

Teaching the World through German Eyes: A View of Asia in 21st-century German Studies

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A casual perusal of scholarly literature on German Studies in the United States over the last few decades might lead one to believe that the end of the discipline is near. Peter U. Hohendahl noted in 1989 that scholars of German had seemingly taken it upon themselves to “accentuate” the flaws in their field, and he added with a touch of humor that a “skeptical observer could easily describe *Germanistik* as a sequence of (failed) attempts to solve a crisis” (227). Among the chief causes for concern, scholars have listed such difficulties as low enrollments, a world no longer interested in foreign languages and literature, and various methodological shortcomings. To top it all off, the focus in the American media over the last few years on war in the Middle East and the growing power of China has drawn attention further away from European languages and cultures and stressed the need for increased understanding of languages like Arabic and Chinese.

The concerns of scholars in German Studies should surprise no one, but even though scholars and teachers of German in the United States have been worried about the future of the language at least since the end of World War I, the study of German has not disappeared yet. In the Association of Departments of Foreign Languages Bulletin for Winter-Spring 2008 a report states that, although the “most dramatic increases [in enrollments in foreign languages] between 2002 and 2006 were in Arabic (126.5%) and Chinese (51.0%)[,]” German remains the third most studied language in the United States and has even witnessed a 3.5% increase in enrollment since 2002 (Furman, Goldberg, and Lusin, 71). Nonetheless, the fear that German is in a crisis seems to persist in the twenty-first century.

For anyone concerned that German Studies might disappear, there are countless articles with ideas on how to prevent the end of the discipline, and such expert advice should not go unheeded. Scholars have repeatedly advised, for instance, that the study of literature be reconnected to the study of language. Ideally, therefore, German Studies might simultaneously return to a study of language connected to literature and also respond to twenty-first century demands for increased study of Asia.

Germans have long written about Asia, and students of German throughout the world arguably stand to gain as much from studying the German perspective on China,

Korea, or Japan, for instance, as from reading English-language texts. Nor is Asia entirely unknown to German Studies. Already numerous publications have appeared on German-Turkish relations, exemplified in such works as Leslie Adelson's recent publication of *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* (2005). In a similar vein, Todd Kontje has added the voice of the German-speaking world solidly to the academic discussion of Orientalism with his *German Orientalisms* (2004). Nonetheless, the so-called Far East still seems to remain somewhat outside of the scope of German Studies.

One example of how students of German might learn of Asia's impact on the German-speaking world around the beginning of the twentieth century is through study of the discourse on the so-called yellow peril (*die gelbe Gefahr*). This epithetical phrase entered common parlance in Germany around the time of the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05). Kaiser Wilhelm II allegedly coined the term to describe the potential destruction of European culture at the hands of an Asia united under a powerful Japan, and the idea took hold of the German imagination. Older than fear of the very demise of *Germanistik* itself, fear of the "yellow peril" grew into a discourse in the German-speaking world, and evidence of it still remains in various pieces of literature from the time period.

Information on the European discourse on the "yellow peril" can deepen students' understanding not only of German-Asian relations but also of German language and literature. In the following, I will summarize the state of crisis in which German Studies have seemed locked over much of the twentieth century, synthesize various pieces of advice from scholars in the past as a guide for a possible direction for the discipline in the future, and then propose opening the field up to Asia-specific questions. I offer as a model for the sort of work I am proposing a course I designed and taught called "Red Tide"- "Yellow Peril," in which I introduced my students to German-Asian relations at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and I recommend selections from Erwin Bälz's diary *Awakening Japan: Diary of a Doctor* (1930) as a German-language text that presents a first-person account of Western prejudice toward Asia up to 1905. Bälz was a physician who worked in Japan early in the last century, and his insights offer a deep view of German-Asian relations. Consideration of German-Asian relations, even of such mass fears as recalled by the phrase "yellow peril," may serve not only to promote greater understanding across cultures but also to draw general attention at the university back toward the wealth of valuable texts in the German-language tradition. Moreover, contemplation of stereotypes may encourage students to examine their own native language. Those who speak English natively, for example, may find vestiges of the discourse on the "yellow peril" in North America and Europe today.

I. Perpetual Crisis in German Studies: Just another German Angst?

Scholarly articles on the seemingly precarious position of German at universities in North America have communicated a sort of cheery gloom in the discipline. Even an altogether positive article like James C. Davidheiser's "Attracting and Retaining Students in Small Undergraduate Programs" addresses the problem of low enrollment in German courses. Titles like that of Sara Lennox's article "German Studies: Who Cares?" seem almost to exemplify the feeling of crisis in the discipline. Interestingly, Lennox's all-too-true lamentation that, for many people, literature has come to signify something "thoroughly contaminated by the great range of social prejudices that characterized the time and culture from which specific works derive" offers its own hope for German Studies; especially, if social prejudices are the scholar's focus (12). Scholars like Davidheiser and Lennox have offered useful advice in these difficult times, but an analysis of the history of the teaching of German in the United States since World War I, when the crisis probably began, shows that scholars of German Studies have not only experienced numerous crises but have also given a wealth of expert advice on how to deal with pressures the discipline has faced.

Scholars may feel most directly connected to the discipline as it is taught at the university level, but it is worthwhile to begin the consideration of problems in the study of German language at elementary schools and high schools, where the language was once taught with some success throughout the United States. In 1914, for instance, one-third of all elementary school children in Cincinnati, Ohio, were learning German for as many as eight years (Zeydel 343). Widespread interest in German language and culture ended abruptly, however, when the Americans entered World War I, and the study of German in the U.S. never recovered. American hatred for Germany culminated in a taboo against the German language, but Zeydel has pointed out that it actually affected all foreign languages in the U.S.: "In 1915 German alone had about 28 per cent of the total high-school enrollment in its classes (the highest percentage ever achieved in the United States by a modern foreign language [up to that time!]), but in 1949 [French, Spanish, and German] together could muster only 14 per cent" (362). During World War II the United States Army began to teach foreign languages and area studies, and this effort made the American public aware of the need for instruction in foreign languages. After the war, however, associations of German with Adolf Hitler and Nazism had a negative impact on enrollments in the language.

Over time, another problem occurred that affected all foreign languages, not just German: a myth developed that a foreign language can be learned in two years. No

doubt, most teachers of foreign languages will agree that two years are simply not long enough to master another language, but even in the twenty-first century two years are still the general university-level requirement to demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language. In 1964, Zeydel declared in seeming frustration that “the United States is still almost the only civilized country in which men think they can lay claim to education and culture without any knowledge, or with the merest smattering, of a second language” (351). While scholars today would probably shake their heads at Zeydel’s notion of “civilized countries,” few would probably disagree with his comment on low expectations for achievement in foreign languages in the United States.

The seeming lack of interest in foreign languages in the U.S. probably has earned Americans the reputation that they simply cannot learn other languages, and some present-day students in the United States may even be convinced that they cannot. Such a judgment is neither completely fair nor true, but it is striking that as early as 1929 William R. Price lamented the strong public distaste for foreign languages in American high schools. Price encouraged his fellow language teachers to continue undaunted, saying that they were teaching subjects of “increasing importance,” since so many people had begun to travel abroad (23). The Great Depression also came in 1929, however, and travel abroad became a luxury in which few could indulge. People in the thirties spent much of their time just trying to survive, and foreign languages did not become popular in the United States until the Second World War, when teachers of foreign languages suddenly were in demand (Kettelkamp 355). By 1966, the situation had changed for the worse, for even academically strong students in American high schools were dropping out of languages in which they had invested much time and effort (Zeldner 276). Max Zeldner believed that students dropped foreign languages because they were merely optional classes, and he remarked that students likely would have dropped out of math, science, and English, too, if not for requirements (277).

In 1970, foreign languages seemed to be as unappealing as ever before, and Harry Reinert complained that students showed little interest in other languages, because society had communicated that foreign languages were less important than other subjects. Considering enrollments in the three most popular languages—then and now, Spanish, French, and German—Reinert concluded that the typical student would drop out of these languages after completing the requirements, because society had suggested that two years of study were enough for a foreign language. In an effort to improve teaching methods, Reinert admonished, teachers and scholars had ignored students’ attitudes towards other languages, and he believed that soon they would have to justify the teaching of their languages (111). It seems that Reinert was right.

If the initial crisis in German Studies came hand in hand with hatred of Germans during World War I, then by the seventies university professors were feeling a very

different strain: Americans had begun to distrust the scholarly methods of *Germanistik*. A. Peter Foulkes called the situation a “crisis” and claimed that scholars had been blind to the problems in their field when *Germanistik* was shown to have been guilty of “complicity in the abominations of the Third Reich” (526). Moreover, he saw university-level German as threatened further by the need to make the language appealing to the American consumer. In part, Foulkes believed, many departments had made the mistake of treating language instruction merely as a way to gain access to literature (531). Although he personally believed it beneficial to society to have scholars with knowledge of the German language and tradition, he found that the most solid reason to learn a foreign language was “society’s desire to transcend its own provinciality and tribalism” (532). Foulkes complained, however, that language departments had done a poor job in producing students proficient in their chosen languages, and he said that scholars of German would simply have to recognize the existing problem in the discipline and seek to solve it with “empirical investigations” into literary questions, rather than with the usual “handed-down words of wisdom concerning moral elevation and emotional sensitivity” (541-42). In retrospect, Foulkes’ article takes on a nearly prophetic quality.

Germanistik, the discipline inherited from German-speaking Europe, developed over the decades into German Studies by opening up its field of inquiry to include interdisciplinary questions. At the university, study of German survived into the eighties, but talk of crisis continued. William H. McClain remarked in 1987 that *Germanistik* had been severely damaged when philology disappeared, because with it went the collaborative efforts between philologists in Germany and the United States, a connection that scholars of literature never had (423). The discipline then began to disintegrate altogether in the sixties, according to McClain, when critics questioned the validity of a literary canon (430).

At the end of the eighties, Paul Michael Lützeler’s and Jeffrey Peck’s volume of *The German Quarterly* on the theme of “*Germanistik* as German Studies” appeared. Among the various scholarly views were two that prove especially useful for demonstrating how teaching about a concept like the “yellow peril” might fit into German Studies, as proposed in this article. Anton Kaes saw in Steven Greenblatt’s *New Historicism* a lens through which scholars of German Studies might analyze German literature as various expressions embedded in larger discourses of the given historical moment. Somewhat like Foulkes in the seventies, however, Hinrich C. Seeba expressed a growing concern for the separation of language from the literary tradition and suggested that scholars had done their discipline a disservice by giving up the German language in the classroom in order to join wider debates with other disciplines that used English (147). The way out of the crisis was to return to a focus on the German language,

since learning German, a language with a tradition that has long connected notions of national identity to a literary canon, would make students more sensitive to “manipulations of language” and allow them to “apply their new-learned sensitivity to rhetorical strategies in their own language” (150).

It seems that Seeba called for the very pedagogical shift that could allow students to examine a concept like the “yellow peril” (*gelbe Gefahr*) as a discourse in German language and literature. Seeba wrote: “Since it is not simply a matter of relating facts, the task of critical German Studies consists of questioning the rhetorical context in which the facts are meant to take on meaning as figments of a projected cultural identity” (152). For Seeba, it was important that the study of German literature be reintegrated with the study of the German language in order for German Studies to regain any relevance (152). Such a shift in focus would also bring German Studies closer to a “German” model of language, according to Seeba, which began with Herder and continued with writers and intellectuals like Kleist and Humboldt (150-51).

In the nineties, the crisis had not disappeared. Scholars began to anticipate what would be necessary to keep German Studies alive in the twenty-first century. The future seemed to promise budget cuts and further justification for German in a world of languages with far more native speakers than the roughly one hundred million speakers of German (Critchfield). At what point in history one hundred million became an insignificant number may, of course, yet be a question worthy of scholarly attention, but Heidi Byrnes wrote in the nineties of “matters the discipline can no longer ignore,” such as that demographic changes had made German primarily a college-level subject and one of the less commonly taught languages (254). Byrnes also took note of scholars’ tendencies to replace German with English as the classroom language in order to connect with other disciplines. To ensure the future of German, she recommended reform at all levels of instruction (256). The corporate model that universities had adopted, a model that stressed maximum profit, also loomed as a threat to German (Mews).

Puzzled by the apparent lack of interest in German in the United States, Kurt E. Müller argued at the end of the nineties that, since the economic strength of a country must be an important factor in determining the utility of a language, German should be of interest to a greater number of Americans. After all, Germany was among the top five trading partners with the U.S., he explained, and, after the United Kingdom, Germany was where the U.S. had its greatest investments in Europe (11-12). Furthermore, except for Russian, German was spoken by more native speakers in Europe than any other language, and it was also a popular language throughout Eastern Europe (14-15). Müller applauded Americans for their success in learning Spanish, but the unusually large enrollments in Spanish created an educational imbalance, he believed, which would leave Americans unprepared for more extensive foreign relations and rob them of the

ability to compete on a world scale (19).

Müller was not alone at the end of the nineties, for scholars of German were still sounding the alarm, claiming that change in the discipline was vital for its survival (Gilman 1998). By 2000, change was not simply a recurrent theme but seemed even to have become the very basis for any continuation of German in North America (Gilman 2000). Sander Gilman commented sagely that no one would believe claims that German would be a language of the future, but few would doubt its past relevance, and he suggested that the way in which scholars approached the past would have to remain dynamic and continue to evolve (9-11).

The year 2000 also witnessed general distress among scholars over a job market that did not become as positive as prognoses in the eighties and nineties had promised (Loentz). For some, the crisis in German Studies afflicted all of the humanities and presented a challenge to create something new (Strum). Calls went out for a return to the study of literature in the German language (Lützel; McCarthey), since numerous departments provided access to German culture in English translation but a German Department had the singular opportunity to deliver information accessible only through knowledge of the German language itself (McCarthey). Jeffrey M. Peck suggested from a Canadian perspective that German Studies in North America should move toward global studies on the model of introductory courses to world history that history departments had begun to offer (34).

This overview of the history of the crisis of German as a discipline in the United States is by no means comprehensive, but it offers meaningful insights into general views in the field. It would be too much, perhaps, to call this never-ending crisis a “German angst,” since such diagnostic language plays too dangerously with stereotypes, but the phrase makes a provocative section title for an article that focuses on the examination of stereotypes. As we have seen, scholars of German Studies have made numerous suggestions on how to improve the discipline, but two pieces of advice have come up multiple times, and they bear repeating: 1. Scholars of German should reconnect the teaching of German literature to the study of the German language. 2. Scholars of German should look to the past to find the lasting value of the German-language tradition. If human beings are capable of learning from history, such past tips from the experts may show present-day scholars a clear path into the future of ever-changing German Studies. Moreover, by combining past advice with present-day pressures to teach students in North America more about Asia, scholars of German might reposition themselves and their discipline, without further diminishing the intellectual quality of the field, not only to become more connected to present-day world issues but also to restore to the study of language and literature some of the sense of relevance it may have lost since the Second World War.

II. Bälz' s Japan and German Apprehensions of a Changing World

Because critical thinking is a skill the humanities in the United States so often claim to teach, I designed and taught a course in Spring 2008 called “Red Tide”-“Yellow Peril,” in which students analyzed German-language stereotypes about the vast region east of the German-speaking world. The course’s name derives directly from negative associations past Germans have had with the East, such as that various threats to German security came from the East. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, these threats seemed to emanate from Russia, later from the former Soviet Union, and also from more distant China and Japan. Initially, Germans received information on these regions with enthusiasm, but general acceptance eventually gave way to a dismissive and fearful rejection, and this course challenges students to trace the developments of these discourses through their study of literary works as expressions from specific historical moments.

Numerous literary texts in the German tradition have thematized Russia, China, and Japan, but within the context of this article, the focus is primarily on the texts on China and Japan, since this area of the world was most closely associated with the “yellow peril.” While this discussion will not demonstrate the stereotypes of Asians in individual German-language literary texts, it is useful to know that students enrolled in “Red Tide”-“Yellow Peril” read, discussed, and wrote in German on Theodor Fontane’s *Effi Briest* (1896), for example, which uses the figure of a Chinese man almost like a creature in a horror story. They also read Franz Kafka’s short story “The Great Wall” (“Beim Bau der chinesischen Mauer,” 1917), Klabund’s *The Chalk Circle (Der Kreidekreis)*, (1925), and Günter Grass’ *Headbirths or the Germans are dying out (Kopfgeburten oder die Deutschen sterben aus)*, (1980). Bertolt Brecht’s *The Good Person of Szechuan (Der gute Mensch von Sezuan)*, (1938) is another obvious choice for such a course, for, even if few scholars of German have commented on this work as a statement on Chinese culture, it fits into a series of depictions of China in the German-speaking world. Students in this course also read Hermann Hesse’s essay “The Brothers Karamasov or the Downfall of Europe” (“Die Brüder Karamasoff oder der Untergang Europas,” 1919) as a segway-piece that connected consideration of German literary images of the Soviet Union to similar fears from a generalized Mongolian, Chinese and Japanese East.

As background information on the “yellow peril,” students in a course like “Red Tide”-“Yellow Peril” could read a selection of excerpts from Erwin Bälz’s *Awakening Japan: The Diary of a German Doctor* (1930). Bälz’s text gives insight into the impact of the discourse of the “yellow peril” on East-West relations around the time

of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), when European fears of a powerful Asia probably seemed to come true. In a student-centered classroom environment, these diary entries can be used in place of a standard lecture on the historical period in which the literary fictions mentioned above were written, for the diary grants a view of European reactions to the Japanese wars in Asia. Broken down into a few entries, each of no more than three pages, the excerpts from Bälz's work discussed here are suited even for classes that are still just beginning to read longer texts in German. In order to understand Bälz's work, however, one must first know something about the evolution of the "yellow peril" in the German-speaking world. It is important to note that, while this discussion cites a version of the diary translated into English, students in a German-language class should have access only to the original.

The phrase "yellow peril," or "gelbe Gefahr," became a linguistic reservoir for the European anxiety that Japan or China might rise up against a Europe that had sought to subjugate them (Gollwitzer 20). Fears of a powerful Asia ranged from the imagined economic competition Asia might represent to the military might Europeans envisioned in the vast numbers in Asia (20-21). Before the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Germans did not imagine China and Japan as threats, but after the war they became increasingly interested in developments in Asia (164-65). By this time, Germans already had heard talk of the "yellow peril," but in 1895 Kaiser Wilhelm II attempted to reinforce fears of Asia with a picture that depicted a figure of Buddha on the horizon moving toward a concerned group of Europeans guarded by the Archangel Michael, patron of Germans (42; see also 206). The German emperor sent this picture to various monarchs and statesmen as a form of propaganda against the Japanese, but he hoped to have a particularly strong effect on Russia (207). The Kaiser was also interested in gaining a colony in China for Germany. Worried that Germany might spoil Japan's efforts in Asia, the Japanese encouraged Germany to take a piece of China. At the Treaty of Shimonoseki, however, Germany, Russia, and France forced Japan to give up the prize possession won in the war, the Liaotung peninsula (208-09). When two German Catholic missionaries were murdered in 1897, Germany took the region of Kiaochow (Kiautschou) with the capital city of Qingdao (Tsingtau) for a planned ninety-nine years to come. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, few in Europe probably believed that the Japanese could actually defeat Russia, but many were surprised at the Asian country's courage. When Japan won the war against Russia, Europeans sensed a change in the balance of power in the world.

Bälz's diary records that German-Japanese relations had been badly hurt by the Kaiser's anti-Japanese acts. Bälz wrote in 1903, for example, that the Japanese had not forgotten the German Emperor's insult. He even recounted a conversation on the matter with Prince Ito, who said that the "German Emperor painted a picture to show the way in

which the most sacred treasures of European civilization were threatened by the Mongols. There can be no shadow of doubt that the Mongols he had in mind were chiefly the Japanese; for, if any Mongol power should threaten Europe, it could not be impotent China, but only Japan, the rising power of the Far East” (222).

Bälz also showed how racism affected interactions between white Europeans and Americans with Asians. He commented, for instance, on a dinner-party given by the maharajah of India, which he attended in 1903, where an American woman sitting at his table had “made fun of the Indian ‘darkies’” (235). For this American woman, according to Bälz, the good-looking Indian doctor who also attended the party was “merely a ‘nigger’” (235). When dealing with such racist Westerners, the Japanese did what little they could to alleviate racial tension. In one instance, Bälz recommended to Ito that the Japanese not give up their traditional clothing for European clothes. Ito explained to Bälz the reason that Japanese had begun to wear European styles: “My dear Baelz, you don’t in the least understand the requirements of high politics. All that you say may be perfectly sound, but so long as our ladies continue to appear in Japanese dress they will be regarded as mere dolls or bric-à-brac” (239).

Although many Westerners may have looked upon the Japanese with contempt, Bälz explained that Asians had come to regard Japan as something of a legend. Japan had given people even as far away as the Middle East hope for freedom from European colonial aspirations. On December 27, 1903, Bälz commented that the Persian ex-grand vizier, who claimed to be traveling for pleasure, probably actually had come to learn more about the Japanese: “Throughout Asia, among the nations that are not under European tutelage or dread coming under it, there is a steady increase in the prestige of Japan as one Asiatic country that is treated as an equal by the European powers, and which none of the latter dreams of trying to conquer” (238). Even if applauded by the Asians, however, the Japanese did not believe that Europeans had accepted them fully yet, and it seemed that they were right, for in January of 1904 France began to create intrigue against Japan in China (241). Before the war against Russia started, Bälz spoke with his friend Ito and said that the Japanese had been too understanding of the Russians. Ito responded that the Japanese had wanted to show the European powers their “earnest desire for peace” and added: “Of course, what is really wrong with us is that we have yellow skins. If our skins were as white as yours, the whole world would rejoice at our calling a halt to Russia’s inexorable aggressions” (243).

Despite negative European images about the “yellow peril,” Bälz saw Japan as a model from which Europe might learn. Except in the case of Japan’s treatment of Korea, a country he believed Japan had unjustly turned into a “vassal” as early as 1904, Bälz rarely criticized the Japanese (299). On February 9, 1904, Bälz recorded that war had broken out (245). Although Europeans had moved into Asia prior to the

Russo-Japanese War with the intent to colonize the region, when Japan fought back a German newspaper rather hypocritically accused Japan of “megalomania” (260). Bälz reprimanded Europeans for their double standard and criticized Russia’s misuse of God to justify its own belligerent intentions. Bälz asked: “What are they to say when God is on the side of the heathen? Can there be anything more repulsive than the way in which many of those who proclaim the religion of love of one’s neighbor appeal to their God in support of mass murder?” (261).

Japan was a model, for Bälz, because the Japanese Emperor had given the people a constitution and basic rights, whereas Russia’s Tsar still ruled an autocracy. Thus, the revolution underway in Russia, came as little surprise to Bälz. Indeed, he even wondered whether Kaiser Wilhelm II would take notice and change things in Germany for the better of the German people (339). A Chinese minister in Japan corroborated Bälz’s view of Japan’s achievements, saying that thirty-seven years earlier, when he had first arrived in Japan, “China’s attitude towards Japan was supercilious,” but since then China had come to look up to Japan (342). Bälz declared that Russia’s loss in this war would be Germany’s gain, since he believed the “Slav Peril [was] a far more serious menace to [Germany] than the Yellow” (348).

On August 29, 1905, Bälz wrote of peace. Although he was surprised by the terms according to which the Japanese were willing to settle with Russia, he pronounced the end of the war the end of a “very important chapter in history” (384). Japan had become a “great power,” he claimed, and Asia was about to play a role in world politics (384-85). “This new Asia can and will exert a decisive influence upon the policy of western European states, and among others upon that of Germany” (385).

Against the background of Bälz’s diary, the German-language literary texts in a course like “Red Tide”-“Yellow Peril” gain new significance as part of a discourse on Asia during that time. For students in such a course, the German-speaking world and Asian cultures will no longer seem so distant and different, because students will gain insights into interactions between these two parts of the world that have been going on for longer than many might expect. Generally, German language and literature probably seem completely separate from Asia, but study of the “yellow peril” is one example of how close Germany and Asia might seem to be in the classroom setting. Indeed, one might even begin to ask how phrases from Chinese and Japanese, for instance, found their way into the German lexicon. When and under what circumstances did *Kotau machen* or *Rikscha*, for instance, become part of the German language? No doubt, students of German Studies will take much pleasure in seeking the answers to such questions as they come to understand the various outcomes of German-Asian relations.

III. Examining the “Yellow Peril” in Bookstores and the Classroom

In a world that seems determined to create a single universal means of communication—English?—at the expense of countless other languages and cultures, it is imperative that scholar-teachers present in their classes a view of how stereotypes have evolved so that we may avoid potential conflicts based on mere misunderstandings. Heinz Gollwitzer has called the “yellow peril” a “catch-phrase from the day before yesterday,” seemingly implying that the notion has disappeared (My translation 20), but even in the twenty-first century there are small signs that the discourse may not have gone away entirely. Various covers of the widely read German magazine *Der Spiegel* have even played with threatening images of China using headlines like “Attack from the Far East” (“Angriff aus Fern-Ost,” volume 37, 2006) (my translation), which featured a picture of the renowned terracotta warriors. In 2007, volume 35 showed a picture of an Asian woman peeking through window-blinds designed to look like a flag of China with the caption “How China Spies on German Technology” (“Wie China deutsche Technologie ausspäht”) (my translation). Such images and comments do not have to mention the “yellow peril” to access similar fears among people watching China’s recent rise in power.

Similarly, students in North America may find books at their local bookstores that hint at China’s power as something to be feared. One assignment for a course on the model of “Red Tide”-“Yellow Peril” might be for students to go to bookstores in their region or to look on-line for recently published books on Asian themes. No doubt, many of the titles they will find will suggest specific historical or cultural topics, but a surprising number of them may also hint again at a threat from Asia and tap into potential fears in a public unsure of what a world with an Asian superpower might mean.

In the introduction to an English translation of Erwin Bälz’s diary, George Macklin Wilson recommended that scholars examine and learn from past stereotypes, pointing out that texts like Bälz’s diary provided insights into “wars so tragic that they were pursued by whole populations that really knew little about their adversaries beyond a few stereotyped images,” (xxi). Because the twenty-first century is a time when so many speak of internationalization and globalization, Wilson’s wisdom may be more applicable than ever before. For scholars of German Studies, examining stereotypes associated with phrases like the “yellow peril” could mean not only a step in the direction past experts have agreed the discipline must go but also another opportunity to demonstrate how much of the human experience of the world is determined by the various languages to which one has access.

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