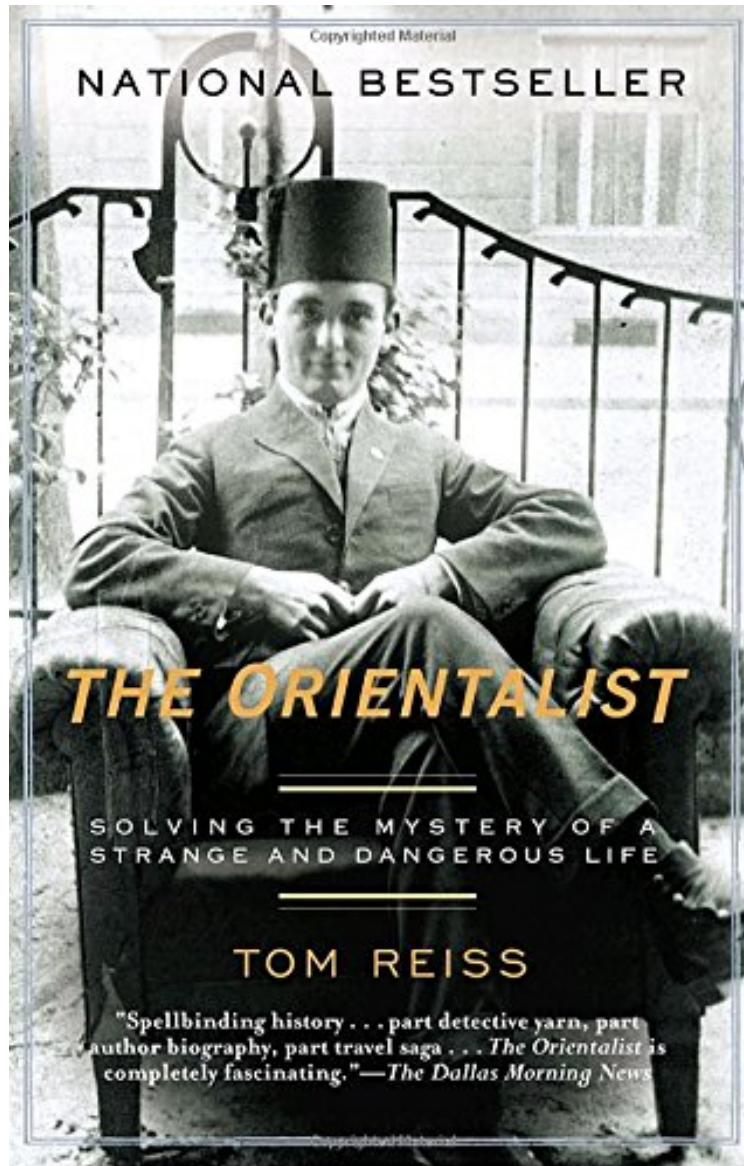


(Mobile ebook) The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life

# The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life

Tom Reiss

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**Tom Reiss : The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Interesting...By Jill MeyerTom Reiss's book, "The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life", is the very strange story of author Lev Nussimbaum and his identity, which has been obscured through the 20th century. It is also the story of Tom Reiss's search for that story and is, at times, as much about the "hunter" as the "hunted". Lev Nussimbaum was, at various times in his life, a Jew, a Muslim, and a hybrid. It seemed to depend on where he was living at the time and what he wanted to write. Born to Jewish parents in the oil capitol of Baku, he changed identities as often, it seems, as he changed clothing. Certainly the political exigencies of the times - the Russian Revolution, Nazism, Bolshevism - that Lev lived through, called for a somewhat "flexible" identity. Tom Reiss began searching for Lev Nussimbaum when he began searching for the author of "Ali and Nino", reputed to be one Kurban Said. Long years of searching and interviewing led to Lev Nussimbaum, who had died in 1942. Reiss's book is a long, sometimes repetitive, but always interesting look at foreign places and wars and how they led to Lev Nussimbaum.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Stick with this true story and find a forgotten worldBy NatalieDo you know about Baku and their thriving oil industry more than one hundred years ago? Do you know the terrible struggles that area suffered after the Bolshevik revolution and how the "White Russians," the lucky ones, escaped to Europe? Read about Lev, known also as Essad Bey, writer of best sellers in German and Russian, who warned of the Soviet threat, and then the Nazi threat to humanity. Stick with this true story and find a forgotten world. Very relevant in today's clashes of east and west, moderation and hatred.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. An Unfamiliar Aspect of HistoryBy Easar57This story opened up a new aspect of Jewish history of which I was previously unaware. Lev Nussimbaum's involvement in so many of the tumults that took place in Russia and Europe during the years it covers is extraordinary. Sadly, the book also reveals how deeply seated anti-Semitism was everywhere this unusual person went. Bolsheviks blamed the world's ills on Jewish capitalists. Pre-Nazi fascists blamed Bolshevism on the Jews. Capitalists simply turned their backs on Jews. And he felt it all, no matter how hard he tried to reinvent himself. Lev Nussimbaum is not particularly likable, but I have to respect his intelligence; and I can't imagine how I would have dealt with the challenging circumstances within which he found himself. He is flawed, like all of us. He was bright yet naive. He was hopeful at the wrong times. His fears lead him to be blind to the dangers of certain ideologies. My one criticism of the book was that the author could have found a better way to help the reader keep track of some of the many characters who come in and out of Lev's life, and then resurface later.

A thrilling page-turner of epic proportions, Tom Reiss's panoramic bestseller tells the true story of a Jew who transformed himself into a Muslim prince in Nazi Germany. Lev Nussimbaum escaped the Russian Revolution in a camel caravan and, as Essad Bey, became a celebrated author with the enduring novel *Ali and Nino* as well as an adventurer, a real-life Indiana Jones with a fatal secret. Reiss pursued Lev's story across ten countries and found himself caught up in encounters as dramatic and surreal and sometimes as heartbreaking as his subject's life.

From *Bookmarks Magazine*Reiss persistently peeled away layers of fact and fiction to recount a remarkable life. He was also lucky: his subject's elusiveness made ferreting out truth difficult, but Reiss discovered six of Nussimbaum's notebooks in the possession of his last editor. Critics agree that *The Orientalist* fascinates from both a biographical and cultural perspective - it's rich in exotic settings and characters, from an Austrian baroness to a former Hollywood starlet. Despite its charm, the book has some faults. Reiss seems to have included every piece of information he encountered, from historical anecdotes to ornate set pieces. Some factual errors, the book's brisk pace, and the lack of maps may confuse readers. Still, *The Orientalist* is an excellent look into the reinvention of self during one of history's most turbulent times.

Copyright 2004 Phillips Nelson Media, Inc. From *Booklist*Lev Nussimbaum fabricated a life that in its brief arc encompassed the whole of the Western and Near Eastern culture of his time. A Jew from the Caucasus, born in the first throes of the Russian Revolution, he styled himself a Muslim prince. As Kurban Said, he wrote a best-selling novel that made him the toast of Nazi Germany. Inventing and reinventing himself, he left a confused and perplexing trail. Reiss pursues two great narratives, one recounting Nussimbaum's life itself, the other following the author's quest to ferret from among myths and outright lies the truth of this man's life. Along the way, readers absorb much about oil-rich Azerbaijan, the Russian Revolution, the rise of fascism, and the centuries-old clashes of cultures and religions in the Caucasus and Middle East. Digressions abound because of Nussimbaum's intricate, multicultural encounters. In the hands of a less adept writer, such complex history might grow opaque and tedious, but Reiss' storytelling flair and the utterly compelling character of Lev Nussimbaum turn this biography into a page-turner of epic proportion.

Mark KnoblauchCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved. Spellbinding history . . . part detective yarn, part author biography, part travel saga . . . *The Orientalist* is completely fascinating. *The Dallas Morning News*Rarely in the literary annals of identity confusion has there been a tale as gripping. . . . A captivating and disquieting parable of the mystery of identity . . . truly page-turning. *The Miami Herald*Sympathetic, elegant, and extraordinarily affecting . . . Reiss's storytelling panache [is] spellbinding. *Los Angeles Times* Thrilling, novelistic and rich with the personal and political madness of early-twentieth-century Europe. *Entertainment Weekly*A brainy, nimble, remarkable book. *Chicago Tribune*A wondrous tale, beautifully told . . . mesmerizing, poignant, and

almost incredible. Reiss, caught up in the spell of Essad Bey, has turned around and worked some magic of his own. The New York Times For sheer reading pleasure . . . this book cannot be bettered. The New York Sun