardsley interview in the newspaper *To-Day* (1894), as quoted in Matthew Sturgis, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011), p. 200.

³⁷ Moeller van den Bruck, p. 23; p. 21.

³⁸ Julius Hart, 'Briefe über die Literatur der Gegenwart – Der ironische Ästhetizismus Paul Scheerbarts', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 August 1897; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart II – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. II: Analysen, Aufsätze, Forschungsbeiträge*, ed. by Michael M. Schardt and Hiltrud Steffen (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996), pp. 38–45 (p. 39).

dominance of Naturalism. His ‘Phantastik’ suggests a revival of Decadent sensualism and Oriental mysticism to open literature to the experience of modernity.

Yet it would be limiting to relate Scheerbart’s work only to the French tradition. Much of his writing also accepts motifs from English Decadence. The English reception of French theories popularized throughout the nineteenth century found its equivalent in the Pre-Raphaelite tradition out of which Decadence evolved in England during the 1880s and 1890s. Germany and Austria lacked such a foundation and were reliant on intermediaries such as Friedrich Nietzsche or the Austrian critic and author Hermann Bahr (1863–1934) to introduce and mediate these European movements. It is not certain whether or not Scheerbart read Pater. However, Pater’s ideas on aesthetics, indebted to German philosophy, were circulated and appraised in German and Austrian literary circles by many of Scheerbart’s contemporaries such as Hugo von Hofmannsthal.³⁹

Until 1891 Bahr significantly shaped the discourse on Decadence in Berlin. From April 1890 until early 1891 Bahr acted as editor of the *Freie Bühne für modernes Leben* (from 1893 called *Neue Rundschau*), a periodical to which Scheerbart regularly contributed in the early 1890s.⁴⁰ Bahr found himself at odds with Wilde’s historicizing English Aestheticism: ‘Diese “Estheten”, die Erben der Präraphaelite Brotherhood, die der *Punch* so unermüdlich verspottet [...] sind eine fanatisch dem Schönen ergebene, in künstliche Extasen selige Gemeinde’ [These ‘aesthetes’, the heirs of the Pre-Raphaelites, whom *Punch* never tired of mocking [...] are a community that devotes

³⁹ Stephen Bann, ed., *The Reception of Walter Pater in Europe* (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004), p. 142.

⁴⁰ Scheerbart was in contact with Bahr as a letter from Scheerbart to Franz Servaes, stamped 21 May 1898, indicates: ‘Gerne würde ich Deinen Artikel lesen – aber ich kann an Bahr nicht schreiben – da ich ihm vor 14 Tagen ein großes Manuskript gesandt habe – das muß er ungestört verdauen’, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 54.

itself to the worship of beauty and revels in the ecstasy of artifice].⁴¹ His criticism of Decadence and Aestheticism (especially directed against Wilde's persona) questioned whether the term could be applied to German literature at all, which in his view had not yet surmounted the influence of Naturalism.

Scheerbart's close friend Richard Dehmel, a prominent poet and editor at the time, also played a key role in the exchange of international artistic trends. Dehmel was acquainted with Hofmannsthal, one of Bahr's protégés, whom he hosted on several occasions in Berlin. Scheerbart was a declared admirer of Hofmannsthal who wrote appraisingly on Pater, elevating "the great English critic" above Goethe', and in 1905 critically reviewed Wilde's aestheticism in his essay 'Sebastian Melmoth'.⁴² Taking the cue from Hofmannsthal's cosmopolitan outlook, Scheerbart even felt the necessity to spread the new developments in German literature abroad. In a letter to his publisher Max Bruns, who was also Wilde's publisher in Germany, he expresses his cosmopolitan eagerness.⁴³

Die Ausländer müssen nach meiner Meinung ganz energisch für die deutsche Litteratur interessirt [*sic*] werden. Könnten Sie mir vielleicht auf einer Karte Hofmannsthals Adresse senden? [...] es scheint mir nur sehr wichtig, das Ausland zu interessiren [*sic*]. Deutschland ist doch für 'Uns' zu klein.⁴⁴

[In my view, foreigners must vigorously be made curious about German literature. Could you maybe send Hofmannsthal's address on a card? [...] it only seems important to me, to get the foreign countries interested. After all Germany is too small for 'us'.]

⁴¹ Hermann Bahr, 'Décadence', in *Renaissance: Neue Studien zur Kritik der Moderne*, ed. by Claus Pias (Weimar: VDG, 2008), pp. 11–19 (p. 12; p. 15).

⁴² Robert M. Seiler, ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1980), p. 7.; Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 'Sebastian Melmoth', in *Hugo von Hofmannsthal Sämtliche Werke XXXIII, Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. by Konrad Heumann and Ellen Ritter (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 2009), pp. 62–65; Joseph Bristow, *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008), pp. 110–20.

⁴³ Max Bruns was an eminent publisher of the German-speaking *fin de siècle*. He published German translations of Poe, Baudelaire, Flaubert as well as Wilde, Whitman, and Gide. His programme further included 'progressive' German authors like Schlaf, Dauthendey, Mombert, and Scheerbart. See Rausch, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 496.

⁴⁴ Scheerbart to Max Bruns, 10 March 1902, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 181.

In line with Scheerbart's efforts to reach out to his literary neighbours, Jens Malte Fischer notes, German Decadent discourse in particular is characterized by its 'Dialogizität' [dialogical character]. That is to say German Decadence operates via a network of 'Vorbilder' [antetypes], which Fischer locates in the French, Belgian, Scandinavian and Italian, but not English versions of Decadence.⁴⁵ I argue that Scheerbart also indirectly related his work to the English notion of Decadence precisely in his Orientalized works. The proximity to Nietzsche's, Pater's and Wilde's aesthetic concepts, and their 'profound sense of the past that transcended national boundaries',⁴⁶ left traces in Scheerbart's writing.

Following Fischer's suggestion that German Decadence focuses on 'Sprachartistik, Künstlichkeit und Naturferne' [linguistic acrobatics, artificiality and a distancing from nature],⁴⁷ Scheerbart's fixation on the East can be explained: the Decadent East encompasses the potential for generic hybridity (Pater), an interest in surface, textures and ornament, and the grotesque and humorous (Wilde and Beardsley). Scheerbart's idea of 'Genuß' and his experimental attitude to mixing literary genres resonates with Pater's aesthetics, which welcome the fusion of art and subjective criticism. Scheerbart takes the 'respektlosen Umgang mit der Gattung' [disregard towards literary categories]⁴⁸ to the extreme: for instance, his novel *Ich liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahnroman mit 66 Intermezzos* [*I love you! A railroad novel with sixty-six intermezzos*] is composed of individual poems, prose descriptions of architecture, and short stories only loosely joined up and framed by dramatic narrative sections. The

⁴⁵ Fischer's *Fin de siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche* neglects to acknowledge the influence of English Decadence on the German tendency, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Patrick Bridgwater, *Anglo-German Interactions in the Literature of the 1890s* (Oxford: Legenda, 1999), p. 228.

⁴⁷ Fischer, p. 79.

⁴⁸ Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall*, p. 142.

reader as a critic needs to navigate the centrifugal ambivalence of these texts. It is very much the reader's perspective on them that determines their literary meaning.

Consequently, Scheerbart's work eludes straightforward categorization. It brings together various qualities of European Decadence rarely found compressed in one author's strand of writing. These innovations, to German readers, make him an Expressionist and a precursor of Surrealism. However, seen in an international context (especially through the lens of English-language literary periodization in which terms such as Expressionist do not exist), Scheerbart's Oriental work can best be classified as Decadent. It absorbs international trends, not only from a French origin as Roger Bauer and Dieter Kafitz have argued,⁴⁹ but also from English Decadence whilst pushing them towards a Modernist aesthetic.

Oriental 'Genuß' and Pater's Definition of Aesthetic Experience in *Tarub*

In *Tarub*, Scheerbart's first Oriental novel which was published in 1897, Scheerbart's version of Pater's aesthetics and the belief in the innovative potential of the East meet. *Tarub* is a Decadent artist novel set in Baghdad in 892 AD. It tells the story of the poet Safur, 'ein Verwandter', as Rausch noted, 'von Huysmans Des Esseintes (*À rebours*) und Wildes Dorian Gray' [a relative of Huysmans's *Des Esseintes* and Wilde's *Dorian Gray*].⁵⁰ The novel follows the poet's dilemma between art and life, embodied by his problematic marriage to the pragmatic Tarub, the famous chef of Baghdad. *Tarub* reverberates with the art-life dialectic which dominated English Decadence. As Rausch and Sprengel observed, the protagonists are modelled on Scheerbart and his wife Anna,

⁴⁹ Bauer, *Die schöne Décadence* (2001); Kafitz, *Décadence in Deutschland* (2004).

⁵⁰ Rausch, 'Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin', *Über Paul Scheerbart, Vol. III*, pp. 52–54 (p. 52).

also known among his friends as Scheerbart's 'Bär' [bear] owing to her resolute character. Safur, often read to be the author himself, is torn between the principle of rationality personified by Tarub and her Dionysian counterpart: the 'blauäugigen Dschinnen, jene wilde[n] schwarze[n] Wüstengeister, die auf feurigen Hengsten nachts durch die Wüste jagen' [blue-eyed djinns, those wild, black spirits of the desert, who chase through the desert at night on fiery stallions] – a pre-Islamic Orientalized rendition of the Decadent *femme fatale*.⁵¹

Scheerbart's novel resumes Pater's call for an individualized perception of art and an understanding of the self as fluid, as put forward in the 'Conclusion' to *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873).⁵² Pater describes the constant decay and renewal of the physical body, a breaking away of individual atoms and cells, as a 'concurrence, renewed from moment to moment' (118). Pater equates this constant decadence with the internal 'drift of momentary acts of sight and passion' (118) that is channelled through the individual's selective perception. By the acts of looking, feeling and sensing, each individual becomes a critic of taste experiencing the self in different constellations according to outward aesthetic stimulation. As a result the individual, through aesthetic perception, becomes aware of his or her own 'continual vanishing away, that strange perpetual weaving and unweaving of ourselves' (119). For Pater '[n]ot the fruit of the experience, but experience itself is the end' (119) to achieve the widening of the senses. To be successful in this on-going search for 'ecstasy', 'exquisite passion' and 'as many pulsations as possible' (120), Pater controversially recommended

⁵¹ Paul Scheerbart, *Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin. Ein arabischer Kulturroman*, in *Paul Scheerbart: Dichterische Hauptwerke*, ed. by Else Harke (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts, 1962), pp. 17–227 (p. 24).

⁵² Walter Pater, 'Conclusion', in *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, pp. 118–121. All references are to this edition. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

‘to be for ever curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions’ (120). Art and poetry offer the best way to procure this ‘enthusiasm’ (121).

Scheerbart’s Safur conveys the Paterian search for an intensification of sensations by the analogy of Oriental food and the relationship between testing and tasting.⁵³ Safur devotes himself to what he calls the ‘Genußverschärfung’ [sharpening of the senses] (70), which operates along Paterian lines. In chapter four, he explains, similar to Dorian Gray’s zeal of maximizing pleasure: ‘man muß in jedem Augenblick einen neuen Genuß oder einen verschärften Genuß zu empfinden trachten [...]. Das höchste Lebensglück besteht in dem Leben, das da aufweisen kann: die größte Zahl von glücklichen Augenblicken. [...] Genießen will ich – genießen!’ [in each and every moment one needs to seek out the sensation of a new or intensified enjoyment [...]. The highest happiness in life depends on the greatest number of happy moments. [...] I want to enjoy myself – enjoy!] (70–71). Safur expounds his idea of ‘Genuß’ [enjoyment], which correlates with the Paterian quest for sensation and the constant renewal of the self:

[...] ich will nur genießen. Doch ich kann nie fein genug genießen. Ich möchte den Genuß so fein machen wie einen Geist – wie ein Frauenhaar. Man muß so mit allen Fingerspitzen genießen – die feinste Reizung der Haut muß empfunden werden. In jedem Augenblicke müßte man anders erregt und bewegt werden – und zwar bewußt. [...] Da ich so viel Neues in jedem Augenblick genießen will – so bin ich auch immer ein Anderer. Jeden Tag will ich auch was Andres. (65)

[[...] the only thing I want is enjoyment. But there is never enough refinement in my enjoyment. I want to refine enjoyment to make it feel like a ghost – like a woman’s hair. One has to enjoy right into the fingertips – the slightest stimulation must be registered. In each single moment one would have to be excited and stirred in a different way – and to be conscious of it. [...] Since I want to enjoy so many new things in every moment – I will always be a changed man at any time. And I want change every day.]

⁵³ Scheerbart, *Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin. Ein arabischer Kulturroman*, in *Paul Scheerbart: Dichterische Hauptwerke*, ed. by Else Harke (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts, 1962), pp. 17–227. All references are to this edition. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

Pater's theory of weaving and unweaving of identity in reaction to outward impressions correlates to Scheerbart's idea of 'Anderssein' [being an other]. This idea establishes itself as a connecting transnational link of a Decadent as well as an Orientalist identity. The East is thus instrumental in the redrafting of Decadent selfhood and a reading of decadence not only as decay but productive (cultural) renewal. As Pater turns to the Renaissance and antiquity for his aesthetic aspiration of savouring sensuality to the full, Scheerbart resorts to the Arabic Orient. For Scheerbart the East therefore is the ideal resource to satisfy the Decadent's consistent hunger for aesthetic sensations.

Beyond its Paterian aesthetics, Scheerbart's *Tarub* comments on contemporary literary debates of the 1890s. Safur's Oriental Decadent dilemma is a veiled description of the literary rivalry between Realism and Decadence in the Berlin of 1892.⁵⁴ The novel, set exactly a thousand years earlier than the time of its genesis, echoes the artistic networks and literary debates of the Berlin Bohème and international Decadence. Scheerbart creates a link between nineteenth-century Decadence and the East by alluding to an intellectual club in Bagdad of 892 called the 'Bund der Treuen Brüder' [The Brethren of Sincerity], a group of tenth-century Arabic intellectuals and scholars from Basra.⁵⁵ Thus Scheerbart forms a transnational and transtemporal Eastern genealogy of influence as the basis of his Decadent works. The East once more is used as a commentary on nineteenth-century cultural politics.

Unlike Pater and Wilde, Scheerbart neglects Decadence's Hellenic and Neo-Classical heritage. In *Ich liebe Dich!*, a character called 'Scheerbart', the obvious mouthpiece of the author, declares: 'Ich, der radikalste Vertreter des europäischen Antihellenismus, der das Heil der Occidentalen nur im Orientalen erblickt, ich [...] will

⁵⁴ Sprengel, 'Exotismus bei Paul Scheerbart', p. 205.

⁵⁵ Tjitze J. de Boer, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1901), pp. 78–79.

von der griechischen Liebe eben so wenig wissen wie von aller anderen Erotik.' [I, the most radical representative of European Anti-Hellenism, who sees the salvation for the occidentals to lie in the Orient, I [...] am no more interested in Greek love than in any other form of eroticism].⁵⁶ Scheerbart is careful to distance himself from French Decadence's emphasis on perverse pleasure, and allusions to classical homoeroticism as associated with Pater's and Wilde's Aestheticism. In this point, English Decadence differs from Scheerbart's German Decadence, which promotes the Decadent East not as alien to Modernism but as the way into modernity.

In that regard, Scheerbart fits Kristin Mahoney's description of a displacement of Decadence in early Modernism only to a certain extent. In Scheerbart's case the East helps to formulate the author's modern anti-Modernism. In contrast to English writers such as Symons, viewing the East as a nostalgic concept through which to preserve and defend their Decadent pasts, Scheerbart uses the Decadent East to comment explicitly on a turn-of-the-century European identity crisis and practical ways to resolve it. Not surprisingly, Friedrich Nietzsche's Orientalism and critique of Europe are theoretical models for Scheerbart's conflicted sense of modernity. Scheerbart mentioned Nietzsche only twice in his correspondence, so it is hard to determine to what degree he was familiar with Nietzsche's work. In any case, Scheerbart's Decadent Orientalism and 'Anti-Europäertum' identify with Nietzsche's idea of decay as a progressive process of renewal.

⁵⁶ Scheerbart, *Ich liebe Dich!*, p. 517.

Nietzsche's Orientalism and Critique of Europe

In 1886 Nietzsche maintained that the future of European culture – not least caused by tendencies such as the Decadence and ‘l’art pour l’art’ Aestheticism – was anything but promising: ‘Our Europe of today [is] gloomy as a cloud overloaded with question marks – and often sick to death of its will!’⁵⁷ Stifled in its energies to progress, European culture – especially when compared to its Eastern neighbours – was in decline. According to Nietzsche, Western culture must face its dissolution and transcend its original, but limiting, foundations in Greek philosophy and Christianity. Nietzsche was of course not the only writer to diagnose Europe’s supposed decline. Yet Nietzsche’s ideas about the shortcomings of Europe, his critique of nationalism and a pan-Germanism as well as his Orientalism had some influence on Scheerbart’s utopia that views the ‘Orient als Gesellschafts-Ideal’ [the Orient as ideal society].⁵⁸

Nietzsche’s understanding of a dynamic cultural history based on the exchange of cultures, as Duncan Large remarks, ‘means that the Oriental is not to be discounted, but, on the contrary, since it is profoundly necessary as Europe’s foil, to be respected and admired, “accommodated within” as an invigorating, innervating impulse’.⁵⁹ Nietzsche’s reverse Orientalism (‘Asia’s superiority of instinct’)⁶⁰ is not one of opposition towards the East but one of integration. Nietzsche attributes Europe’s roots to the ancient Greeks, ‘these best heirs and disciples of Asia,’⁶¹ confirming that ‘Europe

⁵⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Vol. VIII*, ed. by Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large, trans. by Adrian Del Caro (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–207 (p. 109).

⁵⁸ Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden*, p. 101.

⁵⁹ Duncan Large, ‘Nietzsche’s Orientalism’, *Nietzsche-Studien*, 42:1 (2013), 178–203 (p. 202).

⁶⁰ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 140.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141

has already been “orientalised” in at least two distinct phases’.⁶² The genius of the Greeks capitalized on other and earlier cultures to craft their own: ‘Borrowing forms from foreigners, not creating them, but reshaping them into the most beautiful appearances – that is Greek: imitating [...]’.⁶³ As a result Nietzsche conceptualizes the Orient in a paradoxical way as the root of European identity but also as a product of the West, so that Said’s oppositional Orientalist logic, as Large notes, ‘breaks down’.⁶⁴

While Nietzsche reinforces the ties between East and West, like Scheerbart, he nevertheless employs a panoply of Orientalist clichés to set the East apart from a complex and sophisticated analysis of Europe. In order to critique Europe’s decadence and degeneration, Nietzsche praises the achievements of the East and emphasizes Europe’s indebtedness to Asia. Greece, the accepted cradle of Western culture, was born out of Asia and underwent several instances of ‘re-orientalisation’ to secure its survival.⁶⁵ Scheerbart adopts what Nietzsche calls the ‘orientalization of the Hellenic’⁶⁶ as a principle to show the East’s importance for the evolution and the renewal of European culture.

Scheerbart’s image of the Orient challenges the uniformity of European identity following Nietzsche’s insights. Like Nietzsche he seems to find that ‘[b]eing a good German means de-Germanizing oneself’.⁶⁷ Similar to Wilde’s comments on Goethe’s inclusive definition of culture, regarding French culture as part of his own, Scheerbart embraces the Orient as part of his own identity. Scheerbart’s aesthetics, defined by his

⁶² Large, p. 186.

⁶³ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II (Spring 1878–Fall 1879)*, ed. by Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large, trans. by Gary Handwerk (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 93.

⁶⁴ Large, p. 179.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

⁶⁶ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 208.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, p. 125.

love for all things Oriental, shared a vision of what Large calls ‘Phant-Asien’, denoting a consciously utopian conflation of history and fiction. Scheerbart’s novel *Der Tod der Barmekiden* and many pacifist articles exemplify this re-definition of a German cosmopolitan ideal, viewing ‘Schiller’s *tendency cosmopolitan*, and Goethe corresponding to the Oriental tendency’.⁶⁸ Nietzsche concludes that cosmopolitan affiliation is vital to grow ‘not decorative, but rather organic cultivation’. Precisely through Oriental attachment ‘the Germans will perhaps yet succeed in accomplishing what the Greeks accomplished with regard to the Orient – and thereby finally discover what is “German”’.⁶⁹

Nietzsche, and following in his footsteps Scheerbart, calls for Europe to ‘re-orientalise itself’.⁷⁰ Those who Nietzsche terms the ‘good Europeans’⁷¹ need to undergo a ‘self-de-europeanisation’,⁷² a concept Scheerbart welcomed. In Nietzsche’s view ‘the German soul is manifold, of different origins, more pieced together and piled on than actually built’.⁷³ As a result, for Scheerbart the Orient served as a projection surface for Decadent escapism as much as for a critique of nationalism as a justification of innate superiority. Even though Scheerbart’s Orient becomes an instrument to re-sensualize literature as seen in *Tarub*, it provides a platform for political satire directed at Europe. Accordingly in 1929, Lothar Schreyer portrayed Scheerbart as the ‘Anti-Europäer’ par excellence:

⁶⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, ed. and trans. by Richard T. Gray, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), p. 87.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 270.

⁷⁰ Large, p. 194.

⁷¹ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 145.

⁷² Large, p. 195.

⁷³ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 148.

Die Welt des Maschinendämons ist Europa. Der Europäer von heute ist der grundsätzlich kunstfeindliche Mensch. Daher ist Scheerbart fanatischer Antieuropäer. Europa, diese Beule am Riesenleibe Asiens, hat das Haus der Menschen gänzlich verdorben. [...] Und der Dichter gibt das Wundermittel, Europa zu heilen: nicht den Völkerkrieg, nicht den Völkerbund, nicht Paneuropa, sondern: den planetaren Patriotismus.⁷⁴

[The home of the demon of mechanization is Europe. The European of today is by definition hostile towards the arts. Therefore Scheerbart is a fanatical anti-European. Europe, this ulcer on the giant body of Asia, has spoiled the whole of humanity. [...] And the poet provides the panacea to cure Europe: not the war between nations, not the League of Nations, not a pan-Europe, but planetary patriotism.]

In taking the term ‘universal’ literally, Scheerbart’s definition of universal cosmopolitanism transcends the European or global scale as it includes extra-terrestrial planets. It upholds the East as ideal while Europe as an ‘ulcer’ impedes healthy global communications through continuous warfare. Nietzsche’s observation of a ‘self-diminution’⁷⁵ of Europe is resumed in Scheerbart’s ‘Anti-Europäertum’ and the celebration of the Orient in his literature. Parallels between Nietzschean thought and Scheerbart’s political agenda become evident in the satire introduced into his Orientalized Decadent writing as, for example, in *Der Tod der Barmekiden*.⁷⁶ In this work, the East is, in Said’s words, a stage for European navel-gazing.

⁷⁴ Lothar Schreyer, ‘Die Wundermittel des Paul Scheerbart’, *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1926; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart, Vol. III*, pp. 696–700 (p. 699).

⁷⁵ Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 180.

⁷⁶ Paul Scheerbart, *Der Tod der Barmekiden – Arabischer Haremsroman*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1992). All references are to this edition. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

Der Tod der Barmekiden: The Decadent East as Mirror of Europe's Cultural Decay

Der Tod der Barmekiden is an example of Scheerbart's vision of a dystopian Europe and a utopian, while Decadent, East. The novel consists of twenty-four Oriental dramatic vignettes telling the story of a fatal *ménage à trois* involving the powerful caliph Harun al Raschyd, his wife and sister Abbasah and the caliph's friend Djafar, a Barmecide. The story hinges on the historical figure of al Raschyd, leader of the Abbassid dynasty. The Abbassids ruled from 786 until 809 AD and helped the Barmecides, a noble family from Balkh in Persia (today's Afghanistan), to influential positions in their court. Scheerbart may also have drawn inspiration from *The Arabian Nights* in which Ja'far the Barmecide is the hero of several tales. Scheerbart's plot, negotiating the dangers of 'free love', is framed in the commentary given by five blue lions. The fantastic lions guide an audience of Europeans through a performance of Oriental lust and violence, which unfolds in front of 'den trunkenen Augen Europas' [drunken eyes of Europe] (75) in the Baghdad of the Abbassids, the 'Stadt des Heils' [city of salvation] (75).

From the outset, the boundaries between play and novel, fiction and criticism are blurred. In its hybrid composition the text draws on a Romantic model, namely Ludwig Tieck's comedy *Das Märchen vom gestiefelten Kater* (1797). Scheerbart adopts the comedy's self-referentiality, in which a cat outsmarts a supposedly sophisticated bourgeois audience as part of the scene. The actual play on stage is interrupted by the commentary of the fictional audience. Their actual ignorance is revealed by their clapping for the beauty of the decorations rather than the controversial contents addressed in the play. In order to develop his anti-European critique, Scheerbart adapts

Tieck's experimentation with generic form and irony, whilst continuing to think along the lines of Pater's and Wilde's aestheticized criticism.

In Scheerbart's text, the lions confront the European audience with the East performed as a play. The exposed East becomes a Nietzschean mirror for the sensitive Europeans. In his essay 'Rahmenkunst' (1899)⁷⁷ Scheerbart explains this concept:

Ohne Gegensatz kommt uns aber nichts zum Bewußtsein, und deshalb ist die Rahmenkunst eine sehr notwendige Kunst; sie übernimmt die Rolle des Impresario, des Arrangeurs, des Kritikers. [...] Die große Sphinx am Nil ist auch umrahmt – vom blauen Himmelgewölbe. [...] Die Sphinx-Kunst ist zu selten.⁷⁸

[Without contrast nothing enters our consciousness and therefore the art of framing is a very important one; it takes on the role of the impresario, of the composer, the critic. [...] The great Sphinx on the Nile is also framed – by the blue firmament. [...] such Sphinx-Art is too rare.]

By mixing the dramatic and epic genres, Scheerbart introduced a critical distance into his text in order to provoke and politicize an audience. Scheerbart's hybridization of art and criticism ('Sphinx-Kunst') anticipates the *Verfremdungseffekte* [alienation effects] practised from the 1920s onwards in Bertolt Brecht's epic theatre. This latter was, in Walter Benjamin's words, 'completing what Scheerbart started so well [...]'.⁷⁹ Scheerbart frames his representation of the Decadent Orient with an in-built European commentary on the Oriental tale. The Oriental episodes are written in an exaggerated, mock-Decadent style, over-embellished to the point of ironization. The commentary is marked by the use of colloquial language and block-capital headlines when announcing the next Oriental episode ('THRÄNEN DER VERZÜCKUNG' or 'DER HARMLOSE', 'RACHE! RACHE!'). Through these contrasting means Scheerbart challenges the audience to reflect on the juxtaposition of East and West. Scheerbart

⁷⁷ Paul Scheerbart, 'Rahmenkunst', in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.2*, pp. 293–304.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 293–94.

⁷⁹ Gershom Scholem quoting Walter Benjamin, in *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p. 208.

borrowing the idea of 'Rahmenkunst' from the original tales of *The Arabian Nights*. In Scheerbart's work, single narratives are 'zu einem großen Ganzen zusammenkomponiert' [arranged to form a grand entity],⁸⁰ to produce a tale about the psychological degeneracy of Europe. For Scheerbart art without a critical frame is unthinkable, and so is Europe without the East.

Der Tod der Barmekiden is in the truest Saidian sense 'a theatrical stage affixed to Europe'.⁸¹ The frustrated giant Raifu, master of the lions, is determined to educate the European audience by setting up a 'Geisterschauspiel' [ghostly spectacle] (10) for them. The scene is the East, highly aestheticized and stylized. Many references attest Scheerbart's proximity to Decadent tropes such as a 'Diamantenregen' [shower of diamonds] bringing to mind Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's shower of roses depicted in *The Roses of Heliogabalus* (1888) (fig. 18). This reflects how the visual and decorative arts, and especially Orientalist painting, informed German authors' encounters with French and English Decadence. Comparable to Flaubert's *Salammbô*, Wilde's *Salome* and Symons's glamorization of the Gypsies, the novel revels in Orientalizing detail: the air is filled with perfume, the palace is populated by dancing slave girls. The text is laden with descriptions of textures and gemstones, colours and sounds.

While Decadent in style, the narrative tone subverts the Oriental reverie. The ironic depiction of Harun's harem exemplifies this: 'Es duftet nach Lilienöl und Rosenwasser; Haruns Harem hat sich vor den Europäern aufgethan. Die Mädchen schlafen auf weichen Teppichen und träumen stillen Unsinn zusammen' [The air is fragrant with fleur-de-lis and rose water; Harun's harem has opened up in front of the

⁸⁰ Scheerbart, 'Rahmenkunst', p. 302.

⁸¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 63.

Europeans. The girls are asleep on soft carpets and dream up silent nonsensical dreams].⁸²

When the lions order the Europeans to join in a discussion on Europe's progressive women's rights and its pitfalls, an Englishman is chosen as spokesman and asks whether the exaggeration of the Oriental décor is necessary. One lion answers in defence of his author:

Der Orient [...] ist an den Luxus gewöhnt. Der Orient ist nicht so armselig wie Europa. Er ist sogar ans Ueberladene, Ueberüppige, Hyperbarocke – kurzum ans Masslose gewöhnt. Und es erscheint uns völlig gerechtfertigt, dass in einem Drama der Masslosigkeit die grossartige Dekoration mehr Spielraum einnimmt als sonstwo. (92)

[The Orient [...] is used to luxury. The Orient is not as impoverished as Europe. It is even accustomed to the ornate, the opulent and flamboyant – in short to excess. And to us it seems thoroughly justifiable that in a drama of excess, the decoration will be given more space than elsewhere.]

The next spokesman of the European audience, who criticizes the purpose of introducing the harem to Europe, is beheaded and devoured, one of many violent excesses staged towards the end of the novel.

Scheerbart elevates the dystopian Oriental tale into a utopian vision to educate the Europeans ('Studirt die orientalischen Sitten ohne Vorurtheil und führt dann bei Euch die nöthigen Reformen ein!' [Study the Oriental customs without prejudice and as a consequence introduce the necessary reforms into your own society] (73)). In order to better Europe, where men are suffering from their women's emancipation and education, the lions debate the urgent need to export the harems' culture to Europe: 'Europäer, passt auf: dieses Stück wird Euch jede Art von "freier Liebe" ein für alle Mal vergällen. Ihr sollt endlich mal Euren Weibern die Freiheitsgelüste auspumpen! Führt endlich mal den Harem in Europa ein!' [Europeans, listen: this play will mar your

⁸² Scheerbart, *Tod der Barmekiden*, p. 61.

idea of ‘free love’ forever. You should finally drain your women’s craving for freedom! Introduce the harem to Europe at last!] (32). The harem culture is portrayed as a way to safeguard social order and even artistic novelty:

Hört weiter, Europäer! Dadurch, dass der Orientale die Frauen dem öffentlichen Leben entzieht, reinigt er dieses, und es werden jene langweiligen Liebesromane, die bei Euch in Europa eine so unangenehme Rolle im Kunstleben spielen, vollständig beseitigt. Diese Liebesromane sind ja nur ein Produkt der Monogamie. (50)

[Listen further, Europeans! Because the Orientals exclude their women from public life, it is cleansed and it follows that such boring romance novels are extinct, which play such a nasty part in your cultural life in Europe. These romance novels are after all only a product of monogamy.]

Scheerbart suggests in an ironic way that innovation can be achieved through regression and a strict conservatism. He uses the Decadent Orient and satire to voice his cultural critique of a Europe that misjudged the implications of modernization.

Scheerbart targets Wilhelmine political debates on the women’s emancipation movements which had emerged in Germany since the mid-1860s. In 1894, three years before Scheerbart published his novel, the Bund deutscher Frauenvereine was formed in order to strengthen women’s position in society. The movement was met with resistance through writers such as Laura Marholm. She was a contributor to the *Freie Bühne* and the wife of Ola Hansson, both of whom were part of the Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis where Scheerbart met them.⁸³ Marholm, ‘die Gewaltige’ [the mighty one],⁸⁴ as Scheerbart calls her in one of his letters, was one of the outspoken defenders of the ‘traditional’ role of women championing woman’s fulfilment in motherhood. Her controversial book *Zur Psychologie der Frau* [*The Psychology of Woman*] states her opposition to emancipation and was published in two parts in 1897 and 1903. By provocatively ironizing such a heated debate, Scheerbart uses this highly stylized

⁸³ Rausch, ‘Eine seltsame Scheherezade’, in *Der Tod der Barmekiden* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1992), pp. 217–36 (p. 231).

⁸⁴ Scheerbart to Franz Servaes, stamped 17 September 1896, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 30.

Orientalized literature to polarize his readership. Franz Servaes recognized Scheerbart's commitment to satire as a way to stir political debate:

Paul Scheerbart wird sicherlich keinen Parlamentsbeschluß auf Einführung des Harems provozieren, er wird höchstens irgendeine 'European Harem Society' begründen und sich zu ihrem unbesoldeten 'Generaldirektor' ernennen lassen. [...] im modernen Europa ist man bekanntlich sehr ernsthaft und feierlich [...]. Es war klüglich und weislich von ihm gehandelt, den steifleinenen Europäern in orientalischer Vermummung zu kommen [...].⁸⁵

[Paul Scheerbart certainly will not provoke an Act of Parliament to decide on the introduction of the harem, he might at most found some 'European Harem Society' and have himself appointed honorary president. [...] As is well-known in modern Europe people are very serious and solemn [...]. It was wise and canny of him to tackle the Europeans in their starched suits with the help of an Oriental disguise [...].]

According to Scheerbart's belief in a 'Phantastik' as the future of literary production, he attacks the development of literature by linking it to the emancipation debates. Conventional romantic novels – intended as safe reading material to be read by married women – are an expression of the formal and moral constraints which will eventually prevent Europe's progress. The Orient and Decadence with their libertine licentiousness can remedy the political upheaval caused by women as well as the artistic 'boredom' endangering the development of literature.

The Europeans are to learn from the fatal outcome of Harun's negligence to keep his women in check and Abbasah's 'Sucht nach Freiheit' [craving for freedom], which is no more than 'Hetärenbrunst' [heat of a hetaera] (48). One of the lions enlightens the reader:

Hier im Orient wurden die Weiber im Allgemeinen so vortrefflich behandelt: man sperrt sie einfach ein. [...] Der Orient hat namentlich in der Frauenfrage schon vor vielen Jahrtausenden das entscheidende Wort gesprochen.

⁸⁵ Servaes, 'Der Anti-Europäer', p. 71; p. 74;

[Here in the Orient women overall are treated so well: one simply locks them away. [...] The Orient especially has passed its crucial verdict on the question of women's rights already centuries ago.] (48/50)

As Nina Berman argues, Scheerbart's drastic words 'draw generously on clichés about Middle Eastern societies in order to articulate emotional, sexual, and power-related desires, views on emancipation, and a critique of Germany's political and social order'.⁸⁶ Woman's worth is in her capacity as 'Rasseerhalterin' [sustainer of the race] (73). The satire employed in these examples leaves the reader uncertain as to whether Scheerbart's fierce demands are to be taken seriously or are a means of illustrating Europe's *fin-de-siècle* concerns in relation to processes of modernization.

This ambivalence continues when Scheerbart not only portrays the East as naïve, backward and grotesque but also ridicules Europe in equal measure. By introducing a satirical tone he also caricatures the Europeans as over-sensitive, degenerate and passive onlookers sitting rather lost in the desert on the 'Westseite des Syrerlandes': 'Die Europäer knittern ängstlich mit den grossen Theaterzetteln [...]. Tausend Wohlgerüche wehen berauschend aus der Alabasterhalle heraus. Die Nasen der Europäer schnuppern – so was haben sie noch nie gerochen. [...] Der blitzende Glanzzauber erscheint den Europäern ganz unfassbar' [in the West of Syria: The Europeans crinkle their big theatre programmes out of fear [...] thousand scents waft intoxicatingly from the halls of alabaster. The European noses sniff – they have never smelt anything like it. [...] This sparkling magical spell is totally incomprehensible to the Europeans] (11; 29; 73).

The frail Westerners are depicted as a degenerate species dependent on technical gadgets for survival; their eyes and ears have lost their natural purpose ('Operngucker und Schallfänger' [opera glasses and ear trumpets] (20)). If not associated with

⁸⁶ Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East*, p. 172.

technological aids, Europe is represented by similes connected to war. The lions' laughter at the Europeans' weakness 'donnert durch die syrische Wüste wie eine europäische Kanonenschlacht' [thunders through the Syrian desert like a European artillery battle] (47), and the quick scene-changes appear to the Europeans as if '[d]ie ganze arabische Wüste rast so schnell an den Europäern vorbei, als wenn die in einem europäischen Blitzzuge sässen und nicht im Syrerland' [The whole of the Arab desert dashes past the Europeans so quickly that they believe they are sitting on a European express train and not in Syria] (52). As if aware of this subversive accusation and admitting their imperial guilt, the Europeans feel uncomfortable with watching the East ('den Europäern wird ungemüthlich zu Muthe' (47)). These examples unveil Scheerbart's implied critique of the accelerated mechanization of Europe and the rearmament of Wilhelmine Germany, which in Scheerbart's view had an opposite effect to progress, namely the sabotage of a renewal of the West.

Like Wilde or Beardsley, Scheerbart demonstrates that, as Kirsten MacLeod has argued, 'satire, even self-satire, could function well as a radical counter-discourse'.⁸⁷ Scheerbart has the lions explain his satirical approach: '[d]ie aphoristische Art verlangt zu viel Scharfsinn vom Publikum [...]. Ihr müsst Euch mit Rücksicht auf das Kunstwerk, das wir aufführen, die doktrinaire Schulmeistermiene ein wenig abgewöhnen [...]. Künstler und Schulmeister vertragen sich nicht.' [aphorisms demand too much intelligence from the audience [...] for the sake of the artwork we are presenting here you have to overcome your doctrinaire pedantry [...] artist and schoolmaster are no friends] (111; 119). In contrast to Said's observations, the East is lecturing the West in this scenario. Scheerbart inverts the usual clichéd attributes; the action is happening in

⁸⁷ MacLeod, p. 71.

the Orient whilst Europe looks on passively. Unusually, the Europeans are subsumed into a nameless and mostly silent mass ('die Europäer, die ganz sprachlos sind' [the Europeans, who are absolutely speechless] (174)) and only referred to as 'die Europäer' whilst the Orientals are individualized through actual names and historical grounding.

Unlike Wilde and Symons who place the East and satire in separate spheres, Scheerbart combines the two to stage his 'Anti-Europäertum', concluding his novel: 'Der Orient ist gross, und Europa denkt jetzt über uns nach!' [The Orient is mighty, and Europe thinks about us now!] (174). 'Uns' [us] refers not to a European representation of the Orient but to the Europeans themselves, who now need to reconsider Europe's future.

In his review of the novel entitled 'Der Anti-Europäer' in *Die Zeit* in 1898, Franz Servaes, an advocate of French *décadentisme*,⁸⁸ evaluates the satire of *Der Tod der Barmekiden* as a play about the state of Europe:

in allem Andersartigen und Paradoxen ist Scheerbart wunderbar heimisch. [...] Es wird sich also hoffentlich niemand mehr wundern, daß Scheerbart auch „Anti-Europäer“ ist. [...] Europa ist ihm so was Quarkiges. Darum ist er als ganz junger Mensch schon in den Orient geflohen. Nicht in persona, selbstverständlich nicht – bloß in der Phantasie! Was würde einem Scheerbart der Orient noch sein, wenn er ihn anders als durch die Phantasie zu genießen hätte?! [...] Aber so ist der Orient wunderbar schön! [...] Und mit ebenso phantastischer wie systematischer Dialektik spielt er den Orient gegen Europa aus.⁸⁹

[Scheerbart feels truly at home with everything that is different or paradoxical [...] therefore no one, I hope, will be surprised to realise that Scheerbart is an 'Anti-European' [...] Europe to him is a mass of slurry. That is why he took flight to the Orient in his youth. Of course not for real but in his imagination! What would be left of the Orient to Scheerbart if he could enjoy it through other means than through his imagination!? [...] but this way the Orient stays miraculously beautiful! [...] And with an equally fantastical and systematic dialectic he pits the Orient against Europe.]

⁸⁸ Philip Ursprung, *Kritik und Secession: "Das Atelier" Kunstkritik in Berlin zwischen 1890 und 1897* (Basel: Schwabe, 1996), p. 161.

⁸⁹ Servaes, 'Der Anti-Europäer', pp. 69–70.

Compared to Servaes's approval of Scheerbart's hyperbolic satire, Albert Soergel and Curt Hohoff dismissed the novel in their literary history *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit* as 'aufklärerische Sozialkritik [im] orientalische[n] Kostüm' [educational social criticism [in] Oriental fancy dress].⁹⁰ Arthur Moeller van den Bruck was equally convinced that Scheerbart lacked a sense of actualities.⁹¹ Whereas Berman's argument is insightful in stating that '[for] Scheerbart the Orient was a means to express resistance to and critique of modern rationality. [...] the Orient is not the other but is, rather, the problematic self'.⁹² In that sense, Scheerbart's works exploit the East to pinpoint current inner-European political and cultural tensions.

While contemporary critics could not readily accept Scheerbart's inflated satire in which he expressed his critical views on Europe and Wilhelmine Germany, Scheerbart's perspective, however, captured the *fin-de-siècle* mood: as Fischer argues, a 'Gefühl, sich nationaler Identifizierung entziehen zu müssen, ohne sich andererseits der in Opposition stehenden Sozialdemokratie anschließen zu sollen, ein Versuch an dem bereits die Naturalisten gescheitert waren' [feeling of having to withdraw from an identification with nationalism, without having to affiliate with the social democrats in the opposition, an attempt in which the Naturalists had already failed].⁹³ Scheerbart's perception of Europe in relation to the East corresponds to Nietzsche's Orientalism and his deliberations on the make-up of Europe in terms of its opposition to, and dependency on, Asia. Ultimately, the construction of the East in *Der Tod der*

⁹⁰ Albert Soergel and Curt Hohoff, *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit. Vom Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart, Vol. II* (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1963), pp. 57–58. Soergel and Hohoff maintain that '[i]n 1897 Scheerbart was preaching to the converted with these ideas and was absolutely not in need of a disguise. As a result his novel is coltish and contrived to the point of daftness.'

⁹¹ Moeller van den Bruck, p. 31.

⁹² Berman, *Orientalismus, Kolonismus und Moderne*, p. 172.

⁹³ Fischer, p. 86.

Barmekiden illustrates how Decadence and the Orient meet under a political agenda for Europe.

Der Alte Orient: A Decadent Self-Parody

In his second Oriental phase from 1910 to 1911, Scheerbart continues to use the East as a lens through which to judge Europe. This time he directs his criticism at nineteenth-century literary Decadence, in his collection of short stories titled *Der Alte Orient*. While the satire encountered in *Der Tod der Barmekiden* ironized Europe's cultural fatigue and exploited Decadence's 'critical function' as a corrective for modernity,⁹⁴ the satire in *Der Alte Orient* comments on Scheerbart's own practice as an author writing in the Decadent tradition. The ancient Orient and Decadence appear as out-dated and displaced in Scheerbart's self-parody.

In a letter to Servaes Scheerbart announces that he has written 'ein Dutzend "Kulturnovelletten aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon"' [a dozen 'cultural novellas from Assyria, Palmyra and Babylon'].⁹⁵ Rausch and Sprengel focus on Scheerbart's seriously scientific intention to evoking his Orient through a host of nineteenth-century historical sources. Sprengel's research proves that Scheerbart had knowledge of an 1889 museum catalogue of the Islamic culture department of the Kunstgewerbemuseum in Berlin, which he interlaced with his fiction.⁹⁶ I argue that Scheerbart not only incorporated Orientalist research to give his writing academic gravitas. The incorporation of artefacts and the ancient Orient represent Scheerbart's prism through

⁹⁴ Mahoney, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Scheerbart to Franz Servaes, 5 April 1911, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, pp. 421–22 (p. 422).

⁹⁶ Rausch claims that Scheerbart's Arabic novels are based on 'solid historical and cultural research', in 'Eine seltsame Scheherezade', p. 225. Sprengel gives an in-depth analysis of the exact sources Rausch refers to, in 'Museums-Poesie. Archäologie und Ästhetik in Scheerbarts assyrisch-babylonischen Novelletten'.

which he reflects on the literary developments of his own time. He thus continues his the search he began in the 1890s with the proposition of a literary ‘Phantastik’.

Contrary to Rausch’s statement that the foreign culture is neither represented as naive nor is it deformed by irony,⁹⁷ I would suggest that Scheerbart consciously distorts the Orient. He takes the Orient – historical material is used as ‘exotische[r] Zierrat’ [exotic decoration]⁹⁸ – to parody Decadence’s artificiality and ahistoricity. This way he delivers a meta-commentary on Decadence as for example seen in Beardsley’s Decadent self-parody *Under the Hill* (1896). Much as Beardsley, in his Rococophile re-imagining of Wagner’s Venusberg as a pleasure-driven underworld, infuses his narrative with Roman and French insider jargon, Scheerbart garnishes his stories with ‘Requisiten der archäologischen Überlieferung’ [archaeological props] taken straight out of the museum’s catalogue.⁹⁹

Another German-language example of Decadent self-satire is Richard Schaukal’s (1874–1942) *Leben und Meinungen des Herrn Andreas von Balthesser, eines Dandy und Dilettanten* (1908).¹⁰⁰ Schaukal was Scheerbart’s fellow contributor to the periodicals *Die Gegenwart* and *Die Gesellschaft*; in addition, Scheerbart mentions Schaukal’s review in praise of his *Die Seeschlange* (1901) in *Die Gesellschaft*.¹⁰¹ Schaukal’s satire provides a parody of major aspects of European Decadent style complete with a nonsensical paraphrase of Wilde’s *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young* (1894). Schaukal denounces Decadent cosmopolitanism as ‘armselige Selbstgefälligkeit taubstummer “Weltbürger”, die sich nur durch eine konventionelle

⁹⁷ Rausch, ‘Eine seltsame Scheherezade’, p. 220.

⁹⁸ Sprengel, ‘Museums-Poesie’, p. 216.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 212.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Schaukal, *Leben und Meinungen des Herrn Andreas von Balthesser, eines Dandy und Dilettanten* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1908).

¹⁰¹ Scheerbart to Max Bruns, 10 March 1902, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, pp. 180–81 (p. 181). Rausch notes that the existence of such a review cannot be verified.

Gebärdensprache miteinander “verständigen” können’ [the dingy egomania of some deaf-mute ‘citizens of the world’, who can only ‘communicate’ with each other via a conventional sign language].¹⁰² Scheerbart’s short story identifies and deconstructs this sign language of European Decadence in the East.

Scheerbart’s short story ‘Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: Palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novelle’,¹⁰³ individually published in *Die Aktion* in 1911, parodies iconic Oriental *femmes fatales* (the Sphinx, Cleopatra, Salammbô, Herodias and Salomé) in the historical figure of Queen Zenobia. Apart from references to the museum’s catalogue from which he adopts the names of the characters, the story offers abundant references to the French and English canon of Decadent symbols. Similar to Beardsley and Schaukal, Scheerbart made use of satire as a stage for commentary not only on the current *Realpolitik* but also on the Decadent movement and its politics.¹⁰⁴ According to Winckler’s *Die babylonische Geisteskultur*, Zenobia perceived herself as heiress to Cleopatra and Semiramis, both of whom represent the goddess Ishtar-Astrate, the Assyrian goddess of fertility.¹⁰⁵ In Scheerbart, she is a caricature of the capricious nymph of nineteenth-century Oriental Decadence.

The story opens with the queen’s executioner, doctor and chef overlooking a Flaubertian palace with a Mallarméan ‘Schloßteich, wo die Schwäne sind’ [moat of the castle where the swans are] (59) (compare Mallarmé’s Symbolist poem ‘Le Cygne’ (1885)). They figuratively watch the sun set in the West, an allusion to Scheerbart’s

¹⁰² Schaukal, p. 150.

¹⁰³ Scheerbart, ‘Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novelle’, in *Der Alte Orient – Kulturnovellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1999). All references are to this edition. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

¹⁰⁴ See also Linda C. Dowling, “‘Venus and Tannhäuser’: Beardsley’s Satire of Decadence’, *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, 8:1 (1978), 26–41.

¹⁰⁵ Hugo Winckler, *Die babylonische Geisteskultur: in ihren Beziehungen zur Kulturentwicklung der Menschheit* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1907), pp. 117–18.

own perspective on the decay of the West (55). Zenobia reigns as queen supreme, known for her love of ‘Konfitüren und das gute Gebäck’ [jam and good pastries] (55), which earned her the title of ‘Konfitüren-Königin’ [queen of jam] (56). In a reference to Wilde’s Salome, the narrator relates that the queen loves men’s heads even more than tasty pastries (56), and hence she also is known as the ‘Männerkopf-Königin’ [queen of men’s heads] (57). This juxtaposition of Zenobia’s refined taste for exotic, yet banal breakfast items (‘Zwieback aus Damaskus [...] mit sidonischer Erdbeerfüllung’ [zwieback from Damascus [...] with a Sidonian strawberry filling] (57)) and violence is representative of Scheerbart’s view on Decadence as a product of a ‘civilization grown over-luxurious, over-inquiring’.¹⁰⁶ Zenobia embodies Decadence as a comical crossover between periods and styles, East and West. Having just woken up at sunset in a very Decadent fashion, and like Salome ‘mit finsterer Miene’ [with a sombre look] (56) she appears solemnly on the terrace only to suddenly demand ‘ganz wild und heftig’ [all furious and fierce] (56) to have the doctor beheaded. While portrayed as cruel and unpredictable, Zenobia faints on seeing blood. This way, Scheerbart undermines the ideal of a bloodthirsty *femme fatale* embodied by the Oriental enchantresses.

This Decadent queen’s comical flaw is her sensitivity to violence: “‘Ich will beim Kopfabhauen zusehen.’ [...] Die Königin Zenobia fiel bei der Prozedur abermals in Ohnmacht’ [‘I want to witness the beheading.’ [...] During the procedure the queen Zenobia swooned yet again] (57/58). As a result Scheerbart allegorically ridicules the supposed innovative power of Decadent literature; its most famous icons are quite literally ‘ohnmächtig wie die Königin’ [powerless like the queen] (58) and fickle figures susceptible to parody. Regretting her hunger for violence, in the end the queen is taken

¹⁰⁶ Symons, ‘The Decadent Movement’, p. 859.

captive and redelivered ‘im Triumphzuge durch die Straßen Roms’ [in triumphal procession through the streets of Rome] (59) to the starting point of Western Decadence. The satirical review of the 1890s aesthetics of Decadence is another step in Scheerbart’s search for modern aesthetics in the East.

Scheerbart’s Journalism: The East as the Way into Modernity

Comparable to Victorian Egyptomania in London, Berlin had experienced a revival of Babylonian culture from the 1890 to the 1930s. Scheerbart’s art-historical journalism meant that he had his share of the ‘Babylon-Boom’ which incited a vision of Berlin as a Decadent and cosmopolitan metropolis. The myth of Babylon was a rich source for cultural creation in literature, film and cultural criticism. The ‘Babylon-Boom’ revived Biblical notions of a vibrant internationalism, the Whore of Babylon as another figure of the Decadent *femme fatale* and indeed Salome as ‘daughter of Babylon’, architectural wonders such as the hanging Gardens of Semiramis and pompous courts ruled by the despots Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar. Scheerbart’s predilection for such a modern antiquity is realized in his cultural journalism.¹⁰⁷ There the Decadent Orient is remodelled into a Modernist utopia built on a fundamental cosmopolitanism.

Scheerbart’s writing, like that of Wilde and Symons, seeks to revitalize Western literature by synthesizing Western traditions with the ancient Orient. In particular, Scheerbart’s art historical journalism for *Das Atelier: Organ für Kunst und Kunstgewerbe* (1890–1897), for which he wrote twelve articles from 1891 to 1893, is key to explaining how far Scheerbart’s East provides a utopian response to Modernism.

¹⁰⁷ Andrea Polaschegg and Michael Weichenhan, eds., *Berlin – Babylon, Eine deutsche Faszination* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2017), p. 8.

Das Atelier was founded by Hans Rosenhagen as a critical voice to support the Berlin Secession. It popularized the English Arts and Crafts Movement throughout the 1880s in Germany and initiated the formation of the Deutsche Werkbund in 1907.¹⁰⁸ As evident from his articles, Scheerbart was not an academically trained Arabist but he was aware of academic Orientalist activity in Berlin. Scheerbart's professed interest in literary sources as well as art historical accounts, suggests a thorough familiarity with the history of the ancient Orient. He lists among his fictional reading on the Orient, a translation of *Tausend und eine Nacht*, and Flaubert's *Salammô*. Rausch's commentary on *Der Tod der Barmekiden* extends the list to include Gustav Weil's *Geschichte der Chalifen* (1848) and Hugo Winckler's *Die babylonische Geisteskultur* (1907), books by the Egyptologist and writer of Oriental fiction Georg Ebers and the Assyriologist Friedrich Delitzsch.

In Scheerbart's preface to *Machtspässe*, his first Oriental collection of three thematically connected novellas written from 1891 until 1894 and first published in 1904, he alerts younger generations of poets to the wealth of literary material provided by the Orient:

der alte Orient (im weitesten Sinne!) sollte dichterisch mehr in den Vordergrund gerückt werden, damit die Geschichten aus der Gegenwart mehr in den Hintergrund geraten [...]. Schließlich werden wir durch eine bessere Bekanntschaft mit dem Orient auch vor einer Überschätzung dieses Orients bewahrt werden. [...] es genügt nicht mehr, sich auf einen mißverstandenen Orient zu berufen, wenn man etwas als maßgebend hinstellen möchte [...] die Beschäftigung mit dem alten Orient ist wie keine andre geeignet, unser Leben wieder religiösen Materien und Motiven und Perspektiven zu nähern.¹⁰⁹

[the ancient Orient (in the broadest sense!) should come more to the fore so that stories of the present may be eclipsed more [...]. Eventually a closer familiarity with the Orient will prevent us from an overestimation of this Orient. [...] it is no longer enough to invoke a misunderstood Orient, if one wants to depict something as authoritative [...]]

¹⁰⁸ Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁹ Paul Scheerbart, 'Vorwort', in *Machtspässe: Arabische Novellen mit Federzeichnungen von Paul Scheerbart* (Munich: Klaus G. Renner, 1981), pp. 5–7 (pp. 6–7).

the preoccupation with the ancient Orient is like no other suited to put our lives again into contact with religious matters, motives and perspectives.]

In this contradictory advice Scheerbart encourages writers to creatively exploit the East in its spirituality, yet he warns against too light-hearted an approach to its cultural heritage. Scheerbart's enthusiasm for Sufist Islamic mysticism influenced this perception. As we have seen, Scheerbart's research on the East tries to be historically accurate, as can be seen in his journalism, yet services the production of fictional works.

To that end and comparable to Wilde, Scheerbart also made the East accessible via art history and archaeological artefacts. His review 'Das ägyptische Museum zu Berlin' (1891/1892) for *Das Atelier* documents his interest in archaeology despite Julius Hart's comment that:

[v]or der Wissenschaft, vor geschichtlichen Tatsachen hat er so wenig Respekt wie nur möglich, aber kraft seiner Einbildung weiß er im ältesten Ägypten wie im ältesten Arabien, in China wie in Indien aufs Genaueste Bescheid und gibt die tiefsten, wie auch die neusten Aufschlüsse über die verborgensten Kulturzustände aller Zeiten und Länder.¹¹⁰

[He has little, if any, respect for scientific or historical facts, yet thanks to his imagination he is in the know about the most ancient Egypt and Arabia, about China and India. He gives the most in-depth and the most up-to-date explorations on the arcane cultures of all times and all countries.]

Thanks to his activity as art critic for *Das Atelier*, Scheerbart on the contrary was aware of international archaeology, as his competent remarks on utensils found by 'Mr. Petrie' show.¹¹¹ Accordingly he welcomed the re-opening of the Egyptian Museum in Berlin as the combination of Near Eastern and Egyptian collection which 'giebt [*sic*] uns jetzt die Berechtigung, mit Stolz von einem *altorientalischen Museum*

¹¹⁰ Julius Hart, 'Briefe über die Literatur der Gegenwart – Der ironische Ästhetismus Paul Scheerbarts', p. 40.

¹¹¹ Paul Scheerbart, 'Das ägyptische Museum zu Berlin', *Das Atelier*, 2:35 (1891/1892), 4–5.

in Berlin zu sprechen [gives us reason to proudly speak of an *Ancient Oriental Museum in Berlin*].¹¹²

Scheerbart's views on Oriental art parallel Wilde's, especially in regards to both their preoccupation with ornamentalia and architecture in their writing. In his article 'Hat die Ornamentkunst jemals nach Originalität gestrebt?' [Did ornamental art ever aspire to be original?] (1891)¹¹³ for *Das Atelier* Scheerbart's starting point is an archaeological interest in the influence of the East on European crafts. Scheerbart delineates the correlation between Eastern and Western culture, which originates in 'Babylon und das Nilthal' [Babylon and the Nile Valley] and evolved in Greece. Hellenic culture in turn adopted 'viele Formen von Egypten [*sic*] und die übrigen aus Asien' [many forms from Egypt and the rest from Asia]. Scheerbart finds that '[d]ie Hieroglyphen der ältesten Culturperioden sind die ursprünglichen Ornamentformen, die später nur variirt wurden' [the hieroglyphics of the oldest cultural epochs are the original ornaments, which ever since only have been varied] (99).

As a result Scheerbart derives nineteenth-century Symbolism in literature and art directly from Eastern artefacts. In his view, the Eastern signs or 'Göttersymbole' [divine symbols] (98) preserved a sacredness that Western letter signs have forfeited. Accordingly, even Oriental words and scripture are imbued with a pictorial sense of beauty and holiness: 'Die arabischen Buchstaben nehmen sich egyptischen Hieroglyphen gegenüber durchaus nicht fremdartig aus' [the Arabic letters strongly resemble the Egyptian hieroglyphics] (100).

¹¹² Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹³ Paul Scheerbart, 'Hat die Ornamentkunst jemals nach Originalität gestrebt?', *Das Atelier*, 1:24 (1890/1891), 3–5; reprinted in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, X.1*, pp. 95–105. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

As Peter Sprengel's research has found, Scheerbart's fictional writing drew on the catalogue of the Near Eastern collection of today's Pergamon-Museum, which he reviewed for *Das Atelier* in 1892. Artefacts of this exhibition appear in several of the short stories, for example in 'Marduk', in *Der Alte Orient*.¹¹⁴ Donna K. Heizer underscores the Orientalist implications of this practice of incorporation:

Authors often expressed an ambivalence toward the Orient which arose out of the paradoxical contrast between the colonial politics of Germany and the intensive exploration of Asian cultures conducted by German intellectuals. Many German authors who wanted to empathize with and relate to Asian cultures maintained a critical stance toward colonialism; but what they actually wrote about the East often revealed their inability to recognize their own submersion in the colonial mentality of the age.¹¹⁵

The convergence of early archaeological research and an imaginary resurrection of the ancient Orient inspired by exotic artefacts mark Scheerbart's quest for a German literary identity as guided by submersion in Eastern cultural history ignorant of colonial actualities. In writing what Sprengel called 'Museums-Poesie' [poetry of the museum], Scheerbart reviewed the ancient civilizations of the East to find a way forward into modernity.

In his 1912 article titled 'Lemurien', Scheerbart synthesizes academic references with the myth of an Oriental utopia.¹¹⁶ In the essay, Scheerbart deflates the arguments put forward by the historian of the Middle East Julius Braun, that the fundamentals of European art and religion originated in Egypt and then travelled via the Semites and Greeks to the Germanic people. Scheerbart's refutation claims that humankind must be even older than Egyptian civilization. Egyptian, as well as Babylonian, culture are to be considered a 'fertige Kultur' [accomplished civilization]

¹¹⁴ Sprengel, 'Museums-Poesie', p. 211.

¹¹⁵ Donna K. Heizer, *Jewish-German Identity in the Orientalist Literature of Else Lasker-Schüler, Friedrich Wolf, and Franz Werfel* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996), pp. 22–23.

¹¹⁶ Paul Scheerbart, 'Lemurien', in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.2*, pp. 668–79. Hereafter, page numbers are provided in the main body of the text.

(669) and therefore have presented a conundrum to academic discourse ever since, as Scheerbart emphasizes. Scheerbart believes the answer lies in the Sumerian culture that must have preceded these accomplished civilizations. It thrived before 3000 BC and then declined: ‘die Legende vom Turmbau zu Babel weist schon darauf hin’ [the legend of the Tower of Babel already gives it away] (671).

Scheerbart’s argument offers a curious mixture of Biblical exegeses and Orientalist research by Oscar Peschel (1826–1875), who was chair of geography at the University of Leipzig. Peschel explained the racial diversity in Madagascar by the prehistoric existence of a sunken continent called Lemuria located in the Indian Ocean and east of Arabia. Scheerbart takes this Oriental imaginary Atlantis to be the home of the Sumerians and the ‘Wiege der menschlichen Kultur’ [cradle of human civilization] (673) even before Egypt and Babylon. Scheerbart supports his arguments by citing Hugo Winckler, professor of Oriental languages at the University of Berlin (from 1904), who wrote extensively on Assyrian cuneiform script and on Old Testament subjects.

Indeed, Lemuria for Scheerbart becomes the Oriental ideal of a prehistoric cosmopolitan pluralist society: ‘Sumerisches finden wir in Amerika, in China und Neuseeland. Das heißt: vor 7000 bis 8000 Jahren hat es schon einen Weltverkehr gegeben; “unser” Weltverkehr ist nicht der erste “Kultur Gipfel” [We find Sumerian subjects in America, in China and New Zealand. That is to say: 7000 to 8000 years ago there was already cosmopolitan exchange; “our” cosmopolitanism is not the first “pinnacle of culture”] (677). Scheerbart’s vision highlights the mutual influence of cultures and puts Europe’s intellectual monopoly on cosmopolitanism in perspective: ‘Wir müssen somit “unsere” Kultur ein wenig anders einschätzen als bisher; Babylon und die Sumerer dürfen nicht übersehen werden.’ [We therefore must view ‘our’

civilization a little differently than before; Babylon and the Sumerians must not be overlooked] (677).

This revaluation of cosmopolitanism as having originated in the East makes Scheerbart question the concept of the augmenting nationalism around 1900. His journalism and prose fiction highlight the cosmopolitan origin of German culture and oppose a notion of ‘Vaterland’ which gained an increasingly prominent status in the late-Wilhelmine era. Derived from Winckler’s 1907 treatise on *Die Babylonische Geisteskultur*, Scheerbart motivates his oppositional views through an astral ‘Panbabylonianism’:

In Babylon war der Mond ‘der Vater der Götter’. Die Erde (das heißt das jeweilige Heimatland) war ein Spiegelbild des Himmels und als solches verehrungswürdig. [...] Nun fragt sich, ob wir heute noch jedes Land als Spiegelbild des Himmels auffassen sollen. Wir können das wohl, ohne zu erröten, aber dann können wir doch in unserer Zeit nicht mehr ein Land über das andere stellen – alle sind ja Spiegelbilder des Himmels. Die Begeisterung für das ‘Vaterland’ muß somit stark gedämpft werden [...]. (678)

[In Babylon the moon was regarded as the ‘father of the gods’. The Earth (that is to say each respective homeland) was a mirror image of the sky and as such it was worthy of worship. [...] Now I wonder whether today we still should consider each nation to be a reflection of the heavens. We might do that, without blushing, but as a consequence we cannot prefer one country to another in our times – as all of them are reflections of heaven. The enthusiasm for the ‘Fatherland’ therefore must be drastically muted [...].]

Scheerbart’s utopian Orient follows the ancient Babylonian formula which defies a hierarchy of cultures (‘Himmelsbild gleich Weltbild’ [firmament equals worldview]). This inclusive vision, which dominates Scheerbart’s Oriental short fiction between 1900 and 1915, thus becomes a remedy against the *Hurra-Patriotismus* [jingoism] which characterized the mood of euphoria in pre-war Wilhelmine Germany as described for example by Heinrich Mann’s novel *Der Untertan* (1914, published 1918).

As early as 1903 Scheerbart and his friend Erich Mühsam (1878–1934), a German-Jewish anarchist poet, endeavoured to found an anti-militarist, satirical

newspaper called *Das Vaterland* in reaction against these developments. A letter to Herwarth Walden, editor of *Der Sturm*, evinces the ubiquitous irony that constitutes Scheerbart's writing as oppositional:

Geehrter Herr! Sie werden mit uns der Meinung sein, dass es so nicht weiter geht. Was zu viel ist, ist zu viel. Es geht eben nicht. Deshalb werden wir eine neue Tages-Zeitung gründen, 'Das Vaterland' soll sie heissen. [...] Mit urdeutschem Herzensgruss [...].¹¹⁷

[Honoured Sir! You will agree with us that things cannot continue the way they are. Enough is enough. It simply does not work. That is why we will found a new daily newspaper, it will be called 'Fatherland'. [...] With totally German greetings straight from the heart [...].

While in 1891 Scheerbart declared the 'Phantastik' to be a specifically German art ['spezifisch *deutsche Kunst*'], he reiterated that '[d]ie Künstler sind nicht dazu da, die Propaganda für die engherzigen nationalistischen Rassomanen zu 'vertiefen'' [artists are not there to 'engross' the propaganda for the narrow-minded nationalist racists].¹¹⁸ Scheerbart's vision of a brotherhood of writers is global: 'unser Club erstreckt sich über den ganzen Erdball' [our club extends over the whole globe].¹¹⁹

Scheerbart's series of articles concerned with German militarization prove a more serious engagement with questions of national identity in relation to other cultures and the necessity of future warfare.¹²⁰ In Scheerbart's technological dystopian perspective, nineteenth-century naval warfare and ground offensives will be replaced by a more violent impact of aerial warfare. In his articles and a pamphlet of 1909 on the disintegration of European military tradition, he argues for the redundancy of such a

¹¹⁷ Scheerbart and Mühsam to Herwarth Walden, 25 August 1903, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 221.

¹¹⁸ Scheerbart, 'Die Phantastik in der Malerei', in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.1*, pp. 58–69 (p. 69). Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall*, p. 170.

¹¹⁹ Scheerbart to Franz Servaes, stamped 17 September 1896, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 30

¹²⁰ Scheerbart's articles are: 'Was nützt uns der Militarismus? Eine Sozialpolitische Betrachtung', *Das Blaubuch*, 1 (1906), 212–13; 'Luftmilitarismus', *Die Gegenwart*, 38 (1909), 722. Parts of this article were subsequently published as a pamphlet: *Die Entwicklung des Luftmilitarismus und die Auflösung der europäischen Landheere, Festungen und Seeflotten* (Berlin: Osterheld, 1909); 'Der Militarismus und die Luftschiffahrt', *Der Demokrat. Wochenschrift für freiheitliche Politik Kunst und Wissenschaft*, 2 (1910), 164–65; 'Der Fortschritt im Luftmilitarismus', *Die Gegenwart*, 40 (1911), 391–92.

new European war, which could be achieved by the collapse of national boundaries:

Anfänglich wollte ich die ganze Militaristentragödie in einem neu zu begründenden Witzblatt [*Das Vaterland*] ‘bearbeiten’. Aber – mir ist bei eingehender Beschäftigung mit dem fatalen Gegenstande der Humor ausgegangen – [...]. An den grossen Völkerfrieden glaube ich nicht. Wohl aber glaube ich daran, dass man in Europa Frieden herstellen kann [...]. Die vereinigten Staaten von Europa bildeten Jahrhunderte hindurch einen vielbelächelten Utopie. Dem Dynamitkriege gegenüber bekommt diese Utopie einen durchaus realisierbaren Boden – dem die lächerliche Seite bald fehlen wird.¹²¹

[Initially I wanted to ‘treat’ this whole tragedy of militarism in a yet to be founded satirical paper. However – pondering over this fatal topic has caused me to lose my sense of humour – [...]. I do not believe in the great Peace of the Nations. Yet I do believe that peace can be established within Europe [...]. The United States of Europe have been regarded as a much-ridiculed utopia for centuries. Faced with a dynamite war, this utopia becomes a much more realizable thing – soon losing its comical side.]

In reaction to the bleak outlook prophesying an immediate armed conflict in Europe, Scheerbart’s architectural vision of *Glasarchitektur* suggests in its Decadent Orientalism an alternative model to nationalist exclusivity. Nineteenth-century Decadent aesthetics and the East supply the building blocks of a modern cosmopolitan society.

¹²¹ Scheerbart, *Die Entwicklung des Luftmilitarismus*, p. 28 ; p. 37; p. 38.

Glasarchitektur

Scheerbart's *Glasarchitektur* is invested in highlighting the ethical effects of aesthetic surroundings. First published as an article in *Der Sturm* in 1914, *Glasarchitektur* promotes not only a rebuilding of cosmopolitanism through literature, but also through real-life architecture looking eastwards.¹²²

Die Erdoberfläche würde sich sehr verändern, wenn überall die Backsteinarchitektur von der Glasarchitektur verdrängt würde. Es wäre so, als umkleidete sich die Erde mit einem Brillanten- und Emailschnuck. Die Herrlichkeit ist gar nicht auszudenken. Und wir hätten dann auf der Erde überall Köstlicheres als die Gärten aus tausend und einer Nacht. Wir hätten dann ein Paradies auf der Erde und brauchten nicht sehnsüchtig nach dem Paradiese im Himmel auszuschaun.

[The face of the earth would be much altered if brick architecture were ousted by glass architecture. It would be as if the earth were adorned with sparkling jewels and enamels. Such glory is unimaginable. All over the world it would be as splendid as in the gardens of the Arabian Nights. We should then have a paradise on earth, and no need to watch in longing expectation for the paradise in heaven.] (29/38)

Scheerbart's commitment to Eastern mysticism links his writing to the Arts and Crafts Movement's zeal to reform the Western arts. By the 1880s, John Ruskin's revival of the Gothic and William Morris's social critique of industrialism via the Arts and Crafts Movement in England had already endorsed the ethical function of architecture and decorative art. While the Arts and Crafts Movement championed medievalism, Scheerbart in a similar vein admired ancient Oriental craftsmanship and the abstract ornamentation, which largely replaced figurative illustration in the Semitic and Arabic arts. His review on 'Orientalische Teppiche' [Oriental carpets] in the Kunstgewerbemuseum highlights his preference for the Orient in comparison to neo-

¹²² Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur* (Berlin: Verlag der Sturm, 1914). All references are to this edition. Hereafter, corresponding page numbers for original and translations are provided in the main body of the text. Parts of the book were first published as 'Die Glasarchitektur' in *Das Atelier*, 3 (1892/1893); all translations are by James Palmes taken from *Glass! Love!! Perpetual motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbart Reader*, ed. by Christine Burgin and Josiah McElheny (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), pp. 20–92.

classical Greek ornament: ‘Wir stehen nicht mehr im Banne des Realismus, das fantastische Banner der Mystik ward wieder hervorgeholt. Die Orientalistik möchte dieser zum Siege verhelfen [...]’. [We are no longer under the spell of Realism, the fantastic banner of mysticism has once again been raised. Orientalism wants to help it to its victory [...]].¹²³

It is interesting to note the transnational dimension of Scheerbart’s promotion of the Orient as the way into modernity. William Richard Lethaby’s (1857–1931) book of 1891, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth*, drew attention to the fundamental importance of ancient Eastern cosmology to European architecture. Lethaby traces the origins of Symbolist and Modernist architecture back to the occult cultures of the Egyptians, the Arabs and the Chinese.¹²⁴ Lethaby, a co-founder of the Arts and Crafts Exhibition Society, like Scheerbart resorts to Oriental mysticism to find purpose behind structure and form. Lethaby identified an ‘egalitarian symbolism’ inherent in Eastern designs.¹²⁵ Like Lethaby, the British artists of the Decadence were influenced by the Orientalism of Arthur Heygate Mackmurdo’s designs, one of the most progressive architects of the Arts and Crafts Movement and Wilde’s editor for his contributions to the *Hobby Horse* in the 1880s.¹²⁶ The turn to the Orient thus marked at once a departure from the nineteenth-century Decadent interest in pure surface and artificiality emptied of purposeful application. At the same time the appreciation of Oriental crafts informed Scheerbart’s outlook on innovation and modernity, which he elaborated on further in *Glasarchitektur*.

¹²³ Scheerbart cited in Rausch, *Von Danzig ins Weltall*, p. 89.

¹²⁴ Harry Francis Mallgrave, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 176.

¹²⁵ Godfrey Rubens, ‘Introduction’, in William R. Lethaby, *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (London: The Architectural Press, 1974), pp. v–xix (p. xvi).

¹²⁶ Mallgrave, p. 176.



Fig.16 Anonymous photographer, Bruno Taut, *Glashaus* (interior view 'Ornamentsaal'), Cologne Werkbund Exhibition, 1914.

Glasarchitektur is both a theoretical and practical manifesto for Modernist architecture based on Arabic architectural principles; but it is also a Decadent literary text reminiscent of Wilde's lectures on interior design and the decorative arts. In 111 paragraphs Scheerbart conceptualizes glass, especially coloured glass as produced by Eastern civilizations, as the material of the future, which will bind societies together ('Das Glas bringt uns die neue Zeit [...]') [Glass heralds a new tomorrow [...]].¹²⁷ Each individual house is designed as a private cathedral. Scheerbart envisions the buildings as furnished with stained glass windows based on the traditional application of coloured glass by ancient Babylonian and Assyrian religions (118). Similar to Symons's meditations on the mosque in Constantinople, the coloured glass thus gains sacral, but also a political significance. Being transparent, it contributes to the peaceful communication between neighbours, so that '[d]as neue Glas-Milieu' [the new glass environment] according to Scheerbart 'wird den Menschen vollkommen umwandeln' [will completely transform mankind] (90).

Scheerbart's friend the Expressionist architect Bruno Taut (1880–1938) hailed Scheerbart in his note 'Ex Oriente Lux' as the guardian spirit ('Unser Schutzgeist, Paul Scheerbart, soll uns führen') of a new age of quite literally enlightened German architecture, responsible for the 'Auferstehung der Kunst' [resurrection of art].¹²⁸ Scheerbart's text echoes Wilde's affinity to architectural writing. Taut even characterized Scheerbart as 'Architekturdichter' [poet of architecture].¹²⁹ Taut, who

¹²⁷ Scheerbart to Bruno Taut, 10 February 1914, cited in 'Glashausbriefe', *Frühlicht*, 1:3 (1920), 45–48, (p. 47), supplement to *Stadtbaukunst Alter und Neuer Zeit*, ed. by Bruno Taut. Trans. by Anne Posten and Laura Lindgren in *Glass! Love!! Perpetual motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbart Reader*, pp. 130–45 (p. 136).

¹²⁸ Bruno Taut, 'Ex Oriente Lux. Ein Aufruf an die Architekten', *Das Hohe Ufer*, 1:1 (1919), 15–18. See also: Esra Akcan, 'Toward a Cosmopolitan Ethics in Architecture: Bruno Taut's Translations out of Germany', *New German Critique*, 33:3 (2006), 7–39.

¹²⁹ Taut, 'Glashausbriefe', p. 45.

emigrated to Japan and Turkey in the 1930s, built a *Glashaus* according to Scheerbart's programmatic vision for the Werkbundausststellung in Cologne in May 1914, a late reprise of the London Great Exhibition which showcased the Crystal Palace in 1851 (fig. 16).¹³⁰ Glass, as medium between materiality and immateriality, allows the new architecture to capture light, transforming buildings, cities and eventually the whole planet into a jewel-like 'Wunderweltlaterne' [Marvel-world-lantern] (29/38).

While Wilde on his lecture tour through America in 1882 considered wood to be 'the universal material',¹³¹ Scheerbart's German approach thirty-two years later embraced the advances of modernity: 'Holz muß vermieden werden [...]. Es paßt eben einfach nicht mehr in die Situation' [wood is to be avoided [...]. It is no longer appropriate] (18/32). It is only by fusing Modernist technology and Oriental hand-crafted 'original art' that Europe has a chance to reinvent itself as an international society at breaking-point and overcome its own decadence reflected in its crumbling architecture (Venice, the urban symbol of Decadence according to Scheerbart, should be rebuilt entirely in glass and steel).¹³²

In 1933, Walter Benjamin in his reflections on Scheerbart even accredited the Marxist revolutionary potential of a transparent society without class inherent in this vision. He notes in his essay 'Experience and Poverty' that Scheerbart 'placed the greatest value on housing his "people" – and, following this model, his fellow citizens – in buildings befitting their station, in adjustable, moveable glass-covered dwellings of

¹³⁰ Leo Ikelaar, ed., *Paul Scheerbart und Bruno Taut: Zur Geschichte einer Bekanntschaft. Scheerbarts Briefe der Jahre 1913–1914 an Gottfried Heinersdorff, Bruno Taut und Herwarth Walden* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996), p. 50.

¹³¹ Wilde, 'The House Beautiful' (1882), in Kevin H. F. O' Brien, "'The House Beautiful': A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde's American Lecture', *Victorian Studies*, 17:4 (1974), 395–418 (p. 404).

¹³² See also: Jennifer Scappettone, *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), pp. 183–84.

the kind since built by Loos and Le Corbusier. [...] Glass is, in general, the enemy of secrets. It is also the enemy of possession'.¹³³

For Scheerbart, culture and architecture are directly co-dependent: '[u]nsere Kultur ist gewissermaßen ein Produkt unsrer Architektur' [Our culture is effectively the product of our architecture] (11/26). Paragraph twenty of *Glasarchitektur* illustrates this understanding. Titled 'Hellas ohne Glas, Orient mit Ampeln und Majolikafliesen' [Ancient Greece without glass, the East with ampullæ and majolica tiles], it denominates the Middle East as the origin of glass-art:

schon vor der hellenischen Kultur gab es in den Ländern am Euphrat und Tigris viele bunte Glasampeln und glänzende Majolikafliesen. Schon um 1000 vor Christus. Der vorderasiatische Orient ist also die sogenannte Wiege der Glaskultur.

[before the Hellenic civilization there were already many colourful glass ampullæ and lustrous majolica tiles in the countries bordering the Euphrates and Tigris, a thousand years before Christ. The Near East is thus the so-called cradle of glass culture.] (31/40)

Even compared to America's 'Riesenbauten' [giant buildings], Europe appears 'zu konservativ und zu langsam' [too conservative and slow] (87/72). Although Scheerbart's architectural fantasy is imbued with socio-political intentions, it is still invested in the idea of decadence as a concept of regeneration. He concludes with a Nietzschean coda that decadence is not to be fought or rejected as it is 'just as necessary to life as its progress':¹³⁴

Wir stehen nicht am Ende einer Kulturepoche – sondern am Anfang einer solchen. [...] Am Alten hängen – das ist ja wohl in manchen Dingen eine ganz gute Sache; wenigstens wird das Alte dadurch erhalten. Wir wollen auch am Alten hängen – die Pyramiden im alten Ägypten sollen ganz bestimmt nicht abgeschafft werden. Aber auch das Neue wollen wir erstreben – mit allen Kräften, die uns zu Gebote stehen [...].

[We are not at the end of a cultural period – but at the beginning of one. [...] to cling to the old is in many cases a good thing; in this way at any rate the old is preserved. We, too, want to cling to the old – the pyramids of ancient Egypt should most certainly not

¹³³ Benjamin, 'Experience and Poverty', pp. 733–34.

¹³⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 32.

be abolished. But we also want to strive after the new, with all the resources at our disposal [...]. (123/90)

Conclusion

Scheerbart pioneers an idea of cosmopolitan German Decadence by continuing and yet renewing a line of French and British literary engagement with the East. In Moeller van den Bruck's words Scheerbart's literature, hovering between the centuries, is characterized by the 'moderne europäisch-antieuropäische Scheerbartsinn' [modern European-anti-European ethos of Scheerbart].¹³⁵ Rather like Symons, Scheerbart exercises in his 'Anti-Europäertum' an inverse form of Orientalism by overstating the achievements of the ancient East. Scheerbart as a theorist of culture constructs the East as a second home, a home for art as *Das Paradies. Die Heimat der Kunst [Paradise: Homeland of Art]* (1893) the title of his first publication, literally proclaims. As I have shown in this chapter German literary Decadence exists, comparable to other European Decadent movements, in its Orientalizing texts; Scheerbart combines several traits of the European Decadence: the Orientalizing (as seen in Baudelaire, Gautier, Nietzsche, Wilde and Symons), self-parody (Wilde and Beardsley), and the interest in Symbolist 'surface' writing (Pater, Mallarmé). Scheerbart's work thus exemplifies how the Decadents in Europe, being themselves in- and outsiders of their respective societies' establishments, actively participated in Orientalist research, whilst equally trying to defend the non-European.

¹³⁵ Moeller van den Bruck, p. 30.

Scheerbart sees in the ‘Phantastik’, a specifically German art, a progressive formative aesthetic rather than a movement describing cultural decline. The fantastic art with its ‘Farbenorgien und Lichteffekten, mit seinen Wundergestalten und allen überirdischen Reizen’ [with its orgies of colour and light effects, with its fabulous creatures and its supernatural appeal], will bind ‘Orient und Occident’ [East and West].¹³⁶ Scheerbart’s image of the Orient unfolding in a first phase 1891–1897 (*Machtspässe, Tarub, Der Tod der Barmekiden*) and a second phase 1910–1914 (*Der Alte Orient* and *Glasarchitektur*), is paradoxical. It cannot decide between an attachment to earlier nineteenth-century Oriental fantasies that include all the clichés of harems, violent despots and sensual danger as criticized by Said; and yet Scheerbart envisions an enlightened, spiritual and practical Orient that will be the saving grace for a decadent Europe facing its downfall. My examples confirm but extend Mahoney’s and Sherry’s observations of Decadence as a critical, even political tool in early Modernism. The East for Scheerbart becomes the place in which Decadence and Modernism exist as ‘dual names for [a] joint condition.’¹³⁷ Scheerbart’s Orientalism demonstrates Decadence’s persistence in modernity. Scheerbart’s Decadent satire, his cosmopolitanism, and his political scepticism of Europe reinvent Decadence as a productive corrective strategy to oppose a disintegration of Western culture in modernity.

In an analogy, the ancient East and Decadence alike become instrumental in rethinking modernity and German progress more profoundly. Scheerbart’s Orient, composed of the remote past as well as the artefacts arriving in Berlin at the turn of the century, presents itself a means of innovation. In *Glasarchitektur* Scheerbart’s Orient

¹³⁶ Scheerbart, ‘Die Phantastik in der Malerei’, p. 69.

¹³⁷ Sherry, p. 34.

expresses the necessity of collaboration and Decadent eccentricity to bring forth modernity:

Jede vernünftige Idee wird nach meiner festen Überzeugung in vielen Köpfen immer zu gleicher Zeit erscheinen und auch in der krausesten Verzerrung; man sollte sich also nicht so sorglos über das Verdrehte und Verrückte aussprechen; es ist zumeist ein Echo von ganz Vernünftigem. Im Orient wird der Verrückte und auch der Wahnsinnige auf freiem Fuß belassen und im Volke als Prophet verehrt.

[I am convinced that every constructive idea will appear in many heads at the same time and also in the strangest distortions; one should therefore not speak carelessly about what is seemingly confused and crazy; it generally is an echo of reason. In the East the madman is left at liberty and honoured as a prophet.] (42/48)

Scheerbart is mostly side-lined by today's literary history and mainly remembered by the Scheerbart-Gesellschaft, founded in 1929. Yet his contemporaries acknowledged him as an author ahead of his time, whose literature and journalism detected the epochal decay of the West in the early twentieth century as early as 1908, long before the First World War: 'Europa ist noch ganz ruhig – das ist aber die Ruhe vor dem *Sturm*' [Europe is yet quite peaceful – but that is only the calm before the *storm*].¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Scheerbart to Mühsam, 10 August 1908, in *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 356.

IV. ‘Ex septentrione lux’: From Stefan George’s Cosmopolitan Empire to *Das Neue Reich*

Als ich im Osten um die Krone rang –

Stefan George, *Algabal* (1892)

Introduction

While Scheerbart’s utopian vision of the East warned against a European catastrophe culminating in a war of the nations, the advocates of a renewal of German culture increasingly favoured the slogan ‘Ex septentrione lux’ [the light comes from the North]. The future of European culture instead of coming from the East, ‘ex Oriente’, as Classical and Romantic traditions promoted, would be determined by a Nordic race. Stefan George was one of the most important representatives of the German conservative revolution that is considered to have paved the way into nationalism. As a poet, George remains one of the most controversial German writers associated with literary Decadence and German Nazism. Born and raised in the German city of Bingen, near the French border, he was a successful and respected poet by his mid-twenties. On his many travels through Europe between 1880 and 1900, he socialized with leading figures of the Decadence such as Mallarmé, Verlaine and Hofmannsthal. These early cosmopolitan encounters led to the establishment of his own poetic network called the George-Kreis and the publication of the *Blätter für die Kunst* (1892–1919) [Hereafter *BfdK*]. This elitist circle of young writers opposed the current imperial Wilhelmine culture, and sought new avenues to prompt a renewal of German values – notably distinguishing themselves through their idiosyncratic orthography.

The group aimed to avoid the capitalization of nouns in order to assimilate the German to the French.

Following from the circle's intention, the editorial maxim of the *BfdK* in 1894 reads: 'NIEDERGANG (dekadenz) in verschiedener hinsicht ist eine erscheinung die man unklugerweise zum einzigen ausfluss UNSRER zeit machen wollte – die gewiss auch einmal in den rechten händen künstlerische behandlung zulässt sonst aber ins gebiet der heilkunde gehört. [Decline (decadence) is in several aspects a phenomenon that people unwisely wanted to make into the sole product of our time – [a phenomenon] that someday may certainly admit artistic treatment by the right hands but otherwise belongs in the realm of medicine].'¹ This editorial statement epitomizes the journey of Decadence as a literary strand in Germany at the *fin de siècle*: it underwent a transition from referring primarily to an artistic concept to a term describing the degeneration not of individuals or society but of civilization more generally.

While the *BfdK* evidently adopted a Latinized orthography and French Symbolist and Decadent tradition with its plenitude of Oriental themes, the editors of the publication, spearheaded by George, were keen to distance themselves from allegations of any French tendency. Free from retrogressive influences of 'any foreign school', they aimed to be recognized as German poets. This publication and George's turn away from Eastern themes towards the second half of his career mirror the increasingly hostile climate towards Decadence as a cultural movement in the first half of the twentieth century.

¹ Stefan George and Carl August Klein, 'Editorial Note, Volume II, No 2', in *Blätter für die Kunst – Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892–1898* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1899), pp. 12–14; trans. by Robert Norton, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002), p. 158. George and his circle do not always capitalize nouns in German. Quotations follow the exact orthography of the original sources or otherwise are marked with [*sic*].

George's poetic treatment of the East helped fashion both his image as a cosmopolitan Decadent writer in his early career and that of a writer of the Conservative Revolution in Germany during and after the First World War. An examination of George's inclusion and exclusion of Eastern images will illustrate this shift in European Decadence, moving from an inclusive aesthetic and cosmopolitan movement to a Decadence that favoured a revival of nationalization. The East in George's work is interesting because it documents the disintegration of European Decadence into segregated cultural and political spheres until the 1920s. This process brings to mind Bourget's and Nietzsche's definition of Decadence as an ailing organism suffering from the anarchy of its cells. George's case thus exemplifies the observation made by the editors of *Perennial Decay* that Decadence played a vital part in the 'development, and the dissolution, of [...] oppositional boundaries.'² As a cultural movement, it accommodates extremes from left-wing bohemianism to right-wing conservatism. The East in George's poetry unveils the capacity of Decadence to encompass extremes of the political spectrum: cosmopolitanism and proto-fascist nationalism.

George's East originates in early cosmopolitan encounters with Decadence in his many travels and translations of other leading European Decadent authors. In 1920 George recalls that '[d]ie syrisch-arabische Kultur, die stand mir einmal sehr nahe, [...] aber ich habe es bekämpft.' [I was once drawn to Syrian and Arabic culture [...] but I fought it].³ This hesitancy yet attraction towards Middle Eastern 'Byzantine' cultures, especially those flourishing towards the end of the Roman Empire, is emblematic of George's ambiguous literary engagement with the East. It is, firstly, a

² Constable, Denisoff and Potolsky, *Perennial Decay*, p. 21.

³ Edith Landmann, *Gespräche mit Stefan George* (Düsseldorf: Küpper (Bondi), 1963), p. 108; trans. by Norton, p. 56.

statement, which demonstrates the poet's 'Entfremdung durch das Fremde' [alienation through the foreign] as Werner M. Bauer puts it.⁴ Bruce Robbins and Paulo Lemos Horta point to this 'difficulty of disentangling cosmopolitan from counter-cosmopolitan impulses in the context of empire'.⁵ George's artistic crafting of nationality, however, brings these two seemingly opposed fields of enquiry together. His poetic soul-searching in the Orient was replaced by a progressively nationalist identification with the search for true German values and a cleansing of poetry of all foreign elements. George's Orientalism exemplifies Robbins and Horta's statement that 'cosmopolitans may be nationalists as well'.⁶

Owed to the rhetoric used in George's circle formed of scholars, artists and literati, who referred to George as the 'Meister' or spiritual 'Führer', his later work, especially his last collection of poetry titled *Das Neue Reich*, is still today controversially debated in German literary criticism.⁷ Essentially conservative in temperament and outlook, George and his circle occupy a central, but ambivalent, place in the rise of proto-fascism in Germany. Whilst George was homosexual, and many of his followers were Jewish, or part of the German resistance, as for example Claus von Stauffenberg, some of the members of the George-Kreis sympathized with Nazism. Their own surrogate state offered a miniature model of a future German state: enthusiastic followers submitting themselves without question to the figure and will of

⁴ Werner M. Bauer, "'toller wunder fremde schau": Exotismus als Negation in Stefan Georges "Algabal"', in *Akten des Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Tokyo, Sektion 13: Orientalismus, Exotismus, koloniale Diskurse*, ed. by Yoshinori Shichiji (Munich: Iudicium, 1991), pp. 454–64 (p. 457). My translation.

⁵ Robbins and Horta, 'Introduction', in *Cosmopolitanisms*, pp. 1–17 (p. 14).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷ Mario Zanucchi, 'Wissenschaftliche Rezeption: Germanistik', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. II*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer et. al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 1073–83 (p. 1073).

a charismatic leader. George's early affiliation with French, English and as my thesis shows Eastern themes, understands cosmopolitanism as a resistance to the Wilhelmine Empire. After the First World War the circle's initial 'kosmopolitischer Humanismus' [cosmopolitan humanism] must not blind one to the fact that post-1918 George and many of his followers nevertheless adopted strongly nationalist positions converting from citizens of the world to fervent nationalists. As Ritchie Robertson put it: 'George's greatness as a poet did not make him reliable as a political visionary.'⁸

This chapter examines the tensions of George's ideal of poetical purity, apparent in his later career, and the East presented by his early aestheticist works *Algabal* (1892) and publications in the journal *BfdK*. Despite the limited circulation, the *BfdK* remains one of the most notable ephemeral publications of German Decadence, equivalent to *The Yellow Book* and *The Savoy* alongside other notable German periodicals such as *Pan* (1895–1900) edited by George's rival Richard Dehmel in Berlin and *Jugend* (1896–1940) or *Simplicissimus*. The chapter traces George's turn away from the East in some poems from *Der Siebente Ring* (1907) and in 'Der Brand des Tempels' (1919), a poem which is part of *Das Neue Reich*, a poetic cycle written in 1919 and published in 1928. These poems mark George's departure from a cosmopolitan ideal and his gravitation towards poetry that reflected national purity. Imbued with a messianic longing and heavily indebted to Nietzsche's will to overcome a decadent modernity, his poetry was appropriated by Nazi ideology. George was concerned about the decline of Western culture, especially German culture. His was a vision of a Germany led by a cultivated elite into a modernity guided by German values of old. Theodor Lessing's *Europa und Asien* (1914) and

⁸ Ritchie Robertson, 'George, Nietzsche, and Nazism', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), pp. 189–205 (p. 201).

Oswald Spengler's work *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* [The Decline of the West] (1918–1922 but conceived before the First World War) encapsulate the reactionary mood challenging the formation of a German Decadence at the beginning of the twentieth century.

George's Cosmopolitanism

The early works of George are considered prime examples of German Aestheticism and Decadence due to their cosmopolitan flair. As a young poet in the 1880s and 1890s, George embraced the cosmopolitan ideal while traversing Europe. His first destination was London, where he stayed from May until October 1888. His correspondence with his old school friends Carl Rouge (1870–1940) and Arthur Stahl (1869–1929) give insight into George's self-understanding as a cosmopolitan in the making:

Ich lebe hier ganz ausgezeichnet, alles nach meinem geschmack. [...] Wenn du meinst dass ich hier meinen kosmopolitismus ablege bist du irr [...] Gerade dadurch, dass ich in dem (an persönlicher Freiheit unendlich mehr gestattenden) lande bin, werde ich ein vollständiger Kosmopolit. Und dass ich nicht daran bin, nach der anderen Seite umzukippen, und engländer zu werden daran hindert mich die überzeugung, dass auch bei uns viele einrichtungen besser sind dass es in anderen landen noch bessere gibt, die ich alle mit eigenem auge zu besehen + beurteilen gedenke.⁹

⁹ Most of the letters to and by George, or citations of George by friends have not been published, nor criticism on George translated into English. For the following chapter, if not indicated otherwise, I have produced my own translations. The Stefan George Archiv, Stuttgart, Germany, will be referred to as 'StGA' in the following.

George to Arthur Stahl, 18 May 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5842]; In another letter George writes to Stahl defending his growing cosmopolitanism, 'Reimbrieff an A. S.', 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5847]:

'[...] Sicher sieht im fremden lande / Er was hier er oft verkannte / und sein Kosmopolitismus / Der fast grenzt an anarchismus / Kommt gewaltig ins gedränge. /

Er dem nur es stets zu enge / Und zu mangelhaft geschienen, sitzt jetzt da mit wehmutsmien / Vom erwachen bis zum schlafe, Und als seiner Muse strafe / Muss er dichten heimatklänge.

Diesen deinen schweren irrtum, / theurer freund, muss ich berichtigen [...] / Wisse nur das gegenteil / Dessen, was Du glaubst ist richtig. /

[I am leading an excellent life here, everything is according to my taste [...] If you think that I will abandon my cosmopolitanism you are foolish [...] It is because I am in a country (that permits infinitely more personal freedom), that I am about to become a complete cosmopolitan. And the only reason that keeps me from switching sides, and becoming an Englishman, is my conviction that also in our country some institutions work better and that there are even better ones in other countries all of which I intend to inspect with my own eyes.]

Back in Germany, George started corresponding with his newly acquired friends: Tom Wellsted, with whom he shared a love for Ibsen and the principles of theosophy,¹⁰ Stuart Merrill (1863–1915), an American Symbolist, and Cyril Scott (1879–1970),¹¹ an acquaintance of Wilde's, composer, poet and occultist whom George met again in Berlin. Wellsted, himself an aspiring writer, informed his friend of the 'Ibsen fever' in London.¹² This was of particular importance to George as he revered Ibsen and read his plays.¹³ Wellsted writes to George: 'It will doubtless interest you to learn that an "Ibsen Society" has been formed in London with the idea of producing Ibsen's plays.

Nichts von einer solchen rührung / Merke ich in meiner führung / Und ich fühle hier so wohl mich / Dass ich beinah selbst mich schäme. /

Das ist doch, der teufel hol' mich, / polizeiwidrig commun / Würde man in Deutschland sagen – / Und ich würde gar nicht klagen [...].'

[Surely he sees abroad / what he misconceived at home / and his cosmopolitanism / which almost borders on anarchism / is greatly compromised. /

He who always felt constricted / and who disapproved, now sits with wistful countenance / from awakening to sleep, and as a punishment to his Muse / he is compelled to compose songs of home.

This, your grave error, / dear friend, I have to rectify [...] / know just the opposite / of which you think is true. /

Nothing like such an emotion / do I notice in my being / and I feel here so much at ease / that I am almost ashamed of it. /

– This is, to hell with me, / commonly known against the law / as one would say in Germany – / and I would not even protest [...].]

¹⁰ Tom Wellsted to George, 29 August 1889, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13817].

¹¹ Cyril Scott's translated some of George's works: *Stefan George. Selection from his Works. Translated into English by Cyril Scott* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1910).

¹² Wellsted to George, 29 August 1889.

¹³ Jens Rieckmann, 'Introduction', *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, pp. 1–24 (p. 3).

[...] I do not think the plays will be successful in England without a lot of adaptation. They appear to me to be essentially “reading” plays and to a great extent “unplayable”.¹⁴ George’s sustained interest in Ibsen’s writing and the theatrical scene in London is also evident in the correspondence with Rouge.¹⁵

Beyond Ibsen, the two young writers exchange poems (‘I enclose the poetry which seemed to charm you so [...]’) also including works by Walt Whitman and Tolstoi,¹⁶ notes on the Exhibition in Paris (‘London is just now full of people, owing in a great measure to the Paris Exhibition [...]’¹⁷), daily politics, stamp collecting, boxing, on notorious figures of British intellectual life (‘I am sending you some letters to the Daily Telegraph by the rather notable dramatist + idealist Robert Buchanan + Professor Huxley (the cynical scientist) + Herbert Spencer (the celebrated Economist) and hope they will prove interesting to you.’)¹⁸ and even the opera (‘The Royal English Opera is flourishing [...] We are getting an artistic people I do assure you’).¹⁹ At one point it seemed George was tempted to accept a position as a political correspondent based in London, taking up a suggestion by Wellsted.²⁰

Another of their shared interests was theosophy, which coincided with a resurgence of esotericism seizing Europe at the *fin de siècle*. George would later fully embrace esoteric theories and practices he encountered with the Munich Kosmiker. This circle of intellectuals considerably shaped his conception of the East as this

¹⁴ Wellsted to George, 6 June 1889, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13813].

¹⁵ Carl Rouge to George, June 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 10687].

¹⁶ Wellsted to George, 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13804].

¹⁷ Wellsted to George, 6 June 1889, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13813].

¹⁸ Wellsted to George, 24 April 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13824].

¹⁹ Wellsted to George, 23 July 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13826].

²⁰ Wellsted to George, 7 September 1891, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13828].

chapter will consider in more depth later on. In the 1880s, Wellsted reports from London:

Mrs Annie Besant, whose book on Socialism I think recently was a pillar among atheists, has been consented to Theosophy. I don't know if you know of this creed, but it is based on the belief that man is possessed of a sevenfold nature [...] the Atma, or the divine + universal spirit; the Buddhi, or human spirit. The Manas, or human soul (– the Ego or individuality of all spiritual systems), the Kama-rupa or passionate nature; the Puana or vitality pure + simple; the Linga-Sharira, or astral body; the Rupa, or physical body; Karma, the eternal justice by the development of which the circumstances of the soul's present + future condition of progress is determined. That is what I call going to the other extreme with a vengeance – a nice mixture truly.²¹

Wellsted adds that there '[...] is some talk of Buddhism making rapid headway in Europe, especially in France. Sir Edwin Arnold, who wrote the "Light of Asia" is very much in love with Buddhism'.²²

George's letters to Wellsted and Stahl in particular highlight the immersion in a cosmopolitan lifestyle, which George sought and found in London. George writes to Stahl of his new identity, which he fosters to resemble a Baudelairean *flâneur*:

Du sollst einmal sehen was ich English parliere! [...] ich kann dreist behaupten, dass man während eines aufenthaltes in England mehr sieht + lernt, als wenn man sich in Neapel + Palermo herumtreibt [...] Du weisst gar nicht wie gross ich mir manchmal vorkomme, wenn ich durch die strassen der riesenstadt streife umgeben von dem endlosen tumult von dem namenlos anders seienden.²³

[You shall see how well I speak English! [...] I can rightly claim, that during a stay in England one will see + and learn more than if one gallivanted through Naples + Palermo, [...] you cannot even imagine how grand I feel when I stroll through the streets of this huge city surrounded by the endless commotion of the otherness without name.]

The exposure to different cultures and nationalities made an impression on George. He frequently emphasized his cosmopolitan development in England ('du musst übrigens wissen, dass ich in England immer kosmopolitischer werde [...]') [by the way you need

²¹ Wellsted to George, 29 August 1889, Stuttgart, StGA, [George III, 13817].

²² Wellsted to George, 24 April 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13824].

²³ George to Arthur Stahl, 15–16 July 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5843].

to know that I am becoming increasingly cosmopolitan in England [...]].²⁴ From 1888 to 1905 George's travels included as destinations also Montreux, Milan, Paris, Madrid, San Sebastian, Berlin, Verona, Venice, Vienna, Munich, Liège, Noordwijk, Cologne, Copenhagen and Zurich. Wellsted at times wondered, as a postcard illustrates, 'who could guess the whereabouts of such a globe-trotter?'.²⁵ Stahl hoped that George's 'cosmopolitan, storming + stressing mind will be bridled a little abroad' [kosmopolitischer, drängender + stürmender Geist in der Fremde etwas gezügelt wird].²⁶ George valued the experience of being a stranger and its effects on his poetic practice. In a letter to Stahl in 1890 he speaks of having undergone a true metamorphosis ['umwälzung'].²⁷

The scope of George's surviving books in foreign languages, now housed in the StGA in Stuttgart, is testimony to his scholarly eagerness to comprehend other cultures. His knowledge of English literature alone ranged from Shakespeare, Byron, Dickens and Swinburne to poetry penned by his contemporaries Lionel Johnson and Ernest Dowson. He also translated works by Swinburne, Rossetti, and Dowson. On his encounters with Dowson he wrote to his Dutch friend Albert Verwey (1865–1937), who introduced George to Dowson, in 1898: 'mein mehrmaliges zusammentreffen mit E D darin war ich glücklich' [my repeated encounters with E D were happy ones]. He compares Dowson's appearance to the 'unnaturally contorted faces by Aubr. Beardsley [...] somewhat life-less' ['unnatürlich gedrehte gesichter Aubr. Beardsleys

²⁴ George to Stahl, 5–14 August 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5845].

²⁵ Wellsted to George, 23 July 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 13825].

²⁶ Arthur Stahl to George, 23 April 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 12082].

²⁷ George to Stahl, 25 October 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5861].

[...] etwas leben-los’].²⁸ Even though Wilde and George share many similarities, there is no evidence that George ever met Wilde in person. There is, however, no doubt that George heard about Wilde’s literary success. By 1892 Wilde was already a known name in the Parisian Symbolist and Decadent circles George frequented.²⁹ Moreover the two men are connected through their many mutual acquaintances: one finds André Gide’s books in George’s library personally signed and even an exchange between George and Lord Alfred Douglas about a letter which Mallarmé sent to the wrong recipient by mistake in 1897.³⁰ Hence, George’s cosmopolitanism encompasses French but also English traits. His many connections to foreign writers show how George positioned himself as a central figure of the international Decadent networks.

The experiences in London were followed a year later by George’s first sojourn to Paris. From May to August 1889, he was admitted to Mallarmé’s soirées, where he met Verlaine, Moréas and Rodin. Whilst in Paris, George absorbed the French literary canon of recent decades. In 1891 George was translating Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal* and poems by Mallarmé, Verlaine and Rimbaud into German. In addition, George called himself Etienne until 1890 to reclaim his family’s French roots. This was a clear provocation for contemporaries shortly after the Franco-Prussian War, which had only ended in 1871. He also corresponded with Maeterlinck, Verhaeren, D’Annunzio, the Polish poet Waclaw Rolicz-Lieder and Hofmannsthal. The intellectual exchange and recognition by these poets helped to shape George’s definition of cosmopolitanism as early as 1888: ‘Berührung mit anderen völkern anderen sitten anderen weisheiten, (das

²⁸ George to Albert Verwey, 16 August 1898, in *Wolfskehl und Verwey. Die Dokumente ihrer Freundschaft 1897–1946*, ed. by Mea Nijland-Verwey (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1968), p. 47.

²⁹ Wilde is mentioned in George’s correspondence with Stuart Merrill, 10 July 1895, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 8912].

³⁰ Enrico de Angelis, ed., *Stefan George – Stéphane Mallarmé Briefwechsel und Übertragungen* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013), p. 82.

ist das pferd auf dem ich so gerne trabe) ist das beste mittel zur ausrottung aller steifheit aller verblendung alles stumpfsinns aller knechtschaft kurz alles schlimmen im geschicke der völker [...]’ [Contact with other peoples other customs other wisdoms (that is the principle I like to harp on) is the best way of exterminating all rigidness all delusion all ignorance all slavery in short all evil in the fate of nations]’.³¹

George’s extended trips to Spain (Aranjuez, Cartagena, Murcia) resonate in his *Algabal, Pilgerfahrten* (1891), and *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* (1895). The Moorish heritage of Spain stayed with George and also formed his understanding of the Orient. George recalled his foray into the ancient Moorish outpost of Murcia in 1889 in conversation with Berthold Vallentin (1877–1933) in 1922: ‘Alles sei dort fremdartig und exotisch. Der Süden Spaniens sei schon ganz afrikanisch – weite Strecken eine Wüste, in der dann noch vereinzelt eine Palme auftaucht – hin und wieder eine Oase.’ [Everything there is strange and exotic. The south of Spain is already completely African – for vast stretches a desert, in which only occasionally a palm tree emerges, now and again an oasis].³² Following this jaunt to Murcia, he had even planned to cross the Mediterranean to Tunis:

da ihn die geistige Verbindung des gotischen und maurischen Geistes beschäftigte, die noch in der Baukunst und in Resten des völkischen Lebens sichtbar war, lockte es ihn, dem Ursprung dieser seltsamen Mischung im mohammedanischen Norden Afrikas nachzugehen, doch ein Zufall verhinderte die Überfahrt und er kehrte nach Paris zurück.³³

[since he was occupied by the mingling of Gothic and Moorish minds, which was still evident in the architecture and the remnants of folklore, he was drawn to investigate the origins of this curious mixture in the Muhammedan North of Africa, but a coincident prevented his passage and he returned to Paris.]

³¹ George to Stahl, 1–6 January 1889, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5851].

³² Berthold Vallentin, *Gespräche mit Stefan George 1902–1931* (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1960), p. 63; trans. by Norton, p. 56.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 63. My translation.

Even when George took up his studies in Romance languages in Berlin in October 1889, he sought the company of foreigners. In Berlin he was reunited with the Peñafiel family from Mexico, whom he had befriended in Paris. For a while he considered emigrating to South America, a plan he abandoned before long. All these examples of George's identification with other cultures show his self-perception as a citizen of the world. George admonished his friend Stahl, who had entered the military, to understand the necessity of travel:

Um die praktischen sachen zu erlernen um in verschiedenen lebenslagen sich schlagfertig und gewachsen zu zeigen braucht man nicht zum militär zu gehen; Das will ich Dir einfach sagen gehe auf reisen wie ich gehe nach England nach Frankreich und nach der Schweiz etc und ich garantiere Dir, dass Du da in allen lebensumständen gewitzigt wirst.³⁴

[In order to learn practical things and to live up to life's various challenges, one does not need to join the army: I will tell you simply, go travelling as I go to England, France, Switzerland and I guarantee you that you will learn there how to adapt to any environment.]

In George's view, cosmopolitanism is not only a key to intellectual independence but also vital to literary creation. Together with Stahl, Rouge and his fellow student Carl August Klein (1867–1952), George formed a private publication destined only for a select, though international, group of readers. The *BfdK* fed on the spirit of cosmopolitan exchange. Back from London and travelling in Switzerland George writes in December 1888 to Stahl: 'Ich könnte vielleicht auch hier einige französische poeten anwerben, ich will mir wenigstens alle mühe geben. Auch meinen freund in England [Wellsted] will ich um beiträge bitten so dass unsere mappe sozusagen die erste "internationale" einrichtung dieser art würde.' [I could recruit some French poets, I will try at least. I will also ask my friend in England to send contributions, so that our

³⁴ George to Stahl, 1–6 January 1889, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5851]. Emphasis in the original.

portfolio will be the first ‘international’ institution of its kind].³⁵ The publication enlisted contributors from seven European countries. It was even published before rival magazines of much wider circulation, such as *Cosmopolis: A Literary Review*, which appeared in 1896.

Apart from the magazine’s European dimension, George was keen to include the East in his early publications as a sign of his literary cosmopolitanism. The journal presented Orient-themed poems and prose pieces. The *BfdK* featured Paul Gérardy’s ‘Heimkehr und Fahrt’ [Homecoming and Departure] which conjures up an exotic journey into the ‘heilges land wo nur die tempel / Unsrer hehren götter stehn’ [Holy Land where the temples / Of our noble gods are built] (IV, 1–2), and ‘Die Tänze’ [Dances] (III, 2), which allegorizes a dance of nations including Hellas, Germania, Arabia and India. Karl Wolfskehl contributed his poems ‘Herodias’ (III, 4) and ‘Osiris’ (II, 2), and Ludwig Klages published his poem ‘Salamambo’ (IV, 1–2). George was not only internationally well connected within cosmopolitan Decadent networks, but he was also aware of national literary developments. He read Richard Schaukal’s *Meine Gärten. Einsame Verse* (1897), which resembles *Algabal* in many aspects; he entertained friendships with Erich Mühsam, Georg Simmel and Richard Perls (1874–1898), a connoisseur of Symbolist literature and contributor to the *BfdK*.

George embodied the polyglot cosmopolitan even more than Wilde. He was able not only to correspond and speak but also translate from several languages including Italian (Dante), French (Baudelaire, Mallarmé), English (Shakespeare), Spanish (his own poetry), Dutch (Verwey), Danish (Jacobson), Polish (Rolicz-

³⁵ George to Stahl, 1 December 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George II, 5848].

Lieder).³⁶ He wrote poetry in French, English and his own invented language that he called ‘Lingua romana’. His library at the StGA further contains linguistic guides on Russian conversation, Portuguese, Swedish, Hebrew (*Hebräisches Lesebuch*, 1834) and modern Arabic (Sophie Liet: *Clef de Langue Arabe*, 1860). Cuttings from newspapers reveal his life-long interest in other cultures, for example a book on cultural developments in Romania (*La Roumanie moderne: comme facteur de la civilisation en Orient*, 1902), a newspaper clipping which is titled ‘Die letzten beiden Repräsentanten eines großen Volkes: Die letzten beiden Azteken’ [The last representatives of a great people: The last Aztecs] and an annotated review of T. E. Lawrence’s *Revolt in the Desert* (1927) [*Aufstand in der Wüste*, 1930]. So even if George never travelled to the East, or, as Winfried Eckel claims, did not systematically read on the Orient, a remarkable number of books demonstrate a sustained interest in foreign cultural spheres and their decline.³⁷

George’s Decadent East

The Orient, often symbolized by the image of the Temple, remained influential on George’s poetic works throughout his career. George’s Orient was also a conglomerate of *The Arabian Nights*, Indian Buddhism, ancient Egypt, Syria and late-Roman Byzantium.³⁸ George himself explains the role of the Orient as a catalyst of modernity

³⁶ Rieckmann, p. 3.

³⁷ Winfried Eckel, ‘Spiegelung, Rahmung, Integration. Zu Funktion und Verwendung von Orientbildern bei Stefan George’, in *Morgenland und Moderne: Orient-Diskurse in der deutschsprachigen Literatur von 1890 bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. by Axel Dunker and Michael Hofmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 35–63 (p. 40).

³⁸ Critics have identified the influences of Hellenism, the Bible, the Middle Ages, and the Orient on George’s work. See also on George and the Orient: Krystyna Kamińska, ‘Der Dialog Stefan Georges mit Antike, Mittelalter und Orient’, *Neue Beiträge zur George-Forschung*, 7 (1982), 22–34; Georg Doerr, ‘Orientalismus bei Friedrich Hölderlin, Stefan George und Hugo von Hofmannsthal (– mit

in the preface to the *Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten*: ‘Jede zeit und jeder geist rücken indem sie fremde und vergangenheit nach eigener art gestalten ins reich des persönlichen und heutigen [...]’ [by shaping the foreign and the past after their own fashion, every time and every spirit are translated into the realm of the personal and actual [...]].³⁹ Despite its temporal and geographical remoteness, the treatment of the Orient in George’s writing is an indicator of George’s own literary development starting out as a Decadent cosmopolitan writer.

Hinweisen auf Gabriele D’Annunzio) <<https://georgdoerr.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/doerr-Orientalismus-neu-def-def4.pdf>. > [accessed: 14/03/2017].

³⁹ Stefan George, ‘Vorwort’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol III: Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann and Ute Oelmann, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), no pagination.

With Carl Rouge, George shared a love for travelling and the idea of liberal cosmopolitanism ('Motto: Seid umschlungen, Millionen!' [Be embraced, Millions!]) as this sketch drawn on an envelope addressed to George shows (fig. 17). A pensive, dark-skinned and veiled allegorical female figure resides in the centre of the cosmopolitan network, drawn by Rouge. In line with their cosmopolitanism, one of Rouge's early (unpublished) poems 'Dein gedacht!' [A thought of you!] (1888) was dedicated to George, and reflects the youthful enthusiasm for exotic and homoerotic Decadent imagery the two poets had in common:

Dein gedacht!

Noch am Himmel hing
Mond mit lichtem Schein
Sandte seinene schönsten Silbergruß –
Leises Flüstern ging
Durch den Palmenhain,
Und mit ihrem wonnetrunk'nen Kuß
Küßte mich die laue Tropennacht –
Holdes Lieb, da hab ich dein gedacht.
Lotusblume hob
Aus der weichen Well'
Ihren rosenroten Kelch im Traum;
Tausendfach zerstob
An dem Fels der Quell
Und die Tropfen und verwehter Schaum
Küßten Wange mir und Stirne sacht –
Holdes Lieb, da hab ich dein gedacht.⁴⁰

A thought of you!

Still clinging to the sky
The bright moon sent his most beautiful
silver beam to greet you –
Hushed whispering suffused the palm grove,
And the balmy tropical night kissed me
drunken with delight –
Lovely dear, that was when I thought of you.
The lotus flower raised its roseate calyx from
the soft well like in a dream;
Thousandfold the wellspring scattered on the
rock
And the drips and drifty foam
Gently kissed my cheek and forehead –
Lovely dear, that was when I thought of you.

At the time of writing this poem, Rouge was drafting a play called *Eudoxia* named after the Byzantine empress, which was based on Ibsen's *Emperor and Galilean* (published in 1873). Alongside his discussion with George of Alma-Tadema's

⁴⁰ Rouge to George, 23 April 1888 / 8 May 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 10684]. My translation.

paintings [‘Alma Tadema [is] so fashionable in England’],⁴¹ whose depictions of late antiquity served as inspiration for the work, both poets frequently conferred about dramatic strategies of how to evoke the Orient:

Ich habe in neuerer Zeit wieder etwas über die ‘Eudoxia’ nachgedacht u. beschlossen bereits am Anfang des Stücks alle Kräfte, die in demselben wirken die ganze Zeit u.s.w. klar zur Anschauung zu bringen [...]. Ibsen in seinem ‘Kaiser u. Galiläer’ hat dasselbe gethan, u. wie herrlich! Schon in der 1. Scene [*sic*] sehen wir Zeit u. Ort der Handlung, die verschiedenen Parteien, das ganze Byzantinentum vor uns. [...] Wäre das nicht so müßten wir uns erst mühsam aus der Gegenwart allmählich von Scene zu Scene in das Byzantinentum hinüberträumen [...].⁴²

[Lately I have thought about the ‘Eudoxia’ a little and decided to set out the forces, which operate in in the play, the whole period and so forth from the very beginning of the play [...]. Ibsen has done the same in his ‘Emperor and Galilean’, and how wonderfully! In scene 1 we already recognize time and location of the action, the different parts, the whole of Byzantine culture in front of us. [...] Were it not so we would have to dream our way from the present bit by bit and scene by scene into Byzantium [...].]

Similar to Rouge’s dramatic ambition to conjure up Byzantium as described in this passage, George drew his image of the Orient from drama, the fine and decorative arts and theosophy.

The encounter with Melchior Lechter (1865–1937) whom George met in 1894 in Berlin added to George’s hybrid East. Lechter, singled out by George as ‘the apostle in Germany of the Kelmscott Press’,⁴³ was a *Jugendstil* artist known for designs which combined ‘gotische[n] Zierat und die indischen Symbole’ [Gothic ornament and Indian symbols].⁴⁴ In a comparable fashion to Ricketts’s collaboration with Wilde, Lechter illustrated works by George for example his translation of Mallarmé’s *Hérodiade*. From 1901 to 1904 Lechter hosted a group of mystics upon initiation by the eccentric Alfred Schuler (1865–1923), who sought ways to resuscitate neo-pagan

⁴¹ Rouge to George, June 1888, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 10688].

⁴² Ibid. Emphasis in the original.

⁴³ Jethro Bithell, *Modern German Literature, 1880–1950* (London: Methuen, 1959), p. 135.

⁴⁴ Robert Boehringer, *Mein Bild von Stefan George* (Munich: Küpper [Bondi], 1967), p. 80.

rituals. Complemented by members of the *BfdK*, such as Klages, Wolfskehl, Verwey and George, the group congregated as the Kosmiker in Munich.

By forging their own counter-cultural milieu, the group responded to an international occult revival. Based on beliefs in an ancient matriarchal religion as formulated by Johann Jakob Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), they developed a doctrine according to which the West was plagued by degeneration, caused by the rationalising and demythologizing effects of Christianity.⁴⁵ A way out of this desolate state could, according to the 'cosmic' view, only be found by a return to pagan origins and through a rekindling of hidden 'life energies'. In contrast to an intellectual emphasis on parts of their English predecessors such as Swinburne or Pater, the Kosmiker practised their elaborate mythology through the performance of active rituals. Their occultist counter-culture, which dovetailed with the Decadent movement, presented itself as a reaction against bourgeois materialism and capitalism of the Wilhelmine Empire. George absorbed ideas circulated in the group into his work such as the notion of the poet as high priest of the arts, and art itself as a tool of inward renewal.⁴⁶ By 1910, however, George had turned away from the mystics and the occultism he inherited from Lechter and earlier from the French Symbolist scene.⁴⁷

At the turn of the century, the East was predominantly perceived through theosophy and occultism derived from Indian Buddhist tradition, on which both Nietzsche and Bahr commented.⁴⁸ In 1891 Bahr explained that the 'buddhistische

⁴⁵ Johann Jakob Bachofen. *Das Mutterrecht, eine Untersuchung über die Gynaikokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart: Kraus und Hoffmann, 1861).

⁴⁶ Jan Stottmeister, *Der George-Kreis und die Theosophie: Mit einem Exkurs zum Swastika-Zeichen bei Helena Blavatsky, Alfred Schuler und Stefan George* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014), p. 90.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁴⁸ Nietzsche's *The Antichrist* (written in 1888, published in German in 1895) considers both Christianity and Buddhism as decadent religions. Hermann Bahr, 'Buddhismus', in *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus*, ed. by Claus Pias (Weimar: VDG, 2004), pp. 83–88. Scheerbart to

Mode' [fashion of Buddhism] (the speeches of Buddha were translated into German in 1896) designates most of all a Decadent movement, a 'Bewegung vom Verstande weg, [ein] Bruch mit allen Systemen [...] Der Buddhismus ist die Religion der Decadence, weil er die Religion der Nerven ist.' [movement away from rationality and a break with all systems [...] Buddhism is the religion of decadence, because it is the religion of the nerves].⁴⁹ The popularity of occult and spiritualist practices is documented in the rise of publications devoted to the topic across Europe, such as in Germany's case *Sphinx* (1886–1896), from 1894 the official organ of the German Theosophical Society, and *Neue Lotusblüten* (1908–1915).

George was sceptical about the theosophical doctrines. Yet despite his scepticism, George owned copies of *Sphinx. Monatsschrift für Seelen- und Geistesleben* (1893), *Das Reich. Vierteljahrschrift* (1918), *Das Reich des Übersinnlichen* (1901), and Winckler's *Der alte Orient* (1903), which Scheerbart also studied. His library contained Indian and Persian stories such as *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (published by Lane in 1907) and Kālidāsa's *Sakuntala* (1919). George's early works *Prinz Indra* and a dramatic fragment called *Phraortes* suggest an interest in Oriental materials, which he started cultivating already during his schooldays.⁵⁰

George's curiosity about religions included mystical Judaism and Islam.⁵¹

Edith Landmann (1877–1951), one of the few female followers of George, remembers

Bruns, 22 December 1901, *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse*, p. 160. Scheerbart advises Bruns: 'Der Buddhismus von T. W. Rhys Davids bietet eine Uebersicht [*sic*].'

⁴⁹ Bahr, 'Buddhismus', pp. 86–88.

⁵⁰ Robert Vilain, 'Stefan George's early works 1890–1895', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, pp. 51–77 (p. 69).

⁵¹ Werner Paul Sohnle's inventory of George's library lists *Sefer ha-Zohar HaKadosh al HaTorah* (Amsterdam: Jochanan Levi, 1805), Richard Reitzenstein's *Poimandres: Studien zur griechisch-ägyptischen und frühchristlichen Literatur* (1904), and Joséphin Péladan's *Les Idées et les formes. Antiquité Orientale* (Paris, 1908). Péladan was a founding member of the *Ordre Kabbalistique de la Rose-Croix* in 1888. Werner Paul Sohnle, ed., *Stefan George und der Symbolismus* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, 1983), pp. 123–24.

a conversation from 1919 in which George explained to her the meaning of the Kaaba, one of the most sacred places in Mekka and central to any Muslim's pilgrimage. George's explanation, she claims, enabled her to read the Koran.⁵² In conversation with Eckhart Grünewald, as recorded by Vallentin in 1924, George dismissed Islam in a debate on the importance of spiritual leadership:

es gebe eben geister, die ein ganzes jahrhundert in bewegung setzten, ohne selbst eigentlich überragende bedeutung zu haben. [...] Auch auf Mohammed sei das anzuwenden, er halte keinen vergleich mit Jesus und Buddha aus. Diese seien die grossen Schöpfer gewesen, während Mohammed nur ein subalterner Anwender gewesen sei. Seine Bedeutung sei übrigens nur dadurch zu erklären, dass er es mit barbarischen Völkern zu tun gehabt habe. Darum habe er selbst bei den Negern so leicht Eingang gefunden. Wo Mohammed einmal auf kultiviertere Völker gestossen sei, wie z.B. die Perser, sei eine merkwürdige Mischform entstanden.⁵³

[there are just some minds, able to shape the course of a century, without being themselves of outstanding importance. [...] The same applies to Mohammed, he cannot compete with Jesus and Buddha. These have been the great creators, whilst Mohammed was only a subaltern operator. His significance can only be explained by the fact that he was dealing with barbaric peoples. That is the reason why it was so easy to convert even the Negroes. Where Mohammed encountered more civilized nations, such as the Persians for example, a curious hybrid came into existence.]

His racist remarks on the reliance of Islam as a 'subaltern' religion to be received by 'barbaric peoples' delineate a distinction of cultures into high and low civilizations. Following from this, the Orient in George's works is not only an aesthetic mirror for European culture but also carries religious and political implications.

In 1920, the German-Jewish cultural historian Ernst Kantorowicz (1895–1963), another member of the George-Kreis with a specific interest in Arab culture, recalls a debate on Islam with George: '[y]esterday we talked about languages and Islam! Regarding the latter he completely shared my views, which of course was extremely

⁵² Landmann, p. 87: 'Ich hatte kurz vorher nichts von der Kaaba gewusst. [...] Er [George] erklärte dann [...] und das Nichtwissen von der Kaaba verhalf mir zur Lektüre der sämtlichen Suren des Koran.' [I had not heard of the Kaaba before. [...] He then explained [...] and my not knowing of the Kaaba enabled me to read all the sura of the Koran.]

⁵³ Vallentin, pp. 79–80.

important to me.’⁵⁴ As biographer of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II, Kantorowicz’s understanding of Islam emphasized the idea of hybridity whilst reinforcing an East–West dichotomy. Kantorowicz was convinced that “if the West says ‘unity brings strength’ the Orient says ‘multiplicity brings strength’.”⁵⁵ According to these accounts of people who knew George well, it seems that throughout his life George was open-minded towards cultural pluralism despite a belief in the superiority of some cultures. A newspaper cutting, reporting on the XXXIII. Congress of the German Anthropological Society in August 1902, supports this idea:

Aus der Vermischung verschiedener Volkselemente in dem in kultureller Hinsicht sehr hoch stehenden Altegypten [*sic*] ergibt sich nach Ansicht des Redners [Dr Andrian-Werburg] der Schluß, daß nicht eine einzige Bevölkerung die Kultur erzeugt habe, sondern, daß vieles als Resultat des Zusammenwirkens einer großen Anzahl von Völkern aufzufassen sei, und daß auch unsere eigene Kultur, insofern kulturelle Einflüsse in vergangenen Jahrtausenden von Egypten auch nach Europa gelangt sind, von jener altegyptischen Kultur mit beeinflußt worden sei.⁵⁶

[The speaker concluded that through the mixing of multiple ethnic elements in a highly civilized ancient Egypt, it was not only one ethnic group who established that culture; rather it was due to the cooperation of a great number of peoples that much of this came into being; and that our own culture is subject to the influence of the ancient Egyptian civilization, in so far as the cultural influences travelled from Egypt to Europe over the last few millennia.]

George’s annotation on the clipping marks out two aspects of George’s East: first, George was following cultural-political news of Orientalist research (archaeology and anthropology); to him the Orient is multi-faceted; and secondly the markings show his awareness and constant search for the roots of European culture. He recognizes Europe as a hybrid entity of Oriental provenance.

⁵⁴ Robert E. Lerner, *Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), pp. 74–75.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁵⁶ [Anon.], ‘XXXIII. Deutscher Anthropologenkongreß, Dortmund, 6 August,’ *Globus*, 82 (1902), no pagination, Stuttgart, StGA [George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050]. Emphasis in the original.

The French literary historian Claude David observes that while the Orient appears in different contexts throughout George's work, he used the term to describe 'Formen der Anarchie [...], von denen er sich bedroht fühlt' [forms of anarchy he was afraid of].⁵⁷ However, whilst George was critical of the Latinization of German culture in later decades, I argue that he embraced Oriental anarchy and hybridity in his early works. George, like Scheerbart as seen in chapter three, therefore drew on a Nietzschean concept of the Orient as an anarchic yet creative force. A newspaper article entitled 'Nietzsche und die Antike', authored by George's and Simmel's friend Karl Joel, demonstrates the fluidity of boundaries between the barbaric East and Western Hellenism:

Kultus des Unbegrenzten ist der Trieb des Barbaren, ist die Kultur des Orients, ist das Ideal der Romantiker und Nietzsches. Hier liegt ewig tief der Schnitt zwischen Hellas und Antihellas, zwischen der Klassik, die vollendet, weil die Kunst der Begrenzung hat, und der Romantik, der nie vollendeten [...]. Die Romantiker haben gewählt, sie haben ihre Selbsttäuschung erkennend, sich von den Griechen zu Träumen des Orients und zum mittelalterlichen Neu-Orient gewandt. Und hat nicht auch Nietzsche gewählt? Er hat Hellas geschoben, soweit er konnte, um es für sich festzuhalten; er hat seine Blüte zurückverlegt ins alte Ionien, an Asiens Pforte; er hat sich im persischen Geiste des alten Heraklits wiedergefunden, bis er seine Stimme reiner aus dem tieferen Orient tönen ließ als Zarathustra. [...] Nietzsche hat uns die Griechische Romantik wieder geschenkt – nicht nur als fremdes Gut.⁵⁸

[The cult of the unbound is the drive of the barbarian, is the culture of the Orient, the ideal of the Romantics and Nietzsche's. In this lies the eternal division between Hellas and Anti-Hellas, between classicism that perfects, because its art has limits, and Romanticism, which never comes full circle. In recognising their self-deception, the Romantics have made their choice. They have turned from the Greeks towards dreams of the Orient and towards the medieval Neo-Orient. And did not Nietzsche also make his choice? He pushed Hellas as far as he could to grasp it; he has relocated its cultural bloom into ancient Ionia, onto the gate of Asia; he identified with the Persian spirit of old Heraclitus, until his voice rang more purely from the deep Orient as Zarathustra. [...] Nietzsche bestowed Greek Romanticism upon us – not only as a foreign good.]

George's version of a hybrid Orient between Greek classicism and French Neo-Romantic *décadentisme* revisits Joel's concept.

⁵⁷ Claude David, *Stefan George: Sein dichterisches Werk* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1967), p. 127.

⁵⁸ Prof. Dr. Karl Joel, 'Nietzsche und die Antike', no pagination, Stuttgart, StGA [George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050].

Tensions between George's own French-Oriental literary heritage and his ambition to re-inject Greek greatness into German culture remained.⁵⁹ As a comment recorded by Landmann in 1918 shows: 'Napoleon hat nicht so viel, wie unter einen Fingernagel geht, vom Griechischen gewusst. Das lag nicht in seiner Aufgabe. Er war orientalisch.' [What Napoleon knew about Greek culture could fit on the back of a postage stamp. That was not his mission. He was an Oriental].⁶⁰ The fascination with despotic figures embodied by Napoleon who assumed the pose of an Oriental conqueror in the French campaign in Egypt and Syria from 1798 to 1801 coloured George's Oriental poetry. *Algabal* earned George the reputation of a Decadent writer.⁶¹ This cycle of poetry was modelled on cosmopolitan rulers between East and West such as Frederick the Second, and King Ludwig II of Bavaria who cultivated an expensive taste for the Orient.

Despot and Dandy: *Algabal*

In 1892 George's *Algabal* was published in Paris in a small print run. In 1899, an edition published by Georg Bondi in Berlin followed which was intended for the general reading public.⁶² Even though George wrote his poem almost simultaneously with Wilde's *Salome*, *Algabal* presents a much more critical scrutiny of Decadent literature as a mode to express modernity. The poem's title draws on the historical

⁵⁹ Rieckmann, p. 12.

⁶⁰ Landmann, p. 65.

⁶¹ Reed, p. 120.

⁶² Joachim Jacob, 'Stefan George Werk: *Hymnen Pilgerfahrten Algabal*', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. I*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer et. al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 107–121 (p. 108).

Heliogabalus (203–222 AD), a former Syrian sun-priest of Elah-Gabal in Emesa who became Emperor Marius Aurelius Antonius of Rome in 218. In the poem *Algabal* is both an Orientalized despot and a blasé dandy of the nineteenth century. This dialectic indicates George's self-reflexive testing of the principles of the 1890s Decadence. As Karl Wolfskehl noted, the *Algabal* poems connect the present with the past in their Orientalism: in their 'schwüle[n] atemlose[n] Glut' [sultry and breathless blaze] George manages to link 'was das damalige Rom mit unserer Kulturwelt gemein hat' [what ancient Rome and our culture have in common].⁶³ The poem's treatment of the East suggests that the literary European movement has reached its end. The East thus assumes a paradoxical function: it is as much an expression of Decadence as it is a critique of Decadence. It documents the young author's quest for new aesthetic avenues and a route beyond Decadence. *Algabal* shows a clear correlation between Decadence and Orientalism. The Orient is used as a means of aestheticist self-criticism.⁶⁴

The sustained critical interest in *Algabal* can be explained by the poem's tension, which arises from its Oriental Decadent art for art's sake style and George's changing attitude toward his own aesthetic practice. As Werner M. Bauer notes, '[d]ie exotische Figur, die darin beschworen wird, ist als Negation des zeitgenössischen Kulturbetriebes gedacht' [the exoticized character that is conjured up in the poem is to be understood as a negation of the contemporaneous cultural scene].⁶⁵ Reed notes that George wrote *Algabal* to explore 'the potential decay in himself and ultimately to

⁶³ Karl Wolfskehl to George, 11 December 1892, in Ute Oelmann, 'Anmerkungen', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden, Vol. II: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 119–27 (p. 120).

⁶⁴ Eckel, 'Spiegelung, Rahmung, Integration', p. 47.

⁶⁵ Werner M. Bauer, p. 463.

exorcise it.’⁶⁶ George called *Algabal* a ‘revolutionäres Buch’ [revolutionary book],⁶⁷ and it is telling that it was perceived as a ‘grenzenlose Provokation’ [boundless provocation]⁶⁸ to Wilhelmine society, and first found critical acclaim abroad rather than in Germany. George’s poetic retreat into an artificial Orientalist palace of the arts ran counter to the Wilhelmine faith in progress and an increasing marginalization of the arts at the time. The poem was reread by the George-Kreis in 1899 as a ‘Protest gegen die Korruptheit der Politik und der Kultur, zu einem ersten Aufschwung, der „Dekadenz“ zu entfliehen.’ [protests against the corruption of politics and the arts, as a first attempt to escape Decadence].⁶⁹

It was only after a second private print run that literary circles in Berlin started to take an interest in George’s work. Paul Scheerbart was a keen reader of the *BfdK*. On three occasions he requested issues for his literary friends from Klein, then publisher of the *BfdK* in Berlin.⁷⁰ Helmuth Mojem even speculates on the influence George’s *BfdK* had on Scheerbart’s artistic development. Published in 1894, ‘Der Tod des Emins. Ein Chalifenidyll’ resumes several Decadent Oriental metaphors George had used in his *Algabal*, for example the colour sensation caused by a dead body on the alabaster stairs.⁷¹ In November 1892 Scheerbart tried to win George’s *Algabal* for his newly founded Verlag deutscher Phantasten: ‘Sehr geehrter Herr! Hat der “Algabal” von Stefan George bereits einen Verleger? Der Verlag deutscher Phantasten wäre evtl. bereit, den Algabal herauszugeben. [...]’ [Dear Sir! Does “Algabal” by

⁶⁶ Reed, p. 126.

⁶⁷ George cited in Ernst Robert Curtius, *Essays on European Literature*, trans. by Michael Kowal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), p. 125.

⁶⁸ Werner M. Bauer, p. 457.

⁶⁹ David, p. 100.

⁷⁰ Postcards from Paul Scheerbart to Carl August Klein, 1892/1893, Stuttgart, StGA [BfdK III, 340–343].

⁷¹ Helmuth Mojem, ‘Algabal bei den Phantasten? Stefan George und Paul Scheerbart’, in *George-Jahrbuch*, 4 (2002/2003), 36–78 (p. 71).

Stefan George already have a publisher? The Publishing Association of German Fantasists might be willing to take on Algabal].⁷² George addressed Scheerbart's approach, answering a letter to Hofmannsthal in 1893 on whether he entertained relationships with the 'phantastischen verlag': 'wie kommen Sie zur frage ob Ich mit den "Fantasten" beziehungen unterhielte?' [how dare you insinuate that I have connections to the 'Fantasten'?].⁷³ A collaboration never came into being. However, not least because of a shared interest in the East, Julius Hart professed that '[w]enn man das erste Heft der Kleinschen "Blätter für die Kunst" liest, und das erste Heft von Paul Scheerbarts Wunderfabelbuch, so stößt man hier und da auf denselben Geist, dieselben Welt-und Kunstanschauungen.' [if you read the first volume of Klein's "Blätter für die Kunst", and the first volume of Scheerbart's Wunderfabelbuch, you will find the spirit, the same view of the world and art].⁷⁴

⁷² Scheerbart to Klein, 2 November 1892, Stuttgart, StGA [BfdK III, 341]; reprinted in 'Algabal bei den Phantasten?', p. 42.

⁷³ George to Hugo von Hofmannsthal, 3 April 1893, in *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Küpper (Bondi), 1953), p. 62.

⁷⁴ Julius Hart, 'Paul Scheerbart', *Die Freie Bühne*, 3 (1892), pp. 1334–336.



Fig. 18 Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema, *The Roses of Heliogabalus*, oil on canvas, 1888, private collection.

The accounts of Heliogabalus's notorious eccentricity by classical historians Cassius Dio, Herodian and Aurelius Lampridius's *Historia Augusta* portray the emperor as the prototype of a nineteenth-century dandy. In the eighteenth century, Edward Gibbon (1737–1794) had cemented the scandalous reputation of Heliogabalus's excesses by descriptions of his deviant sexuality, blasphemy, cross-dressing and debauched orgies. Alma-Tadema's painting *The Roses of Heliogabalus* immortalized Heliogabalus as an icon of Decadence. Given his enthusiasm for Alma-Tadema, George is likely to have seen the painting during his first stay in London at the Royal Academy summer exhibition in 1888. Gibbon even finds an analogy between Heliogabalus's effeminate tastes for delicate Eastern silks instead of rough 'masculine' wool and the fall of the Roman Empire ('Rome was at length humbled beneath the effeminate luxury of Oriental despotism [and] every vice that could be collected from the mighty conflux of nations').⁷⁵ Likewise in George's poem, foreign influences bring about artistic as well as political decadence.

George identifies his emperor Algabal as an Orientalized dandy figure marked by 'the burning need to create for oneself a personal originality, bounded only by the limits of the proprieties.'⁷⁶ Baudelaire's theoretical writing on 'The Dandy', part of his essay *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), portrayed the dandy as a political artistic figure, much like the *flâneur*, in the centre yet in the periphery of society. In his resistance to social norm, Algabal adheres to Baudelaire's notion of dandyism being 'of great antiquity [...] an institution beyond the laws [...] a school of tyrants [...]'.⁷⁷ Baudelaire's description of the dandy fits George's portrayal of the emperor and sun-

⁷⁵ Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I*, ed. by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1994), p. 166; p. 168.

⁷⁶ Charles Baudelaire, 'The Dandy', in *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon Press, 1995), pp. 26–29 (p. 27).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27.

priest ‘[...] there is a grandeur in all follies, an energy in all excess. [...] consider dandyism as a kind of religion. [...] Dandyism is the last spark of heroism amid decadence’.⁷⁸ George’s poem equally can be read as the last brilliant example of a movement in decline.

By the 1890s, Heliogabalus was a well-established point of reference in the French and English Decadent canon alongside other Roman emperors of antiquity considered Decadent such as Nero and Caligula.⁷⁹ *Algabal* furthermore relates directly to the writings of Flaubert, Jean Lombard, Edmond de Goncourt, Baudelaire’s poetry especially in its allusions to ‘Rêve Parisien’ (1840–1867), Mallarmé’s *Hérodiade* (1864–1867, which George translated for the second issue of the *BfdK*), Huysmans’s *À Rebours* (1884), and Gautier’s *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, as well as works by Verlaine and Poe.⁸⁰ Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* mentions Heliogabalus as the embodiment of licentious homoerotic desire in chapter eleven. Robert de Montesquiou, the notorious real-life model for the literary creation of many canonical dandy figures, had celebrated the spiritual brotherhood of Ludwig II and Heliogabalus in his poem ‘Treizième César’ (1887).

George owned a number of Felix Paul Greve’s translations of Wilde’s works and collected newspaper cuttings on Robert de Montesquiou found in the StGA. This suggests a sustained interest in Wilde’s ‘Neronian’⁸¹ career, even after the latter’s

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 28–29.

⁷⁹ Victor A. Oswald, ‘Oscar Wilde, Stefan George, Heliogabalus’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 10:4 (1949), 517–25 (p. 522).

⁸⁰ Victor A. Oswald, ‘The Historical Content of Stefan George’s *Algabal*’, *The Germanic Review*, 23:3 (1948), 193–205.

⁸¹ Merrill, a friend of both George and Wilde, described Wilde as “gigantic, roseate, and smooth-faced, like a high priest of the moon in the times of Heliogabalus”, in ‘Oscar Wilde, Stefan George, Heliogabalus’, p. 524.

trials in 1895 and death.⁸² However, in comparison to the Irishmen Wilde and George Moore, who took Latinity as a means of ‘subverting the empire of England’,⁸³ as Norman Vance claims, George is not interested in subversion. George takes subversion a step further. His poem celebrates the splendours of the East for a last time before proclaiming the end of Franco-Roman Decadence by searching for the expression of new German poetics. George dedicated his *Algabal* to King Ludwig II of Bavaria (1845–1886) upon its re-publication as a cycle of poetry together with *Hymnen* (1890) and *Pilgerfahrten* (1891). The ‘mad king’s’ non-conformity, his extravagant taste for all things Oriental and French, his love and patronage of Richard Wagner’s music and not least rumours about his homosexuality, made Ludwig II a cult figure of the French Decadence and the degenerate *fin-de-siècle* aristocrat par excellence.

⁸² [Anon.], ‘Der dekadente Dichter Graf Robert de Montesquiou pflegt für jeden Besuch, den er macht, seine Toilette nach der Identität des Besuchten einzurichten [...]’, Stuttgart, StGA, [George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050]. George’s library includes following translations of Wilde’s works and books on Wilde by Paul Greve: *Intentions (Fingerzeige, 1902)*, *Phrases and Philosophies for the Use of the Young (Lehren und Sprüche für die reifere Jugend, 1902)*, *Randarabesken zu Oscar Wilde* (1903) and *Apologia pro Oscar Wilde* (1904).

⁸³ Norman Vance, ‘Decadence and the Subversion of Empire’, in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. by Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 110–24 (p. 121).



Fig. 19 and 20 *Moorish Kiosk* (1867) and *The Peacock Throne* (1876) at the Castle Linderhof.

King Ludwig's fanciful castles impressed the young George and were one major influence on George's idea of the Orient.⁸⁴ Like Symons and George, the king was fascinated by Moorish Spain, as he recorded in his diaries.⁸⁵ Moreover, the king supported the emergence of academic Oriental research and even commissioned research expeditions to 'exotic' destinations to Constantinople and to the Alhambra, to do be documented by latest technology in photographs. Frequently he visited his Turkish-style hunting-lodge on the mountain of Schachen. Luise von Kobell, the wife of Ludwig's secretary, reports on Ludwig's re-enactments of the Orient à la des Esseintes:

[h]ier saß in türkischer Tracht Ludwig II. lesend, während der Troß seiner Dienerschaft als Moslems gekleidet, auf Teppichen und Kissen herumlagerte, stark rauchend und Mokka schlürfend, wie der königliche Herr befohlen hatte, der dann häufig überlegen lächelnd die Blicke über den Rand des Buches hinweg auf die stilvolle Gruppe schweifen ließ.⁸⁶

[here sat King Ludwig II in Turkish attire and read whilst a group of servants, dressed as moslems, lounged on carpets and cushions. They smoked a lot and drank mocca as the King had ordered them, who then, often glancing over the rim of his book with a superior smile, examined the stylish crowd.]

George visited Ludwig II's fantastic castles five years after the king's death in 1886. In a letter of 11 July 1891 George raves about this visit to Linderhof whilst passing through Bavaria (figs. 19, 20). Another French friend had written to him in May reporting from his own visit to one of the castles at the lake Chiemsee: 'Vous savez que ce'est dans ce lac que s'est noyé Louis II de Bavière, ce souverain dilettante, vrai artiste et poète decadent?' [Do you know that it is in this lake that Ludwig II of

⁸⁴ Fischer, p. 131.

⁸⁵ Elmar D. Schmid, 'Die Welt des Orients und Fernen Ostens. Bauwerke und Projekte', in *König Ludwig II.-Museum Herrenchiemsee Katalog*, ed. by Gerhard Hojer (Munich: Hirmer, 1986), pp. 426–32 (p. 427).

⁸⁶ Luise von Kobell cited in *König Ludwig II.-Museum Herrenchiemsee Katalog*, p. 54.

Bavaria drowned himself, this amateurish sovereign, true artist and Decadent poet?].⁸⁷ Much as nineteenth-century dandies of the French salons found their role models in the extravagant biographies of Roman-Byzantine emperors of antiquity, George found the Orient alive with mystic splendour of Byzantium in the Bavarian Alps (which he toured a second time accompanied by his sister Anna in 1897).

Many features of the ‘Unterreich’, the first part of the *Algabal* poems, stem directly from the king’s Oriental inventory.⁸⁸ In Linderhof, the king had erected a Moorish Pavilion, previously exhibited in Paris, complete with Algabal’s Pfauenthron (‘Der wände matte täfelung aus zedern / Die dreissig pfauen stehen dran im kreis / Sie tragen daunen blank wie schwanenfedern’ [The cedar wainscot on the walls is matt / The thirty peacocks stand leaning against it in a circle, / They wear down as pure white as that of swans] (62).⁸⁹ The king, like George and the other Decadent ‘armchair cosmopolitans’, created a synthesized Orient, in which Eastern and Western symbols like the peacock emblemizing eternal felicity and the swan, a symbol for the poet, harmoniously coexist.

Claude David recognizes a synthesis of Roman and Oriental elements also in George’s representation of the East:

Die römische Dekadenz verschmilzt mit der Suche nach dem Nirwana. Nicht zufällig hat der Dichter hier unter den Herrschern des spätrömischen Kaiserreichs symbolhaft einen Syrer ausgewählt. Alles, was George und die Seinen später, um es zu

⁸⁷ Maurice Muret to George, 16 May 1890, Stuttgart, StGA [George III, 9542]. My translation.

⁸⁸ Mario Zanucchi observes how George transposed architectural details seen in Linderhof into his poetry. Zanucchi, ‘Algabal’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 60–96.

⁸⁹ Stefan George, ‘Algabal’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. II: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 55–85; In order to give a more direct account of the contents of George’s poetry, a literal translation is given preference over the poetic and at times obscuring translations by Olga Marx and Ernst Morwitz, *The Works of Stefan George rendered into English* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1949). All poetry quoted in the following is accompanied by my own translations.

verdammen, in das Wort "Orient" hineinlegen werden, findet man hier gepriesen: die Versuchung des Todes, Weltflucht, Trunkenheit, die Vergessen schenkt.⁹⁰

[The Roman Decadence merges with the search for Nirvana. It is no coincidence that the poet symbolically chose a Syrian amongst the rulers of the late Roman Empire. Everything that George and his circle would later condemn by the word "Orient" is glorified in this poem: the temptation of death, escapism, and intoxication that offers oblivion.]

In contrast to Scheerbart whose 'Anti-Europäertum' tried to describe the same exhaustion of European culture and who wanted to rebuild it in an Orient-inspired Modernism, George did not accept the Orient as a source of renewal but as an impasse. The sense of stagnation is reflected in George's lines addressed to Hofmannsthal: 'was ich nach Halgabal noch schreiben soll ist mir unfasslich' [what I should write after Halgabal, I simply do not know].⁹¹ As the analysis will show, this poem is not only a celebration of Decadent style but also a reassessment of Decadence. The poem reflects George's search for new aesthetics that increasingly favour the exclusion of Eastern influence.

George's *Algabal*, consisting of twenty-two poems, is structured in three thematic parts ('Im Unterreich' [In the Underground Realm] / 'Tage' [Days] / 'Die Andenken' [The Memory]), and a coda ('Vogelschau' [Auspice]). Part one introduces Algabal as ruler of an underground realm of extravagant Oriental beauty. He alone is the creator and inhabitant of this *paradis artificiel*. The second part, 'Tage', comprises ten poems telling the reader about Algabal's despotic rule in his court. 'Andenken', Algabal's retrospective of his youth and kingdom after he has lost both, concludes the cycle. Similar to Wilde, George evokes the Orient by foreign objects or personages (Lydians, Syrians, Egyptians) but also by rehearsing preconceptions of the

⁹⁰ David, p. 97.

⁹¹ George to Hofmannsthal, [undated], in *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal*, p. 12.

East, which Said listed: despotism, atrocities, wealth beyond belief, languor, and a love of artifice.

The 'Unterreich', in four poems, sets the scene of Algabal's palace, which, like Wilde's *Salome* and *The Sphinx*, is a cosmopolitan museum of Oriental art. The hall is laden with references to George's interest in the materialist aspects of Orientalism. The mirrors and lion skins adorning the walls of the hall are looted: 'Gesamter städte ganzer staaten beute' [the loot from all the cities of entire states] (61). The inflated use of lists and embellishing adjectives supports the Decadent precious style, in which words appear as objects themselves. The materialist excess of the palace, especially in poem two and poem three with its 'glas', 'zedern', 'elfenbein', 'alabaster', 'kristall', 'perlen' [glass, cedar, ivory, alabaster, crystal, pearls] (62), exemplify George's mastery of Decadent aesthetics:

Der saal des gelben gleisses und der sonne

Der saal des gelben gleisses und der sonne.
Sie herrscht auf flacher kuppel unter sternem
In blitzes schnellen aus dem feuerbronne
Topase untermengt mit bernstein-kernen.

An allen seiten aufgereiht als spiegel
– Gesamter städte ganzer staaten beute –
Die ungeschmückten platten goldnen ziegel
Und an der erde breiten löwenhäute.

Nur nicht des Einen scharfen blick zu blenden
Vermag die stechend grelle weltenkrone
Und dreimal tausend schwere urnen spenden
Den geist von amber weihrauch und zitrone.
(61)

The hall of yellow glistening and of sun

In the hall of yellow glistening and of sun
She reigns on the level dome among the stars –
In lightning flashes shoot from the well of fire
Topazes interspersed with beads of amber.

On all sides lined up as mirrors
–the loot from all the cities of entire states–
are the unadorned even golden tiles
And on the ground broad lion-skins are spread.

And yet the harshly piercing crown of worlds fails
To dazzle the fierce gaze of the one
And three thousand heavy urns effuse
The spirit of yellow, frankincense and lemon.

Whilst this passage exhibits Algabal's splendour and his might as a ruler, this poem expresses doubts about Decadence as a productive artistic movement. The exaggeration of Oriental textures and objects and the explicit acknowledgement of their foreign origin seem to serve George as a platform to query the longevity of Decadent art reliant on materialism.

The alternate rhyme scheme weaves a close texture of Oriental sensations consisting of scents, heat and visual impressions, especially a strong sense of colours: The colour yellow ('gelben gleisses', 'sonne', 'sterne', 'blitzen', 'feuerbronne', 'bernstein', 'goldnen', 'löwenhäute', 'grelle', 'zitrone') protrudes as a symbolic colour of the East. It equally came to epitomise the heyday of 1890s Decadence in England, referred to as the 'Yellow Nineties', which to large extents was defined by the publication of *The Yellow Book*. Apart from describing Algabal's power ('weltenkrone' refers to his absolute sovereignty as well as to his worship of the sun), the colour yellow is emblematic also for the Orient 'aesthetic yellow fevers' in European Decadent literature.⁹² As a prolific contributor to *The Yellow Book*, Richard Le Gallienne (1866–1947) affirms that yellow remained 'always a prominent Oriental colour.'⁹³ In line with the racial discourses of degeneracy, Constable points to the colour's implied power of contamination through an encroaching 'yellow peril' believed to arrive from Asia.

The colour in this section of George's poem links it to two other Orientalizing Decadent poems on 'yellow': another earlier poem by George, 'Gelbe Rose' [Yellow

⁹² Liz Constable, 'Fin-de-siècle Yellow Fevers: Women Writers, Decadence and Discourses of Degeneracy', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 37:3 (1997), 25–37 (p. 27).

⁹³ Richard Le Gallienne, 'The Boom in Yellow', in *Prose Fancies, Second Series* (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1896), pp. 79–90 (p. 82).

Rose] (1889),⁹⁴ which he composed shortly after his stay in London and Wilde's 'Symphony in Yellow' written in the same year.⁹⁵ The two otherwise unrelated poems are connected through their imagery of the Orient. Both express the way in which Oriental symbols guided the development of Decadence in England and Germany, whilst allowing us to examine the different accents of this development in each national strand.

⁹⁴ George, 'Die Gelbe Rose', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. I: Die Fibel*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2003), p. 72. George's poem is not to be confused with a series of poems written by Hermann Hesse under the same name parodying the poetic style of Richard Dehmel, Scheerbar and George, in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. II*, p. 840.

⁹⁵ Wilde, 'Symphony in Yellow', in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. I, Poems*, p. 168.

GELBE ROSE

Im warmen von gerüchen zitternden luftkreis
Im silbernen licht eines falschen tages
Kauchte sie von gelbem glanz umgossen
Sanz gehüllt in gelbe seide
Fast gestaltlos mit fremdem aussehn
Nur lässt sie bestimmte formen ahnen
Wenn sich ihr mund zu sterbendem lächeln verzieht
Und ihre schulter ihr busen zu leichtem zucken
Götin geheimnissvoll vom Brahmaputra vom Ganges
Du schienst aus wachs geschaffen und seelenlos
Ohne dein dichtbeschattetes auge
Wenn es der ruhe müd sich plötzlich erhob

HANDSCHRIFT VON 1889: GELBE ROSE.

Fig. 21 George, 'Gelbe Rose', 1889, *Zeichnungen in Grau, Die Fibel*.

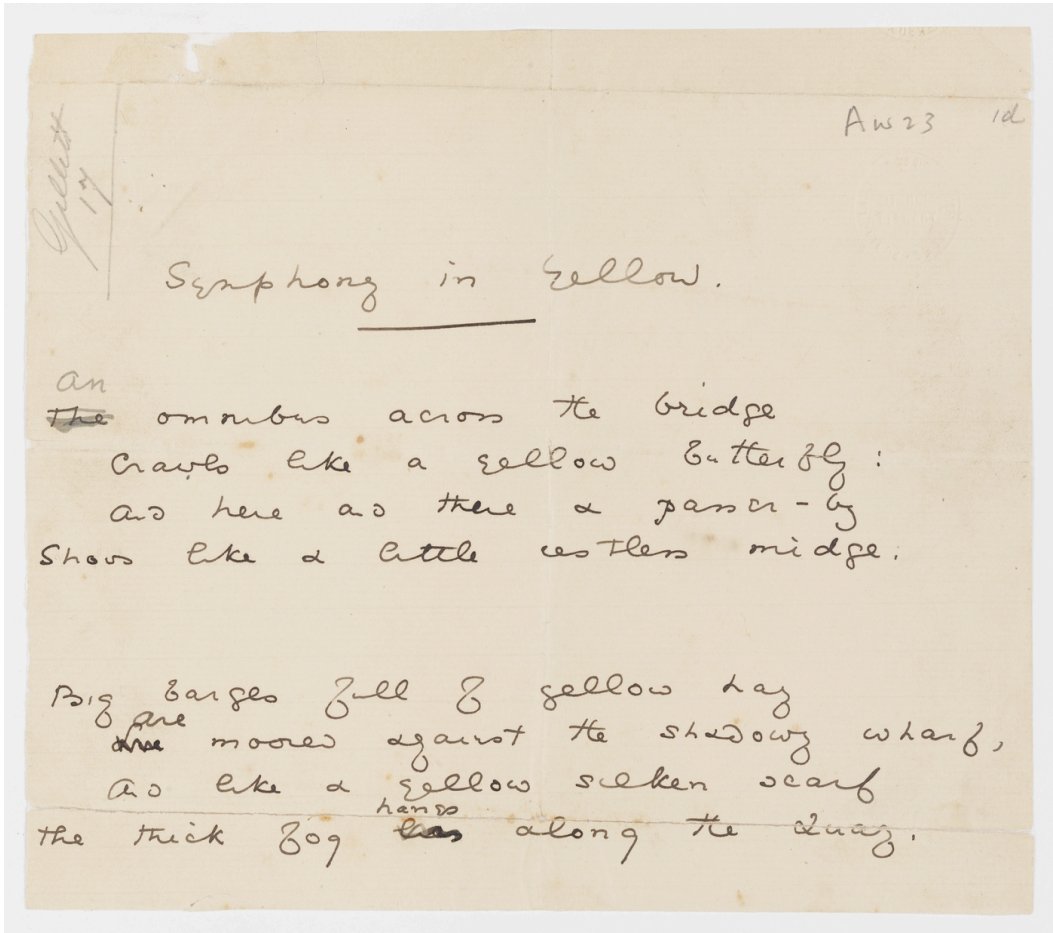


Fig. 22 Wilde, 'Symphony in Yellow', a manuscript poem by Oscar Wilde with autograph, published 1903, State Library, New South Wales.

Whilst the ruby streams in Algabal's realm 'Verfärben sich blässer [...] / Und fließen von nun ab wie rosenblüten' [fade / And from now on flow / Like rosebuds] (60), in Wilde's urban Symbolist poem, the 'pale green Thames / Lies like a rod of rippled jade' and is covered in fog 'like a yellow silken scarf'. The river Ganges, allegorized as a goddess in George's 'Gelbe Rose', is 'von gelbem glanz umgossen / Ganz gehüllt in gelbe seide / Fast gestaltlos mit fremdem aussehn' [A yellow radiance poured around her / All wrapped in yellow silk / Almost contourless with foreign appearance] (fig. 21). The analogy in imagery, the rose, the silk, and the use of the colour yellow, indicates that this first section 'Unterreich' was conceived in dialogue with international symbols of Decadence.

The rose, another prominent image in *Algabal*, does not stand for sensual delight, (even though its silken texture is emphasized throughout), but ultimately depicts a symbol of death. In a reminiscence of Alma-Tadema's painting, a shower of roses puts an end to one of Algabal's debauched feasts in the poem ('Ende das fest!' [finish the feast!] (69). On a figurative level, the movement of Decadence is defeated by its own means: 'Rosen regnen [...] gelbe tote: / [...] Auf die schleusen! / Und aus reusen / Regnen rosen / Güsse flüsse / Die begraben.' [Roses pour down [...] / yellow and dead [...] / Open the sluices! / And out of creels / the Roses rain / Gushes rivers / which will bury you] (69). The internal rhymes imitating a stream of death symbols such as the 'yellow dead roses' seem to suffocate its author's own creative practice. The material excess and the downward-spiralling, accelerated rhyme give the impression that the Decadent precious style is merely self-perpetuating but not leading into an aesthetic future. It will ultimately impede a renewal of culture from within, which George pursued as an ideal.

The metaphor of the silken yellow scarf weaves together Wilde's and George's early poems. It also alludes back to Algabal's preference of Oriental silks, which, according to Gibbon, implied the undoing of national integrity. Similar to the emperor in Alma-Tadema's painting, Algabal wears 'ein kleid aus blauer Serer-seide' (66) from China, and rests on a 'seidene[m] lager' [His robe is blue, of silken Seric twist [...] on silken sheets] (70). The Oriental silken veil represents another luxury good of colonial origin, not least associated with Salome's dance. Apart from its imperialist implication, it can be read as George's attempt to quite literally lift the narcotic veil off Decadent writing and uncover the essence of a new kind of poetry emanating from within.

The second part of the *Algabal* cycle, titled 'Tage', reinforces George's criticism of the longevity of Decadence as established in the first poems. George's awareness of the sensationalism of literary Oriental writing is embedded in the expression 'Toller wunder fremde schau' [fantastic wonders / marvelled at by strangers] (67). The mass of people that come to Algabal's temple to worship and adore him in his majesty are paralleled with the readers and writers of Oriental Decadent fiction. Both seek outward ephemeral sensations instead of lasting spiritual values. Images of decay pair up with Oriental attributes: 'tote liljen und narzissen' [dead lilies and narcissus] appear as 'sand und silberstaub' [sand and silver dust] (67). George fuses symbols of *The Arabian Nights* and emblems of English Aestheticism, the lily and the daffodil, most prominently representing the myth of Narcissus and English Romantic poetry. The temple facing East ['Gegen osten ragt der bau' (67)] becomes a central image of Decadence charged with negative connotations. The masses of believers (readers) have no access to the core of the sanctum where 'das heilige bild entschleiert / Nur sich gibt dem einen gast / Der es oft und innig feiert'

[the holy idol unveiled / Will only allowed to be seen by a single guest / Who adores it often and in earnest] (67). As much as Algabal worships himself, Decadence, George seems to say, is futile in its navel-gazing attitude [‘Nur sein mund gebete lallt [...] / Seinen immergleichen segen’ [only his mouth mumbles prayers [...] His same old blessings] (67). Decadence has exhausted the East as a resource for literary creativity.

The final stanza, still following an alternating rhyme scheme, immerses the reader in the atmosphere of this sanctum. The voices of the young outside (‘Junge stimmen’ [youthful voices] (67) are restrained from entering the shrine. The voices of the young as well as the young authors like George himself at the time, are dulled distant echos of the past (‘ferner hall’). Oriental mists have already misled the senses of the previous generations of poets (‘Narden die verflüchtet [*sic*] irren / Durch der räuche strengen quall / Zu dem kuss der süssen mirren.’ [Nards dissolve in err / Through the heavy diffusion of fumes / Toward the kiss of sweet myrrh] (67)). George’s choice of words (‘irren’ / ‘strengen’) implies the dangers of sensual intoxication for Algabal as well as for the development of Decadent texts. The haze of drug-infused Decadent literature obscures its own future.

In the fifth poem of ‘Tage’, the theme of a dangerous Oriental intoxication is explicitly linked to the idea of a weakening of Decadence. Unlike in Pater, Wilde or in Scheerbart’s Tarub where such intoxication is intended to provide new experiences, sensations, and pleasure, Algabal’s wish to be intoxicated is a tormented one. The refrain to this poem in two stanzas highlights the languor caused by depression: ‘Nun schlingt mich in eure bande / Flötenspieler vom Nil. [...] Entrückt und tötet mich wieder / Flötenspieler vom Nil.’ [Now draw me into your power, / Players of flutes from the Nile! [...] Entrance me and kill me once more] (70). Algabal lying on his

silken couch lists all the previous attempts to put him to sleep: the ‘wundersager’ [teller of tales], ‘lullendes lied’ [song that is lulling and sweet], and the dance of maidens from Attica (70). These arts, predominately Oriental, are all emptied of their desired effect to stimulate his and George’s Decadent appetites (‘Was mir vor monden gefiel’ [what used to please me moons ago] (70).

The next line focuses explicitly on the depression of Decadence as the speaker addresses the flute-players directly: ‘Ihr sanget die flucht aus den welten’ [You sang of the escape from the worlds] (70). This line resonates with a host of poems celebrating escapism such as Baudelaire’s ‘N’importe où hors du monde’ [Anywhere Out of the World] (*Paris Spleen*, 1855–1867), and poems from *Les Fleurs du mal*, which George had translated around the same time as writing *Algabal*. In Baudelaire’s poem, the speaker in conversation with his soul deliberates how to exit his life, which he or she compares to a ‘hospital’ of *ennui*.⁹⁶ Algabal’s palace, once representing Oriental extravagance, appears just as such a Baudelairean, heterotopic space. As if to appeal to the Decadent writers who are equated to the flute-players, Algabal cries out for a last dosage of Decadent exhilaration (‘wieder’). Decadent fiction helps the reader to a momentary escape from life into art (‘entrückt’) only then to make him or her realize their own stagnation (‘tötet’).

The interpretation of the Decadents as the Oriental flute-player, points the reader to the last poem of ‘Tage’, ‘Schall von oben’ [Sound from above]. Algabal

⁹⁶ The section resonates particularly with Verlaine’s poem ‘Langueur’ (1883):

‘Je suis l’Empire à la fin de la décadence,
Qui regarde passer les grands Barbares blancs
En composant des acrostiches indolents
D’un style d’or où la langueur du soleil danse.
L’âme seulette a mal au coeur d’un ennui dense. [...]’

addresses them as Syrians [‘Syrer’] whose singing has elevated him and cast him into graves (75). ‘Sänge’ [songs] in this context refers to Decadent literature voiced by the East. The Syrians again could be read as George’s Decadent predecessors. Algabal and the young poet George are unsure whether to succumb further to their influence:

Weise Syrer Werd ich dankend euch vertreiben?	Wise Syrians Will I drive you off with thanks?
Ihr verführer Noch im leben zu verbleiben! (75)	You whose seductive power keeps me alive!

In these lines George acknowledges the impact of the French Decadents and Symbolists (‘Weise Syrer’). However, the rhetorical question ‘[w]erd ich dankend euch vertreiben?’ followed by an exclamation mark concluding the last line of the poem in the original, implies a hesitation to follow if not a rejection of the Decadent tradition. The passage suggests the necessity for George to overcome his own literary heritage (‘dankend euch vertreiben’) and the East (‘verführer’) in order to renew the contemporary canon (‘Noch im leben zu verbleiben’).

‘Die Andenken’ shows Algabal, now an overthrown ruler in exile, reflecting on the splendours of the past (‘Grosse tage wo im geist ich nur der herr der welten hiess / Arger tag wo in der heimat meine tempel ich verliess!’ [Grand days when in my mind I was called the lord of the worlds / dreadful the day when I left behind my temples in the homeland] (78). This last part of the cycle, consisting of seven poems, is drained of all colour, exotic vocabulary, and cosmopolitan ideals, which created Algabal as ‘herr der welten’ [lord of the worlds] and the ‘tempel’ as an emblem of the East. Far away are times in which Decadence celebrated the tantalizing conjunctions of pain and pleasure: ‘Fern ist mir das blumenalter / Wo die zähre noch genuss’ [Long

gone seems the age of flowers to me / when a tear was still regarded as pleasure] (79). A regretful, yet proud ruler summons his (poetic) past, aware of his own thoughts' vehemence ['eigener gedanken wucht'] and of the difficult year of change ['schweren wechseljahre[s]'] (78).

Finally, the coda in four stanzas with the title 'Vogelschau' [Auspice] indicates George's new literary orientation towards a replacement of the East by Nordic and Germanic tropes. This shift is made explicit by the bird imagery. In the first and last stanza the poetic speaker sees white, innocent swallows 'schnee- und silberweiss' [white as snow and silver] flying in the air that is 'hell und heiss' [bright and hot]. Closing in like a cage, the first and last stanza frame the middle stanzas in which George describes the expulsion of exotic imagery symbolized by a flock of colourful birds and black birds ('Bunte häher [...] / Papagei und colibri' [Multi-coloured jays [...] parrots and hummingbirds], 'Dohlen' ['raven']) (85). These are engulfed by the enchanted wilderness ('wald der Tusferi' [forest of the Tusferi]) which sinks into an abyss ('Nah am grunde über nattern / Im verzauberten gehau' [hovering over the ground over vipers / In the spellbound coppice]).⁹⁷

The last stanza resumes the dynamic and upward movement of the native swallows, representative of German [European] fauna. While the exotic animals are banished to live in darkness, the white birds return to fly again ['wieder fliegen']. The wind is now cleansed from Oriental heat as cited in the first stanza ['heiss']. On the contrary, the wind of change for George is Nordic, clear and cold ['klar und kalt'] (85). Here, George's awareness of the decline of a Decadent tradition based on

⁹⁷ The term 'Tusferi' relates to the Latin verb *turifer* meaning 'to bear incense'.

Oriental influences is most obvious. Thus the overall poem concludes with the anticipation of the decadence of Decadence.

Overall, the East has a twofold function in *Algabal*: in the first part it is celebrated as the means of creating Decadent materialism and atmosphere. It defines George's early work as belonging to the Decadent canon. Secondly, however, the East is a strategy to test Decadence's fitness to survive in literary history. In the second part, 'Tage', it is a foil on which Algabal as an allegorical figure for Decadent literary tradition perceives his own decline. George questions the implications of his own usage of the East, which puts him in line with the literary conventions characteristic of the European Decadence. The artistic and political renewal the George-Kreis aspired to certainly did not derive from the East. While in the first half George's Decadent text positively identifies with the East, the East and thus Decadence are alienated from itself by the end of the poetic cycle.

The scepticism about literary Orientalism reoccurs in *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* that succeeded the publication of *Algabal* in 1895.⁹⁸ The opening line 'Wir werden noch einmal zum lande fliegen / Das dir von früh auf eigen war' [We will fly once more to the country / that belonged to you from early on' (71)] indicates a revisitation of the Orient, to which the poetic speaker refers as being the familiar territory of his youth. This nostalgic space however is in ruins ('Von säulen die im schutte dampfen / Von schwertern die von staub und purpur kleben [...] Der rest der kämpfenden die strassen deckte [...] Die leiber vom weiss des marmors [...] und hochrot wie blut.' [Of pillars which steamed in debris / Of swords made sticky of dust

⁹⁸ Stefan George, *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten, Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. III*, pp. 69–99.

and purple [...] the remains of fighters covered the streets [...] the bodies as white as marble [...] and dark red as blood] (73–75)). Here the images of the East derive from Goethe's *Divan*, and yet again they describe a defeated Orient. Even an attempt to turn away from contemporary French and English influence to Goethe's classical – and idiosyncratically German – treatment of the East does not seem to satisfy George in his search for a new, post-Decadent aesthetic.

In a later poem of *Der Siebente Ring* (1907), named 'Ellora' after the Indian shrine in Maharashtra, the destruction of the Decadent Orient is fulfilled.⁹⁹ The first stanza relates directly to the demolition of colour, the flute-players and Decadent flower motives encountered in *Algabal*:

Werft die blumen werft die flöten
 Rest von tröstlichem geflimme!
 Ton und farbe müsst ihr töten
 Trennen euch von licht und stimme
 An der schwelle von Ellora. (130)

Cast away the flowers, cast away the flutes
 remnants of consoling shimmer!
 Sound and colour you must kill
 Part from light and voice
 On the threshold of Ellora.

The Exclusion of the East: Early Beginnings of the German Conservative Revolution

In the mid to late 1910s of the twentieth century many intellectuals within George's orbit started to formulate ideas about a return to, or rather, a recreation of national values. A new conservatism based on a rejection of liberalism, materialism, utilitarianism, industrialism, urban expansion and universalism was intended to

⁹⁹ Stefan George, 'Ellora', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring*, (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 130.

establish a modern political order. Disillusioned by the First World War and enthused by the preservation of home-grown culture, writers such as Klages, Kantorowicz, Schuler and Moeller van den Bruck asked how the nationalist conservative as ‘Erhalter und Empörer’ [preservator and rebel] could initiate a new beginning of culture.¹⁰⁰ Hofmannsthal, perceiving literature as a space for the cultivation of nationality, contributed to the debate by envisioning a ‘new German reality’ in which the whole nation could partake.¹⁰¹ In a similar vein, in 1919 Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) promoted a modern re-germanization, and called for the ‘Befreiung von den Formen der englisch-französischen Demokratie. Wir haben eine eigene’ [liberation of English-French forms of democracy. We have our own].¹⁰² Until 1922, Thomas Mann supported the movement, then turned his back on conservatism to defend the politics of the Weimar Republic.¹⁰³ Finding its starting point in early degeneration discourses of the 1880 and 1890s and often motivated by the citation of Nietzsche’s philosophy (Mann maintained in 1921 that ‘Nietzsche selbst war von Anbeginn [...] nichts anderes als konservative Revolution’ [from the beginning Nietzsche himself was [...] nothing more than the conservative revolution]),¹⁰⁴ the conservative revolution flared up between 1918 and 1930 and prepared the grounds for nationalist and fascist movements, which were to dominate European politics from the mid-1920s onwards.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁰ Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, *Das dritte Reich* (Hamburg: Schwarz, 1931), p. 189.

¹⁰¹ Hofmannsthal, *Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich: Verlag der Bremer Presse, 1927), p. 31.

¹⁰² Oswald Spengler, *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (Munich: Carl Beck, 1920), p. 102.

¹⁰³ ‘In so doing Mann anticipated his literary farewell to the lure of decadence’. See Anton Kaes, Martin Jay, Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 87.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Mann, ‘Zum Geleit’, *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, 18:5 (1921), 289–96 (p. 293).

¹⁰⁵ The proto-fascist tendencies of Decadence have been pointed out by Costable, Denisoff, Potolsky, *Perennial Decay*, p. 26; Gagnier, *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization*, p. 111; Reed (1985);

George, as a leading agent of the pre-1920 conservative revolution, can be read as being in proximity to avowed Decadent nationalists and kindred spirits Gabriele D'Annunzio (1863–1938) and Auguste-Maurice Barrès (1862–1932).¹⁰⁶ The anti-Anglo-American sentiment that characterized George's scepticism towards the notion of progress, which he rejected in the *BfdK* in 1910,¹⁰⁷ contrasts distinctly with his discovery of cosmopolitanism in London as discussed earlier in this chapter. Out of the cosmopolitan Decadent circles of the 1890s sprung a new cosmopolitan exchange concerned with the preservation of national interest, which was to a large extent determined by a literature that reflected such conservatism. Nations were singular entities bound together by militarism and a suppression of individualism. While Wilde's Decadence valued individual unities in the service of a universal purpose, George's Decadence helped to pervert an aestheticist cult of self into a cult of the nation.

George's own critique of the decay of culture has the same origin as Scheerbart's: Western cultures are in decline and in need of reinvigoration in order to avert their downfall. In his article 'Zur Kritik des Fortschritts' [On the critique of progress], Berthold Vallentin explains that a further exploitation of colonies and in a figurative way the literary East ('früherer welten' [former worlds]) could help this decay: 'Der zustand der welt um 1880 war absolute stagnation, die unablässige

Andrew Hewitt, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993); Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

¹⁰⁶ Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), p. 196. Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der Deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995). Peter Gay, 'Das heimliche Deutschland; Dichtung als Macht', in *Die Republik der Außenseiter – Geist und Kultur in der Weimarer Zeit 1918–1933* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1970), pp. 71–78; Armin Mohler, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Vorwerk Verlag, 1950), p. 21.

¹⁰⁷ Breuer, *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus*, p. 208.

ausschöpfung und billige nutzbarmachung früherer welten. [...] Diese erstorbene welt von 1880 war eine legitim erstorbene [...]. Sie hat ein scheinleben nur erhalten durch den angriff der sogenannten “Jungen von 1890”.’ [The state of the world around 1880 was absolute stagnation, resulting in the unremitting exhaustion and careless exploitation of ancient worlds [...]. This dead world of 1880 was rightly dying down [...]. It only seemingly was kept alive by the attack of the so-called ‘Youth of 1890’].¹⁰⁸ While the East in Scheerbart’s poetics is the utopia of tomorrow, the literary Orient is a world of the past for George’s circle. Whilst Scheerbart was critical of the debate on the ‘Fatherland’ and tried to countervail a resurging nationalization by praising the East as the cosmopolitan ideal, George believed in an inner-German renewal that explicitly excludes the East.

This exclusion often found expression in an anti-Semitic stance formulated by the George-Kreis. The Jews, comparable to the Gypsies in Symons’s Edwardian understanding, held the status of cosmopolitan mediators between East and West. The growing animosity towards ‘otherness’ and the increasing view of the East, now also to include Russia, as a dystopian threat, was described as early as 1914 by the German-Jewish philosopher Theodor Lessing (1872–1933) whom George had encountered at a meeting of the Kosmiker in Munich. In the 1890s, when George was working on *Algabal*, Lessing portrayed George as a ‘melancholischer Prinz im Exil, herrisch und verhärtet’ [melancholy prince in exile, imperious and careworn].¹⁰⁹ Lessing’s book *Europa und Asien* presented the Jews and the Parsees (followers of Zarathustra) according to his worldview as ‘Mittler [...] zwischen asiatischer und

¹⁰⁸ Berthold Vallentin, ‘Zur Kritik des Fortschritts’, in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung I herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1910), pp. 49–63 (p. 61).

¹⁰⁹ Theodor Lessing, *Einmal und nie wieder* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1969), p. 305; trans. by Norton, p. 166.

europäischer Geistigkeit' [mediators between Asiatic and European spirituality], to be considered as 'internationale Nationen' [international nations].¹¹⁰ By definition these are non-intellectual collectives because of their Oriental origin, which Lessing marks out as fundamentally irrational. These groups' vitality could jeopardize Europe's stifling belief in progress. The East is thus not a chance to bring forth modernity, as Scheerbart understood it, but a competitor if not obstacle to the renaissance of European culture. Lessing prophesied a decline of the European intelligentsia in favour of a rise of a more primitive, instinctive East:

Und schon aus naher Gegenwart könnte statt der geträumten Gehirnkultur Europas ein Wiedererwachen Asiens hervorblühn [*sic*], als Wiedererwachen dunkel instinktiver, unergründlicher, elementarer Kräfte der Seele. Weil wir aber auf solche Wandlungen Europas gefaßt sein müssen, so müssen wir Asiens Seele kennen; anders und besser, als sie bis heute in Europa gekannt wird.¹¹¹

[In already from our present day a reawakening of Asia, a reawakening of dark instinctive, fathomless, elementary forces of the soul, could blossom instead of an imaginary culture of the brain in Europe. As we need to reckon with these changes in Europe, we need to know the soul of Asia; different and better than it is known in Europe until now.]

Lessing challenges the former literary elites to take charge of Europe's destiny: 'Wo seid ihr jetzt, Alle! auf die Europa stolz ist? Wo?! [...] Simmel, Bergson, Boutroux, Husserl, Scheler, Kerr, Hauptmann, Dehmel, Hofmannsthal, Borchardt, George ...' [Where are you now, everyone! On whom Europe's pride rests? Where?!].¹¹²

Friedrich Gundolf and Friedrich Wolters, both members of the George-Kreis, shared George's cultural pessimism. From 1910 to 1912 they published the *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* [*Yearbook of the Spiritual Movement*]. As a follow-up

¹¹⁰ Theodor Lessing, *Europa und Asien* (Berlin: Verlag der Wochenschrift DIE AKTION Franz Pfemfert, 1918), pp. 78–79.

¹¹¹ Lessing, *Europa und Asien*, p. 11.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

publication from the *BfdK*, the *Jahrbuch* sought to abandon the ivory tower of the art for art's sake past and aimed instead to position itself as a more critical and timely journal, an explicit move away also from its cosmopolitan roots of the 1890s. The journal's programmatic demand for cultural regeneration targets dandyism, if not the persona of Wilde himself as an international allegory of the cultural decay that was setting in during the 1890s:

Die heutigen symptome für diese zersetzung sind: die sucht nach exotischen, exhibitionistischen, theosophischen nerven- und seelenspeisen, die neugier nach bekenntnisorgien und impressionistisch aufgehöhten reisebeschreibungen, das schnuppern nach unentdeckten reizen draussen und drinnen, die lust an allem hautlichen, am glitzernd skizzenhaften, spannend vorläufigen, prickelnd andeutenden... insbesondere die weichliche und schwatzhafte eitelkeit mit der die ichlein ihre paradoxen und liebhabereien hegen, ihre winkelchen und kauzereien, ihre schnörkel und abweichungen, die angst vor dem banalen, wobei das banale verwechselt wird mit dem einfachen.¹¹³

[Today's symptoms of this decay are the following: the addiction to the exotic, exhibitionist, theosophical food for the nerves and the soul, the curiosity for orgies of commitment and impressionistically charged travel writings; the sniffing for undiscovered sensations outdoors and indoors, the pleasure of anything skin-related, of anything glittery sketchy, of anything enthrallingly ephemeral, tantalising vague... especially the whimpish and gossipy vanity with which the little egos nurture their paradoxes and pleasures, their little angles and queerness, their squiggles and deviations, the anxiety of the banal, although the banal often is mistaken for simplicity.]

Gundolf's statement relates to Spengler's definition of ornament as the emblematically erratic art form of the Orient in opposition to a mimetic rational art representative of the new conservative West.¹¹⁴ Anticipating this train of thought Gundolf postulates a return to a clear simplicity away from arabesque and Oriental décor.

Spengler's work *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918) poignantly captured the anxieties and cultural scepticism concerning a decay of civilization. Spengler

¹¹³ Friedrich Gundolf, 'Vorbilder', in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung III herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1912), pp. 1–20 (p. 4).

¹¹⁴ Hans-Günther Schwarz, *Der Orient und die Ästhetik der Moderne* (Munich: Iudicium, 2003), p. 238.

envisions distinct seasons of cultural developments in the history of the world. While Europe is steering towards its winter, its entropy, the rise of cultures from the East is immanent. Spengler distinguishes the ‘Faustian’ (the modern Westerner) from the ‘Magical’ Oriental (Jews, Muslims, Christians).¹¹⁵ Edith Landmann recalls George’s commenting on Spengler’s idea of a cyclicity of cultures following a pattern of rise, bloom, and decline:

Vielleicht sei Kultur- und Kunstfähigkeit gar nicht eine allgemein verbreitete Fähigkeit aller Menschen. Vielleicht gab es nur einen Ort, wo es als einmaliges entstand, und von dem aus es sich überall hin verbreitet habe. Er stehe dieser Idee nicht fern. Der Spenglersche Unterschied sei falsch. Dass eine Kultur in und an der Zivilisation stirbt, das sei das Unterscheidende nur bei uns. Wenn sonst alte Kulturen starben, so starben sie als Kulturen. Sie hatten noch irgend einen Gott. Jetzt aber hört das Menschsein auf und ein Insektenwesen beginnt. [...] Spengler tut die Dinge in Schubladen. Damit sie reingehen, schneidet er was ab, und dann denkt er sie seien ganz drin.¹¹⁶

[Maybe the ability to establish a culture or art is not a universal ability given to all people. Maybe there was only one place where it singularly emerged and from where it spread everywhere. He would not oppose this idea. However Spengler’s distinction is wrong, that a culture dies in and of its own civilization that is the only difference in our case. If in former times ancient cultures died, they died as a culture. They still had some kind of divinity. Now, however, human existence will come to an end and a new age of the insect-beings dawns. [...] Spengler pigeonholes things. In order to make them fit, he cuts bits off, and then he thinks they all fit perfectly.]

Despite George’s turn away from literary Decadence, one must differentiate his cultural critique. Unlike Spengler, George’s concern is for the general loss of culture and the cultivation of humankind altogether. In 1919 upon reading the book, Thomas Mann who kept a critical distance from the excitement around George’s persona, remained sceptical of Spengler’s ‘Naivität, Egocentrität [...] Ahistorismus’ [naïveté, egocentricity [...] ahistoricity] which in Mann’s words turned the book into an attempt

¹¹⁵ Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1972), pp. 234–281.

¹¹⁶ Landmann, pp. 94–95; p. 105.

of ‘Décadence-Aufklärung’ [explanation of decadence].¹¹⁷ Whilst George did not agree with Spengler’s categorization, his later poetry also reflects a sceptical view of the East. In contrast to his followers who participated in what Werner M. Bauer calls the ‘Radaunationalismus von 1914’ [rowdy nationalism of 1914] George refrained from taking an overt radical position. While members of the George-Kreis started publishing politically aggressive articles in major daily newspapers, George wanted to reform the German bourgeoisie through poetry and abolish the imperialist ‘kapitalistische Massenzivilisation’ [capitalist civilization of the masses],¹¹⁸ which he regarded as one of the main reasons for the decline of German culture.

The Decline of Decadence: *Der Siebente Ring* und ‘Der Brand des Tempels’

In *Der Siebente Ring* (1907) George revisits his *Algabal* and redrafts his image of the East in three short poems. The whole cycle of ‘more activist later poetry’¹¹⁹ is considered George’s turning point away from Decadence. This collection also marks the last collaboration between George and Lechter. In the subsection titled ‘Gezeiten’ [Tides], George honours his friendship with Friedrich Gundolf, one of his most trusted companions in the George circle since 1899.¹²⁰ In the last stanza of the three-part poem, Gundolf assumes the role of Scheherazade’s sister listening to George (or for that matter Scheherazade) spinning ‘verschlungene mären’ [labyrinthine tales] (69):

¹¹⁷ Thomas Mann, 22 June 1919, in *Thomas Mann Tagebücher, 1918–1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1979), p. 272.

¹¹⁸ Werner M. Bauer, p. 457.

¹¹⁹ Jeffrey D. Todd, ‘Stefan George and Two Types of Aestheticism’, in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, pp. 127–45 (p. 128).

¹²⁰ Stefan George, ‘Gezeiten’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring*, pp. 65–69.

Lag doch in jenen schenkenden nächten / Deine wange schon auf meinen knieen / [...] Folgtest dem spiel von sich streitenden mächten: / Meiner geschicke vergangene gnade / Und meine leiden am fernen gestade / Bis zu der frühwolken rosigem klären... / Wie auf der schwester verschlungene mären / Lauschte die liebliche Doniazade. (264)

[Your cheek did rest upon my knees / in these rewarding nights [...] / You followed the play of forces at war: / To the past graces of my fate/ To the sorrow I suffered in far-away land / Until early clouds of dawn rose / like in the labyrinthine tales of her sister / beautiful Dunyazad listened.]

The adjectives ‘vergangene’ [past] and ‘fernen’ [far-away] signal, in addition to their temporal implications, George’s move away from the East in regards to Scheherazade’s story telling. With reference to the poem’s title, the tide of Decadence is turning. The poem’s irregular, disjointed composition of individual sections with varying verse forms, mirror the sense of an epoch phasing out and George’s search for new poetic articulations. The ‘zitternden melodien [*sic*]’ [faltering melodies] which resonate from an underground realm (‘dumpf hallenden schächten’ [dull subterranean gulfs] (69) bring Algabal’s kingdom to mind. Karl Wolfskehl, another close associate of George, notes the importance of a new German revival in the first issue of the *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung* alluding to the past of the *BfdK*:

Nun das blättchen sich, allerdings recht “rauschend”, gewandt hat, auch die gesetze des werdens und vergehens heilsam eingegriffen haben, sitzen die meisten der ehemaligen revolutionäre still und zufrieden an der stelle der todfeinde und lassen sichs so wohl sein wie die “Not der Zeit” erlaubt. [...] Man legt nicht mehr zuviel gewicht auf die satzungen von ehedem [...]. So war der naturalistische Impressionismus – in Frankreich die naturnotwendige äusserung eines lebens das am ende glorreicher, durch jahrhunderte hin wach gebliebener inbrunst schliesslich in empfindungsfasern verebbte [...] für uns Deutsche ein feldgeschrei fremder herkunft [...]. Ja – und den göttern sei dank dass es so ist – wir Deutsche sind von gestern, denn darum werden wir von morgen sein.¹²¹

[Now that the tide is turning, and with rather big noise, and also the laws of growth and decay have interfered to its benefits, most of the former revolutionaries sit still and content, as they have taken the places of their deadly enemies and enjoy themselves as much as the ‘hardship of the times’ permits. [...] One does not pay too much tribute to statutes of the past [...] The naturalist impressionism in France was a necessary expression of a life that in the end faded out into sentiment and which was kept awake

¹²¹ Karl Wolfskehl, ‘Die Blätter für die Kunst und die neuste Literatur’, in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung I*, pp. 1–18 (pp. 2–4; p. 17).

through centuries by a glorious ardour [...] for us Germans that is a battle cry of foreign parentage [...]. Yes – thanks to the gods, that it is so – we Germans are of yesterday, that is why we will be of tomorrow.]

The new impulse from the past, which he calls ‘ein strahl von Hellas’ [a ray of Hellas] must bring forth a ‘bewegung aus der tiefe, wenn in Europa dergleichen noch möglich ist, [die] nur von Deutschland ausgehen kann, dem geheimen Deutschland, für das jedes unserer worte gesprochen ist’ [movement from the depth, if Europe is still capable of such a thing [which] only can spring from Germany, the secret Germany, for which all our words are spoken].¹²² The editors affirm in their editorial note that ‘wie alles östliche’ [like all things from the East] no renewal of Europe can be expected of the Orient (‘nichts haftendes, aufbauendes’ [nothing lasting, constructive]).¹²³

Continuing the theme of ‘Gezeiten’, ‘Zeit’ and ‘Zeitenwende’, George devotes a whole subsection of *Der Siebente Ring* to Decadence as the facilitator of the dawn of a new age. The ‘Zeitgedichte’ consist of fourteen poems that had been previously published in the *BfdK* between 1900 and 1906.¹²⁴ In four stanzas of the poem called ‘Das Zeitgedicht [II]’ [A Poem of my Times],¹²⁵ George questions the routes to be taken beyond Decadence. As the ‘gewissen’ [conscience] the speaker of the poem addresses the poets of the past who feel at odds with modernity: ‘Nur niedre herrschen noch die edlen starben: / Verschwemmt ist glaube und verdorrt ist liebe. / Wie flüchten wir aus dem verwesten ball?’ [The base alone still rule, the noble have perished: / Faith is washed away and love has withered. / How can we flee the foulness of the

¹²² Ibid., pp. 15–4.

¹²³ Gundolf and Wolters, ‘Einleitung der Herausgeber’, *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung III*, pp. i–viii (p. viii).

¹²⁴ Kai Kauffmann, ‘Zeitgedichte’, in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch Vol. I*, pp. 175–77.

¹²⁵ Stefan George, ‘Das Zeitgedicht [II]’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring*, pp. 32–33.

earth?]) (32). The theme of escapism from a degenerate world, especially into artificial realms such as the Orient appears no longer as an option. The speaker, as a prophet, offers himself or herself as torchbearer to show new ways to face the era's ruin [‘verderben / der zeit’] (32).

The Decadents, the pale and feverish seekers for gold [‘blass und fiebernd sucher / Des golds’] (32) worked with debased materials such as ore and water [‘ihr erz’, ‘wässern’], which they beautified on the surface. The Oriental attributes of Decadence such as gold, ornamental architecture and precious gemstones were never of real substance despite their exaggerated exquisite materiality. Stanza three makes the distinction between superficial, bodily Decadent beauty and George's new idea of inner beauty clear. The speaker accuses the Decadents: ‘Da ihr aus gift und kot die seele kochtet / Verspriztet ihr der guten säfte rest.’ [As you concocted souls from poison and filth / You spilled the residue of healthy saps] (32). The last stanza is interesting in its use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’. The speaker now includes himself in the group of Decadents. In a retrospective as if in regretful nostalgia [‘busse [*sic*] für das glück’] of his own Oriental works, the speaker, or George, looks back to the 1890s:

Ich sah die nun jahrtausendalten augen
Der könige aus stein von unsren träumen
Von unsren tränen schwer ... sie wie wir wussten:
Mit wüsten wechseln gärten [...] busse für das glück. (33)

I saw the the Pharaohs gazing through millennia, /
Their eyes of stone conversant with our visions, /
And heavy with our tears. They knew as we /
That deserts shift with gardens [...] /
atonement for delight.

Despite Decadence's modernity as an avant-garde movement, in George's changed perception, it failed to express true purpose. Exchanging lush gardens for deserts, he

hopes to find a penance [‘busse’] of poetry, which he developed in his next poetic cycles *Der Stern des Bundes* (1913/1914) and *Das Neue Reich* [The New Empire] (published in 1928; written from 1907 onwards).

Finally, in ‘Tafeln’ [Tablets] one poem, ‘Jahrhundertspruch’ [Centenary Lines],¹²⁶ consisting of six parts, addresses the upheaval that the speaker – and, it has often been suggested, George himself – foresees before the reshaping of Europe. Sections IV, titled ‘Schlacht’ [Battle], and VI draw out the scepticism toward the saving grace coming from the East:

IV

Ich sah von fern getümmel einer schlacht
 So wie sie bald in unsren ebren kracht.
 Ich sah die kleine schar ums banner stehn ...
 Und alle andren haben nichts gesehn.

[...]

I saw from far away the turmoil of a
 battle /
 Such as will soon be raging in our
 own land /
 I saw the small group gathering
 around the flag.../
 While everyone else saw nothing.

VI

Nur aus dem fernsten her kommt die erneuung–
 So braust der grosse sang zur frühlingstrift ...
 Und eine hochzeit heilt von zwein: zerstreuung
 Und zuviel kosten von dem süssen gift. (183)

[...]

Only the most remote can bring
 renewal! /
 Thus resounded the great song of
 spring / A single wedding cures two
 ills: dispersal / And too much tasting
 of that sweet poison.

The poem’s speaker anticipates a political conflict, which seems invisible to his or her environment. The resistance to that impending destruction, which later generations of critics named the First World War, cannot be to take refuge into artificial realms of art in a counter-culture of Decadence that feeds off ‘zerstreung’ [dispersion and distraction] and the curiosity about the exotic, the ‘kosten von dem süssen gift’ [tasting

¹²⁶ Stefan George, ‘Tafeln’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring*, pp. 165–87.

of that sweet poison]. George reflects on his own poetic work concluding the definite expulsion of foreign influence in the last poems of the ‘Tafeln’, called ‘Ein Gleiches’ [Likeness]:

Ganz wuchs empor in vaterländischer brache
Dies werk und ging der reife zu ganz ohne
Fernluft ... Was früher klang im tempeltone
Deucht nun den menschen mehr in
ihrer sprache. (187)

This work has grown entirely in the
fallow soil of my native land and
ripened completely without foreign
air... What once resounded in the
temple's tone
Means more to people now in their
own tongue.

With reference to *Algabal*, the works that echoed with the ‘früher klang im tempeltone’, he denies all French and Eastern influence [‘ganz ohne / Fernluft’].

Thematically the destruction of alien influence links these poems of *Der Siebente Ring* to ‘Der Brand des Tempels’ [The Burning of the Temple] (1919), part of George’s last cycle of poetry *Das Neue Reich*.¹²⁷ In the poem, a foreign invader burns the temple of an ancient decadent civilization in order to establish a new culture. As Ray Ockenden notes, ‘[a]ny possibility of an alternative, of new growth from within the decadent culture, is absent: the memory of the old, mad king setting plants into the parched earth shows that there is no possibility of regenerative growth from within the kingdom.’¹²⁸ In ‘Der Brand des Tempels’ George symbolically burns the East that came to define his early poetry and his affiliation with the Decadent movement. In a conversation with Edith Landmann George explains his two-sided view on the historical regeneration of civilizations. One, he argues, originates from

¹²⁷ Stefan George, ‘Der Brand des Tempels’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), pp. 61–69.

¹²⁸ Ray Ockenden, ‘Kingdom of the Spirit: The Secret Germany in Stefan George’s Later Poems’, in *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa Lane and Martin Ruehl (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 91–117 (p. 108).

within, and otherwise cultural rejuvenation is caused by a forcible destruction from the outside. [‘Es gibt zwei Möglichkeiten: entweder es gibt eine friedliche Durchdringung vom Geistigen her, eine Erneuerung von innen heraus, oder es muss alles erst zugrunde gehen, bevor ein Neues entsteht’].¹²⁹

The poem is conceived as a lyrical drama in which six priests await the invader’s verdict on their country’s future. Here George presents the reader with an ironic reversal: Europe is the culture in decline, which is destroyed by the invader ironically coming from the East. Asia, embodied by the foreign emperor and his army, is sweeping away decadent Europe. The priests are unclear about his name or provenance. Critics suggest that according to the invader’s self-nomination as ‘JLI’ and ‘Geissel Gottes’ [scourge of God] (64), George referred to Attila the Hun (406 – 453). Attila’s reign posed an unceasing threat to the Roman Empire, especially after his successful invasion of the Eastern part of the Empire (Byzantium).¹³⁰ In comparison to the dandified, aristocratic and passive Algalab, this new ruler is a self-made conqueror. Pamfilia, the princess of the annexed kingdom, representative of the decadent West, is sent to reason with the attacker in the hope to form an alliance. As Ockenden notes, ‘the last dream of a decadent civilization is that it might preserve its treasures by making common cause with the conqueror and bringing about a marriage of new and old ways.’¹³¹

After a futile attempt to negotiate with the new king, the princess commits suicide and leaves the ‘armgewordne[n] welt’ [impoverished world] (68). The priests, as the guardians of culture, see with her the hope for the future dying: ‘sobald / Du

¹²⁹ Landmann, p. 70.

¹³⁰ Ute Oelmann, ‘Notes’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich*, p. 156.

¹³¹ Ockenden, ‘Kingdom of the Spirit’, p. 108.

nicht mit uns die gleiche luft mehr trinkst / Bricht unsre hoffnung ein... Pamfilia'
[since / You no longer breath the same air as us / Our hope is fading ... Pamfilia] (68).

On a figurative level, the passage illustrates how Decadence cannot exist without the East. Yet it seems, in George's view, the East is the reason for its very own decay. No marriage between the old (princess and the East) and the new (the new ruler and modernity) is possible. Relating to Nietzsche's idea of progress (the will to overcome decadence), George's conqueror is adamant that new beginnings can only arise from the ruins of the old. In conversation with the princess he proclaims:

'Ich bin gesandt mit fackel und mit stahl /
Dass ich euch härte nicht dass ihr mich weichet. /
Ihr wisst nicht was euch nützt ich muss es euch rauben /
Verfallne wenn ihr dess euch nicht begeben /
Was euch nur mehr erschlafft. So wills das recht.' (67)

['I have been sent with torch and sword / That you grow hard and not that I grow soft.
/ You do not know what is good for your own sake / I have to rob it off you /
Degenerates, if you will not give up what only serves to drain you. This is the law.']

The emphatic 'Verfallene' directed at the priests literally translates as 'Decadents' or 'Degenerates'. George seems to directly attack the superficiality of dandyism cultivated in *Algabal*. The priests lament the Decadents' cosmopolitan culture of the 1890s, upheld like a temple and passed on from generations of writers:

Indes wir hier der Fremden loos bereden / Erfüllt sich unsres. Dies erhabne haus / Mit
götter-säulen heiligen tafeln schriften / Das köstliche vermächtnis vieler ahnen / Als
dessen wahrer wir bisher gelebt / Ist von zertrümmerung bedroht ... vollbracht / Sind
alle opfer und ererbten bräuche. / Wir haben unsre eigne macht erschöpft... (66)

[While here we weigh the destiny of stranger s/ Our own is jeopardized. This lofty
house / With statues of the gods, with sacred scripts / The luscious heritage of many
forbearers / for which we lived to guard it until now / Is threatened with destruction.../
All our sacrifices have been performed and the inherited customs. / We have
exhausted our own power...]

The second *réplique* in the priests' conversation opens up a realm of this exhausted power of the East: the Decadent if highly artificial and sterile gardens the reader

encountered in *Algabal* are now even aesthetically barren. Reminiscent of *Algabal* and the defeated ruler in *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*, the priests or Decadent writers revisit an image of a lost realm in which ‘Der alte irre könig seine gärten / Durchschlich sich auf dem grunde niederbog / Mit seinen weissen fingern wurzeln steckte / Ins trockne erdreich.’ [The old mad king crept through his gardens / He bent down towards the ground / With his white fingers / He planted roots into the arid soil] (62). In response to the priests asking him to spare their temple, as a symbol for the decadent tradition, the ruler answers:

‘Ihr könnt nicht eures landes fäulnis heilen. Was sind die götter die euch nicht mehr helfen? / Was bücher bilder die euch nicht mehr heben? / Dankt ihm der euch vom wust befreit.’ / DRITTER: Sein wort / Schmucklos und rauh trägt nicht des unsern form / Lässt keine antwort zu ... doch trifft wie blitz. (64)

[‘You are not fit to heal your country’s foulness. What use are gods that help you no longer? / Books and images that fail to excite you? / Thank him who relieves you of the debris!’ / THE THIRD / His language / is unadorned and rough does not share our form / Allows no answers... yet they strike like lightning.]

This example discloses how the means of Decadence are exhausted. Modernity requires brand-new forms of expression, indeed another language altogether. Only a neo-Germanic poetry will bring society forward in the new century. In comparison to Mahoney’s examples of Decadence as a nostalgic, yet productive corrective in regard to gender, political and class resistance in Modernism, George models his modern aesthetic against the negative of a cosmopolitan Decadence. Decadence is not used as a strategy to respond to political issues of the post-Victorian/post-Wilhelmine era. Rather, George’s rejection of Decadence determines an endpoint of a literary evolution incited by Eastern forms and themes.

Two other of George’s prescient poems, ‘Der Krieg’ [The War] (1917) and ‘Der Gehenkte’ [The Hanged Man] of the same collection, contribute to the poetic

cleansing of the East. In ‘Der Krieg’, a prophetic figure warns of the detrimental effects and waste of modernized warfare emptied of any humanitarian ideals.¹³² Much like in Symons’s nostalgic defence of the Gypsies, which admonished a spiritual decay conditioned by modernity, George portrays the leaders of the war as the bureaucrats, economists and the military [Sachwalter / händler / schreiber – piff und zahl] (24). Yet, in contrast to Symons’s and Scheerbart’s views, the war is considered as a teleological, even if unwanted, necessity. Recalling Spengler’s theory, war is unavoidable to bring about change and re-establish healthy societies and nations (‘Erkrankte welten fiebern sich zu ende’ (24) [sick worlds feverishly embrace their own end]). In a letter to Wolters, George writes critically on the war, which he had hoped would initiate an inner renewal: ‘In *dem* rast ein altes jahrhundert sich zu end.’¹³³ Whilst George did not welcome the materialistic warfare as such, he however accepted a fatalistic view of history in which epochs decline in order to provide space for the rebirth of culture.

As in ‘Vogelschau’, the literary rebirth of poetry is reflected in George’s use of Nordic imagery. A possible revival for humankind in modern times is not coming from the East in form of Christ’s Second Coming, but from Western and Nordic mythologies. In the poem, the Roman god of light and rationality, Apollo, and Baldur, the Norse god of war and bravery, form an entity fit to rule: ‘Apollo lehnt geheim / An Baldur: “Eine weile währt noch nacht / Doch diesmal kommt von Osten nicht das licht.“ [...] Und Herr der zukunft wer sich wandeln kann.’ [Secretly Apollo leans / On Baldur: ‘for a while there will still be night / Yet this time the light will not come

¹³² Stefan George, ‘Der Krieg’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich*, pp. 21–26.

¹³³ George to Wolters, in *Stefan George und Friedrich Wolters Briefwechsel 1904–1930*, ed. by Michael Philipp (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1998), p. 133.

from the East!' [...] And he will be master of the future who can adapt to change] (26). The syncretism of Greek-Roman and Scandinavian mythology replaces the neo-pagan Christ-Dionysus cult which, due to its sensual appeal constituted a recurrent theme in Decadent thinking. Christ as a Jew, hanging from the tree of salvation ['Baum des Heiles'] (26) is aligned with Dionysus ['dem Zerstückten'] (26) representing the foreign god from the East. As a result, the Norse god Odin takes the place of the suffering Christ. In Nietzsche's judgement, as Julia Prewitt Brown notes, the figure of Christ and Christian morality signified the Oriental 'symptom of cultural decadence'.¹³⁴ Christianity and Decadence are what George terms 'fallreif' [ripe to fall].

The third but last stanza underlines the vehemence of the rejection of the East and Decadence. George alludes to Nietzsche's Zarathustra (whom Nietzsche ironically modelled on the Persian prophet Zoroaster) 'What falleth, that shall one also push!' commenting on the need to support the decline of old orders.¹³⁵ George quotes Tacitus whose history marks the Jewish Christians under Nero as the 'odium humani generis'. In reference to Tacitus, George casts the Jews as outsiders, 'die Verpönten', who are held responsible for the burning of the Roman Temple ['dass die Verpönten / Was fallreif war zerstören' (26)]:

[...] im schooss der hellsten
Einsicht kein schwacher blink ·
dass die Verpönten
Was fallreif war zerstören ·
dass vielleicht
Ein 'Hass und Abscheu menschlichen
geschlechtes'
Zum weitren male die erlösung bringt. (26)

[...] in the womb of clearest
insight
no faint vision
that the vile outcasts destroy that
which was due to fall
that maybe 'hatred and loathing
of the human race'
may bring salvation for a second
time.

¹³⁴ Prewitt Brown, p. 84.

¹³⁵ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, trans. by Thomas Common, ed. by Oscar Levy (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932), p. 254.

Lastly, the poem ‘Der Gehenkte’ visualizes George’s belief in a birth of culture through forceful destruction.¹³⁶ Here the dead body of a hanged man, symbolizing the process of decay, prophesies to a questioner that he will, once dead, ‘soon enter into your brains as victor [...] and before long / I will bend / This rigid beam to form a circle.’ [Als sieger dring ich einst in euer hirn [...] und eh ihrs euch versahet biege / Ich diesen starren balken um zum rad] (52). As an outsider of society, he predicts that he will determine the future of society by a reconstruction of the gallows into a swastika (an Indian symbol in origin, which George had already used in 1900).¹³⁷ The wheel signifies a cyclicity that opposes a linear model of historical progress, as Ockenden finds.¹³⁸ Decadence, it seems, in its decay provides ground for new artistic endeavours of modernity after all, even for nationalist aesthetics. George’s literary *Das Neue Reich* with the Germanic god Thor as ‘Lenker / Im sturmgewölk’ [guide / in the eye of the storm] (‘Der Krieg’, 26) put into the context of Nazism, pronounces the West ‘ripe for destruction and renewal at the hands of ruthless conquerors.’¹³⁹

This observation holds true also for the importance of Decadence as the pathfinder for major following periods: Cosmopolitan Decadence was the necessary springboard for major Modernist European authors. Even though many of the Decadent writers of the 1880s and 1890s such as Symons and Hofmannsthal, continued writing after 1900, the Decadent ‘temple’ was abandoned. George’s self-positioning, as prophet of cultural conservatism after 1906 and passive fatalist in the face of Nazism, still remains a subject of debate. However, Walter Benjamin, writing

¹³⁶ Stefan George, ‘Der Gehenkte’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich*, p. 52.

¹³⁷ Ray Ockenden, ‘Interpretationen von “Der Gehenkte”, “Der Mensch und der Drud”, “Gespräch des Herren mit dem römischen Hauptmann” und “Der Brand des Tempels”’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar*, pp. 609–27 (p. 614).

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 615.

¹³⁹ Robertson, p. 199.

in memory of George's death in 1933, evaluates George's poetry as the end point of Decadent literature and its European genealogy:

George was the great poet in the eyes of that generation, and he was so as the perfecter of the decadence whose playfulness he rejected in order to create for death the space it was to claim for itself at this crucial turning point. He stands at the end of an intellectual line that began with Baudelaire.¹⁴⁰

Conclusion

While the George-Kreis in the 1890s followed their fellow Decadents in Orientalizing practices to demonstrate their cosmopolitanism and active affiliation with 'otherness', they were keen to distance themselves in their editorials from any 'neuen strömungen der literature im in-und ausland [*Symbolismus Dekadentismus Okkultismus u.s.w.] [*sic*] [...] die auch bei uns schon auftauchen und dazu angethan sind die köpfe zu verwirren.' [new tendencies in literature from home or abroad [...] which are already emerging in our country and are about to irritate our minds].¹⁴¹ In 1894, when George had not even written some of his most acclaimed Orientalizing poetry such as *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*, the circle proclaims that '[w]enn wir alle FREMDWÖRTER auch die eingewurzelten [...] wegliessen so bliebe vieles leere ungesagt. wenn ein satz der eines solchen wortes nicht entbehren kann fortfällt so wird weder sprache noch gesellschaft dadurch einen verlust erfahren.' [if we leave out all foreign words also the ones ingrained in our language, a lot of emptiness would remain unsaid; if a sentence that cannot do without such a term has to be cut out, then

¹⁴⁰ Walter Benjamin, 'Stefan George in Retrospect', in *Walter Benjamin Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 2: 1931–1934*, pp. 706–11 (p. 711).

¹⁴¹ Stefan George, 'Einleitungen und Merksprüche', in *Blätter für die Kunst – Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892–1898*, pp. 10–11.

neither our language nor society in general will suffer a loss from it].¹⁴² The synchronicity of high-flying Decadent and cosmopolitan ambition on the one hand and early nationalistic tendencies on the other hand, which were already visible in the 1890s, questions the compatibility of opposites in Decadent literature. This suggests as Denishoff, Constable and Potolsky have established, that Decadence indeed accommodates seemingly conflicting concepts within one term.

Over a period of twenty years from 1880 to 1900, in which Orientalizing texts came to define Decadence as a cosmopolitan literary movement, the exclusion of the East in the interwar period signified the end of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence. While George's early *Algabal* is Decadent through its vibrant Orientalism, George's poem 'Der Brand des Tempels' imagines a symbolic demolition of Decadent aesthetics thriving on foreign influence. The crumbling of the cosmopolitan networks of writers, translators and readerships, gave way to Decadence as a facilitator of nationalism and fascism. In George's critique of cultural decay, Decadence as an aesthetic cosmopolitan concept was increasingly understood as a decay of (national) culture, denoting degeneration instead of an international Modernist avant-garde. The East in George's work indicates that move away from an interest in the 'other' ('toller wunder fremde schau' in *Algabal* and '[d]ie lust an fremder pracht' [indulgence in foreign splendour] in *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten* in the 1890s) toward an elimination of the foreign element in literature.¹⁴³

¹⁴² Stefan George and Carl August Klein, 'Editorial Note Volume II, No 2', p. 14.

¹⁴³ George, *Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten*, pp. 69–99 (76).

By 1913 a poem of the *Der Stern des Bundes* [The Star of the Covenant] ‘Eingang’¹⁴⁴ speaks of the ‘sucht der ferne’ [addiction to roam] (8) instead of the ‘lust an fremder pracht’. Orientalism as an attribute of Decadent cosmopolitanism has been replaced by the identification with the idea of nationhood, which is not unlike in the 1890s a paradoxical yet synchronized development. Eckel reads George’s treatment of the Orient as a self-identification and not, like Georg Doerr, as an affirmation of the imperial intentions of the German Empire. Eckel cites George’s poem ‘Geheimes Deutschland’ [Secret Germany] as a critique of colonialism (‘unersättliche gierde / Von dem pol bis zum gleicher / Schon jeden zoll breit bestapft hat / [...] Alle poren der welt’ [impressible greed has / Trampled down every inch of Earth]).¹⁴⁵ Ultimately then George’s Decadent East is two-sided: it represents the Saidian concept of the ‘other’ to Europe. At the same time, it is a place for self-identification with an analogous ‘inner’ culture. It is, as Eckel maintains, a ‘Spiegel des Eigenen’ [mirror of self].¹⁴⁶ The dialectical discourses on the Orient collide in George’s work around 1900 and caused a friction in the literary development of Decadence in Europe after the turn of the century.

¹⁴⁴ Stefan George, ‘Eingang’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VIII: Der Stern des Bundes*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart; Klett- Cotta, 2011), pp. 8–16.

¹⁴⁵ Stefan George, ‘Geheimes Deutschland’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich*, pp. 45–49 (p. 46).

¹⁴⁶ Eckel, ‘Spiegelung, Rahmung, Integration’, p. 62.

Conclusion: Orientalism and the Decadent Politics of Opposition

In England and Germany at the turn of the century, the East was adopted by Decadent writers to further their own artistic and political agendas. However, as this thesis has shown, the East in Decadent literature challenged and fostered modernity in different ways. The combination of materialist splendour with social discourses of otherness – famously criticized by Said in the twentieth century – made the East the ideal vehicle to negotiate socio-political debates of cultural degeneracy and strategies of cultural invigoration. By focusing specifically on the Middle East, this thesis has pinpointed Decadence's shifting self-perception as a European movement of otherness. Reciprocally, this study has illustrated how the Decadent East adopts a variety of forms, contesting Said's critique that the Orient was merely Europe's 'underground self'.¹

Decadence, whilst complicit in building Orientalism as part of an imperialist discourse, presents a special case when it comes to the promotion of cultural supremacy via the intellectual and colonial exploitation of the East. Decadents needed the East as a constituting means of selfhood. This thesis has suggested that Decadence collapses the ontological distinction between East and West, by identifying with the Orient. This reversed Orientalism is an expression of literary cosmopolitanism. Just as the networks of Decadent literature fluctuated, depending on national and historical conditions, so too did the image of the East change depending on the means through which it was conveyed. Political journalism, aestheticized travel writing, illustrations, satire as well as highly architectural prose and poetry, influenced how the East was

¹ Said, *Orientalism*, p. 3.

perceived as a foil for an existing European condition or a better Europe. Consequently, the political element of the East had a significant impact on the artistic evolution of Decadent literature.

The intermediary stages of the political motivation to write the East, therefore, affects the degree to which Decadent literature qualifies as Orientalist in Said's sense. In response to Said's critique of cultural exploitation of the East through Western literature, Decadent Orientalism can be considered as an aesthetics of resistance, as seen in Wilde's *Orient* as a product and response to his transgressive Francophilia. The attribution of intentionality in literary texts is a precarious business. But, as I have demonstrated Decadent fiction and journalism with anarchic tones functioned as response to, as Sherry defined it, the 'crisis of modernization'.² Decadence relied on the East to describe and oppose this crisis of modernity, as for example seen in chapter two on Symons's turn to a nostalgic view onto a magical, primitivist East embodied by the Gypsy.

But also, as this thesis has argued, the East was vital in overcoming the crisis of modernization: Scheerbart's *Glasarchitektur* embraces ancient Oriental and modern technology to contribute to a global cosmopolitanism. George's work differs, in that it delineates the resolution of Decadence. Unlike in Mahoney's and Walkowitz's observations in which Decadence served as the model of constructive liberal critique in Modernism, George consciously brought Decadence to a hold by excluding one of its defining features, namely the East. In George's poetry the negation of the East heralds the early beginning of the German Conservative Revolution which sparked a process of re-nationalization in the 1920s. The Decadent East in literature thus

² Sherry, p. 123.

assumes the active role of a catalyst in bringing about European modernity. While this position still serves to define European history exclusively, I have demonstrated that the East was an ‘indispensable’ force in the development of Decadent literature and had a considerable impact on the growth of Decadence as political, transnational network at the *fin de siècle*. It would therefore be limiting to suggest that Decadence equals Orientalist imperialism in its at times reductive images of the East. Rather, the Decadents, while practising Orientalist techniques and actively affiliating with the East, used their power of knowledge (to stay with Said) in order to formulate their own politics of opposition. Consequently, cosmopolitanism and Orientalism in Decadence appear as superimposed discourses.

The role of the East, metaphorically portrayed as mosaic or kaleidoscope by Wilde and Symons, therefore paints a positive image of Decadence as a movement characterized by its cosmopolitan inclusivity. As Rebecca L. Walkowitz argues ‘Decadence is an affect of cosmopolitanism, but it is a product of cosmopolitanism as well’.³ In arguing that the Decadents identified with the role of outsider partly by choice, the examples in this thesis have shown how Decadence complicates definitions of cosmopolitanism and Orientalism in equal measure. Wilde and George are theorists and practitioners of cosmopolitanism. While Wilde’s universal cosmopolitanism of ‘The Critic as Artist’ is steeped in German Romantic notions of universalism, George grows to reject the notion of inclusivity. The case of George himself spins this idea further, as he turns from a nineteenth-century cosmopolitan and Decadent writer in the 1880s and 1890s to a nationalist with fascist inclinations in the early twentieth century.

³ Rebecca L. Walkowitz, p. 176.

As the comparison between England and Germany has exposed, different national cosmopolitanisms coexisted. Nationalism, as George's exclusion of the East demonstrated, in fact originated in his cosmopolitanism. The displacement of Decadence in early Modernism can be traced in the treatment of the Orient in George's poetry. The 'East' is increasingly replaced by 'nation' as the desirable other place. While Wilde was envisioning art as a universal cosmopolitan project in the 1880s, George's poetry, at the other end of the timeline this thesis maps out, illustrates a return to a provincialism in Decadence. Ultimately, Decadence pre-empties some of Said's arguments by openly declaring a sole interest in exactly a generalising universalism and a cosmopolitan motto that proclaims the supremacy of 'art over the fate of nations'.

The question of how Decadent texts construct the East and whether they make use of resistance to the 'othering' of the East in these constructions, might be partially answered by a glance at the historical, geographical and conceptual Easts this thesis has explored: Egypt, Constantinople, Gypsydom, Babylonian and Assyrian cultures and Byzantium. While the East is stereotyped and 'othered', Decadence creates Oriental images as images of anarchic resistance, of political subversion and intervention; the dandy re-emerges as the Oriental despot, the Gypsy as Oriental *flâneur*, the *femme fatale* as hybrid of East and West. As Wilde maintained during his lecture tour in Birmingham, there 'could not be an exoticism in art'.⁴

Decadence therefore treats the East beyond its common function as an exotic destination of escapist desire and a surrogate for the loss of religion. In Modernism, as Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei has contended, exotic spaces functioned as a response

⁴ [Anon.], 'Oscar Wilde's lectures', *Birmingham Daily Post*, 14 March 1884, no pagination.

to the disenchantment of the modern world.⁵ Reaching further back in time, the exotic had already dominated strands of Romantic writing such as William Beckford's *Vathek. An Arabian Tale* (in 1768 published in English), Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'Kubla Khan' (1797, published in 1816), Lord Byron's *Turkish Tales* (1813–1814), Heinrich Heine's *Hebrew Melodies* (1851). Instead of denominating the exotic as a passive space of longing and atmosphere, in Decadence the exotic is politicized. Ornaments assume political implications, as seen in Wilde's views on exotic art in chapter one.

A catalogue of stock Oriental images in Decadent texts – the pomegranates, peacocks, Sphinxes, Gypsies, the severed head – become signs of a literature that is aware of its own activating radical politics. The Eastern Decadent image is politicized and informed by Orientalist research. It is through this self-awareness that *fin-de-siècle* poets pioneered cutting-edge experimentation; through the innovative integration of 'otherness' into their writing they decisively shaped today's naturally understood role of the reader as a critical co-creator of the text. By conceptualizing 'Art as a riddling Sphinx',⁶ it becomes the role of the reader to find answers to questions raised by the East. As a result, the East in Decadent literature produces atmospheres but more importantly confronts the readers with uneasy socio-political questions. The examples presented in this study thus addressed historical concerns of ethnic segregation, imperial exploitation in the name of the arts and sciences, and the struggle of emancipation movements. Chapter three has demonstrated how Scheerbart's

⁵ Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, *Exotic Spaces in German Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁶ Wilde, 'The Critic as Artist', p. 164.

ironization of the East, demanding the introduction of a harem-culture to Europe, challenges the early stirrings of the women's emancipation movement in Germany.

Next to images of anarchic resistance, Decadence represents the East in figures of hybridity. Seen in this light, as Jennifer Yee notes, Decadent texts in their cumulative and synthesizing use of details 'set[s] up a parody of that very Occidental compulsion to know and catalogue the Orient that Said describes'.⁷ Wilde's cosmopolitan vision of *Salome* and *The Sphinx* as mosaics, portrays the East as a connector between Eastern and Western art history that defies classification. As a mediator between Occident and Orient, Egypt appeared in a series of other poems such as, for example in John Barlas's 'The Memphian Temple' (1885), Lord Alfred Douglas's 'The Sphinx' (1893) written in his temporary exile in Cairo, Rosamund Marriott Watson's ('Graham R. Thomson') 'London in October' (1891), and Olive Custance's 'Peacocks. A Mood' (1905), to name but a few. These poets' literary affiliation with Francophile artistic theories of the Orient initiated and perpetuated the trend of a critical as well as dissident 'rising counterculture'⁸ situating itself simultaneously outside and in the midst of Victorian and Edwardian society and cultural trends. In forming what Potolsky terms 'cosmopolitan communities of taste'⁹ these poets' fictional engagement with 'foreign' influences mirrored the great extent to which Egyptian décor – in the material consumption and reproduction of 'stone fashioned dreams' in the architecture – the archaeological collections, and fashion had become part of Victorian and therefore English culture.

⁷ Yee, p. 68.

⁸ Thaïs E. Morgan, 'Swinburne's Dramatic Monologues: Sex and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, 22:2 (1984), 175–95 (p. 177).

⁹ Potolsky, 'The Decadent Counterpublic', p. 25.

To a certain extent, Symons's *Cities* resists the materialization of the East as practised by Wilde and Scheerbart. Symons's East – comparable to George's Byzantium – is a 'revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition'.¹⁰ Following his 'Master's' advice, it is in this Paterian aestheticized prose that Symons's writing finds its strength.¹¹ It is, as Clements finds, 'flexible, fluid, and sensuous',¹² yet written with a political intentionality. Symons's attitudes towards the East oscillate between repulsion and attraction, identification and opposition. The Gypsyism of Symons's writing, based on a paradoxical response to the East, enables a destabilization of the concepts of 'civilization' and 'decadence'. Equally, in seeking contact with travelling communities, Symons's anthropological Orientalism aims to transgress the boundaries of cultural belonging. Decadent Orientalism here opens the category of foreignness for revision.

Decadence resisted the 'othering' of the East by affiliating with it. As a result, late-nineteenth-century discourses on degeneration and Orientalism overlap to large extents. Their actively sought involvement with 'strange and foreign' influences make the Decadent writers discussed in this thesis cosmopolitans and Orientalists at the same time. In Georg Simmel's words the stranger's role in society 'involves both being outside it and confronting it'.¹³ Through identifying with the 'other', be this French culture, homosexuality or pacifist groups, and as I have argued, the East, Decadents fashioned themselves as strangers in their societies. They occupied a grey

¹⁰ Symons, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, p. 8.

¹¹ In a letter to Charles Osborne (7 May 1885) Symons confessed to modeling his style on that of Pater 'the most exquisite critic of our day', in *Arthur Symons Selected Letters*, pp. 15–17 (p. 16). A benevolent reviewer of Symons's early work, Pater recommended that Symons should 'make prose his principal *métier*, poetry second.', in *Letters of Walter Pater*, ed. by Lawrence Evans (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), pp. 79–80.

¹² Clements, p. 186.

¹³ Georg Simmel, 'The Stranger', in *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, pp. 402–08 (p. 402).

zone in-between belonging to a nation and a form of self-exoticization. As explored in the last section of chapter one, controversial figures such as Wilde were remembered as the Oriental other (Wilde as ‘the lyrical madman of Algeria’¹⁴ and Scheerbart as a fakir, George as Algabal himself). I have maintained that this self-positioning at the periphery of society or the denomination by others, was expressed first and foremost through their readiness to adopt Eastern imagery to fashion themselves as Decadent writers.

Pointing back to Gandhi’s argument, Decadent writers not only reached out to set up relations between imperial powers and colonial subject as in the case of Wilde and Manmohan Ghose. The Middle East specifically mediated what I call ‘intellectual empires’. It created networks between European writers. These inner-European ‘affective communities’ provided spaces for Decadent writers to express their struggle with modernity. Returning to my definition of the East as a hybrid cultural category, the Decadent East can be considered as another example of Foucault’s heterotopic spaces. In ‘Different Spaces’ Foucault defined heterotopia as ‘contradictory emplacements’.¹⁵ While the Middle East is an actual space, it has been superimposed by symbolical meaning throughout history. At the end of the nineteenth century, the East is a ‘universalising’ heterotopic space in Decadent literature. It configures simultaneously dystopian and utopian visions of modernity exceeding their physical locations. Foucault regards Persian gardens as the oldest such ‘emplacements’. Seen as deeply symbolic spaces, even sacred spaces, their architectural layout equals an emblematic microcosm. Colonies are places of perfection or in Foucault’s terms places

¹⁴ Gide, *Oscar Wilde*, p. 32.

¹⁵ Michel Foucault, ‘Different Spaces’, in *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, trans. by Robert Hurley, pp. 175–85 (p. 181).

of ‘compensation’ to the self; temporal heterotopia include spaces such as museums and libraries ‘in which time never ceases to pile up’.¹⁶ My study has shown how Decadent literature imagined the East through such heterotopic spaces: The East, as appears as a literary museum, an Oriental carpet woven of words and verbal artefacts. As a ‘placeless place’¹⁷ the East is a trans-national and transtemporal ‘sailing vessel’ in Decadent literature connecting ‘reservoir[s] of imagination’ with political actualities.¹⁸

To bring the political awareness of Decadence to the forefront, my analysis has highlighted the importance of reading journalism as the ‘other’ to Decadent fiction. This study has read journalistic works by all four authors as a commentary to their literary works. An examination of their non-literary publications and in George’s case reading materials, reveal their involvement in Oriental practice. The aesthetics of the Decadent Orient were ‘misplaced’ and set to journalistic purpose and employed for socio-political discourses, which in turn inform the authors’ fictional works.¹⁹ Thus we can see firstly, that Decadence lifted the East from the purely fictional realm but made it a topical concern of everyday politics in both countries. Secondly, as my examples have shown, Decadent journalism participated in the creation of (national) literature and national canons.

Journalism and magazine culture in the form in which it appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century was a product of, and a genre which helped to form, British and German culture. Wilde, Symons, and Scheerbart were prolific journalists

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 182.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁹ Jock Macleod, ‘Between Politics and Culture: Liberal Journalism and Literary Cultural Discourse at the *Fin de Siècle*’, *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 51:1 (2008), 5–22 (p. 5).

and published in periodicals and the daily press. The restriction of the George's circle's publications is significant as they symbolize the new, secret elite that will form a new German spiritual renewal. Scheerbar's many anti-militarist publications inform his utopian fantasies of a global community which he formulates through the East. *The Gypsy* marks a shift from the nineteenth-century literary art periodical and little magazines towards art magazines that increasingly partook in cultural and political debates in England. With its dramatic black and white illustrations by Odle and its review of Anglo-German foreign politics in Egypt caricatured in the *Simplicissimus*, the aesthetic of Decadence provoked political sentiment.

During the early twentieth century, therefore, the importance of journalism in cultural debates grew with the emergence of specialist papers. Established in 1888 as a 'radical journal' the *Star* published pieces by Symons, Le Gallienne and Shaw. The liberal press continued to grow out of debates surrounding cultural progress. Despite its political-economical outlook, the monthly the *Progressive Review* counted Havelock Ellis, Symons's close friend, and William Archer, advocate of Ibsen's plays and Shaw's early supporter, amongst its authors next to other 'leaders of free-thought in the fields of art and literature'.²⁰ By the late 1890s and early 1910s, the *Chronicle* was the London centre for liberal literary journalists, many of them part of the Decadent cosmopolitan circles. Their anti-imperial bent coloured their literary critical discourse. Journalism in the early 1910s performed the reversal of Wilde's idea of 'The Critic as Artist'. As this study has shown with a focus on matters arising from the East, the Decadent artists increasingly came to be critics of the 'condition and

²⁰ John A. Hobson, *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938), p. 54.

direction of literary culture from the late 1880s to the First World War'.²¹ As proto-Modernist thinkers their journalism looking eastwards contributed to the new orientation of European culture. The Decadent hangover in early twentieth-century journalism could only partially be addressed in my thesis but certainly is a field open for further investigation.

As much as this thesis uncovered the coexistence of many different Easts, it revealed the idiosyncrasies of English and German Decadences. The Victorian and Wilhelmine age were epochs of constant war at home and abroad. In fact, imperialism was part of Victorian and Wilhelmine cosmopolitanisms. This shift in the utility of the East to describe the relationship between English and Decadent Orientalism is further concrete evidence in support of Florian Krobb's assertion that while the *fin de siècle* witnessed 'unprecedented scientific achievement' it lost a sense of wholesomeness.²² Yet as the thesis has shown, for every movement there is a countermovement. As much as the period between 1880 and the 1920 saw a wealth of scientific and technological progress, it experienced an occult revival, and worshippers of esoteric and cosmic religions, which appealed to authors treated in this thesis.

This thesis has agreed with Constable, Denisoff and Potolsky in their view that 'decadent writing[s] regularly have supported starkly opposed political aims. The case of Nietzsche's appropriation by Nazi philosophers is surely the paradigmatic example of this problem'.²³ In a similar way George's engagement with the cleansing of poetics of foreign words, corresponds to later notions of 'Entartung' propagated under Nazi rule. 'Art' meaning along the lines of Nordau's polemic, 'kind or race' that

²¹ Macleod, p. 7.

²² Krobb, p. 550.

²³ Constable, Denisoff and Potolsky, *Perennial Decay*, p. 26.

diverged from its ‘natural’, national roots and thrived on cultural exchange, was shunned. Decadence once again serviced two opposed ideologies. In the wake of the Conservative Revolution after 1918, Decadence privileged submission and leadership over self-affiliation and individualism.²⁴ Decadence, degeneration and a racialism in art are therefore related terms and illustrate the fine line Decadence tried to negotiate between national and cosmopolitan identity at the turn of the century. The birth of modernity out of the ruins of the old becomes a common thread in the debates regarding degeneration and regeneration in the 1890s, and finds its application in literature as the mirror of the social and political lives of a culture. While George and his circle proposed new poetics for a *Neues Reich* through the eradication of Romanized words, Nazi ideology mirrored this aesthetic cultural cleansing in the destruction of the Jewish people, Romani, homosexuals, and other minorities. Ultimately, especially in George’s case, aesthetic criticism and political engagement are interconnected and are the foundation of the production of Decadent texts. The East gives expression to the political ‘strategies’ of Decadent texts that aim at a transgression of established borders. The East in Decadent journalism and in Decadent networks radicalizes the discourses of gender, degeneration and cultural decay.

In the case of Germany this thesis has explained that Decadence was belatedly received and has a darker side to it. It includes racist, militarist, and conservative tendencies. Therefore one could argue that it is better to speak of various German Decadences. Scheerbart’s and George’s Decadences could not be further apart. Scheerbart invites the Orient into his literature as a way into modernity. George’s literature increasingly excludes the East. While Scheerbart tried to formulate a new

²⁴ Krobb, p. 554.

literary programme in the 'Phantastik', German Decadence was defined in the negative as 'unwanted extreme modernism'²⁵ and struggled to fully emancipate itself from its French and English influences. This becomes most evident in the German authors' use of the same literary methods and tropes, especially Eastern ones.

While both countries are historically bound by a common intellectual history, the treatment of the East in English and German Decadence differs. In English Decadence the East is concerned with discourses on marginality (homosexuality and marginalized groups such as the travelling communities). In comparison, the use of the East in German Decadence appears more radical in its negotiation of national belonging, Europeanness and cosmopolitan affiliation. Wilde promotes the fact that readers can be loyal to their own nation while being cosmopolitan or for that matter Orientalist. George's work exemplifies the decline of Decadent literature at the turn of the century: it is rooted in a cosmopolitan understanding of aestheticism communicated in images of the East and dissolves with the exclusion of the East in the wake of a re-nationalization after the First World War. We can see how Decadence came to mean degeneration and despite its original decline described by my argument, experienced revivals in the 1920s and 1930s Weimar Republic and in 1940s Fascism. While my thesis traced the chronology of the decline of this nineteenth-century literary phenomenon, Decadence continued, and continues, to influence literatures throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Despite my comparison of specifically English and German Decadent texts, I have insisted on the European dimension of Decadence. Given the influence by French and other sources, can we speak of German or English Decadence, or is there just one

²⁵ Ibid., p. 556.

European Decadence? Or perhaps ‘European Decadence’ is an inadequate descriptor, as the East forms such a substantial part of it? In comparison to the mutual permeation of terms such as East and West (which Said’s study initially had set in opposition), I suggest that Decadence equally cannot be separated into different self-contained national strands. Further to considering the East in Decadence as a Foucauldian heterotopia, it is also Bhabha’s translational third space ‘in-between’ cultures. Like Wilde’s units of beauty they correspond and shape one another. This, I have argued becomes most evident in its treatment of images from the East. What is more, while I have examined forty years of European Decadence, I conclude that Decadence is neither nationally nor temporally restricted. Rasch’s strict temporal limitation of German Decadence is challenged by my thesis as, despite its emphasis on a decline of *fin-de-siècle* Decadence, it has demonstrated the cross-temporal and international recurrence of Decadence or rather several decadences as social and artistic phenomena. By demarcating Decadence, one runs the risk of constructing a non-specific cultural concept stripped of its singular identity. However as major upcoming studies by Jane H. Desmarais and David Weir, and Alex Murray and Kate Hext, suggest, Decadence is much like Said’s Orientalism, an ever-relevant universal critical concept to mirror and oppose both cultural crisis and civilisatory progress.²⁶

My central concern has been to understand Decadence as a product of comparison between national literatures, genres and disciplines. I have argued that Decadence needs to be studied comparatively. The historical specificity of Decadent Orientalist texts is highlighted by the fact that Orientalist research evolved with such

²⁶ Jane H. Desmarais and David Weir, eds., *Decadence: Cambridge Critical Concepts Series* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2019). Alex Murray, *Decadence: A Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2019); Alex Murray and Kate Hext, eds., *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming 2019).

rapidity at the turn of the twentieth century. Decadent literature prospered through its connection to other disciplines including archaeology, architecture and anthropology. As I have shown, *fin-de-siècle* Decadence even participated in the institutionalization of the East – from Wilde’s Victorian interest in archaeology, to Symons’s support of the formation of Gypsy Lore Society and Gypsy Clubs, to Scheerbart’s journalism documenting the ‘Babylon-Boom’ in Berlin’s museums. Marchand observes the affinity between Decadence and Aestheticism and ‘archaeological adventures’ which ‘appealed more strongly to [...] the general public than did even the finest text editions’, and that ‘archaeology possessed something philology did not: an immediate, visual, means to gain access to the beautiful’.²⁷ In the largely popular arena, amateur clubs and manias, stirred the public’s imagination and blurred lines between academic research and Oriental sensationalism. Many of these Oriental enterprises were intellectually supported by Decadent and artistic circles, who were instrumental in launching new disciples that made the East relevant for a number of European literary and non-literary audiences. As seen in this discussion, Ricketts’s collection of artefacts, Odle’s drawings and Symons’s Gypsy research helped perpetuate interest in archaeology and exhibition of Eastern artefacts in museums and galleries.

We can see that Decadent texts thus often crossed a line between art and real life: *Algabal* absorbed the Oriental architecture of Ludwig II’s castles into his lines, as did Wilde’s preoccupation with his father’s travel writing from the Middle East and Scheerbart’s *Museumspoesie*, Symons’s anthropological research and Gosse’s analysis of political cartoons. The East as a building element, construction site of new literary identity, finds expression in monumental and architectural metaphors which all of

²⁷ Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), p. 49.

these authors use: Wilde in his *ekphrasis* of Salome and ruins in *The Sphinx*; Symons's en-detail impressions of the mosque in Constantinople; Scheerbart's *Glashaus*, and George's Algabal's underground palace and the symbolic destruction of the Temple of the East. There was no novel revelation of inter-artistic correspondences, which of course existed earlier in the nineteenth century such as Rossetti's museum's poem 'The Burden of Nineveh' (1856); rather than a correspondence between fine arts and literature, a new relationship, that of Oriental studies and Decadence took its cue from nineteenth-century techniques. The process of such artistic translations brought with it an objectification of the East. However, this exchange describes the Decadent dilemma between cosmopolitanism and Orientalism; it transformed Oriental objects into literature, which in turn instrumentally shaped European Modernism.

In the light of the multiplicity of approaches towards the East that I have outlined in the preceding chapters, it is clear that the field of Decadence studies benefits from a multinational and interdisciplinary examination. Even though recent scholarship has established that British and German writers around 1900 have come to terms with their Oriental other, the relation of postcolonial studies to Decadence is still a growing field of research. Pointing to future avenues of this project, an exploration of women writing the Decadent East would round off a larger discussion of the connection between literary Decadence and Orientalism.²⁸

²⁸ In literature as well as criticism, the East is often personified as female. Due to the scope of this comparative study, I chose to omit the introduction of these aspects that complicate Oriental-Decadent relations in European literature. However, an examination of the reversal from Oriental object to writing subject for example in Else Lasker-Schüler's work (*Der Malik*, 1913–1917) or the use of Eastern tropes in Mathilde Blind's, Watson's (John Lane, 1912), Michael Field's and Custance's poetry would bring together the fields of literary studies, gender studies and Orientalism. Molly Youngkin's book has started this exploration: *British Women Writers and the Reception of Ancient Egypt, 1840–1910: Imperialist Representations of Egyptian Women* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

Decadence in the strictest sense was a peculiarly late-nineteenth century phenomenon, as was the rise of Orientalism and the institutionalization of Oriental studies. There are continuities, with gradual change, in the development of postcolonial discourses, which parallel similar developments in Decadence studies. Examining the European dimension of the subject has emphasized the international and cosmopolitan character of Decadence as a network woven between European and non-European cultures. Throughout this thesis I have insisted that the East in Decadent literature had the function to pull down boundaries – national, temporal and geographical. The conscious affiliation with the East shaped Decadence as a cosmopolitan as well as Orientalist network. This way the East describes the peak and the turning point of literary Decadence, which was temporally phased in Europe in response to drastic political change.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ARCHIVAL AND MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Liverpool, University of Liverpool, Gypsy Lore Society Archive

MS GLS A4 537, letter from Arthur Symons to Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, 1 April 1908
MS GLS A6 736, letter from Arthur Symons to Robert Andrew Scott Macfie, 1 July 1908
MS GLS C1/13 (10), letter from Arthur Symons to John Sampson, 16 August 1911
MS GLS C1 /13 (11), letter from Arthur Symons to John Sampson, 27 August 1910
MS GLS C1/13 (14), letter from Arthur Symons to Dora Yates, undated
MS GLS B15 59, letter from Theodore Watts-Dunton to John Sampson, 5 May 1908
MS GLS XLIX-L, Membership lists (c.1906–1973)

Liverpool, University of Liverpool, Scott Macfie Gypsy Collections

SMGC 5/2, cuttings album 1907–1913 (microfilm)

London, British Library

Add. MS 49522, Arthur Symons letter to James Dykes Campbell, 2 January 1888

Eccles 69/70, Oscar Wilde, *For Love of the King – A Burmese Masque* (London: Methuen 1922)

Eccles 445, Ada Levenson, *Letters to the Sphinx from Oscar Wilde, with Reminiscences of the Author* (London: Duckworth, 1930)

Oxford, Bodleian Libraries

Per. 2705 d. 316 (1 (1915), *The Gypsy*, 1 (London: Pomegranate Press, 1915)

Per. 2705 d. 316 (2 (1916), *The Gypsy*, 2 (Dublin: Gypsy Press, 1916)

Stuttgart, Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stefan George Archiv

Letters by George

MS George II, 5842, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 18 May 1888
MS George II, 5843, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 15–16 July 1888
MS George II, 5845, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 5–14 August 1888
MS George II, 5847, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 'Reimbrieff an A.S.', 1888
MS George II, 5848, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 1 December 1888
MS George II, 5851, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 1–6 January 1889
MS George II, 5861, letter from Stefan George to Arthur Stahl, 25 October 1890

Letters to George

MS George III, 9542, letter from Maurice Muret to Stefan George, 16 May 1890
MS George III, 10684, letter from Carl Rouge to Stefan George, 23 April 1888 / 8 May 1888
MS George III, 10687, letter from Carl Rouge to Stefan George, [no day] June 1888
MS George III, 10688, letter from Carl Rouge to Stefan George, [no day] June 1888
MS George III, 12082, letter from Arthur Stahl to Stefan George, 23 April 1888
MS George III, 13804, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 1888
MS George III, 13813, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 6 June 1889
MS George III, 13817, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 29 August 1889
MS George III, 13824, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 24 April 1890
MS George III, 13825, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 23 July 1890
MS George III, 13826, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 23 July 1890
MS George III, 13828, letter from Tom Wellsted to Stefan George, 7 September 1891
MS George III, 8912, letter from Stuart Merrill to Stefan George, 10 July 1895

Illustration

MS George III, 10697, *Vivant Cosmopolitani*, drawing on envelope from letter Carl Rouge to Stefan George, 5 April 1889

Letters relating to George

MS BfdK III, 340–343, postcards from Paul Scheerbart to Carl August Klein, 1892/1893
MS BfdK III, 341, letter from Scheerbart to Klein, 2 November 1892

Newspaper cuttings

George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050, [Anon.], ‘XXXIII. Deutscher Anthropologenkongreß’, Dortmund 6 August, *Globus*, 82 (1902), no pagination

George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050, Prof. Dr. Karl Joel, ‘Nietzsche und die Antike’, no pagination

George Nachlass IV Konvolut 14: IV, 3050, [Anon.], ‘Der dekadente Dichter Graf Robert de Montesquiou pflegt für jeden Besuch, den er macht, seine Toilette nach der Identität des Besuchten einzurichten [...]’, no pagination

PRIMARY SOURCES

Stefan George (1868 – 1933)

- George, Stefan, 'Algabal', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. II: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 55–85
- , *Briefwechsel zwischen George und Hofmannsthal* (Munich: Küpper (Bondi), 1953)
- , 'Das Buch der Hängenden Gärten', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol III: Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), pp. 69–99
- , 'Das Zeitgedicht [II]', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring* Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), pp. 32–33
- , 'Der Brand des Tempels', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), pp. 61–69
- , 'Der Gehenkte', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), p. 52.
- , 'Der Krieg', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), pp. 21–26
- , 'Die Gelbe Rose', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. I: Die Fibel*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2003), p. 72
- , 'Eingang', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VIII: Der Stern des Bundes*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart; Klett- Cotta, 2011), pp. 8–16
- , 'Ellora', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), p. 130
- , 'Geheimes Deutschland', *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. IX: Das Neue Reich* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2001), pp. 45–49
- , 'Gezeiten', in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), pp. 65–69
- , *Phraortes – Graf Bothwell: Zwei dramatische Fragmente aus der Schulzeit*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann (Munich: Küpper (Bondi), 1975)
- , *Stefan George – Stéphane Mallarmé Briefwechsel und Übertragungen*, ed. by Enrico de Angelis (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013)
- , *Stefan George und Friedrich Wolters Briefwechsel 1904–1930*, ed. by Philipp, Michael (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1998)
- , *Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann and Ute Oelmann (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1982–2013)

- , ‘Tafeln’, *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol. VI/VII: Der Siebente Ring* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), pp. 165–87
- , ‘Vorwort’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke, Vol III: Die Bücher der Hirten- und Preisgedichte, der Sagen und Sänge und der Hängenden Gärten*, ed. by Georg Peter Landmann and Ute Oelmann, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2007), no pagination

George, Stefan, and Carl August Klein, *Blätter für die Kunst – Eine Auslese aus den Jahren 1892–1898* (Berlin: Georg Bondi, 1899)

Marx, Olga, and Ernst Morwitz, trans. *The Works of Stefan George rendered into English* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1949)

Scott, Cyril, *Stefan George: Selection from his Works. Translated into English by Cyril Scott* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1910)

Paul Scheerbart (1863 – 1915)

Please note that the Complete Works of Paul Scheerbart published by Edition Phantasia is not a reliable academic edition. It is however the only one available to date which compromises Scheerbart’s complete fiction and journalism.

- Scheerbart, Paul, ‘Autobiographisches’, in *Paul Scheerbart – Bibliographie mit einer Autobiographie des Dichters*, ed. by Kurt Lubasch und Alfred Richard Meyer (Berlin: Privatdruck, 1930), pp. 14–15
- , ‘Berlins literarische Bohème. Eine Studie nach dem Leben’, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. VII*, pp. 503–09
- , ‘Das ägyptische Museum zu Berlin’, *Das Atelier*, 2: 35 (1891/1892), 4–5
- , ‘Der Fortschritt im Luftmilitarismus’, *Die Gegenwart*, 40 (1911), 391–92
- , ‘Der Militarismus und die Luftschiffahrt’, *Der Demokrat. Wochenschrift für freiheitliche Politik Kunst und Wissenschaft*, 2 (1910), 164–65
- , *Der Tod der Barmekiden – Arabischer Haremsroman*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1992)
- , ‘Die Ästhetik der Phantastik’, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.I*, pp. 163–79
- , *Die Entwicklung des Luftmilitarismus und die Auflösung der europäischen Landheere, Festungen und Seeflotten* (Berlin: Osterheld, 1909)

- , ‘Die Phantastik im Kunstgewerbe’, *Das Atelier*, 10 (1891), 10–17
- , ‘Die Phantastik in der Malerei’, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.1*, pp. 58–69
- , *Gesammelte Werke, Vols. I–X.2*, ed. by Thomas Bürk, Joachim Körber, Ulrich Kohnle (Linkenheim: Edition Phantasia, 1986)
- , *Glasarchitektur* (Berlin: Verlag der Sturm, 1914)
- , ‘Hat die Ornamentkunst jemals nach Originalität gestrebt?’, *Das Atelier*, 1:24 (1890/1891), 3–5; reprinted in *Gesammelte Werke, X.1*, pp. 95–105
- , *Ich liebe Dich! Ein Eisenbahnroman mit 66 Intermezzos*, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. I*, pp. 319–615
- , ‘Lemurien’, in *Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.2*, pp. 668–79
- , ‘Luftmilitarismus’, *Die Gegenwart*, 38 (1909), 722
- , *Machtspässe: Arabische Novellen mit Federzeichnungen von Paul Scheerbart* (Munich: Klaus G. Renner, [1904] 1981)
- , ‘Rahmenkunst’, in *Paul Scheerbart Gesammelte Werke, Vol. X.2*, pp. 293–304.
- , *Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin. Ein arabischer Kulturroman* in *Paul Scheerbart: Dichterische Hauptwerke*, ed. by Else Harke (Stuttgart: Henry Goverts, 1962), pp. 17–227
- , ‘Von Leuten, die den Kopf verloren: palmyrenische Fackeltanz-Novelle’, in *Der Alte Orient – Kulturromanellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon* (1910–1911), ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Munich: edition text+kritik, 1999), pp. 55–59
- , ‘Was nützt uns der Militarismus? Eine Sozialpolitische Betrachtung’, *Das Blaubuch*, 1 (1906), 212–13
- , *70 Trillionen Weltgrüsse: Eine Biographie in Briefen 1889–1915*, ed. by Mechthild Rausch (Berlin: Argon Verlag, 1991)

Arthur Symons (1865 – 1945)

- Symons, Arthur, ‘Alvisi Contarini’, *Arthur Symons Collected Works, Vol. II* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 271
- , *Arthur Symons: Selected Letters 1880–1935*, ed. by Karl Beckson and John M. Munro (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989)
- , *Collected Works of Arthur Symons Vols. I–IX* (London: Martin Secker, 1924)
- , *Cities and Sea-Coasts and Islands* (London: W. Collins, 1918)
- , *Charles Baudelaire – A Study* (London: Elkin Mathews, 1920)
- , *Cities* (London: J. M. Dent, 1903)
- , *Dramatis Personae* (London: Faber & Gwyer, 1925), pp. 241–62

- , ‘Gypsy Love’, in *Arthur Symons Collected Works Poems, Vol. I* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 127
- , ‘In Praise of Gypsies’, *Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society*, 4:1(1908), 294–99.
- , *Mes Souvenirs* (Chapelle-Réanville: Hours, 1929).
- , ‘Nini Patte-en-l’air’, *The Gypsy*, 1:1, p. 11; reprinted in *Collected Works of Arthur Symons, Vol. III*, pp. 197–98.
- , ‘Perfect Grief’, *Arthur Symons Collected Works, Vol. II* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 111.
- , *Selected Letters 1880–1935*, ed. by Karl Beckson and John M. Munro (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1989)
- , *Spiritual Adventures* (London: Archibald Constable, 1905)
- , *Studies in Seven Arts* (London: Archibald Constable, 1906)
- , *Studies in Two Literatures* (London: Leonard Smithers, 1897)
- , ‘The Decadent Movement in Literature’, *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* (November 1893), pp. 858–67
- , ‘The Gypsy’s Song’, in *Arthur Symons Collected Works, Vol. III* (London: Martin Secker, 1924), p. 227
- , *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: William Heinemann, 1899).
- , *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (London: Archibald Constable, 1908)
- , *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1919).
- , *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, ed. by Matthew Creasy (Manchester: Carcanet, 2014)

Oscar Wilde (1854 – 1900)

- Wilde, Oscar, ‘A Fascinating Book’, *Woman’s World*, November 1888; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 88–96
- , ‘A New Pilgrimage’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 21 January 1890; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 311–12
- , ‘A Note On Some Modern Poets’, *Woman’s World*, December 1888; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VII, Journalism Part II*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 108–12

- , ‘A Ride through Morocco’, *Pall Mall Gazette*, 8 October 1886; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VI, Journalism Part I*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 97–98
- , ‘Dress & the Philosophy of Dress’, in Geoff Dibb, *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde’s Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013), pp. 262–82
- , ‘Historical Criticism’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV, Criticism*, ed. by Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 3–67
- , ‘Lecture to Art Students (Modern Art Training)’, in *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission The Story of Oscar Wilde’s Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013), pp. 224–32
- , ‘Pen, Pencil, and Poison’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. IV, Criticism*, ed. by Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 104–22
- , *Salome: A Tragedy in One Act translated from the French of Oscar Wilde, pictured by Aubrey Beardsley*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. V, Plays I*, ed. by Joseph Donohue (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 703–32
- , ‘Symphony in Yellow’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. I, Poems and Poems in Prose*, ed. by Bobby Fong and Karl Beckson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 168
- , *The Complete Letters of Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Merlin Holland and Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Fourth Estate, 2000)
- , ‘The Critic as Artist’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. IV, Criticism*, ed. by Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 124–206
- , ‘The Decay of Lying’, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde, Vol. IV, Criticism*, ed. by Josephine M. Guy (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 72–103
- , ‘The House Beautiful’ (1882), in Kevin H. F. O’ Brien, ‘“The House Beautiful”: A Reconstruction of Oscar Wilde’s American Lecture’, *Victorian Studies*, 17:4 (1974), 395–418
- , ‘The House Beautiful’ (1884), in Geoff Dibb, *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde’s Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013), pp. 248–61
- , *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. III*, ed. by Joseph Bristow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

- , *The Sphinx*, in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. I, Poems and Poems in Prose*, ed. by Bobby Fong and Karl Beckson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 180–94
- , ‘The Tomb of Keats’, *The Irish Monthly*, 5 July 1877; reprinted in *The Complete Works of Oscar Wilde Vol. VI, Journalism Part I*, ed. by John Stokes and Mark W. Turner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 11–13
- , ‘The Value of Art in Modern Life’, in Geoff Dibb, *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde’s Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013), pp. 283–91

SECONDARY SOURCES

- Ahmad, Aijaz, *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures* (London: Verso, 1992)
- Akcan, Esra, ‘Toward a Cosmopolitan Ethics in Architecture: Bruno Taut’s Translations out of Germany’, *New German Critique*, 33:3 (2006), 7–39
- Al-Dabbagh, Abdulla, *Literary Orientalism, Postcolonialism, and Universalism* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010)
- Anderson, Amanda *The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001)
- [Anon.], ‘Oscar Wilde’s lectures’, *Birmingham Daily Post*, Issue 8019 (14 March 1884)
- [Anon.], ‘Mr. Arthur Symons’s “Cities”’, *The Spectator*, 91 (21 November 1903)
- [Anon.], ‘Review’, *The Times Literary Supplement* (20 May 1915)
- Apter, Emily, *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability* (London: Verso, 2013)
- , ‘Acting Out Orientalism: Sapphic Theatricality in Turn-of-the-Century Paris’, in *Performance and Cultural Politics*, ed. by Elin Diamond (London: Routledge, 1996), pp. 15–34
- Arata, Stephen D., ‘The Occidental Tourist: “Dracula” and the Anxiety of Reverse Colonization’, *Victorian Studies*, 33: 4 (1990), 621–45

Aurnhammer, Achim, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer, Ute Maria Oelmann, and Kai Kauffmann, eds., *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. I–III*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016).

Austen, John, *The ABC of Pen and Ink Rendering* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons Limited, 1937)

Bachofen, Johann Jakob, *Das Mutterrecht, eine Untersuchung über die Gynaiokratie der alten Welt nach ihrer religiösen und rechtlichen Natur* (Stuttgart: Kraiss und Hoffmann, 1861)

Bahr, Hermann, 'Buddhismus', in *Die Überwindung des Naturalismus*, ed. by Claus Pias (Weimar: VDG, 2004), pp. 83–88

———, 'Décadence', in *Renaissance: Neue Studien zur Kritik der Moderne*, ed. by Claus Pias (Weimar: VDG, 2008), pp. 11–19

Ballaster, Rosalind, *Fabulous Orient: Fictions of the East in England, 1662–1785* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005)

Bann, Stephen, ed., *The Reception of Walter Pater in Europe* (London: Thoemmes Continuum, 2004)

Baudelaire, Charles, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, ed. and trans. by Jonathan Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1995)

———, 'Gypsies Travelling', in *The Flowers of Evil*, trans. by James McGowan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 33

Bauer, Roger, *Die Schöne Décadence: Geschichte eines literarischen Paradoxons* (Frankfurt a. M.: Klostermann, 2001)

Bauer, Werner M., "toller wunder fremde schau": Exotismus als Negation in Stefan Georges "Algabal", in *Akten des Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Tokyo, Sektion 13: Orientalismus, Exotismus, koloniale Diskurse*, ed. by Yoshinori Shichiji (Iudicium: Munich, 1991), pp. 454–64

Beckson, Karl, *Arthur Symons: A Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

Behdad, Ali, *Belated Travelers: Orientalism in the Age of Colonial Dissolution* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994)

Behrendt, Patricia Flanagan, *Oscar Wilde: Eros and Aesthetics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991)

Beller, Steven, *Rethinking Vienna 1900* (Oxford: Berghahn, 2001)

- Benjamin, Walter, 'Experience and Poverty', in *Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 2: 1931–1934*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 731–36
- , 'On Scheerbart', in *Selected Writings, Vol. IV: 1938–1940*, ed. by Howard Eiland and Michael W. Jennings, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Others, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 386–89
- , 'Stefan George in Retrospect', in *Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 2: 1931–1934*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 706–11
- , 'Surrealism', *Selected Writings, Vol. II, Part 1: 1927–1934*, trans. by Rodney Livingstone and others, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), pp. 207–22
- Bennett, Chad, 'Oscar Wilde's Salome: Décor, Des Corps, Desire', *ELH*, 77:2 (2010), 297–323
- Berman, Nina, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2011)
- , *Orientalismus, Kolonismus und Moderne; Zum Bild des Orients in der deutschsprachigen Kultur um 1900* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1997)
- Bernheimer, Charles, *Decadent Subjects – The Idea of Decadence in Art, Literature, Philosophy, and Culture of the Fin de Siècle in Europe*, ed. by T. Jefferson Kline and Naomi Schor (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002)
- Bhabha, Homi K., *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994)
- Bierbaum, Otto Julius, *Stilpe: Roman aus der Froschperspektive* (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1897)
- Bithell, Jethro, *Modern German Literature, 1880–1950* (London: Methuen, 1959)
- Bizzotto, Elisa, and Stefano Evangelista, eds. *Arthur Symons: Poet, Critic, Vagabond* (Oxford: Legenda, 2018)
- Blanchard, Pascal, *Human Zoos: The Invention of the Savage*, trans. by Deke Dusinberre (Arles: Actes Sud, 2011)
- Boehmer, Elleke, *Indian Arrivals 1870–1915 Networks of British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015)
- Boehringer, Robert, *Mein Bild von Stefan George* (Munich: Küpper [Bondi], 1967)

- Boer, Tjitze, J. de, *Geschichte der Philosophie im Islam* (Stuttgart: Frommann, 1901)
- Bourget, Paul, *Essais de Psychologie contemporaine* (Paris: Alphonse Lemerre, 1891)
- Brake, Laurel and Marysa Denmoor, eds., *Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism in Great Britain and Ireland* (London: The British Library, Academia Press, 2009)
- , *Print in Transition, 1850–1910: Studies in Media and Book History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001)
- Breuer, Stefan, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993)
- , *Ästhetischer Fundamentalismus: Stefan George und der Deutsche Antimodernismus* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1995)
- Bridgwater, Patrick, *Anglo-German Interactions in the Literature of the 1890s* (Oxford: Legenda, 1999)
- Bristow, Joseph, *Oscar Wilde and Modern Culture: The Making of a Legend* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2008)
- , ‘Oscar Wilde’s poetic traditions: from Aristophanes’s *Clouds* to *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*’, in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. by Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 73–87
- , *Wilde Discoveries: Traditions, Histories, Archives* (Los Angeles: University of California, 2013)
- Brooker, Peter, and Andrew Thacker, eds., *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines, Vol. I Britain and Ireland 1880–1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)
- Brown, Julia Prewitt, *Cosmopolitan Criticism: Oscar Wilde's Philosophy of Art* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997)
- Burgin, Christine, and Josiah McElheny, eds., *Glass! Love!! Perpetual Motion!!!: A Paul Scheerbart Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014)
- Burke, Edmund III, and David Prochaska, eds., *Genealogies of Orientalism: History, Theory, Politics* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008)
- Casanova, Pascale, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M. B. Debevoise (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004)

- Cave, Richard Allen, 'Annotations to *Salome*', in *Oscar Wilde: The Importance of Being Ernest and Other Plays*, ed. by Richard Allen Cave (London: Penguin, 2000), pp. 65–99
- Chamberlain, John Henry, *Exotic Art: Being a Lecture delivered before the Members of the Birmingham and Midland Institute* (Birmingham: Cornish Bros., 1883)
- Chari, Hema, 'Imperial Dependency, Addiction, and the Decadent Body', in *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics & Politics of Decadence*, ed. by Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff and Matthew Potolsky (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 215–32
- Clausson, Nils, 'Lady Alroy's Secret – "Surface and Symbol" in Wilde's "The Sphinx without a Secret"', *The Wildean*, 28 (2006), 24–33
- Clayton, Martin, and Bennett Zon, eds., *Music and Orientalism in the British Empire, 1780s–1940s: Portrayal of the East* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)
- Clements, Patricia, *Baudelaire and the English Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985)
- Colligan, Colette, "'Esoteric Pornography": Sir Richard Burton's Arabian Nights and the Origins of Pornography', *Victorian Review*, 28:2 (2002), 31–64
- Constable, Liz, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky, eds. *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics & Politics of Decadence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999)
- Constable, Liz, 'Fin-de-siècle Yellow Fevers: Women Writers, Decadence and Discourses of Degeneracy', *L'Esprit Créateur*, 37:3 (1997), 25–37
- Curtius, Ernst Robert, *Essays on European Literature*, trans. by Michael Kowal (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973)
- Damrosch, David, *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003)
- David, Claude, *Stefan George: Sein dichterisches Werk* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1967)
- Davis, W. Eugene, 'Salome and the German Press 1902–1905', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 44:2 (2001), 149–80
- Deghy, Guy, and Keith Waterhouse, *Café Royal: Ninety Years of Bohemia* (London: Hutchinson, 1955)

Desmarais, Jane H., and Chris Baldick, eds., *Decadence: An Annotated Anthology* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012)

———, *Arthur Symons: Selected Early Poems* (Cambridge: Modern Humanities Research Association, 2017)

Desmarais, Jane H., and David Weir, eds., *Decadence: Cambridge Critical Concepts Series* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2019)

Dibb, Geoff, *Oscar Wilde – A Vagabond with a Mission: The Story of Oscar Wilde's Lecture Tours of Britain and Ireland* (London: The Oscar Wilde Society, 2013)

Dierkes-Thrun, Petra, *Salome's Modernity: Oscar Wilde and the Aesthetics of Transgression* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2011)

Dijkstra, Bram, *Idols of Perversity – Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986)

Donohue, Joseph, 'Distance, Death and Desire in *Salome*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Oscar Wilde*, ed. by Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 118–42

———, 'Finger-posts, Limelight, Staircases, and Other Delights: Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* as Popular Drama', *Popular Entertainment Studies*, 1:1 (2010), 9–25

Dowling, Linda C., *Language and Decadence in the Victorian Fin de Siècle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986)

———, '"Venus and Tannhäuser": Beardsley's Satire of Decadence', *Journal of Narrative Technique*, 8 (1978), 26–41

Draws-Tychsen, Hellmut, 'Zum Gedächtnis von Paul Scheerbart', in *Über Paul Scheerbart I – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. I: Einführungen, Vorworte, Nachworte*, ed. by Berni Lörwald and Michael M. Schardt (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1992), pp. 20–25

Dunker, Axel, and Michael Hofmann, eds., *Morgenland und Moderne: Orient-Diskurse in der deutschsprachigen Literatur von 1890 bis zur Gegenwart* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2014)

Eckel, Winfried, 'Die totalitaristische Versuchung der Literatur in Ästhetizismus und Avantgarde. Das Beispiel Stefan Georges und F. T. Marinettis – mit einem Blick auf Gottfried Benn', *Comparatio*, 6 (2011), 315–36

———, 'Spiegelung, Rahmung, Integration. Zu Funktion und Verwendung von orientbildern bei Stefan George', in *Morgenland und Moderne: Orient-*

Diskurse in der deutschsprachigen Literatur von 1890 bis zur Gegenwart, ed. by Axel Dunker and Michael Hofmann (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2014), pp. 35–62

Edwards, Amelia, *A Thousand Miles up the Nile* (London: Routledge and Sons, 1888)

Edwards, Catharine, ed., *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

Efron, John M., 'From Mitteleuropa to the Middle East: Orientalism through a Jewish Lens', *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 94:3 (2004), 490–520

Egyptien, Jürgen, ed., *Stefan George – Werkkommentar* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017)

Eickhorst, William, *Decadence in German Fiction* (Denver: Alan Swallow, 1953)

Ellmann, Richard, *Oscar Wilde* (London: Penguin, 1987)

Elmarsafy, Ziad, Anna Bernard, and David Attwell, eds., *Debating Orientalism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013)

Epstein Nord, Deborah, *Gypsies and the British Imagination, 1807–1930* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)

Evangelista, Stefano, *British Aestheticism and Ancient Greece: Hellenism, Reception, Gods in Exile* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009)

———, *The Love of Strangers: Literary Cosmopolitanism in the English Fin de Siècle*, (forthcoming, 2019)

———, ed., *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe* (London: Continuum, 2010)

Evangelista, Stefano, and Richard Hibbitt, eds., 'Fin-de-Siècle Cosmopolitanism Issue', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 10:2 (2013)

Evans, Lawrence, ed., *Letters of Walter Pater* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970)

Fischer, Jens Malte, *Fin de siècle: Kommentar zu einer Epoche* (Munich: Winkler, 1978)

Flaubert, Gustave, *Salammbô*, ed. and trans. by A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1977)

Fletcher, Ian, ed., *Decadence and the 1890s* (London: Edward Arnold, 1979)

Fletcher, Ian Christopher, 'The Soul of Man under Imperialism: Oscar Wilde, Race, and

- Empire', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 5:2 (2000), 334–41
- Foucault, Michel, *Aesthetics, Method, and Epistemology*, ed. by James Faubion, trans. by Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon (London: Penguin, 1998)
- Frankel, Nicholas, *Oscar Wilde's Decorated Books* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2000)
- Fraser, Angus, 'A Rum Lot', in *100 Years of Gypsy Studies*, ed. by Matt T. Salo (Cheverly, MD: Gypsy Lore Society, 1990), pp. 1–15
- Fromm, Gloria, *Windows on Modernism: Selected Letters of Dorothy Richardson* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1995)
- , *Dorothy Richardson – A Biography* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1977)
- Fuchs-Sumiyoshi, Andrea, *Orientalismus in der deutschen Literatur: Untersuchungen zu Werken des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, von Goethes "West-östlichem Divan" bis Thomas Manns "Joseph"-Tetralogie* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1984)
- Furness, Raymond, ed., *Voices of the Abyss: The Daedalus Book of German Decadence*, trans. by Furness and Mike Mitchell (New York: Hippocrene, 1994)
- G. H. B. , 'An Exhibition by Three Book Illustrators', *The Studio*, 386 (1925), 260–63
- Gagnier, Regenia, 'Global Literatures of Decadence', in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 11–28
- , *Idylls of the Marketplace: Oscar Wilde and the Victorian Public* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1987)
- , *Individualism, Decadence and Globalization: On the Relationship of Part to Whole, 1859–1920* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)
- , 'The Decadence of the West in Huysmans and Houellebecq: Decadence in the Longue Durée', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 60 (2017), 419–30
- Gandhi, Leela, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)
- Gautier, Théophile, 'Fortunio', ed. and trans. by F. C. Sumichrast (New York: George Sproul, 1901), pp. 15–223
- , 'Preface', *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (London: Gibbings, 1899), pp. 9–46

Gay, Peter, *Die Republik der Außenseiter – Geist und Kultur in der Weimarer Zeit 1918–1933* (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1970)

Gibbon, Edward, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, Vol. I*, ed. by David Womersley (London: Penguin, 1994)

Gide, André, *If It Die*, trans. by Dorothy Bussy (London: Martin Secker, 1950)

———, *Oscar Wilde*, trans. by Bernard Frechtman (London: W. Kimber, 1951)

Gilman, Richard, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979)

Gosetti-Ferencei, Jennifer Anna, *Exotic Spaces in German Modernism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Gosse, Edmund, ‘Simplicissimus’, *The Gypsy*, 1 (May 1915), 20–29

Gundolf, Friedrich, and Friedrich Wolters, eds., *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung I herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1910)

———, *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung II herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1911)

———, *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung III herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1912)

Guy, Josephine, and Ian Small, eds., *Studying Oscar Wilde: History, Criticism, and Myth* (Greensboro: ELT Press, 2006)

———, *Oscar Wilde's Profession: Writing and the Culture Industry in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000)

Haas, Willy, ‘Geleitwort’, in *Stanislaw Przybyszewski, Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (Munich: Winkler, 1965), pp. 5–12

Hall, Jason David, and Alex Murray, eds., *Decadent Poetics: Literature and Form at the British Fin de Siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013)

Hanson, Ellis, ‘Style at the fin de siècle: aestheticist, decadent, symbolist’, in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. by Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 150–58

Hanssen, Jens, 'The Middle East', in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 266–83

Härmänmaa, Marja, and Christopher Nissen, eds., *Decadence, Degeneration, and the End. Studies in the European Fin de Siècle* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014)

Hart, Julius, 'Briefe über die Literatur der Gegenwart – Der ironische Ästhetizismus Paul Scheerbarts', *Tägliche Rundschau*, 5 August 1897; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart II – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. II: Analysen, Aufsätze, Forschungsbeiträge*, ed. by Michael M. Schardt and Hiltrud Steffen (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996), pp. 38–45

———, 'Paul Scheerbart', *Die Freie Bühne*, 3 (1892), 1334–336

Heizer, Donna K., *Jewish-German Identity in the Orientalist Literature of Else Lasker-Schüler, Friedrich Wolf, and Franz Werfel* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 1996)

Hentsch, Thierry, *L'Orient imaginaire: La Vision politique occidentale de L'Est méditerranéen* (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1988)

Hewitt, Andrew, *Fascist Modernism: Aesthetics, Politics, and the Avant-Garde* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993)

Hobsbawm E. J., *Industry and Empire: An Economic History of Britain since 1750* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968)

Hobson, John A., *Confessions of an Economic Heretic* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1938)

Hodkinson, James R., and John Walker, eds., *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013)

Hofmannsthal, Hugo von, *Das Schriftum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich: Verlag der Bremer Presse, 1927)

———, 'Sebastian Melmoth', in *Sämtliche Werke XXXIII, Reden und Aufsätze*, ed. by Konrad Heumann and Ellen Ritter (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 2009), pp. 62–65

Hooper, Katharine, 'The Gypsy Collection at Liverpool', in *The Role of the Romanies – Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies'/ Romanies in European Cultures*, ed. by Nicholas Saul and Susan Tebbutt (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp. 21–31

Hyde, Montgomery, *Oscar Wilde – A Biography* (London: Methuen, 1976)

- Ikelaar, Leo, ed., *Paul Scheerbart und Bruno Taut. Zur Geschichte einer Bekanntschaft. Scheerbarts Briefe der Jahre 1913 – 1914 an Gottfried Heinersdorff, Bruno Taut und Herwarth Walden* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996)
- Im, Yeeyon, 'Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*: Disorienting Orientalism', *Comparative Drama*, 45:4 (2011), 361–80
- Ingleby, Leonard Cresswell, *Oscar Wilde* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1907)
- Innerhofer, Roland, "'Mir ist so Orientalisch zu Muth" – 1897: Paul Scheerbarts arabische Romane', in *Mit Deutschland um die Welt. Eine Kulturgeschichte des Fremden in der Kolonialzeit*, ed. by Alexander Honold and Klaus R. Scherpe (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2004), pp. 209–16
- Ives, Maura, 'Descriptive Bibliography and the Victorian Periodical', *Studies in Bibliography*, 49 (1996), 61–94
- Jacob, Joachim, 'Stefan George Werk: *Hymnen Pilgerfahrten Algabal*', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. I*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer et. al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 107–121
- Kabbani, Rana, *Europe's Myths of Orient: Devise and Rule* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1986)
- Kaes, Anton, Martin Jay, and Edward Dimendberg, eds., *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994)
- Kafitz, Dieter, *Décadence in Deutschland: Studien zu einem versunkenen Diskurs der 90er Jahre des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2004)
- , *Dekadenz in Deutschland: Beiträge zur Erforschung der Romanliteratur um die Jahrhundertwende* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 1987)
- Kaltefleiter, Paul, ed., *Über Paul Scheerbart III – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. III: Rezensionen. Artikel zu Leben und Werk* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1998)
- Kamińska, Krystyna, 'Der Dialog Stefan Georges mit Antike, Mittelalter und Orient', in *Neue Beiträge zur George-Forschung*, 7 (1982), 22–34
- Kauffmann, Kai, 'Zeitgedichte', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. I*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer, Wolfgang Braungart, Stefan Breuer, Ute Maria Oelmann and Kai Kauffmann, 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 175–77

- Keitel, Walter, and Helmuth Nürnberger, eds., *Theodor Fontane, Werke, Schriften, Briefe IV: 1890–1898* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982)
- Kontje, Todd, 'Germany's Local Orientalisms', in *Deploying Orientalism in Culture and History: From Germany to Central and Eastern Europe*, ed. by James R. Hodgkinson and John Walker (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013), pp. 55–78
- , *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004)
- Krailsheimer, A. J., 'Introduction', in *Gustave Flaubert Salammbô*, ed. by A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1977), pp. 7–16
- Kreuzer, Helmut, *Die Bohème: Beiträge zu ihrer Beschreibung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968)
- Krobb, Florian, "Die Kunst der Väter tödtet das Leben der Enkel": Decadence and Crisis in Fin-de-Siècle German and Austrian Discourse', *New Literary History*, 35:4 (2004), 547–62
- Landmann, Edith, *Gespräche mit Stefan George* (Düsseldorf: Küpper (Bondi), 1963)
- Lane, Melissa S., and Martin A. Ruehl, eds., *A Poet's Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011)
- Large, Duncan, 'Nietzsche's Orientalism', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 42:1 (2013), 178–203
- Lee, Ken, 'Orientalism and Gypsylorism', *Social Analysis: The International Journal of Social and Cultural Practice*, 44:2 (2000), 129–56
- Le Gallienne, Richard, 'The Boom in Yellow', in *Prose Fancies, Second Series* (London: Elkin Mathews & John Lane, 1896), pp. 79–90
- Lemon, Robert, *Imperial Messages: Orientalism as Self-critique in the Habsburg fin-de-siècle* (Columbia, SC: Camden House, 2011)
- Lennartz, Norbert, 'Oscar Wilde's "The Sphinx" – A Dramatic Monologue of the Dandy as a Young Man?', *Philological Quarterly*, 83:4 (2004), 415–30
- Lerner, Robert E., *Ernst Kantorowicz: A Life* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)
- Lessing, Theodor, *Einmal und nie wieder* (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1969)
- , *Europa und Asien* (Berlin: Verlag der Wochenschrift *Die Aktion* (Franz Pfemfert), 1918)

- Lethaby, William R., *Architecture, Mysticism and Myth* (London: The Architectural Press, 1974)
- Lewis, Bernard, 'The Question of Orientalism', *The New York Review of Books*, 24 June 1982, pp. 49–56
- Lewis, Cecil, 'Preface', in *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, ed. by Cecil Lewis (London: T. & A. Constable, 1939), pp. v–xv
- Long, Andrew C., *Reading Arabia: British Orientalism in the Age of Mass Publication, 1880–1930* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2014)
- Lörwald, Berni, and Michael M. Schardt, eds., *Über Paul Scheerbarth I – 100 Jahre Scheerbarth-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. I: Einführungen, Vorworte, Nachworte* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1992)
- Luckhurst, Roger, *The Mummy's Curse – The True History of a Dark Fantasy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012)
- Lyon, Janet, 'Gadže Modernism', *Modernism/Modernity*, 11:3 (2004), 517–38
- , 'Sociability in the Metropole: Modernism's Bohemian Salons', *English Literary History*, 76:3 (2009)
- Macfie, Alexander Lyon, *Orientalism* (London: Pearson Education, 2002)
- MacKenzie, John M., *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995)
- MacLeod, Kirsten, *Fictions of British Decadence: High Art, Popular Writing and the fin de siècle* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)
- Macleod, Jock, 'Between Politics and Culture: Liberal Journalism and Literary Cultural Discourse at the *Fin de Siècle*', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 51:1 (2008), 5–22
- Mahoney, Kristin Mary, *Literature and the Politics of Post-Victorian Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)
- Mallarmé, Stéphane, 'Crisis in Verse', in *Symbolism: An Anthology*, ed. and trans. by T. G. West (London: Methuen, 1980), pp. 1–12
- Mallgrave, Harry Francis, *Modern Architectural Theory: A Historical Survey, 1673–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

- Mann, Thomas, *Tagebücher 1918–1921*, ed. by Peter de Mendelssohn (Frankfurt a. M.: S. Fischer, 1979)
- , ‘Zum Geleit’, *Süddeutsche Monatshefte*, 18:5 (1921), 289–96
- Marchand, Suzanne L., ‘Central Europe’, in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 131–49
- , *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany 1750–1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996)
- , *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire: Religion, Race, and Scholarship* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009)
- Marchand, Suzanne L., and David F. Lindenfeld, eds., *Germany at the Fin de Siècle: Culture, Politics, and Ideas* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004)
- Marcus, Laura, Michèle Mendelssohn, and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr, eds., *Late Victorian into Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016)
- Marez, Curtis, ‘The Other Addict: Reflections on Colonialism and Oscar Wilde’s Opium Smoke Screen’, *English Literary History*, 64:1 (1997), 257–87
- Mason, Stuart, *Bibliography of Oscar Wilde with a Note by Robert Ross, Vol. II* (London: T. Werner Laurie, 1914)
- Materer, Timothy, ed., *The Selected Letters of Ezra Pound to John Quinn: 1915–1924* (Durham, NC: London: Duke University Press, 1991)
- Maxwell, Catherine, *Second Sight – The Visionary Imagination in Late Victorian Literature* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007)
- McDonald, Peter, *British Literary Culture and Publishing Practice 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002)
- McGuinness, Patrick, *Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives* (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000)
- Mendelssohn, Michèle, ‘Reading Aestheticism, Decadence, and Cosmopolitanism’, in *Late Victorian into Modern*, ed. by Laura Marcus, Michèle Mendelssohn and Kirsten E. Shepherd-Barr (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 482–96
- Miller, David, and Richard Price, *British Poetry Magazines 1914–2000 – A History and Bibliography of ‘Little Magazines’* (London: The British Library, Oak Knoll Press, 2006)

Mirzoeff, Nicholas, 'Disorientalism: Minority and Visuality in Imperial London', *The Drama Review*, 50:2 (2006), 52–69

Moeller van den Bruck, Arthur, *Das dritte Reich* (Hamburg: Schwarz, 1931)

———, *Der neue Humor Varietestil*. (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1902)

Mohler, Armin, *Die Konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918–1932* (Stuttgart: Friedrich Vorwerk, 1950)

Mojem, Helmuth, 'Algabal bei den Phantasten? Stefan George und Paul Scheerbart', in *George-Jahrbuch*, 4 (2002/2003), 36–78

Mommsen, Katharina, *Goethe and the Poets of Arabia*, trans. by Michael Metzger (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014)

Montserrat, Dominic, 'Unidentified Human Remains: Mummies and the Erotics of Biography', in *Changing Bodies, Changing Meanings: Studies on the Human Body in Antiquity*, ed. by Dominic Montserrat (New York: Routledge, 1998), pp. 162–97

Morgan, Thaïs E., 'Swinburne's Dramatic Monologues: Sex and Ideology', *Victorian Poetry*, 22:2 (1984), 175–95

Murray, Alex, *Decadence: A Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2019)

———, *Landscapes of Decadence: Literature and Place at the Fin de Siècle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016)

Murray, Alex, and Kate Hext, eds., *Decadence in the Age of Modernism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, forthcoming 2018)

Nietzsche, Friedrich, *Beyond Good and Evil*, in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Vol. VIII*, ed. by Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large, trans. by Adrian Del Caro (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), pp. 1–207

———, *Human, All Too Human II and Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Human, All Too Human II (Spring 1878 – Fall 1879)* in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche Vol. IV*, ed. by Alan D. Schrift and Duncan Large, trans. by Gary Handwerk (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013)

———, *The Will to Power: Selections from the Notebooks of the 1880s*, ed. by R. Kevin Hill, trans. by R. Kevin Hill and Michael A. Scarpitti (London: Penguin, 2017)

———, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, ed. by Oscar Levy and trans. by Thomas Common (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1932)

———, *Unpublished Writings from the Period of Unfashionable Observations*, ed. and trans. by Richard T. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995)

- , *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)
- Nijland-Verwey, Mea, ed., *Wolfskehl und Verwey. Die Dokumente ihrer Freundschaft 1897–1946* (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1968)
- Nordau, Max, *Degeneration* (London: William Heinemann, 1896)
- Norton, Robert Edward, *Secret Germany: Stefan George and his Circle* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2002)
- Nunokawa, Jeffrey, ‘Oscar Wilde in Japan: Aestheticism, Orientalism, and the Derealization of the Homosexual’, *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, 2:1 (1994), 44–56
- Ockenden, Ray, ‘Interpretationen von “Der Gehenkte”, “Der Mensch und der Drud”, “Gespräch des Herren mit dem römischen Hauptmann” und “Der Brand des Tempels”’, in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar*, ed. by Jürgen Egyptien (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 609–27
- , ‘Kingdom of the Spirit: The Secret Germany in Stefan George’s Later Poems’, in *A Poet’s Reich: Politics and Culture in the George Circle*, ed. by Melissa Lane and Martin Ruehl (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2011), pp. 91–117
- Odle, Rose, *Salt of Our Youth* (Penzance, Cornwall: Wordens of Cornwall, 1972)
- Oelmann, Ute, ‘Anmerkungen’, in *Stefan George Sämtliche Werke in 18 Bänden, Vol. II: Hymnen, Pilgerfahrten, Algabal* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1987), pp. 119–27
- Oswald, Victor A., ‘Oscar Wilde, Stefan George, Heliogabalus’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 10:4 (1949), 517–25
- , ‘The Historical Content of Stefan George’s Algabal’, *The Germanic Review*, 23:3 (1948), 193–205
- Pache, Walter, *Degeneration-Regeneration: Beiträge zur Literatur- und Kulturgeschichte zwischen Dekadenz und Moderne* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2000)
- Paglia, Camille, *Sexual Personae. Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990)
- Parramore, Lynn, *Reading the Sphinx – Ancient Egypt in Nineteenth-Century Literary Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008)
- Pater, Walter, *Studies in the History of the Renaissance*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont

(Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010)

Pease, Allison, 'Aestheticism and Aesthetic Theory', in *Palgrave Advances in Oscar Wilde Studies*, ed. by Frederick S. Roden (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004)

Polaschegg, Andrea, *Der andere Orientalismus: Regeln deutsch-morgenländischer Imagination im 19. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2005)

Polaschegg, Andrea, and Michael Weichenhan, eds., *Berlin – Babylon, Eine deutsche Faszination* (Berlin: Verlag Klaus Wagenbach, 2017)

Popiol, Khoder, *Kunst und Genialität: Eine Interpretation des Werkes "Tarub, Bagdads berühmte Köchin" von Paul Scheerbart*, Doctoral Thesis (Berlin: Freie Universität Berlin, 1988)

Potolsky, Matthew, 'Decadence, Nationalism, and the Logic of Canon Formation', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 67:2 (2006), 213–44

———, 'The Decadent Counterpublic', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 48 (2007), 1–25

———, *The Decadent Republic of Letters: Taste, Politics, and Cosmopolitan Community from Baudelaire to Beardsley* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013)

Potter, Ambrose George, *A Bibliography of the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* (London: Ingpen and Grant, 1929)

Powell, Kerry, and Peter Raby, eds., *Oscar Wilde in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Prager, Debra N., *Orienting the Self: The German Literary Encounter with the Eastern Other* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2014)

Praz, Mario, *The Romantic Agony*, trans. by Angus Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933)

Pross, Caroline, *Dekadenz: Studien zu einer grossen Erzählung der frühen Moderne* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013)

Przybyszewski, Stanisław, *Erinnerungen an das literarische Berlin* (Munich: Winkler, 1965)

Raby, Peter, *Oscar Wilde* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Rasch, Wolfdietrich, *Die literarische Décadence um 1900* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1986)

Rausch, Mechthild, 'Eine seltsame Scheherezade', in *Paul Scheerbart: Der Tod der Barmekiden* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1992), pp. 217–36

———, 'Es lebe Burraburiasch!', in *Paul Scheerbart: Der alte Orient – Kulturromanellen aus Assyrien, Palmyra und Babylon*, ed. by Jörg Drews, Hartmut Geerken und Klaus Ramm (Munich: edition text+ kritik, 1999), pp. 129–57

———, *Von Danzig ins Weltall – Paul Scheerbarts Anfangsjahre 1863–1895* (Munich: edition text + kritik, 1997)

Reed, John Robert, *Decadent Style* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1985)

Regier, Willis Goth, *Book of the Sphinx* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2005)

Ricketts, Charles, *Oscar Wilde: Recollections by Jean Paul Raymond & Charles Ricketts* (London: Nonesuch Press, 1932)

———, *Self-Portrait taken from the Letters & Journals of Charles Ricketts*, ed. by Cecil Lewis (London: T. & A. Constable, 1939)

Rieckmann, Jens. *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005)

Riley, Kathleen, Alastair J. L. Blanshard, and Iarla Manny, eds., *Oscar Wilde and Classical Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018)

Robbins, Bruce and Paulo Lemos Horta, eds., *Cosmopolitanisms* (New York: New York University Press, 2017)

Robertson, Ritchie, 'George, Nietzsche, and Nazism', in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), pp. 189–205

Roditi, Edouard, *Oscar Wilde* (Norfolk, CT: New Directions Books, 1947)

Ross, Iain, *Oscar Wilde and Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Rothenstein, William, *Men and Memories: Recollections of William Rothenstein, vol. 1* (London: Faber & Faber, 1931)

Ruskin, John, *Notes on Some of the Principal Pictures Exhibited in the Rooms of the Royal Academy* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1859)

- Said, Edward W., *Culture & Imperialism* (London: Random House, 1993)
- , 'Introduction', in Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), pp. ix–xxxii
- , *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 2003)
- , 'Orientalism Reconsidered', *Cultural Critique*, 1 (1985), 89–107
- , *Reflections on Exile and other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2000)
- Salamensky, Shelley I., 'Oscar Wilde's "Jewish Problem": Salomé, the Ancient Hebrew and the Modern Jewess', *Modern Drama*, 55:2 (2012), 197–215
- Saler, Michael, ed., *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (New York: Routledge, 2015)
- Saul, Nicholas, *Gypsies and Orientalism in German Literature and Anthropology of the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Legenda, 2007)
- Saul, Nicholas, and Susan Tebbutt, eds., *The Role of the Romanies – Images and Counter-Images of 'Gypsies' / Romanies in European Cultures* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005)
- Scappetone, Jennifer, *Killing the Moonlight: Modernism in Venice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014)
- Schardt, Michael M., and Hiltrud Steffen, eds., *Über Paul Scheerbart II – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. II: Analysen, Aufsätze, Forschungsbeiträge* (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1996)
- Schaukal, Richard, *Leben und Meinungen des Herrn Andreas von Balthesser, eines Dandy und Dilettanten* (Munich: Georg Müller, 1908)
- , *Meine Gärten. Einsame Verse* (Siegen: Böschchen, 2002)
- Schmid, Elmar D., 'Die Welt des Orients und Fernen Ostens. Bauwerke und Projekte', in *König Ludwig II.-Museum Herrenchiemsee Katalog*, ed. by Gerhard Hojer (Munich: Hirmer, 1986), pp. 426–32
- Scholem, Gershom, *Walter Benjamin: The Story of a Friendship* (London: Faber and Faber, 1982)
- Schoolfield, George, *A Baedeker of Decadence: Charting a Literary Fashion 1884–1927* (London: Yale University Press, 2003)

Schorske, Carl E., *Fin-de-siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1979)

Schreyer, Lothar, 'Die Wundermittel des Paul Scheerbart', *Deutsches Volkstum*, 1926; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart III – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. III: Rezensionen. Artikel zu Leben und Werk*, ed. by Paul Kaltefleiter (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1998), pp. 696–700

Schwarz, Hans-Günther, *Der Orient und die Ästhetik der Moderne* (Munich: Iudicium, 2003)

Seiler, Robert M., ed., *Walter Pater: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1980)

Servaes, Franz, 'Der Anti-Europäer', *Die Zeit* (Vienna), 25 June 1898; reprinted in *Über Paul Scheerbart Scheerbart III – 100 Jahre Scheerbart-Rezeption in drei Bänden, Vol. III: Rezensionen. Artikel zu Leben und Werk*, ed. by Paul Kaltefleiter (Paderborn: Igel Verlag, 1998), pp. 68–76

Shakespeare, William, 'Antony and Cleopatra', in *William Shakespeare Complete Works*, ed. by Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp. 2158–240

Sherry, Vincent B., *Modernism and the Reinvention of Decadence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015)

Shoji, Hitomi, 'The Cosmopolitanism of Arthur Symons, 1880–1910' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of London, King's College, 2013)

Showalter, Elaine, 'It's still Salome', *TLS*, 2 September 1994, pp. 13–14 (13)

Simmel, Georg, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, ed. and trans. by Kurt H. Wolff (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1950)

Smart, B. C. and Henry T. Crofton, *The Dialect of the English Gypsies* (London: Asher, 1875)

Smith II, Philip E., 'Wilde and Roman History', in *Oscar Wilde and Classical Antiquity*, ed. by Kathleen Riley, Alastair J. L. Blanshard and Iarla Manny (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 289–305

Soergel, Albert, and Curt Hohoff, *Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit. Vom Naturalismus bis zur Gegenwart, Vol. II* (Düsseldorf: Bagel, 1963)

Sohnle, Werner Paul, ed., *Stefan George und der Symbolismus* (Stuttgart: Württembergische Landesbibliothek, 1983)

- Spackman, Barbara, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)
- Spengler, Oswald, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, [1923] 1972)
- , *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (Munich: Carl Beck, [1919] 1920)
- Sprengel, Peter, *Literatur im Kaiserreich: Studien zur Moderne* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt Verlag, 1993)
- Stenson, Martin, *The Life and Work of Alan Odle* (Stroud: Books & Things, 2012)
- Stilling, Robert, *Beginning at the End: Decadence, Modernism, and Postcolonial Poetry* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018)
- Stokes, John, *Fin de Siècle, Fin du Globe: Fears and Fantasies of the late nineteenth Century* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992)
- , 'Wilde and Paris', in *Oscar Wilde in Context*, ed. by Kerry Powell and Peter Raby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 60–70
- Stottmeister, Jan, *Der George-Kreis und die Theosophie: Mit einem Exkurs zum Swastika-Zeichen bei Helena Blavatsky, Alfred Schuler und Stefan George* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2014)
- Sturgis, Matthew, *Aubrey Beardsley: A Biography* (London: Pallas Athene, 2011).
- Taut, Bruno, 'Ex Oriente Lux. Ein Aufruf an die Architekten', *Das Hohe Ufer*, 1 (1919), 15–18
- , 'Glashausbriefe', *Frühlicht*, 1:3 (1920), 45–48, a supplement to *Stadtbaukunst Alter und Neuer Zeit*, ed. by Bruno Taut
- Temple, Ruth Z., 'Truth in Labelling: Pre-Raphaelitism, Aestheticism, Decadence, Fin de Siècle', *English Literature in Transition, 1880–1920*, 17 (1974), 201–222
- Thornton, R. K. R., "'Decadence" in Late Nineteenth-Century England', in *Decadence and the 1890s*, ed. by Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1979)
- Timms, Edward, and Ritchie Robertson, eds., *Vienna 1900: From Altenberg to Wittgenstein* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990)
- Todd, Jeffrey D., 'Stefan George and Two Types of Aestheticism', in *A Companion to*

the Works of Stefan George, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), pp. 127–45

Trumpener, Katie, ‘The Time of the Gypsies: A “People Without History” in the Narratives of the West’, in *Identities*, ed. by Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 338–80

Turner, Bryan S., *Orientalism: Early Sources Volume I, Readings in Orientalism* (London: Routledge, 2000)

Ursprung, Philip, *Kritik und Secession: “Das Atelier” Kunstkritik in Berlin zwischen 1890 und 1897* (Basel: Schwabe, 1996)

Vallentin, Berthold, *Gespräche mit Stefan George 1902–1931* (Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini, 1960)

———, ‘Zur Kritik des Fortschritts’, in *Jahrbuch für die geistige Bewegung I herausgegeben von Friedrich Gundolf und Friedrich Wolters* (Berlin: Otto von Holten / Verlag der Blätter für die Kunst, 1910), pp. 49–63

Vance, Norman, ‘Decadence and the Subversion of Empire’, in *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945*, ed. by Catharine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 110–24

Vilain, Robert, ‘Temporary Aesthetes: Decadence and Symbolism in Germany and Austria’, in *Symbolism, Decadence and the Fin de Siècle: French and European Perspectives*, ed. by Patrick McGuinness (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2000), pp. 209–24

———, ‘Tragedy and the Apostle of Beauty: The Early Literary Reception of Oscar Wilde in Germany and Austria’, in *The Reception of Oscar Wilde in Europe*, ed. by Stefano Evangelista (London: Continuum, 2010), pp. 173–88

———, ‘Stefan George’s early works 1890–1895’, in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, ed. by Jens Rieckmann (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2005), pp. 51–77

Walkowitz, Judith R., ‘The “Vision of Salome”: Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908–1918’, *American Historical Review*, 108:2 (2003), 337–76

Walkowitz, Rebecca L., *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006)

Warner, Marina, *Stranger Magic: Charmed States & the Arabian Nights* (London: Vintage, 2012)

Weir, David, *Decadence and the Making of Modernism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995)

Wiegler, Paul, 'Ohne Titel', *Das litterarische Echo*, 3:16 (May 1901)

Wilde, Lady, 'Memoir of Gabriel Beranger, and His Labours in the Cause of Irish Art, Literature, and Antiquities from 1760 to 1780, with Illustrations (Commenced by Sir William Wilde, Vol. II., Fourth Series, p. 485)', *The Journal of the Royal Historical and Archaeological Association of Ireland*, 4:28 (1876), 111–56

Wilde, (Sir) William Robert, M. R. I. A. *Narrative of a Voyage to Madeira, Teneriffe, and along the Shores of the Mediterranean, including a Visit to Algiers, Egypt, Palestine, Tyre, Rhodes, Telmessus, Cyprus, and Greece. With Observations on the present State and Prospects of Egypt and Palestine and on the Climate, Natural History, Antiquities, etc. of the Countries visited, 2 Vols* (Dublin: William Curry, 1840)

Williams, Orlo, 'The Yellow Book', *London Mercury*, 2:11 (1920), 567–77

Winckler, Hugo, *Die babylonische Geisteskultur: in ihren Beziehungen zur Kulturentwicklung der Menschheit* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1907)

Wokoeck, Ursula, *German Orientalism: The Study of the Middle East and Islam from 1800 to 1945* (London: Routledge, 2009)

Xiaoyi, Zhou, 'Oscar Wilde's Orientalism and Late Nineteenth-Century. European Consumer Culture', *Ariel – A Review of International English Literature*, 28:4 (1997), 49–71

Yee, Jennifer, *Exotic Subversions in Nineteenth-Century French Fiction* (Oxford: Legenda, 2008)

Youngkin, Molly, *British Women Writers and the Reception of Ancient Egypt, 1840–1910: Imperialist Representations of Egyptian Women* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016)

Zanucchi, Mario, 'Algabal', in *Stefan George – Werkkommentar*, ed. by Jürgen Egiptien (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), pp. 60–96

———, 'Wissenschaftliche Rezeption: Germanistik', in *Stefan George und sein Kreis: Ein Handbuch, Vol. II*, ed. by Achim Aurnhammer et. al., 2nd ed. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), pp. 1073–83

Zatlin, Linda, *Beardsley, Japonisme, and the Perversion of the Victorian Ideal* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

Zepetnek, Steven Tötösy de, *Comparative Literature: Theory, Method, Application* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998)

Ziter, Edward, *The Orient on the Victorian Stage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Zukas, Alexander M., 'Germany and the Middle East', in *Encyclopaedia of Western Colonialism since 1450, Vol. II*, ed. by Thomas Benjamin (Detroit: Macmillan Reference, 2007), pp. 513–17

WEBSITES AND ELECTRONIC RESOURCES

Brown, Catherine, 'Anglo-German Relations and D. H. Lawrence's "All of Us"', 11 September 2014, <<http://catherinebrown.org/anglo-german-relations-and-d-h-lawrences-all-of-us/>> [accessed: 14/04/2015]

Doerr, Georg, 'Orientalismus bei Friedrich Hölderlin, Stefan George und Hugo von Hofmannsthal (– mit Hinweisen auf Gabriele D'Annunzio)', published online by the author, <<https://georgdoerr.files.wordpress.com/2010/04/doerr-Orientalismus-neu-def-def4.pdf>> [accessed: 14/03/2017]

Hawthorne, Melanie, 'Review of Potolsky's *Decadent Republic*', on publisher's website <<http://www.upenn.edu/pennpress/book/15048.html>> [accessed: 14/04/2017]

Herold, Katharina, and Reeds, Eleanor, 'Conference Report: Cosmopolitanism, Aestheticism, and Decadence, 1860–1920', *Journal of Victorian Culture online*, 24 July 2014 <<http://jvc.oup.com/2014/07/24/conference-report-cosmopolitanism-aestheticism-and-decadence-1860-1920/>> [accessed: 14/04/2015]

McGeachie, James, 'Sir William Robert Wilde', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/29403/29403?back=#,29400>> [accessed: 13/11/2015]

O'Connor, Nancy, 'Paul Bourget', <<http://cat.middlebury.edu/~nereview/30-2/Bourget.htm>> [accessed: 14/04/2017]

<<http://www.gypsyloresociety.org>> [accessed: 6/03/2015]

<<http://www.liv.ac.uk/library/sca/colldescs/gypsy/index.html>> [accessed: 06/03/2015]

<<http://www.simplicissimus.info/index.php?id=9>> [accessed: 14/04/2015]

