

In the January 17, 2011 issue of the German weekly newspaper *Der Freitag*, sociologist Sérgio Costa called attention to the conspicuous absence of German scholars of postcolonial studies in “the recent intense debate on ‘integration’ and ‘Islam’” that has been fueled by the so-called Sarrazin scandal.¹ In contrast to Britain, France, or the United States, Costa argues, core tenets of postcolonialism are not an inherent part of German public debates. While he insists that this “indifferent silence” on the part of postcolonial scholars fails to meet the needs of the moment, he also detects possible reasons why these scholars may not intervene in relevant disputes – these reasons mostly deriving from the specific situation of Germany with respect to postcolonial issues (Costa).

My paper takes up the challenge posed in this article and addresses questions concerning the relationship between postcolonialism, Islam, and Germany, focusing on the concept of a postcolonial Germany. My argument is that a concern sometimes voiced – namely that the term ‘postcolonial’ runs the risk of losing its analytical power when it is used for everything and everyone (Uerlings and Patrut) – may be particularly relevant when postcolonial criticism addresses Western perceptions of Islam and Muslims. Furthermore, I argue that German postcolonial criticism is at odds with both the public perception of German ethnic diversity and, perhaps more importantly, the self-image of the very minority groups who are turned into postcolonial subjects by the logic of certain types of postcolonial criticism. My argument thus revolves around the fact that postcolonial studies, otherwise rightly seen as one of the very few remaining “methodological frameworks strongly committed to a critique of the global conditions

¹In the summer of 2010, German economist and politician Thilo Sarrazin published a bestselling book, *Deutschland schafft sich ab. Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* (München: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2010), which “conjures up the Muslim peril” (Musharbash) and triggered a controversial debate. Earlier this year, Sarrazin was even given the opportunity to present his simplistic arguments in a BBC talk show (see e.g. Volkery).

of domination and oppression”², is in danger of failing to achieve its own agenda. This agenda of critique *and change* of continuously asymmetric power structures is threatened when postcolonial criticism neglects the very people who are necessary to bring about this change: the German public, and minority groups in Germany in particular. In fact, in the current struggle to come to terms with a multiethnic Germany and Europe, and with the Islamic roots of the majority of people with a migrant background, German postcolonial studies has to reinvent itself in order to avoid losing touch with this specific German postcolonial reality. Two abstract issues are in particular need of explanation to a wider audience: the relationship of postcolonialism to Germany, and the relationship of postcolonialism to Islam. I will begin by discussing what might stand in the way of a public acceptance of these pairings.

One reason that postcolonial thought has not yet arrived in German public debates on migration, integration, Islam, and related issues may be that it is not easy to impart to a general public the idea that there is a German postcolonial situation. In fact, it took quite some time for this German postcolonial situation to be ‘discovered’ in the first place. Scholars not only came “belatedly to the investigation of [German] colonialism and postcoloniality” (Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox, Zantop, 3), the wider field of postcolonial criticism also developed without contributions by scholars from former German colonies. Whereas British and French postcolonial thought was developed in large part by intellectuals who came from former colonies to the metropolises of their colonizers, Germany’s own colonies did not produce any comparable postcolonial leaders. Postcolonial theories thus emerged out of an anti-colonial resistance discourse to which subjects to German colonialism did not contribute; postcolonial studies did not produce a German Gandhi or Frantz Fanon who could have functioned to increase public awareness of Germany’s role in the history of European colonialism and of German

² Jefferess et al. The authors even feel that “it is still arguably the only methodological framework” in this respect.

postcoloniality (Albrecht „*Europa ist nicht die Welt*,“ 27). Later developments in postcolonial studies from the 1970s onward, which drew on models such as poststructuralism, new versions of Marxism, feminism, and psychoanalytically informed cultural criticism, were also largely shaped significantly by “scholars from former colonized countries who teach at leading universities of the West, in particular in North America” (Lützeler, 23). As in the case of the first generation of (post)colonial intellectuals, scholars from former German colonies did not play a role in the development of postcolonial academic discourses of that time. Furthermore, the prevailing goals in the field of postcolonial studies were then still being phrased in terms of “Decolonising the Mind” (Ngugi wa Thiong’o) or of “empowerment” (Bhabha 4) of those who have been deprived of their rights and their dignity by colonialism.

This link to the history of imperialism and colonialism and to those who suffered from it was still a decisive component at that time – and again, the descendants of those who suffered from Germany’s colonialism did not actively contribute to the debate. Conversely, with its focus on the debates over British (and sometimes French) colonialism, the international field of postcolonial criticism did not seem to see any particular need to specify who, actually, counts as a ‘postcolonial subject’ and who does not. The fact that this seemed self-evident also has to do with the predominance of literary scholars and scholars of comparative literature in the field of postcolonial theories and criticism. According to the authors of an early study in *Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*, what makes literatures “distinctively post-colonial” “is that they emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre” (Ashcroft et al., 2). This concept strongly linked postcoloniality to the writers’ origins and experiences; yet again, in Germany

there are almost no writers whose experience has been shaped by German colonialism³ and who thus could have raised awareness of Germany's postcolonial condition in this narrower sense. As scholars have frequently pointed out, there is no phenomenon in Germany that one could call "the Empire writes back" (Uerlings, 22).

More recently, the field of postcolonial criticism has expanded even more, with a consequent blurring of the concept of 'the postcolonial' and in particular the question of a 'postcolonial subject.' Drawing on Homi Bhabha's assertion in his major work *Location of Culture* of an "ongoing colonial present" (Bhabha 128) or on Edward Said's stressing of the continuity of colonial dichotomies (Said 20), on "a representational level" the current condition of the world has been framed in terms of a "continuity of binary constructs" that are "directly linkable to patterns of European colonialism" (Ife and Rings 3). What started out as a critical examination of European colonialism and its heritage turned into an increasingly abstract conceptualization of issues such as power imbalances, strategies of marginalization within a binary framework, or processes of hybridization, and to a development of appropriate theoretical tools to think them through. When postcolonial criticism in the late 1990s discovered German colonialism and postcoloniality, it was thus at a stage when concrete references to the history of colonialism and to 'genuine' postcolonial subjects had already lost importance. Moreover, a great many in the field of postcolonial studies had already abandoned a concept of postcoloniality that rests upon the presence of descendants of colonized people in the country of their former colonizers or in the West in general. By then, the net had been cast much wider, and included all migrant, ethnic, or minority subjects as, so to speak, postcolonial "communities under siege" (Razack 132).

³ Cf. Lennox for a rare exception, the Cameroon-based political scientist and writer Kum'a Ndumbe III.

Despite its inevitable simplifications, this brief overview may help to explain why the connection of ethnic diversity in Germany to postcolonialism is anything but self-evident to the German public. What is deemed to be a powerful conceptual tool for many scholars working in the field is more likely to appear as a series of open questions and inconsistencies to a broader public. Interestingly, an uneasiness with this abandoning of concrete historical links is occasionally discernible even in the academic discourse on German postcolonialism – for instance, when Leslie Adelson in her 2005 study *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* criticizes the tendency at the beginning of German postcolonial criticism to jump on the postcolonial bandwagon “without more than a nod (or sometimes not even that) to the complex history of German colonialism” (Adelson 176). The issue of a shared colonial past or a lack thereof seems to remain a constant point of friction in German postcolonial studies, if only in the frequent assurance that its absence does *not* matter (see e.g. Ha and Schmitz; Barskanmaz; Mezzadra). Against this backdrop, it is not so surprising that the German public may remain doubtful about links between postcolonialism and the current multiethnic German situation.

Linking postcolonialism and Islam is a likewise complex issue, although on a different level. In the international debate, these are two terms that frequently appear in tandem (Nash and Hackett), and certainly contemporary Germany plays its part in the current public obsession with Islam after the general European “retreat of multiculturalism” (Joppke). As for the general association of postcolonialism with Islam, one may begin by asking why is it only now coming about. A great many of today’s postcolonial communities, such as those of Pakistani origin in Great Britain, or of North African origin in France, have always been Muslim communities. So why is it only now that they appear in a new light, and with a focus on this very aspect as a decisive feature? The obvious explanation would be that postcolonial studies is now looking

back on about three decades of academic research, and that during this time the public image of Islam in the West has considerably changed. From a postcolonial perspective, the fact that these communities were made up of the descendants of colonized peoples frequently seemed to be much more important than their being in large parts Muslims. Today, however, postcolonial studies is working against the backdrop of 9/11, of subsequent terror attacks such as that of 2005 in London, of the Amsterdam murder of Theo van Gogh in 2004, and other events that added substantially to the current shift of public perception.

Western perception of Islamic⁴ topics and Muslims has thus considerably changed during the last decades, with the Islamic revolution in Iran as a first major watershed and 9/11 a second. Many argue that prior to the Islamic movement in Iran, Islam was hardly a topic at all from a Western point of view, neither as a potential motivating force outside of Europe nor in relation to the Muslim population within Europe, which was already growing. A shift in perception began when Muslims became noticeable *as* Muslims, that is, during and after the Iranian revolution. “Whereas earlier in the century Middle Eastern antagonists were Arabs who *happened* to be Muslim, those in this period are seen as antagonistic *because* they are Muslim” (Gottschalk and Greenberg 125). But from a European point of view even the events in Iran were in a way still something that ‘happened elsewhere,’ as the presence and agency of Europe’s own Muslim population only gradually began to capture the public attention. At that time there were only a handful of mosques stitched into the European tapestry; in Germany, that kind of visibility began only in the early 1990s. As Ghassam Hage suggested, Islam became noticeable transnationally only when it began to make an impact in the West, i.e. when reports about attacks

⁴ To the best of my knowledge, the term Islamicate was coined in the 1970s by Marshall Hodgson, who defined it as something that “would refer not directly to the religion, Islam, itself, but to the social and cultural complex historically associated with Islam and the Muslims, both among Muslims themselves and even when found among non-Muslims” (Hodgson 59).

on US and Western facilities and institutions by Islamic militants were on the rise (Hage 78). The outrage caused by events such as the Ayatollah Khomeini's February 1989 call for the execution of Salman Rushdie contributed significantly to the rise in visibility of Islam in the West, and particularly to its frequently negative public image. Germany was no exception; not long ago there was still widespread ignorance of Islamic topics, and in Germany, too, the Muslim population gained visibility slowly. Today, however, Germany contributes to the 'globalization' of the 'Islamic other' as Ghassam Hage called the recent developments from about the turn of the century on (Hage 75).

If the postcolonial condition of the world is now frequently blurred over in the public perception by the recent focus on actual and assumed Islamic perils, one should expect postcolonial and other critical scholars to make every endeavor to counter this tendency. As it seems, however, criticism rather confines itself to what one may call 'postcolonial business as usual.' Indeed, many recent publications point in this direction – such as the 2008 US American study *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (Gottschalk and Greenberg), a 2009 British study called *A Suitable Enemy* that also carries "Islamophobia" in its subtitle (Fekete), or the likewise 2009 German study *Feindbild Moslem* (Sokolowsky) which may be translated as 'the Muslim bogeyman.' As these titles suggest, Western attitudes towards Islam frequently display a sort of fearful "othering" that could profitably be viewed in terms of postcolonialism's criticism of the Western "'racialized' understanding of the world" (Divine 1). But the exact relationship between this rejection of Islam and the postcolonial paradigm remains obscure. Postcolonial criticism primarily seems to be concerned that the recent shift of attention to the postcolonial subjects' Islamic identity leads to a worsening of their situation, in that – as a 2009 study on *Comparing Postcolonial Diasporas* puts it – "the old hierarchies of race seem all the more

attractive” in a world “terrorized from contrary sides by suicide bombers” and “scaremongering” (McLeod 21). This is certainly true; however, I would argue that this recent change in designating people takes place, as I will outline below, on a different level. For that, one must turn back to the ‘older’ model of postcoloniality.

If one sticks to a concept of postcolonial subjects as descendants of colonized people, this current public transformation of descendants of colonized people into Muslims appears to be a considerable de-historicization, in that it draws attention away from the history of colonialism and imperialism as a precondition of the current world situation. What this recent development is about is thus, among other things, a re-casting of the familiar players in the field – rather than former colonizers on the one hand and descendants of the colonized on the other, this new paradigm pits the more or less unblemished but endangered Western people against members of a transnational religious community that is itself being associated with imperial and colonial aggression and slavery (Karsh; Cook; N’Diaye). In this light, Islam appears as inherently inimical to the West, as evidenced by the history of Islamic imperialism. As historian Christina Michelmore puts it: “As an explanation, Islam eliminates space and time, political complications, ideological incompatibilities. Ageless Islam hates the West” (Michelmore 47). This current public obsession with Islam thus creates a situation that is actually counterproductive to the postcolonial paradigm. When Islam is classified as ‘the other’ par excellence of Western secular modernity, it takes over a role that until recently has largely been held by the ‘postcolonial other.’ But while a postcolonial other could be linked to the shadow of colonial history, an Islamic other has no such clear status – not even within, let alone outside of the academy. One could even go so far as to argue that this recent shift of perception is a kind of backlash against postcolonial criticism’s own tendency of de-historization, as it may be perceived, namely its

inclusion of all kinds of non-Western groups within the postcolonial paradigm whether they have a colonial past or not. A similar but reverse logic seems to be at the root of current public perception of the Islamic world: When large parts of this realm can be likewise associated with imperialism and colonialism, why bother asking whether particular Islamic groups have a colonial past or not?

As the reference to the German book title *Feindbild Moslem* indicates, German scholars have taken part in this international debate, frequently neglecting to ask what actually links current Islamophobia to postcolonialism or the colonial legacy.⁵ Postcolonial studies in Germany frequently employs an imprecise definition of postcolonialism, placing ethnic minorities in general on a continuum with the descendants of former colonial subjects. The missing component in German postcolonial studies, a colonial past actually shared by migrants and Germans, is deemed to be negligible on the grounds that any “racist way of appropriation and degradation of the other” is tantamount to “colonial practice” (Ha 18). This pattern of argumentation suggests that any relation between groups can be called ‘colonial’ when a hierarchical relation of superiority and inferiority is involved, and in this view power hierarchies in present day societies are by definition colonial hierarchies (Golly and Cohrs 9, 13). In this spirit, scholars such as sociologist Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim and others are currently tracing the legacy of colonialism in Germany, for instance in debates on Islamicate topics that fuel the ongoing discussion on integration and assimilation such as forced marriages, honor killings, headscarves, etc. These public debates, as Beck-Gernsheim suggests, create a “moral gap between the West and Islam,” in which “the West quite naturally adopts the morally superior position” (Beck-Gernsheim 79f.). This “moral gap” she considers to be a legacy of the colonial

⁵ To be clear: I do *not* suggest that there are no links at all; rather, my indication of logical inconsistencies in the argument is aimed at voicing uneasiness about postcolonial criticism’s at times too simplistic answers to these questions, and calling for more tangible criteria for conceptualizing a link between postcolonialism and Islam.

past: “Earlier on, we had a similar gap in colonial times. At that time the self-image of the colonial powers was shaped by the idea of superiority over the ‘savages’ and connected to this was the mission to civilize those savages” (Beck-Gernsheim, 80). The 2004 study *Colonial Dimensions of Multiculturalism* puts the core tenet of this line of postcolonial criticism concisely: “the mechanism of the one, colonialism, covertly structures the other, multiculturalism” (Gunew 37).⁶ Some would certainly prefer to speak of “updated colonial mechanisms” (Shankar 138) since there is, of course, awareness that “one cannot translate colonial practice one-to-one from the colonies to the centers” (Ha 26); basically, though, German postcolonial criticism once again divides the world into “the West and the rest”⁷ – only from a reverse angle.

As this brief outline of the history of German postcolonial studies against the backdrop of the international field has shown, scholars working in the field generally neglect to address topics that would be of utmost importance for an acceptance of postcolonial paradigms by the German public. The core tenets of German postcolonial criticism summarized above help to explain why postcolonialism as a concept referring to contemporary ethnic diversity in the German context remains an almost exclusively academic discursive field, with hardly any influence on public debates. A pattern of argument that labels hierarchical relations *a priori* colonial can hardly pass the ‘social test’ in a German social reality that consists of a wide range of obvious *intra*-cultural hierarchic relations and “moral gaps” between social classes. Accordingly, German postcolonial studies would have to impart to a general public what exactly distinguishes a “moral gap” between Germans and Muslim migrants from, say, the moral gap

⁶ Gunew’s study deals with Canadian and Australian multiculturalism; the claim quoted above is also valid for the German area (see for instance the contributions in Golly and Cohrs).

⁷ To my knowledge, this oft-quoted phrase originates from Stuart Hall; cf. for instance his essay of the same title (Hall).

that neo-liberal politicians create when they discard human beings (German-born or not) as socially dispensable. The pattern of moral superiority and inferiority can certainly be found in colonial times and presumably to a very high degree; the assumption that it is (post)colonial in nature, however, tends to translate the colonial into a postcolonial situation in an all-too-simplistic way.

Beyond that, imparting to the public the usefulness of connecting postcolonialism, Islam and Germany becomes an irresolvable task in a Germany that has migrants and their descendants, Muslim⁸ or otherwise, but lacks a migrant background like that of Britain or France in which migrants' postcolonial status is more easily recognized. The lack of 'genuine' postcolonial migrants is certainly a result of the specific German role in the history of colonialism and decolonization: On the one hand, Germany's participation in the scramble for Africa in the late 19th century and its subsequent role as a colonial power (1884-1914/19) is anything but a footnote in history; on the other hand, after the First World War German colonies became British, French, Belgian or South African territories for another half century (or even longer in the case of Namibia). This development greatly contributed to the fact that Germany has no noteworthy migration from its former colonies. German migrant communities rather consist of asylum-seekers and refugees from conflict areas all over the world, as well as labor migrants from countries such as Turkey, Italy, Spain, Greece, and many others, which were never German colonies.

⁸ According to recent calculations, there are about 4 million Muslims in contemporary Germany; cf. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, p. 11: „*Germany is home to some 4 million Muslims*. The study conducted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees puts the number of Muslims living in Germany at between 3.8 and 4.3 million. Expressed as a percentage of Germany's total population of around 82 million, the proportion of Muslims is between 4.6 and 5.2 per cent. Of all Muslims living in Germany with a migration background and originating from the countries of origin included in the study, some 45 per cent are German nationals while around 55 per cent are foreign nationals.“

What is more, the German public is very well aware that the ancestors of migrants in Germany have never been subjects of German colonialism, and that the majority of them, the Turks and Kurds, come from successor states of the Ottoman Empire, which disappeared from the global map at the same time as imperial Germany. For this very German public, the narrative figure of a continuum between colonial past and postcolonial present thus seems to lack any historical basis. One might even say that the recent increase in public awareness of German colonialism contributed to a better public understanding of the migrants' history. Numerous TV documentaries of German colonialism have informed the German public that, as Andreas Huyssen put it, "Germans and Turks are not historically bound by a colonial relationship which would give them something like a shared history" (Huyssen 154). In fact, the representative of the Ottoman Empire was among the players invited by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to the Berlin West Africa Conference of 1884-85,⁹ the very conference that subsequently ignited the "scramble for Africa." German postcolonial studies may thus start out by acknowledging that Turkey actually never was a German colony¹⁰ instead of simply disregarding this fact, and then, as Costa suggests, provide more effective arguments from the postcolonial repertoire and its numerous tools – such as explaining the current debates on Muslim migrants as an attempt "to (re-)construct the self at a time when the borderlines between an 'imaginary we' and a constructed 'other' begin to blur" (Costa), to mention just one example.

As long as German postcolonial criticism neglects to address questions that are of importance to the German public, it is unlikely that it will convince this public with an

⁹ For a historical source see the „Aktendstücke betreffend die Kongo-Frage“.

¹⁰ I am paraphrasing Markus Joch's ironic comment in his essay "Wunderbare Hybridität" [Review of Christof Hamann, Cornelia Sieber (Ed.): *Räume der Hybridität. Postkoloniale Konzepte in Theorie und Literatur*. New York: Georg Olms Verlag 2002]. In: IASL online, 22.09.2003, <http://www.iasl.uni-muenchen.de/>, 17.03.2008): „Man wünschte sich schon einmal die Bemerkung, daß die Türkei nie zu den deutschen Kolonien gezählt hat, die interkulturellen Kontaktzonen in Kreuzberg wie in Antalya auf einer anderen Ebene liegen.“

invocation of colonialism in connection with contemporary multiethnic Germany. So far, German postcolonial criticism has avoided questions such as: Is there a difference if patterns of colonial dominance and ideology are to be found in ‘genuine’ postcolonial societies or if these patterns are to be found in ‘merely’ multicultural migrant societies? Is the background of a mutual colonial past or the lack of such a background a factor in public perception and political decision-making? In what way does the presence of people from former colonies or the lack of such constant reminders of the colonial past influence debates and decisions? To address and answer questions like these would be of vital importance for the necessary regeneration of German postcolonial criticism. So far, traces of such innovative conceptual questions can only be found in comparative analyses of migration (for instance Ruud Koopmans and Paul Statham), but not within German postcolonial studies. Whether it is useful or not in these contexts to insist on the terms “colonial” or “postcolonial” for the German multiethnic situation remains to be seen, a point to which I will return below.

Postcolonial criticism has greatly contributed to increasing public awareness of Germany’s role as a colonial power; but as far as contemporary Germany is concerned, it has not even begun to address questions that would be of interest for a wider public. There is, however, yet another problem with the kind of German postcolonial criticism outlined above: the fact that the debate takes place with no (or hardly any) involvement of the very minority groups cast as postcolonial “communities under siege.” Unlike minority actors in France who refer to themselves as the “natives” of the postcolonial French republic,¹¹ or those in Britain who claim that “We’re Here Because You Were There” (Rodriguez), German ethnic minorities do not create strategic links to Germany’s colonial history. Those cast by German postcolonial criticism

¹¹ A group that called itself the “natives of the republic” (“Les Indigènes de la République”) launched an internet call on the occasion of the struggle over the controversial colonial history law of 2005; for a discussion see e.g. Schmid; see also Todorov, 88-90.

as the “colonized of today” do not seem to be inclined to position their own situation as a return of colonialism. Some fifteen years ago, Turkish-German writer Emine Özdamar did make a passing remark of this kind: “The Germans came by their colonies relatively late in the day,” she said in a 1996 interview, “and they have ended up creating new colonies on their home territory” (Özdamar 52f).¹² Diffuse statements like this, however, are few and far between; in general, the minority group that for decades has been called and in parts considered itself to be the “Jews of today” (cf. the 1970s slogan “Turks are the Jews of today”) does not seem to be interested in positioning itself as the “colonized of today” (Albrecht, “Postcolonial Germany?,” 2011). A short look at the field of German minority literature suggests a similar situation: minority writers do not seem to be interested in gaining a strategic position within the postcolonial paradigm, nor do they make any references to the history of colonialism, for that matter. With the exception of a handful of African migrants whose literature, as Dirk Götsche has recently pointed out, constitute “arguably one of the few strands of German postcolonial literature” (Götsche 1), German minority writers have not assumed the role of ‘writing back to the center’ taken on by certain writers of the British and French empires (Uerlings, 22).

Those cast by some as the “colonized of today” in Germany quite obviously do not see their situation as a return of colonialism, nor do they search for comparable victims in German history. On the contrary, many of those so-called postcolonial “communities under siege” seem to wonder how they could, in fact, *relate* to German history. In Germany, most minorities with a migrant background feel expelled from national history and memory – which despite the rapid development of transnationality on all levels still have a crucial impact. Andreas Huyssen discussed this phenomenon some time ago as one of “migration into other pasts,” echoing a statement by Turkish-German writer Zafer Şenocak in a mid-1990s interview: “One can

¹² Thanks to Margaret Littler, who pointed this out to me.

immigrate to a country but not to its past” (Şenocak 53). If minorities with a migrant background ask themselves how they could “migrate into Germany’s past,” however, they usually refer to the Nazi past and the Holocaust. To this day, German colonialism has yet to come to the German minorities’ attention (Albrecht, “Postcolonial Germany?” 2011).

In May of 2007, the journal of the Modern Language Association of America presented a forum on the question whether there is (or soon will be) an “End of Postcolonial Theory” in which some even went so far as to assert its “uselessness” (Yaeger et al., 638). The tendency of German postcolonial criticism to ignore the social phenomena outlined in this article might not help to convert its critics. However, Germany was indeed a colonial power; the question of a postcolonial Germany is still perfectly justified. So what kind of questions can be usefully posted about a postcolonial Germany?

In my view, the shared histories of Turkey and Germany would be an interesting starting point. Minority writers such as Güney Dal have already included this topic in their works – in Dal’s case the Turkish participation in the First World War.¹³ Moreover, historians are at present rediscovering the Ottoman Empire as the “missing piece” in today’s historiography of colonialism (Karsh 120; see also Cook), and the question of how the entangled histories of the German and Ottoman Empires show their effects in the self-image of today’s descendents of both empires may very well establish a new field of postcolonial criticism. One of the most interesting fields of study might turn out to be the concept of “migration into other pasts,” which has been slowly but repeatedly addressed in the last few years. In January 2010, for instance, the German weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* commissioned a small-scale poll on the topic of Turkish-Germans and their relationship to German history – and once again, the topic was the Holocaust. The project was introduced as “a venture into largely unknown territory” and as “a first approach

¹³ See e.g. Güney Dal’s novel *Europastaße 5*. Thanks to Jim Jordan and Margaret Littler for their advice on this.

to questions that have so far hardly been posed” – questions such as: “What do Turkish-Germans know about the Holocaust? What do they think about the National Socialist genocide? How do they judge the German process of ‘coming to terms with the past’ – and which conclusions do they draw from it in relation to current political questions such as the German attitude towards Israel?” (Ulrich et al.) It would indeed be most interesting to ask similar questions with regard to German colonialism, and this would be at the same time a novel and unorthodox way to rephrase the question of a “postcolonial Germany”: What do Turkish-Germans actually know about German colonialism? What do they think about the genocide in the former colony “German South-West Africa”? How do they judge colonialism’s recent increase in visibility in the media? And, more generally, how do they relate to the legacies of imperialism and colonialism in Germany and Europe as a whole? The issue of migration into Germany’s colonial past is indeed still “a venture into largely unknown territory,” and the prospective conceptual framework of this specific issue of “migration into other pasts” has to open up new terrain – a terrain that would provide German postcolonial criticism with a chance to reinvent itself and take the current social reality seriously.

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