FROM GASTARBEITER TO MUSLIM: COSMOPOLITAN
LITERARY RESPONSES TO POST-9/11 ISLAMOPHOBIA

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## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of Abbreviations</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>List of Figures</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Declaration</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copyright Statement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Thinking ‘We’ in Contemporary German Literature</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamophobia and the German Literary Landscape</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Being-with’: Contemporary Cosmopolitan Theory and the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beyond Monotheism: A Cosmopolitan Understanding of the Divine</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sufism and Singularity: The Deconstruction of Islam</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The ‘Voice of Interruption’: Nancy and Cosmopolitan Literature</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Contemporary ‘West-östlicher Divan’: The Islam/West Binary in the Poetic Writing of Zafer Şenocak and SAID</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction: Reconnecting German Literature with Divan Poetry</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘[E]s kostet Sinn und Zeit / die Sphären zu einen’: Self and Other, and Heaven and Earth in Zafer Şenocak’s Übergang</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poetry, Prayer and Apostasy: SAID’s Psalmen as ‘Prayer Demythified’</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion: Moving Beyond Goethe’s Divan</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Der neuste Ritter der Romantik?: Counter-Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism and Romantic Religiosity in the Work of Feridun Zaimoglu

Introduction: From Kanak Spokesperson to Neo-Romantic .............................................................. 126

‘Ich bin gekommen, die Zerstreuten einzusammeln’: Religious/Enlightenment Fundamentalism in Nathan Messias ................................................................................................................ 143

‘Nur die Liebe besitzt den Talisman ewigen Friedens’: Rival Religiosities and Competing Cosmopolitanisms in Liebesbrand .............................................................................................................. 158

Conclusion: A Counter-Enlightenment Critique of German Leitkultur ............................................. 184

Between Terror and Love: The Religiosity of Navid Kermani’s Fiction

Introduction: Fighting Fundamentalism through Scholarship and Literature ........................................ 187

‘[E]twas sagte mir, ich solle es lassen und mich weiter der Musik hingeben’: Rock ‘n’ Roll and Religiosity in Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten .................................................................................................. 195

‘Mit ihm kam sie in Bett vor wie in einer Kirche’: Sexuality, Spirituality and the Quarrel with God in Du sollst ........................................................................................................................................... 204

‘Der Himmel auf Erden’: Ephemeral Love and Worldly Religiosity in Große Liebe .............. 219

Conclusion: A Sceptical Spirituality ...................................................................................................... 230

Conclusion

Germany and Islam: Abolition or Renewal? ...................................................................................... 234

Bibliography ........................................................................................................................................ 260

Word Count: 83,001
List of Abbreviations


NM - Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel, *Nathan Messias* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Theater Verlag, 2009)

GL - Navid Kermani, *Große Liebe* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2014)

List of Figures

Fig. 1- The rabbi, priest and imam played by Adolfo Assor (Photo by Ute Langkafel, 2009)............................................................................................................................150

Fig. 2 - Nathan Messias with microphone in hand, played by Murat Seven (Photo by Ute Langkafel, 2009)....................................................................................................................153
Abstract

The label ‘Muslim’ is increasingly being used to exclude migrants and non-ethnic Germans from German society. Although this process began after 2000 when Germany’s citizenship laws changed from *jus sanguinis* to incorporate an element of *jus soli* and minority subjects could no longer be ‘othered’ by their passports alone, it intensified shortly afterwards due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Spielhaus 2006). Specifically within the German context, the discovery that Mohamed Atta, one of the perpetrators of 9/11, had lived and studied in Hamburg, the foiled bomb plots of 2006 and 2007, and the 2011 Frankfurt Airport shooting all served to buttress this paradigmatic shift from national/ethnic difference to religious. Yet, rather than responding in kind to this identitarian entrenchment, the work of Zafer Şenocak, SAID, Feridun Zaimoglu and Navid Kermani (all minority writers of varying Muslim backgrounds) suggests new ways of thinking about community, identity and religiosity that are fluid, non-foundational and open to an undecided future, which can all be illuminated by Jean-Luc Nancy’s theories of the ‘inoperative community’ (2000 and 1991) and the deconstruction of monotheism (2008).

For Nancy, the traditional understanding of community as the fusion of immanent individuals with a common identity must be resisted, as this disguises our actual ontological interrelatedness as ‘singular beings’ who are radically open to one another. This non-foundational approach regards the spacing of interconnected singular beings (their ‘being-in-common’) as the sense of the world, and rejects universalising ideologies that seek to confer sense upon the world from the outside, since these act to close down meaning and divide us up into polarised communities. In Nancy’s terms, whether these ideologies be political or religious, they are both defined by the monotheistic paradigm that operates through a separate ideal world that acts as our world’s guiding principle. This is why Nancy himself rejects the term cosmopolitanism, as its philosophical roots in the metaphysics of the Enlightenment stem from the ideal world of pure Reason.

Nevertheless, just as the inoperative community can be understood as a non-foundational route to cosmopolitan solidarities, the deconstruction of monotheism too leaves space for a non-foundational religiosity that resists traditional identities and symbolism. Nancy proposes, borrowing from mysticism, a God not as ‘the “other world”’ [...], but the other of the world’ (2008, p. 10), that is to say, a religiosity that does not position God as the subject of the world and its organizing principle, but concerns itself instead with glimpsing the divine in the alterity in our world, which results from the very nothingness of its origins. These arguments, that I place at the forefront of post-9/11 debates surrounding cosmopolitanism and religion, can shed light on the literary writing of Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani, who draw upon the immanentist tradition within Islamic mysticism in order to intimate a non-identitarian religiosity that figures in the alterity of the world and leaves open all possibilities for the future. In this regard, their fiction hints at an affective and worldly spirituality that can be found in love, sex, music and the natural world, which, whilst also serving to dispel stereotypical associations between Islam and sexual conservatism, hints at a post-monotheistic religiosity beyond identity and ideology. Thus, rather than creating a homogenous foundation through dialogue (the approach of the German state and often of *interkultureller Germanistik*), the non-foundational and cosmopolitan conceptualisations of the self, community and religiosity found in the writing of these authors both undermine the closed identities that are clashing violently across the globe at the start of the twenty-first century and also open up the space for us to imagine new ways of coexisting.
Declaration

I confirm that no portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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**Introduction**

**Thinking ‘We’ in Contemporary German Literature**

**Islamophobia and the German Literary Landscape**


The above quotation from the essay collection *Wer ist Wir?: Deutschland und seine Muslime* (2009) by the prize-winning author and Qur’an scholar Navid Kermani is illustrative of the exclusion of those deemed to be Muslims from contemporary German society. Reim Spielhaus’s study (2006), however, suggests that this divide has not always been perceived in the same way. She notes a shift in categorisation, whereby the label ‘Muslim’ began to replace others such as ‘Gastarbeiter’, ‘migrant’, ‘foreigner’ and ‘Turk’ after 2000, the year when Germany’s citizenship laws changed from *jus sanguinis* to incorporate an element of *jus soli* and minority subjects could no longer be ‘othered’ by their passports alone. This transformation was, of course, substantially intensified shortly afterwards by the terrorist attacks committed in the name of Islam on 11 September 2001,² and Islam has since remained at the forefront of German consciousness due to the discovery that Mohamed Atta (one of the perpetrators of ‘9/11’) had lived and studied in Hamburg, the foiled bomb plots of 2006 and 2007,³ and the 2011 Frankfurt Airport shooting, which all served to buttress the

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A paradigmatic shift from national/ethnic difference to religious difference within the public discourse on non-ethnic Germans.\(^4\)

This shift from *Gastarbeiter* to Muslim is not a mere superficial change; it has profoundly affected how ethnic Germans relate to many of their minority fellow citizens, as Yasemin Yildiz’s study (2009) on media portrayals of Turkish-German women demonstrates. Although debates on the impact of ‘foreigners’ upon German society and racist violence directed at immigrants predate 9/11 (the arson attacks during the 1990s in Rostock, Mölln and Solingen are infamous cases), during the ‘90s German minority subjects were mostly perceived as a danger to themselves rather than to wider society, as Yildiz affirms, and were consequently more deserving of pity than fear within the wider public’s imagination.\(^5\) Yet their recent categorisation as Muslim allows for their identity to be linked to all manner of actions carried out in the name of Islam, be they in Turkey, North Africa or Denmark, placing all Muslims (and perceived Muslims) under suspicion of terrorism.\(^6\) Consequently, the fate of the minority subjects themselves has become secondary to the danger they supposedly pose to democratic and ‘enlightened’ European civil society.\(^7\) Islamic terrorism and mass migration have seemingly intensified the polarisation of the Islam/West dichotomy, reawakening historical European fears and prejudices from as far back as the Siege of Vienna, the Crusades and Al-Andalus. The ubiquitous media debates surrounding Islamic terrorism, the headscarf and ‘intrafamily femicides’\(^8\) serve to create an imbalanced perception of Muslims which reinforces the apparent incompatibility of Islam with German society, to

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\(^4\) I use the terms ethnic and non-ethnic German to distinguish between Germans who self-identify with and are perceived as having a non-hyphenated ethnic background (the former) and those whose background is linked to other ethnic groups (the latter). I do, however, reject the notion of a pure and static ethnic identity, as will become apparent from my methodology and readings.

\(^5\) Yasemin Yildiz, ‘Turkish Girls, Allah’s Daughters, and the Contemporary German Subject: Itinerary of a Figure’, *German Life and Letters*, 62.4 (2009), 465-81 (p. 457).


\(^8\) The label ‘honour killing’ has been rightly criticised for both using the terminology of the perpetrator and continuing the association between the female body and family honour. Intrafamily femicide has been used as an alternative. See, for example, Fadia Faqir, ‘Intrafamily Femicide in Defence of Honour: The Case of Jordan’, *Third World Quarterly*, 22.1 (2001), 65-82.
the point that academically successful women in the pursuit of well-respected careers, such as teaching, medicine and law, who still wear headscarves are seen as ‘symbols of the failure of integration’, as Katherine Pratt Ewing asserts.\footnote{9}

The huge success\footnote{10} of Thilo Sarrazin’s best-seller of 2010 Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen appears to confirm this widespread anxiety towards Islam within Germany. In the book, Sarrazin argues that, rather than social and economic factors, it is the infiltration of Islam and Islamic culture that is to be blamed for Germany’s contemporary societal problems:

\begin{quote}
Eine Zuwanderungs- und Intergrationsproblematik [...] gibt es heute in Deutschland ausschließlich mit Migranten aus der Türkei, Afrika, Nah- und Mittelost, die zu mehr als 95 Prozent muslimischen Glaubens sind.\footnote{11}
\end{quote}

He claims that Germany’s Muslims are a drain upon the welfare state, unwilling to integrate (what he exactly means by this is unclear) and are overwhelmingly fundamentalist,\footnote{12} and that the high birth rate amongst non-ethnic Germans in comparison to ethnic Germans is contributing towards the rapid erosion of German culture, a significant decrease in the average intelligence levels of children and an increase in criminal activity.\footnote{13} With reference to the post-war Gastarbeiterprogramm, Sarrazin expresses his regret at the movement of Turkish labourers to Germany, suggesting a neoliberal preference for multinational corporations on his part, but not multiethnic states: ‘Heute wissen wir, dass Fabriken und Dienstleistungen wandern müssen und nicht die Menschen.’\footnote{14}

\footnotesize

\footnote{10} It was the decade’s most popular work of political non-fiction: Gottfried Hahn, ‘Schadet sich die SPD mit ihrem Sarrazin-Kurs?’ , FOCUS, 1 May 2011, <http://www.focus.de/magazin/debatte/focus-leserdebatte-schadet-sich-die-spd-mit-ihrarem-sarrazin-kurs_aid_623031.html> [accessed 28/07/15].
\footnote{11} Thilo Sarrazin, Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2010), p. 260.
\footnote{12} I use the term ‘fundamentalism’ not only in relation to Islam – it was, after all, first used as a self-description by Protestants in the US – or even to religion. Rather, I regard any form of militant belief that seeks to return to a pure sense of origin as fundamentalist in nature. It can, therefore, be contrasted with my methodological emphasis on non-foundationalism.
\footnote{13} Sarrazin, p. 264.
\footnote{14} Ibid., p. 258.
immigrants for having too strong a fixation on their own native culture, his own notion of cultural identity is unashamedly essentialist and purist, narrowly determined by blood and heritage alone. There is, therefore, never really any question of Muslims becoming part of German society for Sarrazin, and this attitude is conveyed in the language used, as he continues to refer to third generation Turkish-Germans as ‘türkische Migranten’, ignoring the fact that they arrived in Germany by the same means as he did: by birth.

In response, Sarrazin’s book spawned Manifest der Vielen: Deutschland erfindet sich neu (edited by the writer and journalist Hilal Sezgin, 2011), a collection of essays, poetry and short stories by prominent German intellectuals and writers of varying Muslim backgrounds, the title of which not only parodies that of Sarrazin’s book, but also echoes the postcolonial French text Manifeste des 121 (1960), which recognised the legitimacy of the Algerian War of Independence (1954-62). Together, the contributions of Manifest der Vielen serve as a counterargument to Sarrazin’s theories, advocating the acceptance of diversity within Germany. For instance, Sezgin’s essay laments the identity purism which seeks to divide the population of Germany into separate homogeneous groups. She echoes the above quotation from Kermani, asserting:

Es gibt die Deutschen so wenig wie es die Muslime gibt. Das Problem ist: Für eine steigende Zahl anderer Deutscher sind Muslime nie ein Teil des gemeinsamen Wir, sondern immer die anderen.

The poet Deniz Uulu, co-founder and -editor of the literary magazine freitext, provides a literary entry to the collection. His poem ‘Sieben Sekunden’ considers the time just after we are born, when we have yet to have an identity prescribed to us:

Vielleicht sind es wirklich nur sieben Sekunden.

15 Ibid., p. 262.
16 Ibid., p. 10.
18 freitext is a literary magazine with interviews, essays, poems and short stories from minority authors. It was founded in 2004.
Wir erblicken das Licht der Welt. Wir sind nackt.
Nicht schwarz, nicht weiß, nicht Arbeiter, nicht Professor, nicht
klug, nicht dumm.
Kein Mig-ratio-ns-hintergrund. Wir sind. Sieben Sekunden
lang sind wir. Sieben Sekunden stilles Sein, sieben Sekunden frei.\textsuperscript{19}

Sarrazin’s essentialist thinking that fixes Muslims as inherently less intelligent is critiqued
here, and the emphasis on ‘ratio’ within the word ‘Migrationshintergrund’ plays with the
Western stereotype of irrational ‘Orientals’.

As Manifest der Vielen evidences, this current climate in which Muslims are excluded
from the German ‘we’ has affected writers and intellectuals. Karin E. Yeşilada argues that
writers previously regarded as migrant-Germans have had the role of spokesperson for Islam
or the ‘Muslim community’ (often involuntarily) thrust upon them,\textsuperscript{20} regardless of whether
they are practising Muslims or not and as if there were a single homogeneous Muslim
community. Yet, although Germans of a Muslim background are often faced with a false
choice between choosing a pre-existing German or Muslim identity, B. Venkat Mani argues
in his monograph (2007) that such identitarian entrenchment is rarely reflected in the works
of ‘minority’ writers, who are more inclined to ‘unsettle concepts of home, belonging, and
cultural citizenship’.\textsuperscript{21} In terms of the religious dimension of this cosmopolitan outlook, Tom
Cheesman argues in his book Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions
(2007) that a religious cosmopolitanism that challenges ‘dominant, left-liberal
cosmopolitanism’\textsuperscript{22} to lower its guard to presumed fanaticism’ emerges in Feridun
Zaimoglu’s\textsuperscript{23} short story collection Zwölf Gramm Glück (2004).\textsuperscript{24} I do not regard Zaimoglu

\textsuperscript{19} Deniz Utlu, ‘2048: Minimals aus dem Magen des Molochs’, in Manifest der Vielen, pp. 17-23 (p. 17).
\textsuperscript{20} Yeşilada, ‘Dialogues with Islam’, p. 183.
\textsuperscript{21} B. Venkat Mani, Cosmopolitical Claims: Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk (Iowa:
\textsuperscript{22} Cheesman is referring to the universalising, secular strain of cosmopolitanism indebted to the Enlightenment
here, which he contrasts with Zaimoglu’s efforts to take religiosity into account.
\textsuperscript{23} Although the spelling of Zaimoglu’s name in some secondary literature includes the breve, not wishing to
impose a marker of difference, I have chosen to write his name as it appears in his publications. Zaimoglu has
also been known to adopt a Germanised pronunciation of his name, including the voiced ‘g’.
\textsuperscript{24} Tom Cheesman, Novels of Turkish German Settlement: Cosmopolite Fictions (Rochester, NY: Camden
House, 2007), pp. 75-6. Cheesman reassessed his earlier comments on cosmopolitanism’s refusal to engage with
as an isolated case, however, and I will also examine the post-9/11 literary work of Zafer Şenocak, SAID, and Navid Kermani for their cosmopolitan responses to contemporary Islamophobia.

There is not one cosmopolitanism, but rather many cosmopolitanisms, yet broadly speaking cosmopolitanism can be understood as the effort to overcome divisive and hierarchical identitarian boundaries, such as national or religious affiliation – Islam, for example, could be described as a cosmopolitan entity in that it unites peoples across national and ethnic divisions. My specific methodological understanding of the concept, outlined in detail in the following section, is guided by Jean-Luc Nancy’s reconceptualisation of community as an open-ended and non-identitarian interrelatedness of being, as opposed to cosmopolitanism as it is often understood within the tradition of the Enlightenment: that is to say, as a utopian and supposedly universal ideological programme that would form a larger ‘we’ by fusing several smaller ones together. This non-foundational understanding of cosmopolitanism will be explored in the work of my chosen authors since, rather than combating post-9/11 xenophobia with a resurgent, unambiguous Islamic identity, exacerbating the polarisation of Germans and Muslims, or by subscribing to a supposedly universal cosmopolitan identity category, the fiction of Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani is cosmopolitan in that it challenges closed notions of identity and community, whilst still engaging with religious faith. I therefore use the term cosmopolitanism not to designate a homogenising way of organising society, but rather in order to express a mindset that allows for a radical heterogeneity – as I will explore in the chapter on Zaimoglu,

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25 By non-foundational, I mean the rejection of the idea that identities and ideologies are shaped by a fundamental and unchanging organising principle or by a shared common ancestry.
‘Romantic cosmopolitanism’\textsuperscript{26} can be understood as an example from the German context of cosmopolitanism similarly being viewed as an attitude, rather than a specific political programme. My view of cosmopolitanism therefore mirrors that of Şenocak according to Cheesman: a ‘search of spaces beyond ethnic, cultural, and national ascriptions’ and a ‘challenge to thinking in national, monocultural terms’.\textsuperscript{27}

Although dealing with English literature, \textit{The Cosmopolitan Novel} (2010) by Berthold Schoene is a useful point of departure for my understanding of cosmopolitan innovation within contemporary literature. In Benedict Anderson’s \textit{Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism} (1983), the novel is closely linked to the rise of the nation state through its capacity to represent an imagined community of protagonists that may never meet, but whose narratives are somehow still connected.\textsuperscript{28} However, according to Schoene, globalisation’s destabilising effect upon the nation state has a congruent effect upon literature, ‘prompting the development of a less homebound and territorialist sub-genre of the novel’, which imagines the global community, rather than the national.\textsuperscript{29} Although, as Jed Deppman indicates, Nancy’s writing has been more popular with political science than with literary analysis,\textsuperscript{30} as Schoene affirms, Nancy’s non-identitarian sense of community can provide a useful framework for the analysis of fiction that is cosmopolitan in its interruption of the traditional understanding of community:

Nancy’s outline of community […] proves instructively illuminating for literature imagining global community beyond “the people” or (united) nations, and outside the utopian/dystopian framework of ideological modelling or transcendent meaning-making.\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{26} Pauline Kleingeld, ‘Six Varieties of Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany’, \textit{Journal of the History of Ideas}, 60.3 (1999), 505-24 (p. 521).
\textsuperscript{27} Cheesman, \textit{Novels of Turkish German Settlement}, p. 184.
\textsuperscript{31} Schoene, p. 17
As I will demonstrate, a Nancian philosophical lens can illuminate the contribution that Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani make towards contemporary debates surrounding the future of cosmopolitanism, Islam in Europe and also religion in the postmodern era, in that they innovatively approach the topics of religiosity, community and subjectivity, with implications not just for minority studies, but for all of German culture and beyond.

_German Muslims and the State_

Although the literary work of these prominent Muslim intellectuals suggests a cosmopolitanism other than laws and treaties, it must nevertheless be acknowledged that steps have been made in an official state capacity towards greater political representation for Muslims. Joel S. Fetzer and J. Christopher Soper argue that the German state has done more to accommodate the religious and cultural needs of its Muslim citizens than, for example, France. \(^{32}\) Moreover, in a highly symbolic gesture, the former President Christian Wulff declared during his speech in Bremen on German Unity Day 2010: ‘Aber der Islam gehört inzwischen auch zu Deutschland.’ Pondering the meaning of ‘Deutschland, einig Vaterland’, he came to the conclusion that this also included Germany’s Muslims:

Wenn mir deutsche Musliminnen und Muslime schreiben: “Sie sind unser Präsident” – dann antworte ich aus vollem Herzen: Ja, natürlich bin ich Ihr Präsident! Und zwar mit der Leidenschaft und Überzeugung, mit der ich der Präsident aller Menschen bin, die hier in Deutschland leben.\(^{33}\)

Regrettably however, the current president Joachim Gauck has distanced himself from his predecessor’s comments.\(^{34}\)

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The continued denial of the status of Körperschaft des öffentlichen Rechts, enjoyed by Christianity and Judaism, to Islam also sends a contradictory message that Muslims are still different in the eyes of the state, although this is partly because Islam lacks an organised ‘Church’ or figurehead, which also frustrates governmental attempts at official dialogue. The most prominent governmental intervention in this regard is the state-sponsored ‘Deutsche Islam Konferenz’ (DIK), which began in 2006 and aims to promote social cohesion and dialogue, discuss values and the constitutional status of religions, and act to prevent extremism.\(^{35}\) However, the lack of a central spiritual leader for Islam and the varied backgrounds of Germany’s Muslims hinder the government’s goal of assimilating Muslims into German society. Thus, as Levent Tezcan’s study (2012) explains, the guided dialogue of the DIK is carried out between government representatives, Muslim umbrella organisations,\(^{36}\) ‘non-organised Muslims’, and academics\(^{37}\) with the goal of cultivating an ‘enlightened’ Muslim subject who is compatible with German society.\(^{38}\) Just as Meyda Yeğenoğlu views the Western fixation on the veil as part of an Enlightenment endeavour ‘in terms of transparency provided by knowledge as power’,\(^{39}\) the DIK can similarly be regarded as an Enlightenment project to create (and control) knowable subjects.

This approach can also be found in the school curriculum of North Rhine-Westphalia, where the state ensures that the version of Islam taught in schools is ‘fully compatible with liberal democracy’,\(^{40}\) and in the writing of the scholar Michael Hofmann, who hopes for Islam to undergo a process of hybridisation upon contact with European culture, whereby it

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\(^{36}\) The ‘Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion’ and the ‘Islamrat für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland’ are the two largest umbrella organisations: Maruta Herding, *Inventing the Muslim Cool: Islamic Youth Culture in Western Europe* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), p. 13.


\(^{38}\) Ibid., p. 64.


\(^{40}\) Fetzer and Soper, p. 6.
becomes compatible with democratic society.  

Although this may appear well-meaning, it is nevertheless embedded in the contradictory and simplistic binary notion of a backward Islam versus a secular/Christian Europe, and in the presumption that dialogue will lead to the acceptance of Western universalism. It also presupposes that Islam is inherently unsuited to democracy, but further still, the notion of dialogue between the German state and the Muslim community is problematic in that it serves to reinforce the German/Muslim binary. Indeed, in his book *Neo-Moslems: Porträt einer deutschen Generation* (2012), the political commentator and blogger Eren Güvercin views the current Muslim umbrella organisations as actually contributing towards the failure of the DIK, accusing their ethnocentric viewpoint of acting to distance Muslims from the rest of German society. Furthermore, as Maruta Herding mentions, the vast majority of Germany’s Muslims are in any case not members of any such organisations.

Reflecting the primary goal of the DIK, Spielhaus’s later study (2010) suggests that this dichotomisation of cultural and religious difference not only positions ethnic Germans as a single hermetically sealed group, but is also encouraging a ‘unifying process fostered by ascriptions from outside and the growth of a collective identity among immigrants with Muslim backgrounds’, leading to increased efforts by both Muslims and the government towards the creation of a wider Islamic umbrella organisation. The ‘Islamic Charta’ by the ‘Zentralrat der Muslime in Deutschland’ can, for example, be regarded as an attempt to promote a unified Muslim-German identity that promotes Enlightenment values, such as

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43 Herding, p. 13.
human rights. Thus, although German Muslims are increasingly taking advantage of the media’s interest in Islam to undermine stereotypes, outside pressure is also acting as a catalyst for the imagining of a unitary German Muslim community that would obscure, or even suppress internal differences. Although group identities can be useful for achieving political recognition, such developments can only serve to escalate the public, media and governmental emphasis on religious difference and the subsequent polarisation of society brought about by this mindset. The DIK is then, despite its good intentions, plagued by inadequacies when it comes to dismantling the Muslim/German binary, which it in fact perpetuates by addressing the participants primarily as Muslims. This is why, rather than analysing the dialogue of (often self-appointed) religious and community leaders, I look to Germany’s contemporary authors of Muslim background in order to analyse how they challenge and problematise divisive religious and national identities.

Muslim Writers in Post-9/11 Germany

Whilst much contemporary writing by non-ethnic Germans undermines fixed notions of identity, this has not always been the case. As Jim Jordan affirms, the so-called ‘Literatur der Betroffenheit’ from the late ‘70s to the early ‘90s often freely deployed ‘images, metaphors and motifs which depict the migrant as suspended, trapped or stranded between two worlds’ to describe their experience, and can consequently be regarded as contributing towards the dichotomisation of ethnic and non-ethnic Germans within the wider public’s imagination. Nevertheless, Leslie A. Adelson’s book The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration (2005) forcefully critiques this


enduring conceptual paradigm of the minority subject as between two worlds, especially so ‘when whatever worlds are meant are presumed to be originary, mutually exclusive, and intact, the boundaries between them clear and absolute’. For Adelson, minority writing became more sophisticated in the ‘90s and is now more experimental, utilising ‘literary strategies of transformation’ rather than constituting the representation of the hardships of the migratory experience, and I too adopt this understanding of literature as intervening in the world and effecting change, and not as the simple mirror image of what already exists.

I acknowledge the tension that arises between my use of the term ‘Muslim’ and my non-foundational approach to identity and community, and must assert here that I employ the term both because the writers I analyse identify as such and also for the pragmatic reason of exploring trends. My use of the label is thus for the purpose of identification and contextualisation, rather than any essentialisation. Indeed, the authors I have chosen undermine a monolithic culturalist view of religion, as they show the diversity of Muslim identifications in their writing and in their own attitudes – for example, whereas Şenocak, SAID and Zaimoglu, although they also admit to having some form of religiosity, identify more as secular ‘cultural’ Muslims, Kermani displays a stronger sense of faith.

Amartya Sen regards the current overemphasis of religious identity in public discourses as contributing towards polarisation and exclusion:

The world is frequently taken to be a collection of religions (or of “civilizations” or “cultures”), ignoring the other identities that people have and value, involving class, gender, profession, language, science, morals, and politics. This unique divisiveness is much more confrontational than the universe of plural and diverse classifications that shape the world in which we actually live.

According to Sen, the over-exaggeration of the importance of religious background has led to

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social issues being sidelined, as violence is presumed to be solely religion-based and thus
challenged through ‘the deployment of different religious leaders of apparently “moderate”
persuasion who are charged with vanquishing the extremists in an intrareligious battle’. 
Such criticisms can be deployed against the DIK, but I realise that I too leave myself open to
similar disapproval by exclusively selecting Muslim authors for my study. Clemens
Pornschlegel has critiqued the performative role of the label ‘Turkish-German’ for
establishing a canon that both obscures links with other writing and groups disparate texts:

Denn anstatt nur einen objektiv gegebenen, quasi-natürlichen
Gegenstandsbereich, nämlich die deutsch-türkische Literatur, neutral zu
beschreiben, ruft der Begriff de facto eine ganze Reihe klassifikatorischer,
institutioneller und politischer Entscheidungen auf, welche die Realität des
Deutsch-Türkischen überhaupt erst ins Leben rufen. 

I similarly do not wish to create a separate ‘German-Muslim’ canon. I agree with Herding,
who states: ‘The label “Muslim” can never be a given category, as it raises questions of self-
identification and ascriptions by others.’

Moreover, although I explore similarities in the writing of these authors, their texts
undermine any notions of homogeneity in that they differ both from each other and more
substantially from other writers with Muslim backgrounds. For instance, aside from the
predictably negative depictions in ‘misery memoirs’ that contribute towards the blanket
condemnation of Islam, religiosity seems to be absent in post-9/11 literature by female
Muslim writers, surprisingly so, since the treatment of women is often the central focus of

51 Ibid., p. xvi.
53 The label ‘deutsch-islamische Dichtung’ is already in circulation. See Jörg Löffler and Stefan Willer,
226); and Christoph Gellner, ‘“Das Verhältnis zwischen Heiligem und Profanem muss immer wieder mit
Spannung aufgeladen werden”: Islam in Texten von Zafer Şenocak’, in Islam in der deutschen und türkischen
54 Herding, p. 10.
55 I do not wish to denigrate the testimonies of survivors of domestic abuse, but the popularity of these texts
compared with the authors of this study often serves to strengthen Islamophobic stereotypes. For a balanced
and critical analysis of these texts from a sociological perspective, see Beverly M. Weber, Violence and Gender in
German debates surrounding Islam. Aside from her first publication, *Wüstenhimmel Sternenland* (2004), Sudabeh Mohafez’s Iranian background seems to hardly influence her work at all, and religiosity is scarce in both Zehra Çirak’s poetry – ‘Konfessionen’ from *Vogel auf dem Rücken eines Elefanten* (1991) is a rare example, but is, even so, critical of religion – and in Özdamar’s texts – *Mutterzunge* (1990) is another rare example from before 9/11. Furthermore, the pedagogical approach of authors who view themselves as ‘Kulturvermittler’, such as Rafik Schami, Mariam Kühsel-Hussaini and Abbas Khider, and the unquestioning religiosity of more pious believers, such as Hadayatullah Hübsch56 and Ilija Trojanow,57 are incompatible with the scepticism shown by the authors under analysis here towards any straight-forward understanding of either cultural or religious identities and their unifying power. Indeed, following Adelson’s lead, my interpretations seek to highlight neither how these authors campaign for the acceptance of the Muslim ‘we’ within the wider German ‘we’, although they may do this in their essayistic and journalistic writing, nor how they supposedly represent their identity through their work. Rather than analysing the varying representations of Islam contained within these texts, treating them as case studies of (post)migratory experience in an ethnographic sense that would serve to pin down the category ‘Muslim’, I aim to examine their capacity for experimentation and their potential to intimate unexpected conceptualisations of Islam beyond representation, that is to say, beyond the readily available ideologically loaded symbols and identities associated with Islam.58

Furthermore, although these authors do make connections and blur the boundaries between Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the religiosity of their writing cannot be understood

56 Born Paul-Gerhard Hübsch, he converted to Islam and joined the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community after a spiritual experience in Morocco in 1969.
58 My research therefore differs from Frauke Matthes’s seemingly similar study which, raising some significant points about the status of Islam in Germany and the UK, is primarily concerned with ‘how literature reflects the development from passive Gastarbeiter or migrants to self-aware German and British Muslims’: Matthes, *Writing and Muslim Identity*, p. 37.
as part of the ahistorical interfaith discourse surrounding the so-called ‘Abrahamic religions’.

The adjective ‘Abrahamic’ has historically been used by the separate monotheisms to put forward their competing claims to be Abraham’s sole heirs, as Aaron W. Hughes states:

If anything, what Judaism, Christianity, and Islam do is construct three rival versions of Abraham, claim that their construction is not only the most valid but the only valid one, and, in the process, discredit the constructions of their rivals [...] What they do not do is inherit an interfaith Abraham.\textsuperscript{59}

The term is, then, rooted in supersessionism, rather than in the ecumenism with which it is increasingly associated in the post-9/11 era. For Hughes, this paradigmatic shift, although well-meaning in its liberal aims, actually obscures the study of similarities on a microlevel amongst the subgroups of different religions,\textsuperscript{60} in favour of a ‘wistful paternity among the three monotheisms’ on the macrolevel,\textsuperscript{61} for instance, a focus on the macrolevel of orthodox Islam risks overlooking Sufism’s combination of Islamic, Hellenistic and Christian sources.\textsuperscript{62}

Rather than this ‘artificially constructed universal’\textsuperscript{63} that would provide a flimsy basis for a religious ‘trialogue’, the authors under consideration here, I will argue, evoke a non-foundational religiosity which, although often influenced by Islam in the form of Sufism, in fact goes radically beyond what can be described as monotheism, suggesting a religiosity that is stripped of its role as rule-giver and organising principle for the world, and which resonates with Nancy’s recent discussions of the ‘deconstruction of monotheism’.

This recent religiosity within the work of German Muslim authors is born of a genuine interest in religious faith and/or the need to defend themselves in the face of the increasing puritanical zeal of orthodox Islam, the German media prejudice against all forms

\textsuperscript{60} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{63} Hughes, p. 6.
of Islam, and the secular rationalism of contemporary German cosmopolitanisms. This trend has been signalled by Yeşilada as the ‘Muslim turn’ in contemporary German literature, which can also be regarded as a branch of the wider ‘religious turn’. Silke Horstkotte states:


Thus, although authors of a Muslim background are the focus of this thesis, in the spirit of an open religiosity, the work of other non-Muslim German-language authors, such as Peter Henisch, Patrick Roth, and Arnold Stadler, is posing similar questions.

Conversely, Adelson claims that ‘references to Islam are few and far between’ in the writing of Turkish-Germans, although at the time of her book’s publication Özdamar’s Mutterzunge and Şenocak’s Der Erottomanе (1999), to name two prominent examples that are influenced by Islamic mysticism, had been published. As Margaret Littler claims, this statement perhaps forms part of Adelson’s argument for viewing Turkish-German culture within wider German culture, rather than as suspended between Germany and the ‘Muslim world’. However, I would agree with Littler that authors of a Muslim background are

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64 This can be seen in the popularity of attacks on religion by so-called ‘New Atheists’ such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens and Sam Harris (‘The Unholy Trinity’), and Michael Schmidt-Salomon in the German context.
67 See Horstkotte; and Anne Fuchs, ‘An Awareness of What is Missing: Voyeurism and the Remediation of Transcendence in Arnold Stadler’s Sehnsucht and Salvatore’, German Life and Letters, 67.3 (2014), 435-49.
68 Adelson, The Turkish Turn, p. 13.
69 See Kate Roy, ‘German-Islamic Literary Interperceptions in Works by Emily Reute and Emine Sevgi Özdamar’, in Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture, pp. 166-80; and Margaret Littler, ‘Intimacies both Sacred and Profane: Islam in the Work of Emine Sevgi Özdamar, Zafer Şenocak, and Feridun Zaimoğlu’, in Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture, pp. 221-35.
(especially after 9/11) increasingly making the case for the acceptance of Islam within a cosmopolitan society, albeit an uninstitutionalised form of Islam.\footnote{Littler, ‘Intimacies both Sacred and Profane’, p. 222.} I will argue, through an appeal to Nancy’s non-foundationalism, that these authors intimate a religiosity beyond representation, stripped of identity, ideology and providence, a worldly religiosity felt in affective experiences that goes beyond the monotheistic paradigm. Like Horsttkotte, I understand this as a postmodern development, as often these authors are critical of grand narratives, and both the religiosity and cosmopolitanism of their fiction does not seek to fill the gap left by the absence of a universalising ideology.

In this regard, comparisons can be made between the authors under analysis here and the direction of thought in the work of Nurcholish Madjid, Hasan Hanafi and Mohammed Arkoun, the ‘new Muslim intellectuals’ of Carool Kersten’s study \textit{Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam} (2011). Broadly speaking, these intellectuals of varied Muslim backgrounds (Indonesia, Egypt and Algeria respectively) advocate a critical engagement with a wide Islamic tradition that includes heretical thinkers, coupled with a methodological approach that draws upon the forefront of contemporary philosophy and theory, including postcolonialism, and the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and Paul Ricoeur.\footnote{See Carool Kersten, \textit{Cosmopolitans and Heretics: New Muslim Intellectuals and the Study of Islam} (London: Hurst & Company, 2011).} The contemporary ‘Islamic Post-Traditionalism’ (or ‘Postra’) movements to which these thinkers contribute is particularly significant for Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani as they all adopt a wide view of what constitutes Islamic culture, frequently engaging with Sufism in their work. As Kersten states:

Postra is not about reviving the Islamic tradition through the restoration of Islamic orthodoxy. On the contrary, Indonesia’s Islamic Post-Traditionalists advocate a critical engagement with the building blocks of hegemonic, hierarchical and authoritarian orthodoxy for the sake of a radical reinterpretation that foregrounds the rich heritage and cultural diversity of
the Muslim world as concrete and specific, historicized and lived experiences [...] 72

The writing of the Moroccan-American scholar Anouar Majid can also be viewed within this school of thought, as he similarly regards heresy as an integral part of his call for a ‘radical openness in the Islamic imagination’. 73 Like the intellectuals of Kersten’s study, Majid too advocates ‘an “epistemological break”: not renouncing tradition but the Muslims’ “traditional understanding of tradition”’, 74 that is to say, he insists upon a more critical approach to Islamic heritage.

However, in contrast to the political and theological discourses of the new Muslim intellectuals, the literary work of the authors under consideration here is arguably free to be more imaginative and radical, and less pious. Given their background and the content of their writing, comparisons can be made between the authors presented here and the British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie, whose novel The Satanic Verses (1988) sparked protests from Muslims around the globe, not least of all from Ayatollah Khomeini. The book, which was criticised for its apparent disrespect towards the prophet Muhammad, sees the Angel Gibreel as the source of the so-called ‘satanic verses’ that accept the legitimacy of three pagan goddesses that used to be worshiped in Mecca. Like Rushdie, these authors also draw upon Islam’s mystical traditions in order to undermine the totalising claims of orthodox Islam, by which I mean a foundational understanding of Islam as a set of institutionalised values, rules and rituals that must be strictly followed. The aims of Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani can therefore be linked to Rushdie’s as outlined in the essay ‘One Thousand Days in a Balloon’ (1991):

74 Ibid., p. 241.
I reluctantly concluded that there was no way for me to help bring into being the Muslim culture I’d dreamed of, the progressive, irreverent, sceptical, argumentative, playful and unafraid culture which is what I’ve always understood as freedom. Not me, not in this lifetime, no chance. Actually Existing Islam, which has all but deified its Prophet, a man who always fought passionately against such deification; which has supplanted a priest-free religion by a priest-ridden one; which makes literalism a weapon and redescriptions a crime, will never let the likes of me in.\(^{75}\)

Although Rushdie ultimately regards his efforts as a failure and has subsequently become increasingly anti-religious, the authors under consideration here, compelled by post-9/11 Islamophobia, pick up his mantel, imagining a ‘progressive, irreverent, sceptical, argumentative, playful and unafraid’ Islam that would be compatible with cosmopolitanism, an Islam that counters both public perceptions of the religion as puritanical and dogmatic and the Muslims who confirm these prejudices. I will argue that, despite the religiosity of the texts under analysis here, they can be regarded as cosmopolitan in their challenge to ideologies and identities, be they religious or otherwise, and that this can be elucidated by Nancy’s non-foundational approaches to both community and religion.

‘Being-with’: Contemporary Cosmopolitan Theory and the Philosophy of Jean-Luc Nancy

Given the key importance of community and identity in the context of my research, Nancy’s concept of a community without a common identity, outlined primarily in *The Inoperative Community* (1991, first published in French in 1986), forms a central aspect of my methodology. Mani is one of many scholars who link the collapse of the Soviet Union and its satellite states to a brief moment of global cosmopolitan optimism,\(^{76}\) and David Harvey too highlights the renewed interest in the field at this time, proclaiming in 2000 that


\(^{76}\) Mani, pp. 1-2.
‘Cosmopolitanism is back’. Although beginning before the fall of communism, Nancy has significantly developed his notion of the inoperative (or ‘unworking’) community during the post-Wall period, but it would be a mistake to categorise Nancy’s work entirely within this cosmopolitan revival. As stated above, the German period of recent reunification was not only a naïve time of celebratory fraternal togetherness in the apparent absence of ideological divisions, but also a time of right-wing violence against minorities, and conflicts in former Yugoslavia and the Gulf were also being played out elsewhere on the world stage. I would therefore contend that Nancy’s philosophy is not born of a misplaced optimism concerning the power of globalisation (indeed, I will later discuss Nancy’s rejection of globalisation), but must rather be understood as a response to the many violent identity conflicts of this period and in a wider context, as Nancy himself states, as a broad reflection upon the ‘history of the doctrines and problems of international law, sovereignty, and war’.

The Inoperative Community: An Alternative to ‘violent relatedness’

Nancy argues that our current formulation of community, be it cosmopolitan, national or otherwise, is shaped by the desire to regain a lost unity that never was, a communal unity characterised by fusion, immanence and a shared identity. This mindset is, according to Nancy, an extrapolation of our self-perception as ‘absolute individuals’, despite the fact that such a self ‘considered as the immanent par excellence’ would be incapable of existing in relation to another ‘absolutely detached for-itself’. As Terry Eagleton argues in his published lectures Reason, Faith, and Revolution: Reflections on the God Debate (2009), this

view stems from the philosophical Enlightenment of the eighteenth century:

Agency, control, and autonomy are admirable virtues, but they are also attempts to master a world now felt to be threateningly alien. Sovereignty proves to be inseparable from solitude. At the peak of his assurance, Enlightenment Man finds himself frighteningly alone in the universe, with nothing to authenticate himself but himself.  

Following on from this paradigm, our communities composed of individuals are also detached from one another:

The fusion of community, instead of propagating its movements, reconstitutes its separation: community against community [...]. To attain to immanence is to be cut off from another immanence.

Returning to contemporary German society, this nostalgic view of a homogeneous community with a pure foundation, as presented by Sarrazin, accurately reflects the dominant self-perception of many ethnic Germans and their view of the Muslim Ummah (the Arabic word for ‘nation’ that is used to refer to a supposed global Muslim community). Following on from Spielhaus’s argument, German Muslims – even those who are not necessarily orthodox – are also ever more likely to view themselves as part of a single transnational group because of external identity ascriptions and demonisation, leading to the further polarisation of ethnic Germans and German Muslims as two immanent groups cut off from one another.

Just as Anderson argues that the nation-state can provide a ‘secular transformation of fatality into continuity’, Nancy too understands the nation-state as a form of hypostasis that, if necessary, warrants our sacrifice to maintain its supposed purity, to be ‘reabsorbed or sublated in a community, yet to come, that would attain immanence’. Both Anderson and Nancy therefore locate an element of sacrifice in dying for one’s country that, like the

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82 Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 60.
83 Anderson, p.11.
immortal soul of religion, gives meaning and a purpose to death – this can be seen in the rituals that surround the remembrance and commemoration of wars. Nancy indicates that nations, religions and political ideologies predominantly view themselves in this way, creating an inherent violence in their rigid and totalising conceptualisation of community; as Nancy asserts they ‘have as their truth the truth of death’. This is true of members dying and/or being prepared to kill in order to maintain the apparent purity of their communities, such as the suicide attacks by Islamic terrorists who reject the influence of the West and also the EU’s strict and perilous border controls – the focus of Kermani’s speech Nach Europa (whose title suggests both the movement of people towards Europe and a kind of post-Europe). Here, Kermani discusses the deaths of those trying to reach southern Spain from North Africa in makeshift boats, establishing controversial parallels with the organised murder of repressive regimes during such atrocities as the Holocaust by referring to the Strait of Gibraltar as ‘das größte Massengrab Europas’. Ignaas Devisch states:

Anything that threatens to escape the immanent unity of the individual and the community must be expelled or crushed under the deadly weight of the immanent. Yet precisely because it is impossible for the immanent to fully present to itself, this striving for immanence carries its own negation and destruction in itself.

For Kermani, today’s refugees are left to die so that the supposed integrity of the ‘European community’ can be upheld.

Not only national and religious communities emerge from within this paradigm of the absolute individual, cosmopolitan theory has also come from this mould, focusing (albeit with good intentions) on the freedoms of the individual and a set of core beliefs. Harvey identifies two strands within cosmopolitanism: the ‘universalist’ approach (influenced by Emmanuel Kant, the Stoics and the Cynics), and ‘rooted’ cosmopolitanisms that aim to be

85 Ibid., p. 12.
87 Devisch, p. 41.
more accepting of difference.88 However, neither universalists, who merely extend the fusional notion of the nation-state to envision a transnational state, nor rooted cosmopolitans, who seek in vain to create solidarities between nation-states or political and religious ideologies still characterised by immanence and fusional unity, have escaped this immanent formulation of community. Whereas both require a set of guiding principles around which the new larger ‘we’ can crystallise, Nancy takes a radically different approach:

The community that becomes a single thing (body, mind, fatherland, Leader...) necessarily loses the in of being-in-common. Or it loses the with, the together that defines it. It yields its being-together to a being of togetherness. The truth of community, on the contrary, resides in a retreat of such a being.89

For Nancy, the current paradigm of communal fusion, even for a cosmopolitan community, actually militates against our perception of community as non-foundational, and relates to our (in Nancy’s opinion) misinformed self-perception as absolute individuals.

Rather than the individual, Nancy advocates thinking in terms of ‘singular beings’, characterised by ecstasis (being as outside of oneself) due to their numerous relations with others. That is to say, absolute individuals would only be able to exist in what Ana Luszczynska refers to as a ‘being-side-by-side’,90 which is an inadequate description of the various relations that constitute our ‘being-with’.91 The inoperative community can instead be regarded as the spacing of singular beings that are radically open to one another, as opposed to the fusion of individuals. It is ‘neither work to be produced, nor a lost communion, but rather space itself, and the spacing of the experience of the outside, of the outside-of-self’.92 This ontological interrelatedness leads to cosmopolitan solidarities without the need for a homogenising ideology, such as human rights, as we are compelled to think of a ‘politics

88 Harvey, pp. 529-30.
89 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. xxxix.
91 Nancy develops Martin Heidegger’s concept of ‘Mitsein’ by not regarding it as secondary to ‘Eins-Sein’.
92 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 19.
without a subject: not without authority or decision-making power – but without a self that reaps, in the end, the benefits of its action’.\textsuperscript{93} In this regard, Nancy opens up the binary opposition between universalism and particularism, and between liberalism and communitarianism within cosmopolitanism, stressing not only singularity, but also interrelated plurality in order to distance his approach from all four camps.

This experience of exposure to community is described by Nancy as ‘laceration’, the opening of the subject to the outside.\textsuperscript{94} He also uses other terms (‘communication’, ‘sharing’ and ‘compearance’) to describe the same concept, and these all essentially indicate the relational and non-immanent aspect of being that is revealed through our pre-lingual exposure to community. Thus, the inoperative community, unlike the formulations of cosmopolitanism discussed in more detail in the following subsection, encompasses all being. This means that a subject cannot confer meaning upon the inoperative community from the outside, and it is therefore beyond the dualist thinking of representation (the German translation of \textit{The Inoperative Community} is \textit{Die undarstellbare Gemeinschaft}, 1988) and proves difficult to express in language; it is, in fact, beyond the structuralist view of language as separate from the real world, a point that I will return to in my discussion of Nancy’s understanding of literature.

According to Nancy, the ‘between’ of being-with ‘constitutes no connective tissue, no cement, no bridge. Perhaps it is not even fair to speak of a “connection” to its subject; it is neither connected nor unconnected; it falls short of both’.\textsuperscript{95} Touch or contact is important in this regard, as a point where singular beings meet but do not fuse, creating proximity and distance, ‘contiguity but not continuity’.\textsuperscript{96} Luszczynska illuminates this concept through the

\textsuperscript{94} Nancy, \textit{Inoperative Community}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{95} Nancy, \textit{Being Singular Plural}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{96} \textit{Ibid}.
comparison of juxtaposition and exposition, the former being associated with absolute
individuals and the latter with singular beings:

In juxtaposition, we are almost forced to see the lack of connection
indicated, whereas exposition specifically gives the sense of an opening to
an outside, thus, implying a kind of connection. \(^\text{97}\)

Nancy presents, then, a notion of community that does not arise from a pure and static shared
identity, and consequently cannot be used as an excuse for sectarian violence. Indeed, Nancy
regards his challenge to the self-other binary as ‘the disturbance of violent relatedness’. \(^\text{98}\)

Since, as I will outline, cosmopolitan theory is often a matter of a set of supposedly
universal principles around which a community can form, Nancy rejects the term
cosmopolitanism due to its ideological nature and its continuation of identity as a work to be
produced, labelling it the ‘dreamlike opposite of the sovereign order’. \(^\text{99}\) For Nancy,
cosmopolitanism fails because, rather than seek to undermine closed forms of identity, it
perpetuates them on a transnational scale; as with nationalism, cosmopolitanism ‘is also the
space of finishing identity’. \(^\text{100}\) I, however, retain the term cosmopolitanism, in order to open it
up to new meanings, just as Nancy sees fit to use the term ‘community’ despite its loaded
connotations. Indeed, Nancy’s non-foundationalism and contemporary cosmopolitan theory
both have the limitation of identity conflict and expansion of solidarity across political, ethnic
and religious borders as their aim, yet Nancy is rarely taken into account by cosmopolitan
theorists. Harvey’s division of the contemporary theory into universalist and rooted
cosmopolitans ignores non-foundational thinkers such as Nancy whose work can address
some of the limitations within both categories.

\(^{97}\) Luszczynska, p. 193.
\(^{98}\) Nancy, Being Singular Plural, p. xiii.
\(^{99}\) Ibid., p. 136.
\(^{100}\) Ibid.


*Universalist and Rooted Cosmopolitanisms*

Jürgen Habermas is an influential figure within the universalist branch of cosmopolitanism; Robert Fine and Will Smith define Habermas’s writing as a ‘multifaceted attempt [...] to reconstruct Kant’s theory of cosmopolitanism right for our own times’.

In his publications *The Inclusion of the Other* (1998, first published in German in 1996) and *The Postnational Constellation* (2001, first published in German in 1998), Habermas argues that ‘constitutional patriotism’ can usurp nationalism’s binding role and foster an ‘abstract, legally constructed solidarity that reproduces itself through political participation’, acting to ensure political consensus amongst differing nations. For Habermas, these supposedly universal rights must be arrived at through a process of political engagement and deliberation, implying that reasoned debate will lead to communal unity around an enlightened cosmopolitan ideology.

More recently, Ulrich Beck’s writing has taken up this universalist approach, attempting to ‘affirm universal norms and at the same time ward off imperialism (in politics) and triumphalism (in religion)’. Like Habermas, Beck contends that a ‘cosmopolitan outlook’ is required to bring us up to speed and enable us to participate fully in today’s globalised world, and equally to allow us to recognise our out-dated nation-orientated global order. Beck includes ‘cosmopolitan empathy’, that is to say ‘the virtual interchangeability of situations’, as part of his cosmopolitan outlook. This is possible for Beck, since ‘[t]here is an inner affinity between national and universal perspectives. One’s own society serves as the model for society in general’. Elsewhere, Beck speaks of ‘realistic cosmopolitanism’, and in attempts to maintain this theory’s universal character, he suggests that we define its

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position negatively (for example, as against torture and slavery), in order to render it more suitable for the varying contexts of its deployment.\textsuperscript{107} In this way universalism and contextualism are, according to Beck, synthesised, allowing people of varying cultural backgrounds to agree on the outcome, whilst perhaps arriving there by different means.\textsuperscript{108} This will, however, perhaps not be entirely peaceful. In order to protect ‘civil rights and difference’, Beck does not accept the universal recognition of all freedoms, such as the freedom of despots, terrorists, and other ‘enemies who can be checked only by force’.\textsuperscript{109} Thus if we want perpetual peace, Beck believes we might well have to prepare for war.

These universalist approaches to cosmopolitanism can, however, be criticised for their coercive drive towards homogenisation and bias towards Western values. In this regard, Judith Butler states:

The problem emerges, however, when the meaning of “the universal” proves to be culturally variable, and the specific cultural articulations of the universal work against its claim to transcultural status.\textsuperscript{110}

However, Butler does not dispense with the term cosmopolitanism entirely, preferring to think of it as a ‘postulated and open-ended ideal’\textsuperscript{111} that ‘may never be fully or finally achievable’.\textsuperscript{112} In this way cosmopolitan ideals are subject to change and revision, and are acknowledged as utopian rather than realisable. Supposedly universalist cosmopolitanisms still, then, fall short of encompassing everyone, and Habermas addresses the political dimension of this in his writing:

Any political community that wants to understand itself as a democracy must at least distinguish between members and non-members. The self-referential concept of collective self-determination demarcates a logical space for democratically united citizens who are members of a particular

\textsuperscript{108} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., p. 431.
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid., p. 48.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., p. 52.
community. Even if such a community is grounded in the universalistic
principles of a democratic constitutional state, it still forms a collective
identity, in the sense that it interprets and realizes these principles in light of
its own history and in the context of its own particular form of life. This
ethical-political self-understanding of citizens of a particular democratic life
is missing in the inclusive community of world citizens.\textsuperscript{113}

Thus, we are still left with the potential for identity conflicts, whether it be between
supranational organisations (as was the case in the Cold War), or between supranational
organisations and rogue states.\textsuperscript{114} Furthermore, Fine and Smith raise an important question in
this regard: ‘What if citizens are confronted with two equally rational means of interpreting
constitutional principles?’ The undesirable result is ‘a weakening either of cosmopolitan
solidarity or constitutional patriotism’,\textsuperscript{115} and this criticism also holds true for Beck’s
negatively defined cosmopolitanism.

Beck’s position has received similar criticism from Bruno Latour, who asserts that
wars do not result from ‘differing views of the same world’, but rather because adversaries
begin ‘to inhabit a different world’.\textsuperscript{116} Consequently, if a common cosmos is desirable we
will have to build it together, which resonates with Nancy’s notion of the inoperative
community that encompasses all being. For Latour, the cosmos must include all the variety of
the world, ‘including all the vast numbers of nonhuman entities making humans act’.\textsuperscript{117} This
includes not only sought-after resources, but also spiritual matters, and he criticises Beck for
ignoring religion, sarcastically mentioning good-willed men leaving their gods on hooks in
the cloakroom of the ‘Habermas Club’ before entering to discuss an armistice.\textsuperscript{118}

Latour summarises universalist cosmopolitanism’s central dilemma thus:

\textbf{We face a situation in which, on the one hand, real peace is unattainable if
negotiators leave their gods, attachments, and incompatible cosmos outside}

\textsuperscript{113} Habermas, \textit{Postethnic Constellation}, p. 107.
\textsuperscript{114} Fine and Smith, p. 474.
\textsuperscript{115} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 472.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 454.
\textsuperscript{118} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 456.
the conference room. One the other hand, a freight of gods, attachments, and unruly cosmos make it hard to get through the door into any common space. Moreover, humans with owners, attachments, and a cosmos (crammed with entities ignored or ridiculed by other humans) tend not to seek new membership in clubs.119

Whereas Neo-Kantian/universalist cosmopolitan theories tend to ignore these issues to a certain extent, rooted cosmopolitanisms (the second strain of cosmopolitan theory mentioned above) take greater notice of alterity. Writing on the topic of the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk’s novel *Snow* (2005), Justin Neuman comments that, whilst much cosmopolitan theory has become increasingly compatible with the nation state, in today’s world religion has assumed its position as ‘cosmopolitanism’s foil and ideological antithesis’.120 Thus, Neuman advocates a ‘religious cosmopolitanism’, arguing that by dismissing religion we ignore cosmopolitanism’s commitment to pluralism.121

Kwame Anthony Appiah (cited by Neuman122) is a prominent defender of rooted cosmopolitanism, of which religion is a part. A fundamentalist religious attitude which denies that there are other legitimate ways of living is, however, not compatible with his understanding of cosmopolitanism’s need for pluralism and fallibilism.123 Furthermore, defending his cosmopolitan outlook against common criticisms of global uniformity, Appiah attempts to strike a balance by dismissing ‘despots who defend the intolerance of their regimes […] by arguing that human rights campaigns are just another colonial attempt to impose Western norms’, whilst acknowledging those ‘who want to keep space for forms of life threatened by the economic and political hegemony of the industrialized world’.124 Yet this call to respect basic human rights, without questioning just what a human is, suggests

that his rooted cosmopolitanism cannot escape universalism completely, just as so-called
universalist cosmopolitanism can actually be regarded as culturally particularist or gender
specific when closely scrutinised.

Overall, it appears symptomatic of rooted cosmopolitanism to propose gestures of
good will that are hard to criticise, but have yet to foster much cosmopolitan commitment in
practice. They are often nothing more than a utopian list of well-meaning pleas, lacking the
necessary binding power universalists see in common justice, human rights and constitutional
patriotism, and doing little to ‘transform self-consciousness on the part of world citizens that
orientates thinking away from any association with national interest or identity’.125

*Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender and Pluralism* (edited by Omid Safi, 2003) is an
example of such rooted cosmopolitanism in the Islamic context, arguing that the Qur’an
reminds us of the humanity of all human beings. Like Appiah, the Progressive Muslims’
cosmopolitanism becomes a doctrine of ‘social justice, gender justice, and pluralism’126 that
people must agree upon, and thus falls into the trap of identity politics.

Rather than universalist cosmopolitanism’s coercive aim that the world will subscribe
to a single cosmopolitan ideology based on a transcendental notion of Reason, or rooted
cosmopolitanism’s plea for the recognition of a plurality of ideologies and identities, the
inoperative community necessitates the refusal of all ideology in favour of an open-ended and
contingent future and creates solidarity through the weakening of subjectivity. Şenocak,
SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani all reject identity-driven and universalising forms of
cosmopolitanism, and an appeal to Nancy’s inoperative community can shed light on how
their writing attempts to avoid many of the aforementioned limitations, but still transform our
self-consciousness to better suit cosmopolitan solidarities. Much like Nancy’s non-

125 Fine and Smith, p. 471.
foundationalism, this involves a critique of subjective autonomy. However, this does not spell the end for agency altogether, as a cosmopolitan resistance to fusional communities and immanent identities shapes their writing.

*The Inoperative Community and Cultural Identity*

The weakening of subjectivity resulting from Nancy’s ontology calls wider cultural boundaries into question. Jane Hiddleston argues that singularity is not an ‘absolute alterity’, such as that found in the work of Emmanuel Levinas, Jacques Derrida or Jean-François Lyotard, but is rather balanced by its emphasis on relationality.¹²⁷ Likewise, Christopher Watkin views Nancy’s *Being Singular Plural* (2000, first published in French in 1996) as an attempt to reconceptualise alterity as concomitant singular plurality, rather than in the dualistic terms of Same and Other. The singular being is, Watkin asserts, ‘less a self-in-relation, more a self-as-relation’,¹²⁸ and it is from this non-foundational interconnectedness (as opposed to a shared founding principle) that singularity arises. Indeed, for Nancy: ‘It is not a question of an Other (the inevitably “capitalized Other”) *than* the world; it is a question of the alterity or alteration *of* the world’¹²⁹ – a theme that resurfaces in Nancy’s writing on religion. Nancy’s philosophy does not, then, function via a symbolic Other that defines us from the outside, as is the case with Jacques Lacan or Homi K. Bhabha. Nor does it seek to create solidarities through universalist affirmations that fundamentally we are all the same. Rather, it is a question of us all being different from one another. As Nancy states:

> What I have in common with another Frenchman is the fact of *not* being the same Frenchman as him, and the fact that our “Frenchness” is never,

nowhere, in no essence, in no figure, brought to completion.\textsuperscript{130}

This singular plural nature of identity is, in Watkin’s words, paradoxically a ‘division which unites’.\textsuperscript{131}

Nancy argues that identity avoids completion and is subject to constant change, and is therefore devoid of any essence, but this must not be regarded as a deficiency, since, as Devisch explains, ‘[identity’s] insufficiency never stands for a lack, but for something that fundamentally cannot be perfected or finished’.\textsuperscript{132} Thus, rather than viewing identity as a ‘mélange’, whereby pure identities are mixed together,\textsuperscript{133} Nancy describes it as a ‘mêlée’:

[I]t is not that identity is always “on the way,” projected onto the horizon like a friendly star, like a vague or a regulative idea. It never comes to be; it never identifies itself, even as an infinite projection, \textit{because it is already there}, because it is the mêlée.\textsuperscript{134}

Hence, identity is not a thing, but an action, suggesting movement and transformation. It is a ‘doing’, rather than a ‘being’, that results from our interrelatedness. Cultures ‘reconfigure each another’, ‘irrigate and drain each other’ and ‘graft one onto the other’,\textsuperscript{135} constantly changing each other and avoiding completion. As Hiddleston asserts:

This emphasis on the mobility of the relation crucially reinforces how Nancy sees interaction not as assimilation, or as movement towards the Same, but as a dynamic process of both dialogue and differentiation.\textsuperscript{136}

Thus, Nancy provides an innovative way of approaching the Muslim/German dichotomy that challenges the divisive thinking in terms of Same and Other of the ‘intercultural’ and ‘transcultural’ methodologies indebted to Hans-Georg Gadamer’s

\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., p. 155.
\textsuperscript{131} Watkin, p. 58.
\textsuperscript{132} Devisch, p. 29.
\textsuperscript{133} Nancy, \textit{Being Singular Plural}, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{134} Ibid., p. 155.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Hiddleston, \textit{Reinventing Community}, p. 72.
philosophy of hermeneutics common to contemporary German Studies. As Nancy affirms:

> Not only are all people different but they are also all different from one another. They do not differ from an archetype or a generality. The typical traits (ethnic, cultural, social, generational, and so forth), whose particular patterns constitute another level of singularity, do not abolish singular differences; instead they bring them into relief.

Through this emphasis on relationality, Nancy moves beyond terms such as ‘hybridity’ and the ‘third space’ that arguably maintain a stable sense of majority cultures. It is, therefore, my position that these authors are not to be labelled as ‘intercultural’ or ‘transcultural’ in contrast to other supposedly ‘monocultural’ writers, as all cultures are inevitably heterogeneous and involved in processes of transformation and cross-fertilisation. Instead, I favour the retention of the label ‘cosmopolitan’, as a way of signalling that their texts bring the cultural mêlée to the fore, challenging identitarian boundaries and making the inoperative community more accessible.

I therefore follow Adelson’s critique of the ‘intercultural encounter’. Without having a preconceived idea of what German culture should be, I view the texts under analysis here as ‘something happening within German culture’, but also of wider significance. Likewise, I dismiss the concept of dialogue often associated with minority literature in German because of its universalist drive that seeks to efface difference through the fusion of mutual horizons. Gadamer’s concept of ‘Horizontverschmelzung’ is first explained in *Wahrheit und Methode* (1960) in terms of our ability to understand the past:

> Der Horizont der Gegenwart bildet sich also gar nicht ohne die

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139 Cheesman also uses the term cosmopolitan as it ‘points beyond the limiting paradigm of interculturality’: Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, p. 39.
Vergangenheit. Es gibt so wenig einen Gegenwartshorizont für sich, wie es historische Horizonte gibt, die man zu gewinnen hätte. Vielmehr ist Verstehen immer der Vorgang der Verschmelzung solcher vermeintlich für sich seiender Horizonte. 142

Yet Gadamer extends this concept, viewing all understanding as a willful negotiation. In Chris Lawn’s words:

According to the Gadamerian picture, transparent and unimpeded communication is always an option; dialogue is as much about negotiation as it is articulation and some measure of understanding is always possible, no matter what divisions really exist. The “fusion of horizons” ensures that some measure of clarity and understanding is always under way if never finally concluded. 143

Thus, although scholars of *interkultureller Germanistik* increasingly emphasise the importance of recognising the heterogeneity of cultures, 144 *Horizontverschmelzung*, although never fully achievable, is still nevertheless problematic in its bridging of two supposedly distinct worlds/horizons and its striving towards homogeneity. On the other hand, Nancy’s emphasis on heterogeneity and openness to alterity within the singular-plural configuration of being is better equipped to do justice to the complex notions of identity and culture explored in this thesis that often resist calls to integrate/assimilate.

My analysis of the non-foundational understanding of community and religiosity suggested in the literature of German authors of Muslim backgrounds ties in with Littler’s research which, indebted to the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, also seeks to highlight how fixed identities are destabilised in the work of minority authors, whilst also acknowledging the role of Islam in their texts. Following Littler, I too focus on ‘literature as a site of experimentation [...]’, rather than representation of a known world’. 145

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144 See, for example, Friederike Eigler, *Gedächtnis und Geschichte in Generationenromanen seit der Wende* (Berlin: Erich Schmidt, 2005), p. 87.
understanding of Zaimoglu’s cosmopolitanism as being ‘beyond identity’\textsuperscript{146} has also greatly influenced my own research, in which I hope to further develop the concept through an appeal to the inoperative community. Moreover, my understanding of identity as a mêlée shows similarities with the Deleuzian formulation of identity deployed by Littler, in which ‘the individual subject is never finished or stable, \textit{and} always a composite formation, permeable to the forces of its milieu’\textsuperscript{147}. In this regard, just as Nancy refutes the closed boundaries of the individual, so too is ‘[t]he Deleuzian self defined not by an unchanging centre but by its margins, where it enters into relations with others, which are themselves multiplicities’\textsuperscript{148}. However, although Littler’s research provides an important reference point for my thesis, further insight into this literature can, I would argue, be gained through Nancy’s emphasis on relationality and his notion of the deconstruction of monotheism. Additionally, Nancy’s notion of identity differs from that of Deleuze, in that identity is not a question of becoming for Nancy, it is not ‘projected onto the horizon’,\textsuperscript{149} but rather must be viewed as the perpetually shifting mêlée of the here and now. In this regard, there is a delicate difference between the way Deleuze privileges the virtual and Nancy the actual, although identities and trajectories remain unfixed for both philosophers.

This concept of the cultural mêlée, unpreventably occurring at the level of the singular being, elaborates on the fallacy of an identitarian foundation for community, casting doubt on the current political strategies of assimilation (favoured in Germany and France) and mosaic multiculturalism (favoured particularly in the US and UK) that have the maintenance of clearly defined, static identities as their aim. Nancy destabilises wider cultural groupings in a radically fundamental way, implying that labels such as ‘German’ or ‘Muslim’, much like notions of the absolute individual, are merely imagined products of history that obfuscate the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] Littler, ‘Cramped Creativity’, p. 225.
\item[149] Nancy, \textit{Being Singular Plural}, p. 155.
\end{footnotes}
internal fragmentation and interrelatedness that undermines their representational role. Such labels are ultimately only maintained through the violence of imposed immanence, and they become mere identifications, devoid of any essence, when their participation in the cultural mêlée becomes apparent. Nancy even rejects the idea of a ‘melting pot’, for instance, as it entertains the notion that the mêlée of identity can be contained,\(^\text{150}\) and whereas cosmopolitan supranational organisations and world religions have been content to dissolve internal borders whilst strengthening outer ones, the inoperative community knows only the horizon of the world.\(^\text{151}\)

For Nancy, rather than a collection of immanent groups, the world must be regarded as a place where ‘each one would be “one” only in not being identifiable in a figure, but infinitely distinct through spacing’.\(^\text{152}\) In a world based on spacing and sharing within the inoperative community and not finishing and figuration, violent divisions based on identity and ideology would be lifted. Similarly, in the work studied here, I see names and other identitarian labels as often free of preconceptions, rather than being invested with predetermined meaning for fusional identity. To be sure, this approach does not necessarily mean that all violence would be banished, as openness towards an other can bring love, hatred and everything in between – equally, I will later discuss how in Sufism, although love is prioritised, God’s terror and wrath is still an important aspect, meaning the persistence of violence in many of the texts analysed here. Nonetheless, it follows that if all possibilities for our identities and our future remain open, undecided and contingent, we remove the need to determine or fix them which results in their separation from other trajectories and the conflict that creates. For Nancy, the only alternative to this change in thinking is constant war.

\(^{150}\) 
\(^{151}\) 
\(^{152}\)
‘Being-in-the-world’ and the ‘Unworld’ of Globalisation

Nancy continues his criticism of ideology in *The Creation of the World; or, Globalization* (2007, first published in French 2002), in which the concepts of globalisation and ‘world-formation’ are contrasted, whereby the former is the spread of the Western capitalist system with its unequal accumulation of wealth and exploitation and the latter involves ‘reopening each possible struggle for a world’.  

Through globalisation, characterised by inequality and misery, the world loses ‘its capacity to “form a world” [fair monde]: it seems only to have gained the capacity of proliferating, to the extent of its means, the “unworld” [immonde]’. The Western notion of the universal has stretched over the world, stifling the ability to think outside of its paradigms, thereby closing down meaning and possible world-formation. This has led to a situation whereby, as Watkin asserts, ‘the infinite generality of globalization and the bellicose intensity of fundamentalist essentiality’ are drawn into conflict. Nevertheless, paradoxically, it is globalisation that is also enabling world-formation by bringing the interconnectedness of humanity to our attention more evidently though mass migration and economic interdependence.

Just as identity is no longer a thing but an action in which we participate, Nancy demands that we no longer see the world as a representation or object outside of ourselves which can have or be ascribed an essence. Whereas ideology functions via a separate, ideal world that guides us, Nancy demands that we recognise our ‘being-in-the-world’ and the world as, in the words of Pieter Meurs et al, ‘a totality of meaning as opposed to something one can have a meaning about’. As Nancy asserts: ‘The world is a possibility before being

155 Watkin, p. 52.
158 Here, once again, Nancy is indebted to Heidegger.
a reality, reversing the perspective from the given to the giving’.\textsuperscript{160} Indeed, Nancy insists in his earlier publication \textit{The Sense of the World} (1997, first published in French in 1993) that there is no transcendental meaning outside of the world.\textsuperscript{161} Rather, meaning is ‘the bared \textit{dénudé} name of our being-with-one-another’\textsuperscript{162} – that is to say, the world has no sense: it is sense. This forms part of Nancy’s argument for a future that is open and undecided, avoiding immanent communities based around a shared teleological understanding of human progress, and allowing for ‘the eruption of the new’.\textsuperscript{163} The sense of the world ‘grows from nothing’,\textsuperscript{164} is created \textit{ex nihilo}, and is therefore without a foundation or an organising principle, such as universal Reason. ‘There is no ground: there is only the “with”, proximity and its spacing’,\textsuperscript{165} and it is, as Nancy’s translators François Raffoul and David Pettigrew indicate, the non-foundational beginnings of the world that guarantees its plurality and alterity.\textsuperscript{166} Eagleton similarly argues:

Creation “out of nothing” is not testimony to how devilishly clever God is, dispensing as he can with even the most rudimentary raw materials, but to the fact that the world is not the inevitable culmination of some prior process, the upshot of some inexorable chain of cause and effect.\textsuperscript{167}

‘That Being is being-with, absolutely, this is what we must think’,\textsuperscript{168} and in the context of my research this implies not merely that Muslims be included in the German ‘we’, but rather that the concept of ‘we’ be radically understood as incorporating all existents. Although Nancy may have abandoned the term, the aims of cosmopolitan theory and Nancy’s philosophy are therefore similar. Nancy’s change in our way of thinking in terms of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[160] Nancy, \textit{The Creation of the World}, p. 65.
\item[164] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 51.
\item[165] \textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.
\item[167] Eagleton, pp. 8-9.
\item[168] Nancy, \textit{Being Singular Plural}, p. 61.
\end{footnotes}
singular being and the inoperative community can illuminate the texts under discussion here since, rather than presenting a set of beliefs to rally around, they too suggest a non-ideological route to cosmopolitan solidarities through the reconceptualisation of community and subjectivity, undermining our current divisive self-categorisation into representational immanent unities (nation, supranational organisation, ethnicity, religion, and even as coherent selves). It is this non-foundational understanding of community that informs my approach to cosmopolitanism in this study, in which I will analyse how literature can undermine fusional views of community and immanent identity, and also evoke the interconnected nature of being beyond representation. However, Nancy also states that a ‘world outside of representation is above all a world without a God capable of being the subject of its representation (and thus of its fabrication, of its maintenance and destination)’. Thus, it remains to be seen how the authors under analysis here can be regarded as attempting to reconcile religiosity with the inoperative community.

**Beyond Monotheism: A Cosmopolitan Understanding of the Divine**

Institutionalised religions act as a barrier to the inoperative community, in that they create a sense of communal fusion through a universalising religious doctrine that takes its authority from a God who is the subject of the world. In contrast, for Nancy: ‘nothing must remain of what, under the title of meaning, related the earth [la terre] and the human to a specifiable horizon’. The literature under analysis here does not take its cues from an otherworldly universal source, but rather accepts that the sense of the world changes and is plural, just as Nancy challenges us to think of ‘a world whose reason and end, provenance and destination,

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are no longer given’. But is this compatible with religiosity?

Religious Cosmopolitanism and the Deconstruction of Monotheism

Nancy is particularly scathing of institutionalised religions since, like his understanding of cosmopolitanism, they finish identities and remove death’s singularity. His writing does, nevertheless, propose new ways of thinking about the divine. As B. C. Hutchens affirms, for Nancy it is not a question of ‘whether a God exists, or what essential properties it possesses, but rather how it figures in empty sacred places’. The divine as empty sacred space is an important theme in Nancy’s work concerning the deconstruction of monotheism and, more specifically, Christianity. In The Creation of the World, Nancy draws upon the thought of the Lurianic kabala (and later will say that such thinking is present in the mysticisms of all the monotheisms), arguing:

\[T\]he “nothing” of creation is the one that opens in God when God withdraws in it (and in sum from it) in the act of creating. God annihilates itself [s’anéantit] as a “self” or as a distinct being in order to “withdraw” in its act – which makes the opening of the world.

Such thinking maintains the necessary non-foundationalism of Nancy’s thought, and suggests a God that, rather than existing separate to the world, ‘merges with it’.

Nancy argues in the more recent essay collection Dis-Enclosure: The Deconstruction of Christianity (2008, first published in French in 2005) that monotheism, with its strict separation of God and humankind, ‘shelters within itself [...] the principle of a world without God’, thereby giving rise to atheism. However, as mentioned above, atheism continues to function within the monotheistic paradigm, as secular ideologies merely replace God with a

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171 Nancy, The Creation of the World, p. 64.
172 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 136.
175 Nancy, The Creation of the World, p. 70.
176 Ibid.
177 Nancy, Dis-Enclosure, p. 35.
sense of Reason that acts as a foundation for their own guiding principles, rather than confronting the void at the opening of the world. Alternatively, in an examination of the Epistle of James and Friedrich Nietzsche’s ‘redeemer’, Nancy develops his understanding of ‘faith’ as a relation ‘to that which cuts off or withdraws access’, \(^\text{178}\) that is to say, the nothingness of the origins of the world. As Christina M. Smerick explains:

> Nancy underlines the notion of a content-less faith that ad-vocates nothing, but that is in and of the world, and is orientated to the void at the heart of being-with (a necessary void, in that it is an opening-up that allows being-with to be). \(^\text{179}\)

Nancy therefore proposes, borrowing from mysticism, an understanding of faith as an openness towards a sense of the divine that is always in withdrawal, and of the divine not as ‘the “other world” [...] but the other of the world’. \(^\text{180}\)

The deconstruction of monotheism can shed light on the experimental worldly religiosity of the texts under analysis here that do not position God as the subject of the world and its organising principle, but instead concern themselves with fleeting glimpses of the divine in the alterity in our world. In this regard, these authors suggest a transformative openness towards the other and the alterity in the world, and not the will to make sense, understand and stabilise. \(^\text{181}\) This is ‘a salvation that saves nothing, except that it saves us from believing in other worlds’, \(^\text{182}\) which thus maintains the necessary immanence of our world and provides an alternative to the suffocating spread of Western universalism. Similar to Nancy’s notion of community as outside representation, his philosophy also leaves room for a post-monotheistic religiosity beyond representation, which neither fosters immanent

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\(^{180}\) Nancy, *Dix-Enclosure*, p. 10.

\(^{181}\) My thesis therefore differs again from Matthes’s study of Muslim writers, which uses the term ‘translation’ in order to emphasise how writers make sense of unknown cultures: Matthes, *Writing and Muslim Identity*, p. 28.

\(^{182}\) Smerick, p. 36.
identities and communal unity, nor attempts to give clear meaning to death:

Holiness is neither determinable, nor representable, nor prescribable. It opens to or in man (unless we should say: it opens to the world or in the world, and not for man alone) the dimension and the movement, or gesture, of an “infinitely coming to pass” [d’un “se passer infiniment”].

Nonetheless, this notion of a post-monotheistic religiosity must not be understood as comprehensively superseding monotheism. It is, rather, an alternative understanding of the divine that moves beyond monotheism, whilst still coexisting alongside it.

**Religion and Universalist Cosmopolitanism**

This non-ideological and non-identitarian notion of the deconstruction of monotheism differs radically from post-9/11 writing on religion and universalist cosmopolitanism. Returning to Beck, his book *A God of One’s Own: Religion’s Capacity for Peace and Potential for Violence* (2010, first published in German in 2008), perhaps conceived in response to Latour’s criticism, is one of the first major studies dealing exclusively with religion and cosmopolitanism. He discusses the implications of a radicalised religious freedom for religious tolerance and religious practice, arguing that ‘the enforced secularization of religion [in Europe] has paved the way for the revitalization of religiosity and spirituality in the twenty-first century’. Inspired by the diary of Etty Hillesum, a Dutch Jewish woman whose account of the German occupation of the Netherlands was published after her murder in Auschwitz, Beck considers her ‘radical version of a God of her own choosing’, a God no longer part of an organised religion and thus requiring no church or religious congregation.

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184 After 2001, Habermas also began to engage with religion, arguing that religious tolerance can only occur in a liberal constitutional state founded upon universal ideals. For Habermas, religious contributions to politics must be translated into profane language in order for secular citizens to judge their truth content. See: Jürgen Habermas, ‘Religion in the Public Sphere: Cognitive Presuppositions for the “Public Use of Reason” by Religious and Secular Citizens’, in *Between Naturalism and Religion*, trans. by Ciaran Cronin (Cambridge, Polity, 2008), pp. 114-47.
For Beck, secularisation in Europe has led to a decoupling of institutionalised religion and subjective faith, which, together with the mass movement of people of various beliefs not formerly considered European, has lead to the ‘individualisation’ and ‘cosmopolitanisation’ of religious belief. ¹⁸⁷ In Beck’s argument, religious belief is individualised, as it is determined by the believer rather than rigid, institutionalised dogma, and it is cosmopolitanised, as globalisation brings an increasing number of people into contact with ‘words and symbols which have abandoned their fixed “orbit” in the institutionalized coordinates of sovereign world religions’. ¹⁸⁸ Thus, people are supposedly free to ‘write their own faith narratives’, ¹⁸⁹ and consequently resist categorisation within one homogeneous religious group.

Yet, although he does not envisage communal unity, Beck’s thinking is still problematic in its emphasis on the autonomous, rational individual’s freedom to choose and define their own religious identity – even if ‘[t]hey are not artists creating themselves, but bunglers cobblling an identity together’. ¹⁹⁰ Though Beck does not intend a fixed identity, his writing is nevertheless incompatible with the singular being for whom identity is never a work, that is to say, the product of subjective autonomy. As Devisch affirms, for Nancy

the ideology of the free individual is not so much a break with a continuation of the desire for an immanent identity. In both cases, auto-production, be it individual or collective, is the beginning and end point. ¹⁹¹

Beck’s individualisation theory still results in an immanent subject that may feel compelled to defend the purity of its identity. Indeed, as Nancy asserts: ‘As soon as the proper name points to [araisonne] a presence in person, a sovereign Subject, this sovereign is threatened; it

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 28.
¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 87.
¹⁸⁹ Ibid.
¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 124.
¹⁹¹ Devisch, p. 60.
is encircled, besieged’. For the singular being, however, it is not a matter of desiring or selecting an identity against which others may be judged. Rather, there are only constantly shifting identities devoid of essence in the mêlée of culture.

For Nancy, religious identity does not depend solely on an atomized and immanent individual or group, but rather is changed through contact with other beliefs/believers. Given that Nancy regards meaning as arising from our being-in-common rather than any deity, it is of no surprise that he believes that we gave the world religions their morals, as opposed to the reverse. If singular beings are in a state of constant change, then it follows that the meaning they give to the world is equally susceptible to change. Likewise, if religious identities are not fixed, they are open to new, contingent transformations that can revitalise religious culture and abandon fixed moral codes that restrict meaning. The writing of the Tunisian poet and theorist Abdelwahab Meddeb also brings Nancy’s concept of the deconstruction of monotheism into dialogue with Islam, but in order to move Islam towards atheism.

Similarly, Hiddleston’s book Reinventing Community: Identity and Difference in Late Twentieth-Century Philosophy and Literature in French (2005) also deals with Nancy’s notion of community and minority authors of a Muslim background, in her case North Africa, and she too argues for an understanding of Islam as ‘a series of singular-plural interpretations rather than as a cultural whole’. Yet, whereas Meddeb and Hiddleston focus on rebellion against Islam, my aim is to highlight how my chosen authors work with Islam in order to intimate a non-identitarian religiosity that would be compatible with cosmopolitanism.

Whilst identity retains its supposed immanence under Beck’s theory, creating a divide between the believer and other individuals, a Nancian approach would see the cosmopolitanisation of religion as an inevitable consequence of the mêlée of religious

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192 Nancy, Being Singular Plural, p. 146.
193 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 138.
195 Hiddleston, Reinventing Community, p. 79.

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identities once all preconceived ideas of communal uniformity are abandoned, nullifying the question of religious tolerance. Beck relies on a universal notion of the rational autonomous individual, arguing that ‘free individuals who represent their own enlightened self-interests’ will increasingly pick and choose from various faiths. The cultural mêlée, on the other hand, has no universal guiding principle and pacifies the active role of the believer to a certain extent, avoiding tensions such as those identified by Cheesman between Beck’s autonomy and Zaimoglu’s rejection of the ‘ideology of “freedom”’. Moreover, by removing subjectivity from the equation, the ‘hierarchy of superiority and inferiority’ brought about by the ‘dualism of believers and unbelievers’, which Beck concedes is problematic for his individualisation theory, is overcome. It is, therefore, perhaps better to think in terms of ‘singularisation’ instead of individualisation when considering a post-monotheistic religiosity that is compatible with cosmopolitanism in the form of the inoperative community. This would be a non-foundational religiosity embedded in the mobile relations of the cultural mêlée, an openness to the divine found in the alterity of the world and a scepticism with regard to God as the Other of the world who bestows meaning upon it. I would, therefore, disagree with Beck, for whom a God of one’s own is subject to change because it ‘lacks an authoritative reference point outside the individual’. Rather, it is subject to change because it is open to the diverse forces of our being-in-the-world.

Such post-monotheistic notions of community and religiosity can be found in the writing of Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani, whose work, although not a direct reflection of Islam as it is lived in Germany, is nonetheless the product of its context, responding both to Islamic orthodoxy and to an increasingly fundamentalist atheism that in any case continues to function within the monotheistic paradigm. As Horstkotte argues, the

196 Beck, *A God of One’s Own*, p. 94.
199 Ibid., pp. 88-9.
religious turn in contemporary German literature is not a return of the religions of old, but rather ‘die Entwicklung neuer, postsäkularer Poetiken’, and Nancy’s understanding of the divine can elucidate the imaginative religiosity of these authors, which is not bound by Islamic doctrine, but rather often looks towards Sufism for inspiration outside of institutionalised Islam.

**Sufism and Singularity: The Deconstruction of Islam**

Returning to Beck once again, he argues that the dual process of cosmopolitanisation and individualisation is particularly relevant to Europe’s Muslims who are gradually separating themselves from holy places, authorities and religious organizations and turning to a new spirituality characterized by a process of searching, selecting and combining that is carried out under the aegis of individual faith.201

However, although Beck does acknowledge that ‘the “return” of religion in Europe does not mean a “return” of traditional Islam’, he hastily concludes that this dual process can only have a negative effect upon Islam, leading to fundamentalism, to which he hastily attributes the headscarf.202 This statement constitutes an acknowledgment that the individualisation of religious belief can just as much lead to fundamentalism as cosmopolitanism, but I would submit that religious fundamentalism is rather directly attributable to such thinking in terms of the absolute individual and immanent identities.

To Beck’s credit, he does recognise the more tolerant period of Islam’s history that predates European secularisation.203 This era is the subject of Kermani’s scholarly

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200 Horstkotte, p. 269.
201 Beck, *A God of One’s Own*, p. 34.
202 Ibid., p. 33.
203 Ibid., p. 93.
monograph (cited by Beck) Der Schrecken Gottes: Attar, Hiob und die metaphysische Revolte (2005), in which the history of theodicy and the tradition of questioning God’s motives are traced in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. ‘Job’s question’ is, therefore, central to Kermani’s book: ‘Man hört auf, Gott zu verstehen, wenn man voraussetzt, daß Er gut und gerecht ist, aber feststellen muß, daß Er seine Allmacht nicht einsetzt, um unschuldiges Leiden zu verhindern.’ Kermani points out that the motif of ‘the quarrel with God’ forms a central part of Jewish prayer, and that, although it is suppressed within Christianity, around half the psalms treat God’s injustices. Yet, perhaps even more strictly than Christianity, ‘[d]er Koran läßt keine Form der klagenden oder gar Gott anklagenden Frömmigkeit gelten’. Of course, this does not mean that there is no Islamic tradition of questioning God – to name a few from Sufism, Kermani lists Jahm ibn Safwān, Abu Talib al-Makki, the Turkish poets of the Bektashi Order (Bektaşi Tarikatı), and Ṭṭār of Nishapur.

Yeşilada comments on the recent influence of Sufism in German literature, regarding it as a tolerant response to contemporary Islamic fundamentalism. The above-mentioned medieval Islamic mystics were arguably transforming and revising the sense of their religion, and I agree that their influence can be felt in the fiction of the authors under examination here, who also seek to change Islam through the abandonment of religious preconceptions.

Thomas Bauer states:

die Existenz verschiedener Koranlesarten heutigen Muslimen vielfach ein Ärgernis.210

Consequently, these mystics provide a link to a more ambiguous and diverse Islamic past, from which postmodern Muslim authors can draw inspiration. As Bauer indicates:

Nicht Mittelalter und Moderne stehen einander gegenüber, sondern das moderne Beharren auf Eindeutigkeit und das postmoderne Potential der islamischen nachformativen Tradition.211

Yet, Yeşilada’s assertion that ‘[s]tatt des gesetzestreuen Gottesgehorsams predigen die Sufis die Liebe zwischen Gott und den Menschen’212 is lacking in complexity. According to Annemarie Schimmel: ‘Obedience, as the Sufis understood it, is complete surrender and acceptance of the will of the beloved whether it manifests itself in kindness or in wrath.’213

Thus, although Sufism can provide inspiration for an uninstitutionalised and more sceptical Islam, it nevertheless renders problematic the notion of a tolerant Islam free from violence. At present, the ‘true’ interpretation of Islam is contested by fundamentalists, such as Al-Qaeda, who lay emphasis on the need to wage holy war against infidels and their idols, and other ‘moderate’ Muslims in the public sphere who plead for a more tolerant reading of the Qur’an, such as many of those who participate in the DIK’s guided dialogue. Yet, at a time when Islam is often held to be synonymous with terrorism and brutality, by emphasising God’s terror, Sufi writing is at odds with both the former and, more controversially, the latter, who often play down the wrathful nature of God found in aspects of the Old Testament and the Qur’an in order to distance Islam from violence.

A post-monotheistic religiosity, however, rejects any notion of a true interpretation, shunning both militant Islam and the DIK as both share the same rejection of pluralism and both desire to determine identities. Thus, although Sufism may act to highlight associations

211 Ibid., p. 114.
212 Yeşilada, Poesie der Dritten Sprache, p. 77.
between Islam and violence, parallels may nevertheless be drawn between Islamic mysticism and a singularised religiosity, as both require scepticism of institutionalised religious dogma, an acceptance of ambiguity and both draw significance from the journey of religious discovery, rather than closing down religious meaning as organised religions do. Just as Nancy stresses that we must not allow any metaphysical sources of meaning to shape our lives, the sceptical Sufi tradition of the quarrel with God points towards a religiosity that does not receive its meaning from outside of the world. I therefore argue that these authors do not engage with Sufism because of its tolerance towards other religions, but rather because it can be regarded as contributing towards the deconstruction of Islam in a similar way to Nancy’s comments on the deconstruction of Christianity, leaving behind a worldly sense of the divine that undermines religious identity and allows for an open-ended future.

In this respect, by engaging with Sufism, these authors explore a religiosity that is not only compatible with, but also can be glimpsed in sensuous experience. As erotic, Orientalising depictions of harem concubines have given way to equally Orientalising media images of women in burqas, Islam is no longer regarded as sensuous and sybaritic in the Western imagination, but rather as sexually repressive. Yet it would be an oversimplification to deem Islam as entirely sexually conservative. Mutual sexual fulfilment within marriage does, after all, remain central to orthodox Islam, for which ‘the exercise of sexuality is a pious obligation’. This emphasis on sexual pleasure is reflected in the Islamic notion of heaven (Jannah, meaning ‘garden’), which is presented in the Qur’an as perpetual sexual gratification, at least for men. ‘[T]he Christian will be a-sexual in paradise, whereas the Muslim’, Abdelwahab Bouhdiba affirms, ‘will experience infinite orgasm.’

Nonetheless, contemporary orthodox Islam is becoming increasingly incompatible with sensual pleasure, as As'ad AbuKhalil argues:

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215 Ibid., p. 80.
Islam was criticized in medieval Christian polemics for its laxity and permissiveness in sexual matters while today, Islam is criticized for its sexual strictness and conservatism. In fact, what passes in present-day Saudi Arabia, for example, as sexual conservatism is due more to Victorian puritanism than to Islamic mores.  

Like Rushdie, preoccupation with the culturally emaciated and pleasureless state of much of today’s Islam forms a central theme in Şenocak’s essays. As early as the essay ‘Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln: Über die vergessene Tradition der osmanischen Dichtung’ (1991), he laments: ‘Über Dichter, Mystiker, Forscher und Philosophen herrschen Dogmatiker’. This topic continues in ‘Das Schweigen der muslimischen Kultur’ (2001), in which he, much like the new Muslim intellectuals, criticises a Muslim elite that ignores sceptical thinkers from their own tradition, such as Ibn Rushd (an Al-Andalus Muslim philosopher known in the West as Averroës) and the Persian Sufi poet Rūmī. Although he cites Pamuk’s and Rushdie’s contributions towards the tenuous beginnings of a new ‘Islamic canon’, he contends that more must be done, especially where the eroticism of Islamic culture is concerned:


This demand for an ‘Islamic Renaissance’ is continued and intensified in the post-9/11 essay collection Das Land hinter den Buchstaben: Deutschland und der Islam im Umbruch (2006), in which the essay ‘Zwischen Koran und Sex Pistols [sic]’ (originally published in 2005) advocates a reconnection with the literary work of Islamic mystics who wrote at a time when

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219 Ibid., pp. 77-8.
the borders between the religions, and between faith and scepticism were more porous.\textsuperscript{220}

When understood in terms of the monotheistic/post-monotheistic divide, the Sufi allusions in these texts convey an ambiguous idea of the divine, at times expressed through wrath and at times through love, although the latter is usually privileged. Whereas instances of terror and punishment depict God as directing behaviour on earth from beyond it, Sufism equally presents a spiritual alternative to orthodox Islam that is not only compatible with, but locates the divine in love and sex; according to Schimmel: ‘often a strong and fascinating combination of human and divine love permeates the verses of the mystics’.\textsuperscript{221} Thus, by highlighting the religiosity of profane experiences, these mystics arguably participate in the deconstruction of Islam, intimating a holiness that figures in the alterity of the world, rather than in an other world. Sufism is, however, a diverse movement, harbouring conflicting schools of thought. Yet, whereas many early Sufis were celibate ascetics, it is the later immanental strain that is most significant for my interpretations. As Sa’diya Shaikh states in her study \textit{Sufi Narratives of Intimacy: Ibn ’Arabī, Gender, and Sexuality} (2012):

\begin{quote}
Within the development of Sufism, Dhū’Nūn’s approach represents some of the shift from the world-transcending approach of the earlier ascetics to a more world-afirming approach, later echoed strongly in the works of Ibn ’Arabī. Dhū’Nūn’s love for nature as a reflection of God’s beauty marked the way in which Sufis increasingly focused on the spiritual possibilities of physical form. This shift facilitated more positive approaches to materiality and the human body, which ultimately had implications for Sufi views of sexuality.\textsuperscript{222}
\end{quote}

Thus, Sufism constitutes ‘a model of religious personhood that is liberated from the binaries of spirit and matter, piety and desire, sanctity and carnality, male and female’, that is to say, ‘a holistic, embodied, and world-affirming spirituality par excellence’.\textsuperscript{223} Rather than

\textsuperscript{221}Schimmel, \textit{Mystical Dimensions of Islam}, p. 5.
\textsuperscript{223}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 189.
conveying an ideological message, this religiosity is based in affective experiences, and in the case of the authors under analysis here, this is overwhelmingly apparent in the form of sexual acts, but also comes across in the act of praying, listening to music, and the appreciation of nature to a lesser extent.

That the divine, understood by Nancy as the nothingness and alterity of the world’s origins, should be glimpsed in our sexual contact with others in Sufi thought ties in with the notion of singular beings as ‘the discreet passage of other origins of the world’. Furthermore, new meaning can be brought to the association between human amorous relationships and humankind’s relationship with the divine if ‘love’ and ‘desire’ are viewed in Nancy’s terms. Specifically within the essay ‘Shattered Love’, Nancy asserts love’s ability to render the inoperative community more accessible. Yet whereas love is the ‘aspect of being that gives itself to be welcomed’, reinforcing the relational nature of being, to desire is to attempt the impossible task of appropriating the other for oneself:

Desire – I mean that which philosophy has thought of desire: will, appetite, conatus, libido – is foreign to love because it sublates, be it negatively, the logic of fulfillment. Desire is self extending towards its end – but love does not extend, nor does it extend itself toward an end. Thus, desire promotes thinking in terms of the absolute individual, rather than community.

When transported to the religious context of this literature, Nancy’s idea of love can be understood as an openness towards God (not unlike the etymology of Islam, ‘submission to God’) that can be regarded as a singularised religiosity, reflecting the ‘being-onto-god’ Nancy describes in his early essay ‘Of Divine Places’. ‘[G]od’, as Nancy understands it, ‘is not the freedom to be-onto in general. He is not projected-toward or destined-to. He simply

224 Nancy, Being Singular Plural, p. 9.
225 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 84.
226 Ibid., p. 98.
227 Ibid., p. 124.
comes, in radiance and in the withdrawal of radiance.'\(^{228}\) Just as the divine may be fleetingly glimpsed in the world’s alterity, in love the singular being ‘is traversed by the alterity of the other, which does not stop or fix itself anywhere, neither in “him,” nor in “me,” because it is nothing other than the coming-and-going’.\(^{229}\) Desire can, by contrast, be regarded as characteristic of the willful demand for unity with God, which would be associated with orthodoxy, the autonomous individual and Beck’s theory of religious individualisation.

Islam, I would therefore argue, is well placed to inspire a post-monotheistic, singularised religiosity not just because of the immanentist Sufi tradition of blurring the sacred and the profane (this is common to most mysticisms and can also be found in the Old Testament’s Song of Solomon, for example), but also for various other reasons. Muslims emphasise the affective experience of listening to recitations of the Qur’an, rather than the meaning of its words, implying an embodied and worldly notion of the divine.\(^{230}\) Islam also lacks the spiritual leaders and the representations of God and the Prophets common to Christianity, whose followers commune in the Pope, for example, and images of Christ. As Şenocak concludes:

\begin{quote}
Denn der Gott der Muslime ist ein abstraktes Wesen, und im Islam steht zwischen Mensch und Gott keine Instanz, die im Namen Gott handeln und diesen instrumentalisieren kann. Aus dieser Unmittelbarkeit, dem Zwiegespräch mit Gott schöpft der Mensch seinen persönlichen Glauben, für den er niemandem Rechenschaft schuldig ist. Darin liegt eine ungeheure Modernisierungsgabe der muslimischen Religion [...].\(^{231}\)
\end{quote}

Moreover, the paradigm of the absolute individual is not as prevalent in the Islamic world, where the focus is primarily on the collective,\(^{232}\) and both Sufism and Nancy’s philosophy demand a loss of self. Whereas Nancy regards what he refers to as the ‘crossing of love’\(^{233}\) as

\(^{228}\) Ibid., p. 126.
\(^{229}\) Ibid., p. 98.
\(^{231}\) Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, p. 92.
\(^{232}\) Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 12-3.
\(^{233}\) Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 98.
revealing the ecstasis of being, Sufis such as Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi equally saw the
overcoming of the subject/object binary in love and sex:

Ibn ʿArabi uses ripe and redolent language to describe the all-consuming intensity of sexual experience; he employs the Sufi term fanā, often translated as “annihilation” or “extinction” and used to describe an extreme heightened spiritual state where the ego is dissolved or extinguished in the presence of God. At this apex of spiritual experience for the seeker, there is no longer an ego or an “I.”

Nancy argues that the current universalising trends of Western globalisation, founded in metaphysics, are inextricably linked to monotheism. “[M]etaphysics sets a founding, warranting presence beyond the world”, such as the universal notion of pure Reason that is the basis of universalist cosmopolitanisms, and therefore merely usurps God’s position as the world’s subject, placing the same restrictions upon meaning — for this reason Nancy sometimes refers to metaphysics in the words of Martin Heidegger as ‘onto-theology’. The reimagining of religiosity and community outside of universalism and representation undertaken by these authors can, therefore, be viewed as a valuable contribution towards undermining this mode of thought that underpins our current shift towards the forced universalism of the unworld and the subsequent closing down of world-formation. Indeed, Nancy asserts that the deconstruction of Christianity must be followed by the deconstruction of Reason, so as not to merely place another abstract principle in God’s place — “human rights” and “socialisms” are’, he contends, ‘the inheritors of Christianity’. I therefore see in the literature under scrutiny here a two pronged attack in opposition to the universalist claims of both anti-West Islamism and anti-religious cosmopolitanism, emphasising both a religiosity and a cosmopolitanism that are beyond our thinking of identity in terms of representation and outside the foundationalism of the monotheistic paradigm.

234 Shaikh, p. 185.
235 Nancy, Dis-Enclosure, p. 6.
236 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 128.
The ‘Voice of Interruption’: Nancy and Cosmopolitan Literature

Just as Schoene views cosmopolitan literature as both intimations of the inoperative community and also interruptions of fusional communities, I will also explore how the relationship between ‘myth’ and ‘literature’, delineated within Nancy’s essay ‘Myth Interrupted’, can provide a valuable perspective from which to view the aims of this cosmopolitan literature. For Nancy, myth is ‘the unique speech of the many, who come thereby to recognize one another, who communicate and commune in myth’, indicating myth’s potential to galvanise sentiments of communal unity. The inoperative community, on the other hand, can only occur at the ‘interruption of myth’, since it has no myth or foundation. Thus, whereas myth is associated with unity and fusion, literature is the ‘voice of interruption’. Literature is not suited to myth because it is never ending, for there is never one clear understanding of literature. It is, rather, as Deppman argues: ‘an “offering” which does not hold, found, or seize our common essence’. I would therefore argue that cosmopolitan literature must come under the category of literature in Nancy’s sense, resisting any possible appropriation by any one group or ideology.

Deppman argues that difficult authors, who simply illuminate problems rather than solve them, are often regarded as limited in literary scholarship because ‘they do not resolve literature into myth’, and that some scholars do damage to literature by creating myths and counter-myths from their readings, returning readers (and authors) to their ‘immanent participation in a community of shared essence’. In this regard, my dissertation will be at odds with the core thesis of Robert Spencer’s publication Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature (2011): namely, that ‘the gradual elaboration of cosmopolitan

238 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 50.
239 Ibid., p. 58.
240 Ibid., p. 63.
241 Deppman, p. 15.
242 Ibid., pp. 16-7.
solidarities is to a large extent the very *raison de'être* of postcolonial literary criticism*.^{243} Rather than examining cosmopolitan novels (like Schoene), Spencer concerns himself more with ‘cosmopolitan readings’, arguing that much of postcolonial literature has the ‘capacity to instil self-consciousness and to compel attention to the moral and political dimensions of the postcolonial situation’.^{244} Although I agree that postcolonial theory and literature constitute powerful critiques of imperialism, and view many aspects of postcolonial theory as a useful approach to earlier German minority writing in particular, despite the lack of a colonial relationship, whereas Spencer’s ‘cosmopolitan criticism’ seeks to give priority to how literature serves to galvanise readers around a particular political view, I would argue that this focus is more appropriate to myth. Moreover, much postcolonial theory is incompatible with my understanding of the texts discussed here, in that the former often merely counteracts the imposed culture of the colonisers by portraying a rejuvenated indigenous culture, albeit in the same form of a community of immanence – this kind of community formation forms a large part of Celia Britton’s study *The Sense of Community in French Caribbean Fiction* (2008), which also draws upon Nancy’s philosophy, although not in order to criticise such mythic writing.

Similar to Spencer, Cheesman’s aforementioned book, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, maintains that Turkish-German authors ‘can only take an ironic view of “cosmopolitanism” or “world citizenship”’,^{245} engendering a cosmopolitan outlook through criticism of the decidedly uncosmopolitan present. Yet I would argue that this is not necessarily always the case. Rather, the fiction under consideration here highlights a broader understanding of community that comes to the fore often in spite of superficial identitarian divisions. I am, therefore, closer to Hiddleston, who, aside from her research into French

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^{245} Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, p. 20.
literature, highlights the potential for literary experimentation to fulfil the form of writing advocated by Nancy in a discussion of *The Satanic Verses*. She argues: ‘literature should not be read according to the conventions of any specific reading community but always resists the imposition of preconceived assumptions’.\(^\text{246}\) Thus, rather than reading to support a politically left-wing cosmopolitan stance, I will read these texts outside of the framework of the individual and the monotheistic paradigm as interruptions of communal identification that nonetheless also evoke a religiosity. It is, therefore, the rejection of any notion of ideology (either political, national or religious) characteristic of these authors that will be explored in this project, not their support of any particular ideology. Indeed, as benevolent as some ideologies may seem, for Nancy they only result in conflict and division.

The focus of the first chapter will be how the ambiguity of Şenocak’s and SAID’s poetic writing destabilises the Islam/West dichotomy and hints at a post-monotheistic understanding of religiosity. In Şenocak’s *Übergang* (2005), an identitarian instability is achieved through indefinite references to the historical and cultural situations of both Turkey and Germany, but also by way of a ‘negative Hermeneutik’, which, much like Nancy’s critique of subjectivity, involves an openness to the other, rather than the binary opposition with a defining, and therefore capitalised, Other. Şenocak’s religiosity functions in much the same way, by drawing upon the Sufi tradition to evoke a worldly sense of the divine in both nature and sexual experiences, rather than by a God who acts as the guiding principle of the world. In *Psalmen* (2007), SAID too ambiguously alludes to the deconstructive potential within the three monotheisms, avoiding any clear-cut distinctions. Although this similarly includes erotic references, here the focus is primarily on prayer as a means of questioning providence in favour of open-ended world-formation.

The impact of Romanticism upon the formulations of cosmopolitanism and religiosity

in Zaimoglu’s writing will be discussed in the second chapter. This will include not only how universalist Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and religious fundamentalism are equated in the play *Nathan Messias* (2006) and the novel *Liebesbrand* (2008) as inherently violent ideological ways of thinking that are conducive to intercommunal conflict, but also how *Liebesbrand* conveys alternative, non-foundational notions of both community and the divine that can be illuminated through the writings of Nancy, the German Romantics and medieval Sufis. As in the first chapter, this ontological openness is conveyed through love in *Liebesbrand*, but here it is contrasted with a violent desire that alludes to both the wrathful God of the Old Testament and the Qur’an, and also to Heinrich von Kleist’s *Penthesilea* (1808). Similarly, Romantic views of the Holy Roman Empire and post-revolutionary France emerge as divergent ideas of community within the novel that resonate with the inoperative community and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism respectively.

Finally, the themes of love and terror will be examined in Kermani’s fiction with regard to religion. Firstly, whereas sex and prayer are highlighted as harbouring the potential to deconstruct the monotheistic paradigm in the first two chapters, music is the focus of *Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten* (2002), reflecting a religiosity based on the affective experience of listening, rather than the interpretation of any message. However, sex becomes the central focus again in *Du sollst* (2005), as, similar to *Liebesbrand*, different understandings of the divine are conveyed by both love and desire. Yet, whereas the focus of *Du sollst* is overwhelmingly on desire and terror, I will argue that *Große Liebe* (2014) turns towards love, bringing the Sufi loss of self and contemporary thought on subjectivity into dialogue. The unexpected interruptions of subjectivity and flashes of the divine in these texts demonstrate an important development within the intertwined German and Islamic canons, opening up new ways of considering community, the self and religiosity with profound consequences for the post-9/11 era.
A Contemporary ‘West-östlicher Divan’: The Islam/West Binary in the Poetic Writing of Zafer Şenocak and SAID

Introduction: Reconnecting German Literature with Divan Poetry

Gottes ist der Orient!
Gottes ist der Okzident!247

It would be hard to imagine a discussion of German poetry that challenges the Islam/West dichotomy without referencing Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *West-östlicher Divan* (1819), a text frequently cited during debates surrounding Islam in Germany. It was influenced both by the Qur’an – as Kermani indicates, the lines quoted above are taken from Joseph Freiherr von Hammer-Purgstall’s translation of the holy text (1811-14)248 – and also by the Persian Sufi poetry of Hāfez, which both Zafer Şenocak (b. 1961 in Ankara) and SAID (b. 1947 in Tehran) mention in their writing on it. In this chapter, I will explore Şenocak’s and SAID’s engagement with sceptical and mystical religious traditions in Übergang (2005) and Psalmen (2007) respectively, and analyse the destabilising implications of this poetry for the relationship between Islam and the West, tracing the movement of these authors beyond Goethe’s *Divan* towards a more fundamental challenge not only to the Islam/West dichotomy, but also to the binaries of Self and Other, and heaven and earth. Just as Nancy has begun to trace how Christianity deconstructs itself, hinting at a sense of the divine that figures in the otherness of the world, I will argue that Übergang and Psalmen too point towards a religiosity beyond monotheism that allows the contingent singular-plural relations of the world to come to the fore, rather than close down meaning through a universalising ideology or an appeal to ready-made identities. As Şenocak states in an interview with Matthias Konzett:


In this respect, Şenocak’s and Nancy’s ideas of literature as the site of newness and creativity, rather than mere intercultural negotiations, are similar.

The essay ‘hafis, du entschlüsselst alle geheimnisse’ from Das Niemandsland ist unseres: West-östliche Betrachtungen (2010) by SAID (recipient of the Goethe-Medaille in 2006) praises Goethe’s Divan, asserting: ‘hafis ist in goethe eingewandert, und goethe in hafis. und es gelang dem genius, den ton haffischer dichtung zu erspüren’. SAID declares that Goethe’s ‘universelle[r] geist’ went on pilgrimage from Weimar to Shiraz, inviting the parlance of interkultureller Germanistik by suggesting a universalism that bridges German and Persian culture, but ultimately belongs to neither. This echoes the view adopted by Hofmann, who champions Goethe as an early proponent of interculturality for turning his back on European classicism in favour of Oriental poetical forms. He regards the Divan as:

weder ein Element der fremden Kultur noch eigentlich ein Element der eigenen, sondern “ein Drittes”, das die “Originalität” der “Nation” des Übersetzers überwindet und so das Produkt einer Kulturmischung darstellt.

Hofmann’s view of Goethe’s collection as neither a part of German nor Persian culture, but rather of an unspecified third, can be criticised for erecting a barrier between German culture and Islam – the no man’s land of the cultural in-between to which the title of SAID’s essay collection perhaps refers.

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250 SAID often writes in all lower case, with the exception of his name, which can be problematic when writing the titles of his books. There is often inconsistency in how they are written between the cover, the inside title page and the list on his official website, and for this reason, I have chosen to follow normal capitalisation rules when writing the book titles here. Essay titles and citations will be written as they are printed.
251 Ibid., p. 35.
252 Hofmann, Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft, p. 81.
Conversely, Şenocak’s more critical view of the Divan comes across in the essay ‘Das Buch mit sieben Siegeln’, in which he questions the extent to which Goethe opened himself up to Islamic culture:

Vielleicht läßt sich daraus einmal eine Ästhetik [...] entwickeln, die sich selbst nicht vergibt, wenn sie den Anderen betrachtet, und den Anderen im Gedächtnis behält, wenn sie zu sich zurückgekehrt ist. Eine Ästhetik der Grenzerfahrungen und ständigen Berührung. Es wird sich dabei zeigen, ob es gelingt, den West-östlichen Divan zu schreiben, ob es gelingt, den Autor zum genauen Leser werden zu lassen, ohne den Leser als reisende Handelsmann – wie Goethe sich in Bezug auf den Orient in seinen Noten und Abhandlungen zum West-östlichen Divan verstand – zu autorisieren.\footnote{Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 47.}

In contrast to SAID’s and Hofmann’s laudatory stances, Şenocak’s emphasis on Goethe’s self-description as adopting ‘die Rolle eines Handelsmannes, der seine Waren gefällig auslegt und sie auf mancherlei Weise angenehm zu machen sucht’\footnote{Goethe, p. 136.} implies a reading of the Divan as superficial and exploitative. He also controversially attacks Germany’s national poet further for perpetuating Orientalist stereotypes that persist to this day (such as the Oriental as bellicose, revenge-driven conservative\footnote{Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 39} and for essentialising divan poetry, thereby robbing it of its ‘grenzüberschreitender, identitätssprengender Charakter’.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 36-7.} Yomb May expresses a similar view, arguing that, although the Divan ‘exposes as absurd the assumption that encounters between cultures must necessarily lead to conflict’,\footnote{Yomb May, ‘Goethe, Islam, and the Orient: The Impetus for and Mode of Intercultural Encounter in the West-östlicher Divan’, in Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture, pp. 89-107 (p. 89).} it also ‘becomes part of a process of asymmetrical intercultural encounter and represents a more complex endeavor, which cannot be absolved of contradiction and essentialism’,\footnote{Ibid., p. 90.} partly because Goethe used British and French colonial texts with a Eurocentric bias as inspiration.\footnote{Ibid., p. 96.}

However, the intercultural paradigm often used to describe Goethe’s Divan is, I would argue, too dualistic for Şenocak’s and often SAID’s poetry, although at times they both
appear to support it in their other writing and other critics of their work use this approach.

Rather than a mere idealisation of the Orient, as Todd Kontje interprets the Divan, an authentically ‘West-östlicher Divan’, as Şenocak envisages it, would involve a more radical destabilisation of the Occident/Orient binary. As opposed to relegating ‘cultural mixing’ to a separate third space, Şenocak proposes that it should problematise identity in general. Just as Nancy rejects the understanding of identity as a mélange in favour of regarding it as a complex and ever-changing mêlée, so Şenocak and SAID too evoke the complexities of identity that exceed any ideas of culture, and indeed of the self, as stable and unified wholes.

In post-9/11 Germany, ‘Muslim’, not ‘Oriental’, is the catch-all label used to exclude minority citizens. Thus a contemporary ‘West-östlicher Divan’ that seeks to challenge the prevailing paradigm of a ‘clash of civilisations’ must rethink both Western modernity, by which is usually meant the democracy, tolerance and capitalist system commonly associated with the European Enlightenment, and also Islam. In this regard, rather than an attempt to find common ground between the universalising grand narratives of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and institutionalised Islam, I interpret the poetry collections Übergang and Psalmen as embracing the ‘identitätssprengender Charakter’ of Sufi poetry, evoking both a religiosity and a cosmopolitanism that do not act as guiding principles, and which can be illuminated by Nancy’s non-foundational ideas of literature, community and the deconstruction of monotheism. As Katharina Mommsen points out, Islam fulfilled the role of an alternative to Church dogma for Goethe, as exemplified in the Divan: ‘Wenn Islam “Gott ergeben” heißt, / Im Islam leben und sterben wir alle’. I am arguing for a similar interpretation of Şenocak’s and SAID’s engagement with Sufism and also the Old

262 Tezcan, p. 54.
263 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 47.
264 See footnote 25 in the introduction for my understanding of non-foundationalism.
266 Goethe, p. 108.
Testament, particularly their erotic aspects, in comparison with orthodox religion. Like Şenocak, May also draws our attention to the Noten und Abhandlungen and its criticisms of Islam which, he argues, stem from ‘hierarchical intellectual impulses underlying the wider colonialist project and its approach to religion’. Şenocak and SAID avoid such impulses, suggesting a post-monotheistic religiosity that is open to an undecided future, that is to say, a mystical, yet worldly religiosity that exceeds traditional notions of identity and representation.

Poetry and the Muslim Turn

Although previously side-lined by Kemalist modernisers, Sufi divan poetry is central to the literature of Turkey, which is of particular importance for Şenocak, and it is equally important for Iranian literature, which is significant for both Şenocak and SAID. Indeed, SAID, a first generation migrant, states that, although he is unsure why he chose to write poetry, ‘vielleicht liegt etwas iranisches darin, weil lyrik die domäne der iranischen literatur ist’. Şenocak too, who is usually grouped in the second generation (he moved to Munich when he was just nine), has written of the importance of Ottoman poetry for his understanding of cosmopolitanism: ‘Für eine nach Einheit und Reinheit suchende Ästhetik sind die Mischkulturen des Orients, und insbesondere die osmanische Kultur, ein Greul, im besten Fall unverständlich.’ Yet, despite its popularity as a medium for ‘minority’ German authors, poetry has been neglected within the scholarship. According to Yeşilada’s book Poesie der Dritten Sprache: Türkisch-deutsche Lyrik der Zweiten Generation (2012), in which she takes steps to rectify this imbalance: ‘Die Lyrik war anfangs das stärkste Genre;

267 May, p. 102.
269 In the Ottoman era, Persian and Arabic were both seen as Ottoman languages, and thus literature written in Persian and Arabic was also considered part of Ottoman culture: Rowe Holbrook, p. 19.
271 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 37.
fast alle eingewanderten AutorInnen schrieben Gedichte. Although this was perhaps because of a lack of time (many had, after all, come to Germany to work as manual labourers) and/or of the confidence to write longer prose in a foreign language, it is also the case that poetry allows writers to explore the themes important to them with a nuance and ambiguity that resist straight-forward representation. As Nancy argues, poetry in particular avoids any fixed meaning:

[It] does not exactly have a sense; rather it has the sense of an access to sense that is each time absent, and postponed until later. The sense of “poetry” is a sense that is always still to be made.

My study demonstrates that this poetic engagement amongst German writers of a Muslim background has continued and evolved in the post-9/11 context, and that it can often provide for a more complex engagement with identity and religion than is present in accompanying essayistic writing – as also the poetry of the West-östlicher Divan is more nuanced than its Noten und Abhandlungen.

Şenocak has published poetry (both his own and translations), novels, short stories and essays in both German and Turkish, treating a wide range of topics – the poetry collection Das senkrechte Meer (1991), for instance, explores the layers of history in Istanbul and Berlin, whereas his most famous publication Gefährliche Verwandtschaft (1998) is the story of Sascha Muchteschem, a German with Turkish and Jewish heritage who imaginatively implicates his grandfather in the Armenian genocide in order to share in Germany’s collective guilt. Islam is a reoccurring theme in most of Şenocak’s writing, and his poetic oeuvre is no exception; the poetry cycle ‘nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars’ (written in 1998) from the collection Futuristenepilog (published with the poet and performer Berkan Karpat, 2008), for example, links the Turkish writer Nâzım Hikmet with both

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272 Yeşilada, Poesie der Dritten Sprache, p. 19.
communism and Sufism, using imagery from technology and space travel. Yet, in spite of a substantial literary output, Şenocak is mostly seen as a public intellectual in Germany, and his contributions to debates on Islam and the West, many of which I draw upon throughout this thesis, have been published in newspapers and magazines, and are collected in five volumes.

Şenocak views himself as outside or between generations, and in keeping with this his writing engaged with the issues facing Islam at the time of the first Gulf War and the fatwa against Rushdie, before the post-9/11 Muslim turn. As early as 1990 in the essay ‘Deutschland – Heimat für Turken?: Ein Plädoyer für die Überwindung der Krise zwischen Okzident und Orient’, he warns of the emergence of Islam as a trouble spot in German and European society and looks to the Islamic past of Al-Andalus and the Anatolia of the Seljuq dynasty for examples of tolerance. In the essay ‘Ingenieure des Glaubens: Kritische Anmerkungen zum gegenwärtigen Islam’ (1993) too, Şenocak criticises both Orientalist prejudices that continue to shape many non-Muslim Germans’ perceptions of Islam, such as lack of intellectual power and incapability of change, but also contemporary fundamentalist manifestations of the religion that serve only to support such stereotypes. As he would go on to reiterate in his following essay collections, Şenocak asserts here:

> Es gilt vor allem, den Pluralismus im Islam sowie die freiheitlichen und aufklärerischen Tendenzen wiederzuentdecken, die auch die europäische Renaissance maßgeblich beeinflußten.

As a strategy to undermine the current view of Islam as irrational, backward and inconsequential for European culture, Şenocak repeatedly emphasises the role Islamic intellectuals played in laying the foundations for the European Enlightenment, and this is perhaps partly why Şenocak does not reject the Enlightenment outright in his essays, but

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276 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, pp. 10-5.
277 Ibid., p. 15.
rather acknowledges its limitations.

Much research has hitherto focused on Şenocak’s essays at the expense of his poetry, reflecting the predominant view of him as a public intellectual – an imbalance I aim to redress through my reading of Übergang, which so far has been analysed by Yeşilada (2003) and Erika M. Nelson (2008), who both focus only on a small number of poems and disregard the collection’s religious dimension. Both, however, stress that Şenocak is first and foremost a poet, and I agree that his complex poetry merits further consideration. Despite receiving much scholarly attention, particularly from Anglophone Germanists, Şenocak has not enjoyed the commercial success of some of his Turkish-German contemporaries. Many of his books are now out of print and difficult to acquire, and the relative commercial success of his essay collections in comparison to his fiction contributes to the uneven picture of his oeuvre. He received the Chamisso-Preis in 1988 for his poetry, yet unlike Zaimoglu, for example, who continues to shock and generate interest within Germany, Şenocak has perhaps been more enthusiastically received outside of the Federal Republic – between 1996 and 2003 he was invited by various colleges and literary establishments across the US to act as writer in residence and the first edited volume devoted to his work was published in Great Britain (Cheesman and Yeşilada, 2003).

This discrepancy between academic recognition and profitability could be due to the many references Şenocak makes to Turkish and Islamic culture and history that would be inaccessible to many Germans, or perhaps because Şenocak’s understanding of culture and identity is so very challenging. In this regard, he is often more in step with Anglophone academia’s rejection of compartmentalised and coherent cultures, as opposed to the insistence

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278 This is partly due to space constraints, but also because Yeşilada only had access to a selection of new poems (published in the same edited volume as her chapter), many of which would later feature in Übergang.

upon multiculturalism or intercultural encounters more prevalent in Germany. It is through the lens of Nancy’s deconstruction of monotheism and critique of subjectivity that I will explore the complex notions of culture, identity and Islam in both his essays and the poetry collection Übergang, exploring how his poetic writing dismantles many of the binaries that maintain the separation of Islam and the West, whilst also highlighting the tensions that arise between Şenocak’s essayistic and poetic writing.

The poetry collection Psalmen by SAID will similarly be discussed in relation to its contribution to debates surrounding Islam in Germany. SAID was twice exiled from Iran, once escaping Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi and once again fleeing from Khomeini, and a large part of his work recounts the terror of these despotic regimes and the difficulties of the migratory experience, acting as a pedagogical tool for the German audience. His political activism led him to participate in the ‘68er student movement in Germany as the general secretary of the Confederation of Iranian Students’ National Union, and his work continues to be politically engaged. From fear of assassination by the Iranian authorities, he publishes under his first name only (normally written in block capitals) and initially would only use childhood photos on the sleeves of his books in order to avoid recognition. His fiction consists of radio plays, poetry (often about love, in contrast to his other more typically exilic writing), imagined conversations, short stories and children’s literature. Furthermore, he has also published autobiographical essays, essays on literature, diary entries and transcribed interviews. Wo ich sterbe ist meine Fremde (1987), for example, is a collection of poems about love and exile, and Der lange Arm der Mullahs: Notizen aus meinem Exil (1995), is, in Thomas Baginski’s words,

a hybrid poetic construct consisting of poetry, letters, political commentary,

eyewitness reports, imagined conversations with dead friends, censored news items, never-before-published political information and statistical reports, and personal reflections in diary form.\textsuperscript{282}

In \textit{Der lange Arm der Mullahs}, SAID writes of the loneliness of a life in exile, the death of friends and fellow activists, and his inability to effect political change in his native Iran from Germany. The real danger of assassination becomes apparent here, as SAID recounts on 17 October 1992: ‘In Berlin wurden vier iranische Oppositionelle – darunter drei Führer der Demokratischen Partei Kurdistsans im Iran – ermordet.’\textsuperscript{283}

He was elected president of the German PEN (Poets, Essayists, Novelists) association in 2000, the first time in its history that a non-German citizen has held the organisation’s highest office,\textsuperscript{284} and although he has won various prestigious awards for his writing, such as the Chamisso-Preis in 2002, there is a distinct lack of scholarly research into SAID’s work, perhaps because the field has moved on from the didactic writing of the first generation, or because academics have tended to focus on Turkish-German writing only. Yet \textit{Psalmen}, I will argue, is a sophisticated literary offering worthy of our attention, in which not only the distinction between separate religions is blurred, but also those between poetry and prayer, hinting at a world where the divine is felt without acting as a guiding principle – a point Nancy makes in the essay ““Prayer Demythified”” from \textit{Dis-Enclosure}, in which prayer becomes an act of opening towards the unknown. The collection therefore shares the aims of Şenocak’s demand for a true ‘west-östlichen Divan’ that would radically destabilise identities.

Like Şenocak, I do not view these poems as an attempt to reconcile Islam with the West, be it through a naïve and ahistorical understanding of the so-called Abrahamic discourse, or by attempting to make orthodox Islam more compatible with Western

\textsuperscript{284} Baginski, ‘SAID (1947-)’, p. 442.
modernity’s Enlightenment grand narratives. Rather, these authors leave the void created by God’s withdrawal as organising principle empty, focusing instead on the heterogeneity of the here and now. Although Nancy challenges the concept of the immanent individual, he nevertheless regards the world as such, in that it is the only world and our single source of meaning. He therefore has a materialist (or even bodily) view of the world as the space in which being can occur and meanings can circulate. In Ian James’s words, it is a ‘conceptualisation of space as spatial-temporal unfolding, or opening of an intelligible world’, by which he means a world in which our interactions are meaningful before we attribute a specific signification to them. The immanentist tradition of Sufism is central to my interpretations, because its conflation of the sacred and the profane constitutes a similarly non-dualist view of the world. This is equally important in terms of creating space for the eroticism and sexuality forbidden by more orthodox manifestations of Islam that can be found in these poems, which can be regarded as cosmopolitan contributions to the post-9/11 debates surrounding Islam in Germany.

‘[E]s kostet Sinn und Zeit / die Sphären zu einen’: Self and Other, and Heaven and Earth in Zafer Şenocak’s Übergang

Şenocak’s Understanding of Identity and Culture

Ich habe versucht zu zeigen, dass das, was “dazwischen” ist, immer im Innern passiert, im Innern von einem selbst. Da ist das Gebrochene oder das Vielfältige, nicht zwischen den konstruierten Gruppen oder Figuren, die gegeneinander stehen etwa wie Fussballmannschaften [sic].

The above quotation, taken from an interview with Cheesman, highlights how Şenocak often

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285 The Neo-Ottomanist Islam of contemporary Turkey appears to be very compatible with modernity’s capitalist manifestations, for example.
287 Ibid., p. 65.
288 Cheesman, “‘Einfach eine neue Form’”, p. 22.
unsettles notions of immanent identities in favour of an understanding of identity as both heterogeneous and fragmentary – by this I mean not only that identity is composed of various parts, but, similar to Nancy’s concept of identity as a mêlée, that it also avoids completion.\(^{289}\)

In terms of his conceptualisation of identity, Şenocak’s notion of a ‘negative Hermeneutik’, first mentioned in the essay ‘Der Dichter und die Deserteure: Rushdie und seine Satanischen Verse zwischen den Fronten’ (1992), has attracted the most scholarly attention, mainly for its resistance to the homogenising and stabilising drive of the intercultural paradigm.\(^{290}\) Şenocak advocates here that we stop trying to understand and pin down the other in our own terms and instead focus on that which resists our understanding,\(^{291}\) showing evidence of a direct engagement with Theodor W. Adorno’s concept of the ‘Nichtidentische’ from *Negative Dialektik* (1966):\(^{292}\)

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\text{Da aber jene Totalität sich gemäß der Logik aufbaut, deren Kern der Satz vom ausgeschlossenen Dritten bildet, so nimmt alles, was ihm nicht sich einfügt, alles qualitativ Verschiedene, die Signatur des Widerspruchs an. Der Widerspruch ist das Nichtidentische unter dem Aspekt der Identität; der Primat des Widerspruchsprinzips in der Dialektik mißt das Heterogene am Einheitsdenken.}\(^{293}\)

Thus, whereas Adorno places emphasis on human nature’s suppression of alterity in its drive for unity in order to challenge capitalism’s fetishistic system of exchange value, Şenocak deploys the same argument in order to critique the idea of clear-cut identities and the dialectic

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\(^{291}\) Şenocak, *War Hitler Araber?*, p. 28.

\(^{292}\) An engagement with the work of the Frankfurt School was also raised in his interview with Matthias Konzett: Konzett and Şenocak, p. 131; and further evidence of a direct engagement with this philosophy is found in the title essay of *War Hitler Araber?*, which asks: 'Ein aufgeklärter Europäer kann Saddam Hussein natürlich nicht sein. Doch war Hitler Araber?'; Şenocak, *War Hitler Araber?*, p. 66. Here, Şenocak adopts the same counter-Enlightenment stance as Max Horkheimer and Adorno in the opening passage of *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (1944), which argues that the Enlightenment, whilst dispelling older myths and dogmata, has now become dogma itself.

of the intercultural paradigm. This prominence afforded to the unknown, and hence the inappropriable, places the religiosity of his work in opposition to the DIK’s Enlightenment production of knowable, predictable, and thus integratable, subjects.

Şenocak would later continue his rejection of integration in the essay ‘Die atonale Welt: Wieviel Vielfalt ertragen wir?’ (2011), asserting: ‘Wir brauchen keine Einheit’. This opposition to homogenisation, indebted, at least partly, to the Frankfurt School, can be further illuminated by Nancy’s non-foundationalism. Indeed, homogenisation is also problematic for Nancy, as its drive towards unity is inherently violent and founded upon an understanding of both the subject and the community as immanent and coherent. Rather than the foundation of communal fusion, Nancy understands identity as heterogeneity and differentiation, with an emphasis on singularity rather than individualisation. Such thinking can illuminate Şenocak’s position, which, I would argue, differs from the incommensurable difference between individuals espoused by Levinas, Derrida and Lyotard without resorting to either the dualistic approach of interculturalism, or to the atomising approach of individualisation. This complex notion of identity, which already quite clearly resists the dualism of the intercultural paradigm, will be first analysed in Şenocak’s essays, and then in the poetry collection Übergang, which I will interpret as subverting the binary oppositions of both Self and Other, and heaven and earth in favour of an immanent world, whose meaning does not come from outside, but rather from the being-in-common of its inhabitants. In this regard, Übergang can be viewed in connection with Şenocak’s cosmopolitan call for a new ‘west-östlichen Divan’ that would destabilise the Islam/West dichotomy.

In the essay ‘Das Unbehagen am Kulturbegriff’ (1993), Şenocak once again rejects the binary opposition of Self and Other that sees judgement of other cultures through comparison with one’s own. Yet, although Şenocak argues that, when defining the other,

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‘unsere Sprachen unbrauchbar sind’, he nevertheless calls for a different approach to our relationship with the other, rather than an insistence upon its ultimate futility:

Wir sind gezwungen eine neue Sprache zu schaffen, gemeinsam mit den Anderen [...]. Wir können uns nicht wie in der Wissenschaft auf Fakten und eine eingebildete Objektivität stützen. Aber auch der Begriff der Subjektivität erscheint uns untauglich zu sein, da wir uns nicht mehr über den anderen definieren können, also unsere überlieferte Identität aufgelöst haben. Auch die dialektische Methode, mit der wir Standpunkte festlegen, ist unbrauchbar geworden, weil Gegensätze als solche nicht mehr auszumachen sind.

This thinking beyond subjectivity and criticism of the dialectic of identity again belies an engagement with Adorno, but it can be further elucidated by Nancy’s concept of the mêlée. Just as Nancy describes our being-with in terms of the spacing and constantly shifting relations of ever-changing singular beings, so too does Şenocak propose an alternative way of relating to the other in terms of curiosity, acknowledgment and acquaintance that all involve the sharing of space, rather than understanding and labelling:


However, this stance is paradoxically contradicted in the same essay which, whilst continuing Şenocak’s critique of subjectivity, seems also to argue for a ‘positive hermeneutics’. The emphasis on language and knowledge as the root of understanding in

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295 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 62.
296 Ibid., p. 62.
297 Ibid., p. 64.
‘Das Unbehagen am Kulturbegriff’ hints at a Gadamerian understanding of hermeneutics, and it takes on a particularly universalist tone in the spirit of Gadamer as Şenocak argues for an orientation of the self ‘am Horizont, dort wo dieser sich mit dem Horizont des Anderen verschmelzen kann’, calling to mind Gadamer’s notion of Horizonverschmelzung that forms the methodological basis of the intercultural paradigm. With this term, Gadamer argues that common ground (that is to say, some form of unity) can be found through a hermeneutical dialogue during which different perspectives ‘fuse’, leading to a shift towards universal understanding without ever reaching completion. This clashes both with the ‘negative Hermeneutik’ of Şenocak’s preceding essay, in which non-understanding without judgement is prioritised, and also with Nancy’s similar rejection of the Self/Other binary that informs my methodology. In this regard, Nancy argues that, when viewed in the terms of a dichotomy, the ‘other is no longer an other, but an object of a subject’s representation’, and thus the other loses its alterity. As James indicates, the subject seen in this way ‘remains intact and subsumes all excess to itself rather than being undone in the exposure to an excess it cannot master or appropriate’.

Nevertheless, despite his wavering between these positions, Şenocak consistently argues against clearly defined and stable cultural and subjective boundaries in other essays and, as I will demonstrate, evokes this complexity of identity in his poetry. For instance, in the essay ‘Mein erster Türke in Deutschland – ein Fremder: Über das Markieren von Grenzen’ (2011), Şenocak again advocates a shift in our understanding of culture that arguably cannot be adequately explained by the dualist notion of the intercultural encounter and the paradigm of the absolute individual:

Ihr [die Bürgergesellschaften] Atom ist der Bürger, das Individuum, das wiederum in zahllosen einander nicht gleichende Teilchen zerfällt. Diese

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298 Ibid.
300 James, pp. 184-85.
Teilchen sind in ständiger Bewegung, berühren und verändern einander.\(^{301}\)

Just as, according to Adelson, *Futuristenepilog* is ‘more about being all in pieces than wanting to make things whole again’,\(^{302}\) so Übergang too suggests an incoherent sense of both the self and community. Rather than opposing sides, this vocabulary of atoms and particles resonates with Nancy’s description of the *clinamen* of singular beings:

> [O]ne cannot make a world with simple atoms. There has to be a *clinamen*. There has to be an inclination or an inclining from one toward the other, of one by the other, or from one to the other. Community is at least the *clinamen* of the “individual.”\(^{303}\)

This term, borrowed from Lucretius, reminds us that even atoms do not exist in isolation, but swerve towards each other in unpredictable ways, just as singular beings are ‘spread out and shared along lines of force, of cleavage, of twisting, of chance, whose network makes up their being-in-common’.\(^{304}\) I would therefore contend that David N. Coury is mistaken to argue that Şenocak ‘promotes the autonomy of the individual’\(^{305}\) in the essay collection *Deutschsein: eine Aufklärungsschrift* (2011). Rather, in the passage from ‘Deutschsein am Bosporus: Über die Vieldeutigkeit von Identität’ which Coury discusses, Şenocak refers to identity as the ‘Keimzelle einer Öffnung nach außen’,\(^{306}\) suggesting, as he does in his poetry, that individual autonomy is limited when it comes to the aspects of culture that make up our fragmentary identity. Şenocak does not argue, then, that we become, in the image of Alexander von Humboldt, autonomous individuals who impose our will upon the world, but

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\(^{301}\) Şenocak, *Deutschsein*, pp. 145-46.


\(^{303}\) Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, pp. 3-4.

\(^{304}\) Ibid., p. 75.


\(^{306}\) Şenocak, *Deutschsein*, p. 105.
rather that we seek to act as a ‘Humboldt für das Innere’,\(^\text{307}\) in order to discover the heterogeneous nature of the self – a task he earlier associated with the writing of the Turkish Sufi poet Yunus Emre, as I discuss in the following section.

**Islam in Şenocak’s Writing**

In the essay ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’, Islam forms a central part of Şenocak’s discussion of identity, and the same subatomic terminology is used:

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\text{Orient, Okzident, Islam und Christentum, Tradition und Moderne begegnen sich bestenfalls in Museen oder anachronistischen Veranstaltungen. Was Menschen heute prägt [...] ist ein Gemisch, eine Legierung aus den vielen versprengten Teilchen kultureller Entitäten, die nicht einmal geographisch eindeutig lokalisierbar sind.}\(^\text{308}\)
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Şenocak’s more recent essays consistently place Islam at the centre of today’s identity conflicts, and an engagement with the religion also lies at the heart of Übergang. These poems emerged after 9/11, during the same time as Şenocak’s essay collection on Islam *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, and can thus be regarded as part of the Muslim turn. That this essay collection is solely devoted to the topic of Islam is evidence of Şenocak’s increased engagement with the topic at this time, and together with his comments on Islam elsewhere it can provide a useful inroad into the symbolism and themes of this hermetic poetry. In ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’ in particular, Şenocak seems to evoke his poetry collection from the same year:

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\text{Jede Grenze trennt und verbindet zugleich, sie kann Schranke sein, aber auch Übergang. Längst leben wir in einer Welt, in der nicht das Trennende, sondern das Verbindende schmerzt.}\(^\text{309}\)
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The border as barrier (*Schranke*) can be associated with the inherent violence involved in defending the supposed purity of a community (or of the self) from cross-border


\(^{308}\) Şenocak, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, p. 33.

contamination, whereas the concept of a transition (Übergang) contains the idea of a border that acts as a point of transformative contact, inviting comparisons with Nancy’s understanding of the interrelatedness of singular beings and the mêlée of culture. These cultural ‘Übergänge’ (transitions, crossovers or shifts) are central to the poetry collection under analysis here, which touches upon migratory, historical, political, generational and, perhaps most prominently, religious transitions.

Yeşilada rightly argues: ‘Das Ich ist unterwegs in Şenocak’s neuester Lyrik, so wie ein Derwisch auf Wanderschaft’; and she equally views the ‘wandering dervish’ as an important motif in Şenocak’s pre-9/11 poetry collections Flammentropfen (1985) and Ritual der Jugend (1987), which are also influenced by Sufism. This exploration of the self in Übergang is also certainly inspired by his engagement with the dervish poet Emre, whose work he has translated, and whose writing he describes as ‘ein befremdeter Blick auf das Eigene’. The fragmentary nature of the self in Emre’s writing is rendered more radical still by debates as to whether ‘he’ existed as a person at all, or whether he was in fact a brand, a de-individualised poetic voice. Although this has not influenced Şenocak’s understanding of him, it still nevertheless serves to emphasise and intensify the singular-plural nature of the writing process. Übergang is, then, part of an engagement with Islamic mysticism that began in his earlier writing. Yet it is also different, as its poems, arguably in response to the post-9/11 situation, are more critical of orthodox Islam, and their demand to rediscover and creatively engage with the Islamic culture of the past more urgent.

310 Şenocak accuses Germans of having this mindset in the essay ‘Ein Türke geht nicht in die Oper’: Şenocak, Atlas des tropischen Deutschland, pp. 20-30.
314 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, p. 30-31.
315 Colin Imber, ‘Who, or where, or which, or what is Yunus Emre? A note on a national poet’ [unpublished manuscript].
Despite taking inspiration from medieval Sufis, Şenocak does not advocate a return to the middle ages or essentialise Islamic culture. Rather, his writing creatively reworks this neglected area of the Islamic canon in order to rethink religiosity for a postmodern present that is sceptical of true interpretations. Just as Nancy criticises the nostalgic, Rousseauistic tendency to try and recuperate a community’s lost immanence that never was, Şenocak, in the essay ‘Islam übersetzen’ (2003), does not advocate the ‘Glorifizierung ferner Zeiten’, but rather pleads for the inventive reinterpretation of religious sources, thereby preventing religion from stagnating into thoughtless ritual.316 Here, he makes a compelling case for the necessary ambiguity of religious texts, arguing that those who regard their interpretation as the absolute truth place themselves above God. Whereas truth is godly, ‘[d]er Mensch aber ist ein nach Wahrheit suchender’.317 Just as the sense of the world is in a state of constant transformation and circulation according to Nancy, so too can Islam and other religions allow themselves (to borrow Şenocak’s terminology) to be ‘translated’ for the present through a singularised religiosity, open to various intimations of the divine. Übergang can thus be understood as paying heed to early Islam’s more permeable cultural boundaries, in order to allow for an eclecticism of divine sources that would lead to intellectual and spiritual renewal with significance for German and Islamic culture, which, as I hope to demonstrate, are not mutually exclusive. Just as Şenocak’s notion of a negative hermeneutics invites us to reconsider our cultural standpoint in the absence of a defining Other, this exploration of pre-modern Islam revisits an era when the religion was more open and not so preoccupied with defining itself in opposition to other religions.

Littler has focused on Şenocak’s engagement with Islam, in his prose work rather than his poetry, interpreting Der Erottomane as a rediscovery of the eroticism that forms part of

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316 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, pp. 54-5.
317 Ibid., p. 56-7.
Islamic mysticism and arguing that religion is part of the material rather than the metaphysical world in the Der Pavillon (2009, published originally in Turkish in 2008), just as it is in Islamic mysticism. Similarly, I have brought Nancy’s deconstruction of monotheism (in which the divine is regarded as the otherness in the world, as opposed to residing in an other world) into contact with the Sufi immanentist tradition. This allows for a religiosity that maintains the circulation of sense and meaning within the material world, rather than acting as its guiding principle from beyond. Such a non-identitarian religiosity also comes through in poetry of Übergang, as the divine is glimpsed in the natural world and passionate human relationships, and also as the wandering dervish motif conveys a religiosity tinged with doubt that does not, or even cannot possess an endpoint, but rather derives its creativity from a continuous state of change and openness. Thus, in Übergang, neither the self nor the world has a symbolic Other against which to define itself dialectically, allowing the sense of the world to be its own ever-changing circulations of meaning. This notion of cultural and religious identity found in Übergang is resolutely outside of binary oppositions and can therefore be regarded as a radical attempt to bring Goethe’s West-östlicher Divan up to date with the contemporary debates surrounding identity, Islam and the West, to which Nancy’s singular-plural ontology and concept of the deconstruction of monotheism have made a considerable theoretical contribution.

House or Fortress?: Identity and the Self in Übergang

Although wordplay and structure are important aspects of Şenocak’s poetry, the key to understanding it lies in its complex imagery. The house is a reoccurring yet ambiguous symbol throughout Şenocak’s work, and Übergang is no exception. Yeşilada views the house

as language in these poems,\textsuperscript{320} yet I interpret it more broadly as symbolising the instability of the self and its identity,\textsuperscript{321} which is, of course, profoundly affected by language, as Nelson demonstrates with her discussion of the polysemy within the collection.\textsuperscript{322} The house is equally tied to identity in \textit{Gefährliche Verwandtschaft}, as a writer called Zafer (a fictionalised Şenocak perhaps) refers to Turkishness as ‘nur ein Fenster mehr in dem Haus, das ich in Deutschland und in der deutschen Sprache aufgebaut hatte’.\textsuperscript{323} Adelson also comments on the use of domestic spaces in \textit{Der Mann im Unterhemd} (1995), again linking notions of language and identity:

The house of words through which we move here diverges significantly from the more familiar trope of language as \textit{Heimat} that has shaped much of the discussion on Turco-German literature to date. This house of words is both particular and transnational. The phantasmic space of this German culture suggests analytical alternatives to the presumption of an all too rigid Turkish-German divide.\textsuperscript{324}

Similarly, the house is never stable and coherent in \textit{Übergang}.

Poem II of the cycle ‘Übergang’ (Ü, p. 10), one of many to contain the house metaphor, begins by evoking migration:

\begin{verbatim}
  schau auf die Landkarte
  und such dir ein behagliches Haus
  alles Leben endet auf einmal dort
\end{verbatim}

However, the house’s foundations turn out to be unstable, suggesting a loss of grounding:

\begin{verbatim}
  viel später wirst du feststellen
  daß es das Land nicht mehr gibt
  auf dem dein Haus steht
  dein Grundbuch wird angezweifelt
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{320} Yeşilada, ‘Poetry on its Way’, p. 117.
\textsuperscript{321} Just as Şenocak references Freud in the essay title ‘Das Unbehagen am Kulturbegriff’, his house metaphor is also perhaps alluding to Freud’s quote on the instability of the self, ‘daß das Ich nicht Herr sei in seinem eigenen Haus’: Sigmund Freud, ‘Eine Schwierigkeit der Psychoanalyse’, \textit{Imago: Zeitschrift für Anwendung der Psychoanalyse auf die Geisteswissenschaften}, 5 (1917), 1-7 (p. 7).
\textsuperscript{322} Nelson, pp. 172-73.
\textsuperscript{324} Adelson, ‘Against Between’, p. 141.
On one level, this can be understood in literal geological terms: the land on which the house was built is unstable. Yet, if the house is taken to mean the self, then this instability is brought about by the political and cultural fluxes that call the legitimacy of fixed identities into question. It is left ambiguous whether post-war Germany, post-Wall Germany, the dissolved Ottoman Empire, or even the recent transformations reshaping contemporary Turkey is meant here as the country (Land) that has disappeared, and it could equally be a general reference to the constant changes that every state and culture undergo. Just as Nancy describes this situation in his concept of the mêlée, Şenocak also generalises this state of affairs for his ‘negative Hermeneutik’:

Wir sind alle mit einer Tabula rasa konfrontiert, einer Situation, in der wir unsere Herkunft, unsere Erinnerungen, unsere Erbschaft neu betrachten und neu ausdrücken müssen[...]. Wir sind darauf angewiesen, uns mit einer Art von Zeichensprache325 zu verständigen.326

This non-foundational thinking is suggested throughout the collection and is significant in relation to the recent debates surrounding Islam and the West, since it radically destabilises such oppositional positions.

In the cycle ‘Vor der Festung’, the open house is contrasted with the fortress, a term Şenocak has used to critique rigid notions of identity and ideology in his essays,327 although he suggests the house can become fortified in this way too in the collection of aphorisms ‘Jenseits der Landessprache’ (2001): ‘Das Denken wird zum Haus, in dem man sich versammelt, sich verbündet und von dem aus man gemeinsam singt und schießt.’328 A positive evaluation of the house comes to the fore in the cycle’s third poem (Ü, p. 64), as the poetic persona must use varying keys to open his house, built from ‘ungleichem Holz’. Here, Şenocak ridicules the idea that, just because he has no traditional feelings of Heimat towards

325 The term ‘Zeichensprache’ could refer to Turkey’s abolition of the Arabic script in 1928, a theme that also emerges in Übergang.
326 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 63.
327 Şenocak, Deutschsein, p. 175.
328 Şenocak, Zungenentfernung, p. 87.
Germany or Turkey, he has no home: ‘niemand bemerkt daß ich ein und ausgehe / glaubt man doch ich sei nirgendwo zuhause’. Thus, in his use of the house metaphor as opposed to the fortress, Şenocak suggests a less defensive idea of culture, identity and ultimately subjectivity. One is neither imprisoned within an identity, nor must one defend it against intruders. Identity is, rather, a house made of varying materials and open to different visitors (as is also the case in Poem XV of ‘Übergang’), indicating the heterogeneous nature of identity and the laceration of subjectivity that constitutes our being-with. This ontological openness also comes to the fore though the domestic symbolism in Poem XII of ‘Wechselnde Lichtverhältnisse’ (Ü, p. 83), in which a couple make love on a balcony in a precarious situation with one leg suspended off it, echoing Nancy’s destabilising idea of love as a ‘beyond the self’.

\[329\] ‘sie machte die fenster auf / ich machte sie zu / wir liebten uns auf dem Balkon / mit einem Bein in der Leere’.

Returning to Poem III of ‘Übergang’, an eerie sense of foreboding emerges towards its end, as dead relatives return: ‘denn sie kommen nur für eine Nacht / kommen nur um mich zu holen / bevor mein Haus abbrennt’. The final line evokes the arson attacks experienced by migrants in Germany in the ‘90s and causes the reader to reassess the whole poem. It is people such as Şenocak, who chip away at the fortress of German identity and seek to undermine clear-cut ideas of culture altogether, who provoke such nationalist scorn.

Furthermore, a wooden house built of varying timbers suggests not only heterogeneity and haphazard construction, but also German forest cabins (an image also present in Poem XIII of ‘Übergang’) and the traditional wooden houses of the Ottoman period, such as those found in the Süleymaniye district of Istanbul, again creating ambiguity between national narratives. The destruction of this house therefore also comes to represent the purging of particular aspects of German/Turkish culture – a theme that is found throughout the collection, often

\[329\] Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 84.
expressed through arboreal imagery, though here perhaps through the dead relatives too.

If houses symbolise identity and the self in Übergang, trees convey the idea of the varying ‘Teilchen kultureller Entitäten’ that make up an identity within the cultural mêlée, which Poem XIII of ‘Übergang’ (Ü, p. 21) evokes. The first three stanzas read:

ich habe meinen Frieden geschlossen
meinen höchst privaten
jeden anderen ausschließenden Frieden

von meiner Hütte aus
sehe ich auf ein Rudel Rehe
das den Schutz der Bäume sucht
dort wo es keine Bäume gibt

die Jägersprache ist voller Fremdwörter
und an der Wasserstelle erinnert nichts mehr
an den ausgestorbenen Wolf

The opening stanza speaks of the poet’s isolation, but also his inner peace. The quintessentially German imagery of the forest cabin (a timber structure like in Poem III of ‘Übergang’) locates the poet as part of German culture, yet I do not read the poem’s symbolism as a comment on Şenocak’s loneliness in a ‘foreign’ land. Rather, I view it, on the one hand, as a comment on the cultural situation in Germany after the so-called ‘Stunde null’, when pre-war German culture became contaminated by association with the Nazi regime — a topic Şenocak discusses in the essay ‘Dichter ohne Lieder: Ein Exkurs in die deutsche Nachkriegslyrik’ (2011). Şenocak has commented that seeing Bavarians in their national dress for the first time reminded him of huntsmen, and thus this foreign ‘Jägersprache’ could hint at Şenocak’s own migration to Munich as a child. However, it equally alludes to the broader context of the ‘68ers’ uneasy relationship with German national culture. In the essay ‘Gebrochen Deutsch: Die Sondersprache der Deutschen’ (2011), Şenocak states: ‘Die Brüchigkeit ist und bleibt der bestimmende Identitätsfaktor der Deutschen, die durch die

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330 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, p. 33.
331 Şenocak, Deutschsein, pp. 75-85.
332 Ibid., p. 11.
Überwindung der deutschen Teilung keineswegs verschwunden ist’; and he argues that if more Germans were less ashamed of German culture, then ‘Berührungspunkte’ with Islamic culture might be rediscovered, such as Rainer Maria Rilke’s and Goethe’s engagement with the Qur’an and Sufi poetry.

This poem can, however, also be interpreted in the Turkish context of Kemalist secularism, and this symbolism of trees and shade is indeed found in a religious context in the poetic text ‘Gespräch über Bäume’ from Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, in which someone is trying to cut down a tree because it is sick, but someone else is sitting in it to be closer to God. The wolf at the watering hole (a cultural reservoir perhaps) that has been hunted to extinction then becomes a reference to Turkey’s founding myth of the grey wolf who is mother of the Turkic peoples, and the deer searching for trees can thus be understood as the people of Turkey who have been denied access to their pre-Kemalist identity and are thus faced with a similar tabula rasa to the ‘68ers, although not through their own doing. ‘[D]ie Jägersprache ist voller Fremdwörter’, just as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s secularising reforms were taken from the Western paradigms of the Enlightenment and forced upon Turkey – an ironic turn of phrase, as Atatürk attempted to rid the Turkish language of the many Persian and Arabic loanwords that were common in Ottoman Turkish.

Thus, whilst criticising historical situations in which cultural aspects with the potential for creative reworking were removed or ignored, this poem also puts such a reworking into practice by ambiguously conflating the ruptures in German post-Nazi and Turkish post-Kemalist culture. In this regard, Şenocak argues for a wider ‘Erinnerungshorizont’, ‘der uns hinter unsere Berührungssängste führen könnte’. Yet, rather than Gadamer’s concept of Horizontverschmelzung, which suggests stasis and immanence,

333 Ibid., p. 28.
334 Nelson also sees Rilke’s influence in the domestic symbolism of Übergang: Nelson, p. 165.
335 Şenocak, Deutschsein, p. 33.
336 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, pp. 77-8.
337 Konzett and Şenocak, p. 135.
the notion of ‘Berührung’ implies both an intimacy and vulnerability, and also an openness to
difference and the capacity for shifting identifications – what Adelson refers to as ‘touching
tales’ that ‘commingle cultural developments and historical references generally not thought
to belong together in any proper sense’.338 This idea of touching tales can be located in the
ambiguity of these poems, and correspond with Şenocak’s call to rethink the West-östlicher
Divan. As Nelson argues, Übergang is ‘layered and multivalent with poetic images and
symbols that refer back to both well-known and lesser-known German, Turkish and
international models’.339 These creative connections can also be linked with Gefährliche
Verwandtschaft, although it could be argued that Sascha’s decision to imagine ancestral
connections with German Erbschuld when confronted with his grandfather’s unintelligible
diaries makes a work of identity in order to create a new foundation, just as the Kemalists
adopted aspects of European modernisms and the ‘68ers defined themselves against the
German culture that supposedly contributed culturally towards the Sonderweg to Nazism.

Şenocak acknowledges the attraction of stability in ‘Die atonale Welt’:

Menschen brauchen Fundamente. Fundamente bieten das Gefühl der
Kontinuität und die Sicherheit der Wiedererkennung [...]. Dem gleichen
Prinzip folgt der Hausbau. Ein Stück Erde wird zum Eigenen. Die eigenen
vier Wände markieren Grenzen nach außen, verleihen Intimität und
verschaffen Zugehörigkeit nach innen.340

Yet he also criticises this need, associating it with nationhood and capitalism. Unlike the
aforementioned operative communities, however, Übergang creatively engages with
historical circumstances to make touching tales that, much like Nancy’s concept of the mêlée,
are ambiguous and lead to fleeting connections, rather than the stability and fusion of
Horizontverschmelzung. This is arguably because, in Übergang, the house not only marks a
boundary to the outside, but also contains doors and windows to allow movement in and out.

338 Adelson, The Turkish Turn, p. 20.
340 Şenocak, Deutschsein, pp. 36-7.
These poems not only imply an open subjectivity, but their imaginative engagement with the past also creatively opens the boundaries of German and Turkish history – an idea that comes to the fore in Poem VI from ‘Vor der Festung’ (Ü, p. 67), which, paraphrasing Novalis, states: ‘Diese Geschichte steht nicht in Geschichtsbüchern. Nur der Dichter könnte sie erfinden.’ Such creative reworking of history through poetry allows for a plurality of voices and unsettles the East/West divide with respect to national cultures more radically than Goethe’s Divan, and, as demonstrated in the following section, it can equally undermine any stable sense of Islamic identity.

**Rootlessness and Turkey’s Lost Sufi Heritage**

Essays such as ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’ and the earlier ‘Das Schweigen der muslimischen Kultur’ suggest a reading of Poem XIII of ‘Übergang’, and those similar to it, as a lamentation of lost Sufi heritage in particular, which is further supported by its echoes of Friedrich Hölderlin’s poem ‘Lebensalter’ (1805), in which he too speaks of an estrangement from an Eastern religiousity:

Ihr Städte des Euphrats!
Ihr Gassen von Palmyra!
Ihr Säulenwälder in der Ebene der Wüste!
Was seid ihr?
Euch hat die Kronen,
Dieweil ihr über die Grenze
Der Othmenden seid gegangen,
Von Himmlischen der Rauchdampf und
Hinweg das Feuer genommen;
Jetzt aber sitz ich unter Wolken (deren
Ein jedes eine Ruh hat eigen) unter
Wohleingerichteten Eichen, auf
Der Heide des Rehs, und fremd
Erscheinen und gestorben mir

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Both poems contain imagery of deers and trees, and both suggest a loss of divinity and the inaccessibility of past ages, which ties in with Şenocak’s efforts to halt Sufism’s drift into oblivion and demonstrate the value of ‘Berührungspunkte’ (or, indeed, ‘Übergänge’) between German and Islamic culture – Kermani too has referred to Hölderlin as ‘der Sufi der deutschen Literatur’.  

Thus, although identity is presented as unfixed and singular-plural in Übergang, its indefinable components are nevertheless vital cultural resources with the potential for creative reinterpretation, and while the ambiguous image of the tree (and later the rose) evokes rootedness and Şenocak’s poems and essays persuade us to return to Islam’s pre-modern ‘roots’, plants equally convey constant growth and transformation as part of this understanding of identity. Moreover, he suggests that these roots are not necessarily fixed in stable ground, as in poem XIV from the cycle ‘Spielsachen’ (1987):

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entrüstet euch
die Rose steht
aufrecht
ohne Erde
ohne Topf
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It is, therefore, important to distinguish in Übergang between the inoperative, non-foundational understanding of identity that leads to creative transformations and the operative eradication of apparently ‘malignant’ aspects of identity in order to establish a new foundation. Trees and identity are also linked in this way by Şenocak’s notion of a ‘tropical Germany’, and by a remark in the essay ‘Was hat Waldsterben mit multikultureller Gesellschaft zu tun?’ (1991) that links biological and cultural diversity, suggesting both are

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343 Navid Kermani, Dein Name (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2011), pp. 181-82.

necessary for future survival.\textsuperscript{345}

The imagery of rootlessness discussed in relation to lost Sufi heritage in the above poem reoccurs throughout the collection in the symbolism of, to mention a selection, a house with an extinguished fire (Ü, p. 11); ‘Erinnerungsfähren’ trapped in ice (Ü, p. 26), calling to mind Şenocak’s notion of a wider ‘Erinnerungshorizont’; and a broken Oriental lamp (Ü, p. 66). In the fifth poem from the cycle ‘Wechselnde Lichtverhältnisse’ (Ü, p. 76), this concept is expressed through the Sufi imagery of the rose:

\begin{quote}
auf den Spuren der verlorenen Rose
alle Entwurzelten sind sich darüber einig
es gibt diese spezielle Rose nicht
stattdessen Pfade im Verblühen
auf denen man sich selten trifft
\end{quote}

The rose as a Sufi symbol for God suggests here that Kemalists (the ‘Entwurzelten’) only see the negative orthodox side of Islam and ignore its more tolerant past. This situation is well documented in Şenocak’s essays, such as ‘Ingenieure des Glaubens’, in which he laments that the Kemalist mentality has impeded the reform of Islam from within its own ranks,\textsuperscript{346} and also ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’, in which he acknowledges how an engagement with Emre allowed him to make sense of conflicting aspects of his identity.\textsuperscript{347} However, this poem’s floral imagery equally hints at the elusive ‘blaue Blume’ and the ‘68ers’ rejection of Romanticism, made famous in their slogan: ‘Schlagt die Germanistik tot, färbt die blaue Blume rot’. In this case, the ‘Pfade im Verblühen’ can be read as the German \textit{Sonderweg}, towards which Romanticism is often seen as contributing through a (often misunderstood) sense of cultural nationalism. Just as Şenocak mentions those who dismiss aspects of German literature because of their supposed connection with Nazism, so his text ‘Gespräch über Bäume’ too hints at at Bertolt Brecht’s poem ‘An die Nachgeborenen’ (1939), written in

\textsuperscript{345} Şenocak, \textit{Atlas des tropischen Deutschland}, pp. 40-1.
\textsuperscript{346} Şenocak, \textit{War Hitler Araber?}, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{347} Şenocak, \textit{Das Land hinter den Buchstaben}, p. 30-1.
exile, in which apolitical poetry about nature (or, more broadly, ‘art for art’s sake’) is seen as shirking a vital pedagogical and political role that would tackle more important themes, such as the crimes of the Nazis. The simultaneous co-presence of different histories in Übergang is, then, also to be found in Şenocak’s essays, as the struggle to save supposedly sick trees in ‘Gespräch über Bäume’ evokes attempts to reconnect with both Sufi and pre-war German poetry. Yet Şenocak appears to be at odds with Brecht; his above poem contains hints (particularly through the images of the path and the rose) of the symbolist poet Stefan George’s ‘Komm in den todgesagten Park und schau’ (1897), which, like Şenocak’s poetry, utilises perplexing and ambiguous imagery that is perhaps easy to dismiss as apolitical – George also conflates human and divine love in his poetry, inspired by his idealised relationship with Maximilian Kronberger, a young poet who was part of his literary circle.348 Moreover, allusions to Hölderlin and Novalis mentioned above further exemplify the creative ‘Berührungspunkte’ that can emerge from this wider understanding of the German literary canon – a point that comes to the fore in the next chapter on Zaimoglu’s work and Romantic cosmopolitanism.

Similar to Şenocak’s call for a broader familiarity with the German canon, a wider understanding of the Islamic canon is also advocated in Übergang, echoing the view of the Postra Movement that seeks to expand conceptions of the Islamic canon to include dissidents and mystics. In this regard, rather than Kemalism or the ’68ers, the sixth poem from ‘Balladen aus dem Gedächtnis’ (Ü, p. 60) critically deals with Islamic orthodoxy, here in the context of the treatment of women:

als es keine verborgenen Stellen gab
wurde die Schrift erfunden am Frauenleib
keine Stelle blieb unbeschrieben
mit groben Fingern brachten Männer

This poem presents a forceful critique of patriarchy and also of resistance to creative interpretations of holy texts, both of which Şenocak associates with contemporary orthodox Islam. Here, just as God created Adam from clay, illiterate men create their own submissive dream-woman from the ashes of burnt books and cover her in a black veil, calling to mind with powerful imagery how the control men exert over women’s bodies is legitimised through a literal and foundational understanding of the Qur’an and the banning of heretical texts – a situation Şenocak criticises: ‘Die männlichen Muslime, so scheint es, verbrauchen ihre gesamte geistige Energie, um ihre Frauen zu hüten.’

In the Islamic context, this not only resonates with contemporary Islamic fundamentalism, but also with the reluctance within institutionalised Islam to reform itself that was contemporaneous with the birth of modern Turkey:

Nachdem man auf eine grundlegende Modernisierung der islamischen Religion verzichtete, jede Bindung zu ihr abreifen ließ, sah man sich gezwungen, die Moderne zu importieren wie ein Ersatzteil.  

However, the symbolism of book burning also invites parallels with the National Socialists too. Thus, not only Kemalists and the ‘68ers are ambiguously equated in Übergang, but also orthodox Muslims and Nazis, which also comes across through the imagery of the ‘Schneebart’ in Poem XVIII from ‘Übergang’(Ü, p 26), linking the Islamic rules on facial hair with Hitler’s metonymic ‘Schnurrbart’ through wintery imagery that suggests stasis.

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349 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, p. 37.
Similar to the rejection of Kemalism, the ‘68ers, orthodox Islam and Nazism expressed in the above poems, the first poem of ‘Vor der Festung’ (Ü, pp. 61-2) implies a more general resistance to ideology. Its second and third stanzas read:

es heißt
niemand sei so weit gekommen
irgendjemand weiß es immer besser
für ihn ist das Schicksal ein Stadtplan
darauf alles eingezeichnet
was das Leben zu bieten hat

Straßen die großen und die winzigen
untauglich für Versteckspiele
Gebäude denen man Namen gegeben hat
die Bahnhöfe immer in Rot
ist das die Farbe des Abschieds

The symbolism here hints at ideologies and operative communities as the ‘mapping out’ of the future, where the unsuitability of the streets for hide and seek implies a lack of space for manoeuvre, a reduction of possible meanings, and the named buildings hint at identity labels. Şenocak perhaps intended this as an argument against organised religions, which, as he puts it, always present a narrative ‘mit einem Anfang und einem Ende’, but it can equally be extended to all ideologies with their common wish to finish identities. This inflexibility is, however, contrasted in the second half of the poem, which emphasises creative thought, asking: ‘wo aber sind die Häuser / die wir nicht kennen’? In terms of Şenocak’s identity metaphors, this implies the imagining of new identities, which the dancer at the end of the poem embodies, in that his unpredictable movements reflect the constantly shifting relations of the inoperative community, the ideas of bodies in relation delineated in ‘Das Unbehagen am Kulturbegriff’, and also the whirling dervish:

hat es jemals den Versuch gegeben
der Spur der Augen zu folgen
dem Tänzer der zwischen uns kreist
mal ist er dir zugewandt mal mir

351 Şenocak, Deutschsein, p. 169.
This reference to the Dervish evokes a return to the lost Islamic past lamented in other poems from the collection, which forms a central theme throughout. Poem XXV of ‘Übergang’ (Ü, p. 33), for example advocates revisiting Islam’s past in order to better make sense of the present through the metaphor of childhood – here childhood positively implies the earlier, more tolerant Islam, as opposed to the colonial stereotype of the Oriental as childish and backward, and therefore unfit to run their own affairs. The last stanza tells of the re-examination of the past as a means of changing the present:

die Kindheit erinnern
um sich einzubilden
dort von Neuem zu beginnen
mit der Hoffnung anderswo zu enden

The final poem of ‘Übergang’ (Ü, p. 44) is also devoted to this theme:

die Kinder werden alt
und im hohen Alter
wieder Kinder
sie graben ihre Spielzeuge aus
verlassen ihre Häuser am Fluß
und fischen nach seltenen Wörtern
mit denen sie übersetzen können

Here, the ‘seltenen Wörten’ could be a reference to Turkey’s former Arabic script, implying the notion of utilising aspects of Sufism’s cultural heritage in order to reform or ‘translate’ a sense of Islam for the present. Alongside these lamentations of forgotten Sufi heritage and critiques of contemporary orthodox manifestations of Islam, evidence of a creative transformation of Islamic culture in practice can also be found in Übergang.
Translating Islam: Şenocak’s Religiosity beyond Monotheism

Poem XIV of the cycle ‘Wechselnde Lichtverhältnisse’ (Ü, p. 85) mirrors Poem VI from ‘Balladen aus dem Gedächtnis’, linking the body with scripture, although this poem is more of an implicit criticism of orthodoxy through a celebration of Sufism’s sensuality:

in diesem Schlaf
werden wir auf der Hut sein
so nahe wie möglich
am Körper des andern
kein Hauch zwischen den Häuten

beim Berühren
üben wir Träumen
die Haut ist das Papier
für die Schrift im Traum

Similar to Littler’s discussion of the eroticism of Şenocak’s prose, the sensual nature of the above poem can also be read as a new interpretation of the imagery of medieval divan poetry. Rather than the body as battleground, as site of male domination, gender is left ambiguous here and the body acts as a world-affirming source of holiness alternative to established religious texts. Moreover, this poem echoes the corporeality affirmed in ‘Das Unbehagen am Kulturbegriff’, in which the sharing of space is prioritised, rather than understanding through dialogue: ‘Wenn Sprachlose einander gegenüberstehen, sind sie auf ihre Sinne und auf ihren Körper angewiesen.’ In this regard, Şenocak not only explores how varying historical and cultural trajectories form touching tales, but also how people relate to one another intimately through touch.

Likewise, the fifth poem of ‘Übergang’ (Ü, p. 13) also conflates human and divine love:

ich sammle auf deine hie und da abgelegten Kleider
sehe deinen entblößten Körper vor mir um einen Pfahl kreisen
um den Pfahl eines Gemarterten
er hat dich angerufen und wurde gefesselt

Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 64.
will aber nicht preisen dein Sternbild in die Nacht hinein

The sexual imagery of a pole-dancer/whirling dervish twirling around ‘den Pfahl eines Gemarterten’ (perhaps alluding to the imagery of Jesus’ flagellation at the column) combines the sacred and the profane in contemporary imagery, just as the word ‘gefesselt’ ambiguously evokes both the martyr in chains and the feeling of being enamoured. The poem goes on to describe the distance and proximity that characterises the poet’s relationship with the dancer, which can also be understood in divine terms: ‘in jener Nacht warst du mir näher als deine Abwesenheit’. It finishes with the imagery of space exploration, similar to that found in ‘nâzım hikmet: auf dem schiff zum mars’, which implies both an overcoming of the heaven/earth binary and a religiosity with no fixed endpoint, whose meaning lies in the journey of discovery:

in meinem All bist du der einzige Planet
mein vertrautes lebensfremdes Irrlicht
für mich zwar noch nicht bewohnbar
doch mein einziger Landepunkt

The contemporaneity of this Sufi imagery is affirmed here, and the Kemalist narrative of scientific progress and modernity is ironically reworked. The reference to God as an ‘Irrlicht’ reinforces the significance of the journey, rather than the destination, as the light of the will-o’-the-wisp is said to recede as the follower approaches it, leading travellers astray. Similarly, the third poem of ‘Wechselnde Lichtverhältnisse’ (Ü, p. 74) sees the poet confronted with a path that branches out in various different directions, which can be viewed in terms of the spiritual journey of a wandering dervish. The centrality of doubt to belief is emphasised in these poems, and Şenocak stresses the importance of doubt for combating thoughtless ritual in the essay ‘Islam übersetzen’, which echoes Rushdie’s call to reinvigorate Islamic culture in ‘One Thousand Days in a Balloon’:

Die Wiederentdeckung menschlicher Bescheidenheit, des Zweifels, der Vergänglichkeit von Deutung und Interpretation sind Grundlagen eines
kritischen Denkens, das in der islamischen Kultur wieder etabliert werden müsste. Nur wer an seiner eigenen Deutung zweifelt, kann zur Erkenntnis gelangen.\textsuperscript{353}

This suggests that true holiness is lacking for those who regard belief as a fixed and with clear set of principles, whilst also removing the impetus for conflict between diverging spiritual identity choices. As Şenocak affirms: ‘Mich interessiert dabei auch nicht eine Antwort, ein Ergebnis, sondern der Weg, oft voller Umwege und Überraschungen.’\textsuperscript{354}

As in the above poems, the fourth poem of ‘Vor der Festung’ (Ü, p. 65) equally suggests a religiosity without a fixed meaning or endpoint. Here, the poet is searching for a volcano:

\begin{quote}
doch die Haut unter meiner Haut blieb unberührt
wie konnte ich wissen wie viele Häute ich hatte
ohne mich zu häuten
mich zu vermengen mit seinem Honig
zu verschmelzen mit seiner Magma
\end{quote}

In this poem, Şenocak uses natural imagery that evokes a worldly religiosiy in order to hint at the Sufi union with God, whilst also problematising the achievability of such a union in life – union with the divine is coupled with a sense of danger here, and this reoccurs more prominently in the work of Zaimoglu and Kermani, whose writing equally refuses to domesticate the pain and passion associated with both God and love. Yet, the volcano here remains elusive; it is a ‘wandernder Berg’, which, as in the other poems, indicates a religiosity which takes its significance from the transformative spiritual journey, rather than a predetermined endpoint. Just as Şenocak’s poetry rejects notions of communal and intersubjective fusion, union with God is equally avoided in favour of the creativity of constant transformation. The symbolism of the volcano also takes on an erotic dimension when viewed in relation to the following quotation from Şenocak’s Der Mann im Unterhemd:

‘Sie lutscht mein Geschlecht, während ich mit meiner Zunge ihre Vulva öffne. Wie oft habe

\textsuperscript{353} Şenocak, Das Land hiner den Buchstaben, p. 57.
\textsuperscript{354} Konzett and Şenocak, p. 132.
ich mir schon die Zunge an einem solchen Vulkan verbrannt.'

Thus, reminiscent of Nancy’s deconstruction of Christianity, the affective spirituality suggested in Übergang can be regarded as an attempt to deconstruct Islam through an engagement with its immanantist mystical tradition, intimating a religiosity beyond monotheism that can be felt in the alterity in our world, rather than an orthodox understanding of Islam as an exterior organising principle.

Conclusion: A Rejection of the Grand Narratives of both God and Reason

The poems of Übergang suggest an understanding of identity as an organic process of constant transformation composed of varying cultural features that can be creatively reworked, and also as something unstable and open to the influence of others – the imagery of trees and open houses respectively, both of which combine in the reoccurring image of the timber house. Şenocak thus puts into practice here his idea of a ‘negative Hermeneutik’, as the self (and its identity) is viewed in terms of a destabilising openness towards the other, as opposed to contrast with a defining Other, overcoming their binary opposition. As Nancy states:

[To do right by identities] means mixing together again the various lines, trails, and skins, while at the same time describing their heterogeneous trajectories and their webs, both those that are tangled and those that are distinct. It is that task of never believing in the simple, homogenous, present “man.” Or woman. Or Croat or Serb or Bosnian. It is the task of knowing (but what knowledge?) that the subject of knowledge is now only someone, and like every someone, someone of mixed blood.

This non-foundational understanding of identity is hinted at in the collection, and it is contrasted with ideologies and movements that seek to make identity into a work by purging unwanted aspects and/or importing others to fulfil a foundational role. For instance, Şenocak evokes ‘Berührungspunkte’ between the Turkish post-Kemalist and the German post-Nazi

355 Zafer Şenocak, Der Mann im Unterhemd (Berlin: Babel, 1995), p. 117.
356 Nancy, Being Singular Plural, p. 147.
cultural and historical ruptures in Übergang through an engagement with aspects of their heritage that have been side-lined, creating an ambiguity that reflects his understanding of identity as fragmentary, albeit without any simplistic comparison (or fusion) of the two.

In particular, Übergang reminds us of Turkey’s lost Sufi heritage and its historical context, demonstrating Sufism’s contemporary significance by creatively reworking it in order to evoke a worldly and open religiosity that, in moving beyond the monotheistic paradigm, does not fossilise into an ideology and close down meaning. This radically destabilises the heaven/earth binary, which is expressed in imagery from the natural world, human love and space travel that hints at our relationship with the divine in the world. These poems therefore put into practice the creative reworking of religious sources advocated in Şenocak’s essays, overcoming Turkey’s loss of its mystical Islamic heritage in order to deconstruct Islam, making it more suitable for a postmodern present in which founding principles are questioned. Thus Şenocak’s ‘negative Hermeneutik’ also influences his religiosity, which similarly refuses to derive its meaning from a symbolic Other, be that either another religion or an otherworldly God. Religiosity as well as identity in Übergang can, therefore, be understood in terms of the deconstruction of the monotheistic paradigm, as both are determined by openness to an undecided future, rather than separate defining worlds.

The collection confronts the assumed connection between Islam and identity conflict that has dominated public debates in Germany, blaming both Kemalism and orthodoxy for rejecting early Islamic thought that has greater acceptance of ambiguity. Both contemporary Germans and Kemalists have viewed Islam as a barrier to modernity, and in Turkey that has lead to schisms in society between the Ottoman past and the post-Kemalist present – although recently the conflict has increasingly been between the past Kemalist and the contemporary Neo-Ottomanist views of modernity. However, institutionalised Islam, Neo-Ottomanist Islam and Enlightenment modernity are arguably all incompatible with the kind of cosmopolitanism
that Übergang suggests. Rather, the sceptical and worldly religiosity inspired by the doubt and eroticism of Emre’s poetry shapes its cosmopolitan character, in that it challenges divisive foundationalist thought and allows the world to derive its ever-changing sense from the mobile relations of the inoperative community, rather than blanket ideologies. Thus, rather than merely trying to make Islam compatible with the grand narrative of either the Turkish or German views of modernity, Şenocak also points out that the modern notion of identity and selfhood is equally outdated. Indeed, both institutionalised Islam, Western modernity and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism are, as Nancy argues, shaped by the same dualistic monotheistic paradigm (be the external guiding principle God or Reason), and thus both Occident and Orient can be regarded as equally flawed in their belief in supposedly universal truths – a criticism Zaimoglu also makes, as I discuss in the following chapter.

Rather than a comment on his supposedly suspended position between Turkey and Germany, it is perhaps these complex dualisms that Şenocak has in mind when writing the line ‘es kostet Sinn und Zeit / die Sphären zu einen’\textsuperscript{357} in Poem XI from ‘Wechselnde Lichtverhältnisse’ (Ü, p. 82). In ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’, Şenocak states, again calling to mind Adorno’s concept of the non-identical:

\begin{quote}
Der Mensch unserer Zeit leidet an einem Erschöpfungszustand, herbeigeführt durch Vielfalt. Das macht den Ruf nach Einfalt gefährlich attraktiv und einen rigiden Modernismus, der Differenzierung abverlangt und Individualisierung einfordert, ineffektiv.\textsuperscript{358}
\end{quote}

The poems of Übergang highlight that the exhaustive maintenance of cultural divisions is useless, as not just migrants and ‘post-migrants’, but everyone is open to the forces of the cultural mêlée. The collection similarly explores a religiosity outside the dualism of monotheism that would be compatible with such a non-foundational understanding of culture.
and identity, and in this respect, Übergang successfully brings the notion of a ‘west-östlichen Divan’ into the postmodern present.

Poetry, Prayer and Apostasy: SAID’s Psalmen as ‘Prayer Demythified’

Religiosity in SAID’s Writing

In SAID’s more recent work since 9/11, such as his collection of poems Psalmen, he, like Şenocak, has begun to explore what can be described as a religiosity beyond identity and ideology that challenges the Islam/West dichotomy. However, SAID (again, like Şenocak) engaged with religiosity in his work long before the terrorist atrocities of the twenty-first century, in his case due to the Islamic fundamentalism of the Khomeini regime. Although this was often in the form of criticism of the Iranian state’s oppressive orthodoxy, his love poetry can also provide early examples of allusions to Sufi aesthetics. For instance, the collection Sei Nacht zu mir (1998) features some strongly religious, but yet worldly, imagery:

Dein Lächeln,  
psalmenlang,  
in der Jahreszeit der Verbannung.

Deine Augen,  
Horizont genug,  
Himmel der Heimkehrer.359

The radio play Die Beichte des Ayatollah (1984), which was published together in 1987 with Ich und der Schah (1982), linking the two regimes that forced him into exile, is an example of SAID’s more overtly political engagement with religion – the collection is dedicated to friends murdered by the Khomeini administration and tortured to death in Afghanistan.360 Ich und der Schah is an imagined conversation between SAID and the Shah in which they discuss the latter’s exile, and the fictionalised SAID torments the Shah with his knowledge of

the future.\textsuperscript{361} Die Beichte des Ayatollah, however, deals with the themes of religious
orthodoxy and oppression. It is an imagined monologue by Khomeini in the form of a prayer
on his deathbed, in which he proudly tells God of the Islamic Republic he leaves behind.

Baginski sums up SAID’s work as of 2001 thus: ‘Said, der Chronist des Terrors und
Leidens, versteht sein literarisches Werk als Geschichtsschreibung der Unterdrückten’;\textsuperscript{362} and
much of SAID’s writing continues to be overtly critical of the Iranian regime. His writing can
also be typical of the first generation of migrants, in that it makes use of the much criticised
two-worlds paradigm to describe the migratory experience, just as he situates Goethe’s Divan
suspended between the worlds of Weimar and Shiraz. Baginski argues:

Diese Zwischenposition in der fremden Gesellschaftssituation, ausgedrückt
in den Bildern der Entwurzelung aus der Heimatkultur und des Nicht-
Wurzelschlagen-Könnens in der fremden Kultur, wird im Werk Saids
immer wieder thematisiert, denn Exil bedeutet für den Dichter psychisch
und auch politisch immer einer Situation des Übergangs und der
prozessualen Entwicklung.\textsuperscript{363}

The autobiographical short story ‘ein kind auf der suche nach europa’ from In Deutschland
leben (2004) is exemplary of this dialectical ‘betweeness’: ‘der gealterte flüchtling – nun zu
einem zwischending geworden aus zwei welten – liebt und sucht sein europa weiter.’\textsuperscript{364} Thus,
given its pedagogical nature and often simplistic view of identity in comparison to the second
and third generation, much of SAID’s work is incompatible with my research and remains
unaddressed by scholars. In Psalmen, however, SAID engages more profoundly with what
can be regarded as post-monotheistic sense of the divine, suggesting a cosmopolitan
alternative to Iran’s state Islam and other manifestations of Islamic fundamentalism.

Yeşilada identifies SAID as an author of the Muslim turn,\textsuperscript{365} and his book Ich und der
Islam (2005), a collection of autobiographical essays and diary entries, elucidates SAID’s

\begin{footnotes}
\item[361] Ibid., p. 17.
\item[362] Baginski, ‘Von Mullahs und Deutschen’, p. 22.
\item[363] Ibid., p. 28-9.
\item[364] SAID, In Deutschland leben, p. 121.
\end{footnotes}
relationship with the religion. In the title essay, SAID affirms that he is a Muslim ‘sociologically’, by which he means that growing up in a culturally Muslim environment shaped who he is, although he distances himself from actual belief and adherence to Islam’s rules: ‘es ist nicht entscheidend, was der erwachsene später räsoniert, sondern was das kind gesehen, gerochen und gehört hat.’

He also contrasts uninstitutionalised forms of religiosity with his negative experience of state Islam in Iran and the Islamic terrorism of the present. For example, he criticises institutionalised religion in an account of a meeting with a rabbi:

die religiosität des rabbiners war stärker als sein glaube an die buchstaben der religion. denn religiosität ist eine ergriffenheit. sie hat kaum etwas zu tun mit einem gebetbuch oder einem heiligen krieg. sie kann nur erhaben – jenseits von rechthaberei und sich bekämpfende institutionen – und voll respekt für die gefühle anderer. intolerant sind religionen, sobald sie sich durch ein geschlossenes system definieren, das sich dann nach außen wehren muß. eine religiöse haltung braucht kein gehäuse.

This critique reflects similar criticism of immanent identities from Nancy – even if it does contrast with Şenocak’s use of the house as a metaphor for an open identity. It is the open religiosity suggested here (which recurs in SAID’s discussion with the Catholic Hans Maier and can be glimpsed in the ambiguity of the short story ‘ich, jesus von nazareth’ from Das Niemandsland ist unseres) that will be examined in the poetry collection Psalmen. Much like the religiosity I have discussed in connection with Şenocak’s call for a true ‘west-östlichen Divan’, I will argue that SAID too hints at a heretical holiness that does not concern itself with organised religion’s claims to universalism and draws inspiration from the immanentist Sufi tradition, and also from the sceptical psalms of the Hebrew bible and the deconstructive power of prayer.

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367 Ibid., p. 21.
368 Ibid., p. 42.
369 SAID, Das Niemandsland ist unseres, pp. 57-72.
Poetry and Prayer

Psalmen is a collection of poems in the form of prayers, evoking a religiosity emptied of its ideological role that is free from the violent divisions of institutionalised religions and their condemnation of sensual pleasure. By writing psalm poetry, SAID is participating in a German literary tradition that spans centuries, including contributions from Martin Luther, Martin Opitz, Andreas Gryphius, Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, Rilke, Brecht and Paul Celan. According to Inka Bach and Helmut Galle: ‘Religionskritik, Sozialkritik und Klage um den Verlust der Transzendenz sind Themen der modernen Psalmen’, and SAID’s collection is similar in this regard, as it criticises orthodoxy and institutionalised religion and emphasises God’s absence. The ‘Individual Laments’ of the biblical psalms, which depict suffering and see the worshipper ask God for help in times of need, can therefore be regarded as a particular inspiration for these poems. As Kermani states: ‘Allein die Psalmen bestehen zur Hälfte aus Klagen darüber, daß Gott sinnloses Leid bewirkt oder jedenfalls nicht verhindert habe’. SAID draws upon this critical and sceptical tradition of the Old Testament, whilst also drawing inspiration from other religious sources, implying an openness towards a mêlée of religious influences. For instance, although the title and main inspiration of the collection comes from the psalms of the Hebrew Bible, the collection does not have 150 psalms like the Bible, but rather 99 like the names of Allah. The collection as a whole, I will argue, retains a literary quality, in Nancy’s sense, in that it resists any established religious identities.

SAID has commented that the God to whom his psalms are addressed ‘ist [...]”

371 Ibid., p. 1.
373 Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 155.
374 Gellner, p. 159.
natürlich nicht der christliche Gott, Jahwe oder Allah. Aber es ist ein Gott’.  

This paradox of a secular author writing prayers to ‘a God’ invites comparisons with Nancy’s comments on prayer in “‘Prayer Demythified’” from Dis-Enclosure, in which the idea of God as the Other of the world and its guiding principle is deconstructed. Here, Nancy highlights that the very need to ask for divine intervention paradoxically implies a criticism of providence, as Aukje van Rooden comments:

[Prayer] is a direct result of the absenting God. Addressed to that which is most hidden, without the guarantee of being heard, and often even pronounced in silence, prayer is simultaneously the evocation of God and the affirmation of his absence.  

Nancy develops the concept of a ‘prayer stripped of its believing’ by drawing upon Adorno’s understanding of music as ‘prayer demythologized’ and the poet Michel Deguy’s discussion thereof, asserting:

Not only do prayer and demythologization repel one another (since you have to posit the existence of a recipient of the prayer in order to pray): they mutually exclude one another. One who is outside the myth cannot pray. One who prays cannot have divested him or herself of all mythology.

This oxymoron constitutes a departure from signification (the sense of the thing) in favour of nomination (the presentation of the thing), just as the eroticism of Şenocak’s (and, I will argue, SAID’s) poetry suggests a spirituality whose meaning is in actions and affect, and not the transmission of an ideological message. As Nancy argues, ‘the “sense of” refers the thing to a different sphere than that of its thing-being, whereas the “name of” inscribes its

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378 Ibid., p. 130.  
379 Ibid., p. 131.
difference (the name/the thing) within the sphere of its being’. Rather than praying to access meaning from another world (God), demythified prayer carries its own significance in the openness of its act. This is, therefore, an understanding of prayer that, through its lack of a recipient, denies God’s role as meaning-maker and maintains the necessary immanence of the world, whilst also pointing beyond it toward the nothingness of its origins. Prayer is, then, in Rooden’s words, ‘a practice – a gesture – that defies and renounces the aspiration of providing sense’. It is an ‘interruption of the representational function of language’, and Nancy consequently links it with the literary character of poetry, as both unsettle clear-cut meaning. Moreover, as an act of transcendence without the transcendent, an opening toward the unknown, demythified prayer hints at our ontological interrelatedness through speech:

Prayer does not rise toward a height, an altitude, or toward a summit (sovereign, ens summum), but is transcendence, or (and this is less noted) the very act of transcending. It is passing-to-the-outside, and passing to the other.

This understanding of prayer that shifts meaning away from a transcendent Other and towards our interconnectedness with others in the world can help demonstrate the deconstructive significance of SAID’s Psalmen for contemporary debates surrounding Islam and the West. In this respect, the possibility to imagine new worlds emerges as ‘from created, becomes creative’, that is to say, the world is no longer determined by a creator, but rather open to new possibilities, just as Şenocak’s Übergang can similarly be regarded as critiquing divisive ideologies in favour of a radical openness to an undecided future.

Demythified Prayers to a Destitute God

Like the original Hebrew psalms, SAID’s all begin by invoking God and their structure is

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380 Ibid.
381 Rooden, p. 193.
382 Ibid., p. 194.
384 Nancy, Globalization, p. 66.
‘based on patterns of meaning rather than the effects of particular worlds and their sounds’. \(^{385}\)

*Psalmen* also reflects ancient Hebrew poetry in that it makes frequent use of parallelisms\(^ {386}\) (repeated forms in different parts of a sentence) and adopts the ‘economy of Hebrew wording’\(^ {387}\) in its lack of adjectives. Various themes occur in *Psalmen*, such as God’s flaws and absence, human and divine love, and also exile (central both to the biblical Israelis’ and SAID’s experiences). Taken as a whole, the collection conveys an openness towards the divine, to which the tradition of psalm poetry as the attempt at an unmediated relationship with God is well suited. Yet, although *Psalmen* remains rooted in the sceptical tradition of the Hebrew originals, SAID does also update this tradition; the collection is a suspended dialogue with a God who permitted the terrible suffering of Auschwitz, Hiroshima, Halabcha and Srebrenica (*P*, p. 9), and can equally be read as a response to contemporary Islamic terrorism.

As mentioned above, God’s absence is a prominent theme in the text, as illustrated in the following poem:

siehe herr  
ich schweige nicht  
aber bist du meines wortes würdig?  
vielleicht schläft mein gott verborgen im gras  
schweigt und betrachtet mich  
ohne zu wissen  
ob er mich liebt  
während ich bete  
bis du dein versteck verläßt  
und meine füße suchst (*P*, p. 94)

This poem imagines a God lying in the grass who, as Nancy states, either reveals himself to us, or does not, implying a lack of agency on the believer’s part. Although the speaker is at first sceptical of God’s worth, the psalm ends, like many individual laments, with a note of confidence, as the poetic persona intends to remain resolutely open to the divine,\(^ {388}\) even

\(^{387}\) *Ibid.*, p. 16  
though the hierarchy that places God above Man is questioned by God’s position, hidden in
the grass at the speaker’s feet.

Like the above poem, the symbolism of the open door (also found in *Übergang*), the
set table, and the reference to the language of animals in the subsequent poem also allude to a
being-onto-god, but ultimately a God that is bound to material reality:

    herr
    wenn du ankommst
    werden wir licht sein
    brot und wasser
    der tisch ist gedeckt die Tür geöffnet
    komm und setze dich zu uns
    befreie mich vom glauben
    daß du nur aus der ferne treu bist
    und sprich mit mir
    in der unbedrängten sprache der tiere
    die uns von weit her auflauern
    mit ihrem unverfälschten hunger (*P*, p. 37)

Nancy argues that the monotheistic God, although he bestows meaning upon the world,
paradoxically remains its inaccessible and distant Other, and just as the original psalms
questioned providence, bringing God’s position as guiding principle into disrepute, through
evoking an absent God, SAID too draws attention to monotheism’s tendency to deconstruct
itself. Nancy states:

    The gods prevent the supreme undecidedness of man; they close off his
    humanity, and prevent him from becoming unhinged, from measuring up to
    the incommensurable: in the end God sets the measure.\(^{389}\)

However, like many of the collection’s other poems, these two psalms use humanising
imagery for God, suggesting a demythified notion of prayer to a God who is no longer a
supreme being from another world, but rather is present in ours. This can be seen as a
lowering of God’s stature, which is implied in the text’s blanket non-capitalisation and the
question ‘bist du meines wortes würdig?’ (*P*, p. 94). Thus, SAID’s poems, following the

biblical psalmic tradition, constitute a sceptical and questioning relationship with the divine, that denies God his position as transcendent Other.

SAID’s psalms evoke, then, a destitute God, and Nancy’s immanentist understanding of the world can shed further light on this challenge to the monotheistic paradigm:

[The thesis of a creation of the world is rendered inadmissible by the destitution of a God-principle of the world, but at the same time revived or made more acute by contrast by the demand to think a world whose reason and end, provenance and destination, are no longer given; and yet we need to think of it as world, that is, as a totality of meaning, at least hypothetical or asymptotic – or as a totality of a meaning that is in itself plural and always singular.]

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Equally, for SAID, it is not a question of a divine providence that would determine the course of the world, but rather of both a world and a religiosity that can still be shaped, as the following poem implies:

herr
Du sollst stets wandern und dich nirgends
niederlassen
denn es gibt keine behausungen mehr
nur schritte
sei laut und eindringlich
nimm teil an mir und meinen regungen
geleite mich
bis hin zu deinem brot
damit mein wort erwache (P, p. 28)

The line ‘nur schritte’, emphasised by its shortness and isolation, is contrasted with the similarly short ‘niederlassen’ before it. By advocating that God be associated with steps rather than dwellings, SAID suggests not only the wandering of exile, but also an ever-changing religiosity, as opposed to a static and rigid one. This notion of a religiosity in a constant state of transformation, much like Şenocak’s wandering dervish motif, is also evoked in other poems from the collection, in which religiosity is presented as a never ending search for God (P, p. 92), and in which the poetic persona wants that God ‘zu keiner kirche

390 Nancy, The Creation of the World, p. 64.
These psalms therefore reject the finishing of identity that comes with being a ‘gottesbesitzer’ (P, p. 92), by which SAID means a follower of an organised religion, advocating instead a singularised openness that takes place in a series of transformations and sceptical questioning.

This critique of institutionalised religion is the dominant theme of the collection with obvious links to the enforced Shia orthodoxy of the Iranian Islamic Republic and, more recently in public consciousness, to the fundamentalism of Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. The speaker demands that God abolish the ‘zwischengötter’, as they are only interested in temporal matters (P, p. 41), implying that the clergy who attempt to mediate between God and humankind are corrupt and arrogant. Once the monotheistic paradigm begins to unravel, there is less need for mediators who can wield power over believers by enforcing their own religious messages, and Psalmen appears to demand its deconstruction: ‘reiße sie nieder / jene membrane zwischen uns / aus atem und lüge’ (P, p. 44). Yet SAID’s critique of institutionalised religion perhaps comes through most forcefully in the following poem:

herr
ich will die differenz nicht anerkennen
zwischen dem schöpfergott und dem erlösergott
dafür gelobe du
keinen unterschied zu machen
zwischen gottesfürchtigen und gottessuchenden
und schaffe die frommen ab
die uns im wege stehen
denn sie betonen nur das trennende
vernimm mein täglich gebet
das ich stumm an die schönheit richte (P, p. 46)

Here, institutionalised religions are depicted as not only causing divisions between singular beings (be it between ‘gottesfürchtigen und gottessuchenden’ or between different religions entirely), but also as ultimately serving to separate us from God, just as Nancy regards monotheism as establishing a world that is disconnected from the divine. As in Nancy’s writing, this divisiveness is linked specifically with violence in the following psalm:
herr
begreife
ich will nicht unterworfen sein
nicht durch das wort nicht durch das schwert
so laß zu
daß ich mich liebe
damit ich dir ergeben bleibe
und fürchte dich nicht vor meinem wort
denn es sucht dich mit mir zu verbinden (P, p. 23)

Here, holy texts and holy wars are rejected in favour of a loving openness, and humanising language is again used as God is asked to understand, questioning God’s position as omniscient Other. The last two lines here ask God not to fear the speaker’s words, as they are a genuine attempt to access holiness, implying there are those who would fear the radicalism of SAID’s psalms, namely institutionalised religions.³⁹¹

Through its links to the sceptical Hebrew psalms, Psalmen thus suggests a religiosity that is separate from identity and ideology, especially so in the subsequent poem:

herr
du bist kein haus
vordem der tod lungert
kein fenster
durch das ich die welt betrachte
keine tür
durch die ich eintrete
du bist vielleicht ein kiesel
den ich stets in der tasche trage
siehe oh herr
ich bin dir nah (P, p. 51)

This poem functions around four parallelisms and the symmetry of the first and penultimate line, leaving the final line to stand out, highlighting the notion of proximity to the divine. Emphasis is created through the repetition of ‘kein’ and the use of architectural imagery, which is followed by an abrupt change to the image of God as a pebble to be carried around

³⁹¹ SAID made clear the power he sees in words to challenge oppressors in his speech at the literary symposium of the Evangelische Akademie Tützing: SAID, Dann schreie ich, bis Stille ist (Tübingen: Heliopolis, 1990), pp. 71-5.
in one’s pocket, borrowed from Buddhist meditation. Significantly, the imagery of man-made structures gives way to the natural, implying a critique of man-made religious institutions. That God is not a window through which we can view the world suggests, quite literally, that religiosity should not be a worldview, but rather a state of mind – in SAID’s words,

als nicht missionarisch [...], sondern als eine persönliche haltung, also eine persönliche stütze, um in der heutigen gesellschaft, die absolut materialistisch geworden ist, zurechtzukommen.

Furthermore, that God is not a door also suggests that God does not provide access to another space, implying an immanentist understanding of the divine that also comes through in the collection’s erotic Sufi imagery.

**Psalmen and the Sceptical Sufi Tradition**

Alongside the more overt connection to the Hebrew Bible, SAID also engages with Sufism in *Psalmen*, which, as I have previously argued, can be of inspiration for a singularised and immanentist religiosity. In this regard, as well as critiquing the monotheistic notion of God as the giver of meaning to the world, *Psalmen* equally intimates a sense of the divine as the other in the world. Indeed, previous quotes have demonstrated the speaker’s (perhaps unattainable) aim of union with the divine, and this is often expressed in erotic terms. For instance, the poetic persona evokes the mystical imagery of an amorous relationship between God and humankind found in medieval Sufi poetry, declaring: ‘laß uns liebende sein’ (*P*, p. 72). Thus, *Psalmen* ambiguously blurs the boundaries between various religions, echoing Şenocak’s call for a more radical ‘west-östlichen Divan’ that would unsettle predetermined identities.

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392 This relates, for example, to *A Pebble for Your Pocket* (2001) by the Vietnamese Zen Buddhist monk Thích Nhất Hạnh.
393 SAID, *Ich und der Islam*, p. 44.
The symbolism and scepticism of the following poem resonate particularly with Sufi poetry:

herr
laß mich eine wasserlache sein
die deinen himmel spiegelt
und deine gebete murmelt
damit mich auch die zikaden verstehen
erscheine oh herr
selbst wenn du keine wahl hast
als den steilen weg des blutes
und nimm die flüchtlinge auf
weil jede flucht in deinem auge endet
selbst wenn der flüchtende in seiner not
denn nur wer an dir zweifelt
sucht dich (P, p. 11)

This poem again uses natural metaphors to convey an organic relationship with God. Its opening can be regarded as a variation on the Sufi imagery of polishing the mirror of one’s heart to reflect God’s light, and it closes with a doubt that is typical of both the Islamic mystics and the Hebrew psalms. Just as SAID’s previously mentioned psalms see religion as an endless search rather than an absolute truth, this psalm also positively evaluates scepticism. Furthermore, the speaker also enjoins God to help refugees, ‘selbst wenn [er] keine wahl ha[t] / als den steilen weg des blutes’, drawing parallels between the importance of the Israeli exile in the biblical psalms and SAID’s own exile from Iran. Individual laments are sometimes ‘prayers for the doom of enemies’, and although the speaker laments the conflicts caused by organised religions, he/she is shown here as willing to accept brutality from God against enemies, complicating the collection’s relationship with violence. As SAID states:

Mir erschien die Form der Psalmen insofern geeignet, weil sie sich zum

394 This echoes an earlier poem, quoted above: ‘Deine Augen, / Horizont genug, / Himmel der Heimkehrer’; SAID, *Sei Nacht zu mir*, p. 43.
395 This occurs throughout the collection. For instance: ‘denn ich verstehe mich nicht als täter / sondern als suchender / wie ein regenwurm im tiefschlaf / ohne eine ahnung von urknall und wolken’ (P, p. 104).
396 Eaton, p. 18.
As previously stated, Sufis were just as much open to God’s wrath as to his love, and by acknowledging this in Psalmen, SAID avoids accusations of ignoring the more violent aspects of Islam in light of its current public associations with terrorism.

Aside from this brief reference to violence, Psalmen also implies a mystical religiosity that is not only compatible with, but also accessed via sexual pleasure:

herr
stimme mir zu
daß jeder körper heilig ist
und so auch seine regungen
daß zwei umschlungene körper sich niemals
beschmutzen

und steh mir bei
damit ich teil dieser bewegung bleibe
um dir näherzukommen (P, p. 27)

Here, the speaker deploys the argument that if our bodies, as creations of God, are holy, then it follows that our impulses and feelings must also be. The poetic persona thus participates in the tradition of theodicy, being sceptical that God would punish something he has determined – a theme that occurs frequently in Kermani’s scholarly and literary writing. The last three lines also demonstrate that passion can be a post-monotheistic source of holiness, and this also comes across forcefully in the following poem, in which the intensity of sexual pleasure is prioritised over religion’s moral guidance:

siehe oh herr
ich trenne das gute nicht vom bösen
ich will beidem widerstehen
so gibt meinen lenden kraft
damit ich ins fleisch meiner geliebten stoße
um dich zu preisen
wie auch ihr fleisch

397 Hildmann, pp. 16-7.
deine herrlichkeit erfaßt
und beraube mich meines lächelns
wenn es je triumphiert (P, p. 66)

The sexual imagery here is stressed by the repetition of both the flesh of the beloved and the praise of God, implying a connection between the two concepts. This blurring of the sacred and the profane is not only reminiscent of Sufi poetry, but also the sexual subject matter of the Song of Solomon from both the Jewish and Christian holy books, tying in with the heritage of the psalms. Yet, although SAID’s sexual imagery calls to mind the eroticism already present within Islam, Judaism and Christianity, this cannot serve as an example of Abrahamic religious pluralism, since the Jews and Christians interpret this the Song of Solomon in completely different ways. Whereas the former regard this erotic tale as symbolising God’s love for the people of Israel, the latter argue that it evokes Christ’s love for the Christian Church. Thus, rather than highlighting supposed similarities amongst the monotheisms, I see this as drawing attention to the deconstructive elements already present within them in order to hint at a demythified sense of prayer that cannot be appropriated by any one religious group.

**Conclusion: Poetic Prayers, or Prayerful Poems?**

Taken as a whole, *Psalmen* at times hints at the movement towards deconstruction within monotheism, emphasising an absent God whose role as meaning-maker is undermined, whilst also moving beyond monotheism by evoking a holiness that figures in the otherness of the world, a religiosity that is a non-identitarian and non-ideological openness towards the divine, not unlike that seen in Şenocak’s writing. In this regard, SAID’s psalms employ Sufi imagery in order to suggest a religiosity that is compatible with sexual pleasure, sharing in Şenocak’s criticism of the puritanical nature of much contemporary Islam. However, alongside Islam, deconstructive elements of the other monotheisms (and Buddhism) are also drawn upon,
suggesting a ‘west-östlicher Divan’ that does more to break down the Islam/West divide than Goethe’s original. Indeed, like Übergang, Psalmen does not seek to demonstrate Islam’s compatibility with Western Enlightenment universalism, or to reveal the apparent similarities of the so-called Abrahamic religions. Rather, it is by moving beyond the competing narratives of the monotheistic paradigm that SAID’s poems undermine such binary divisions.

Thus, Psalmen provides a stark contrast to SAID’s other literary piece in prayer format: Die Beichte des Ayatollah. Like his psalms, Die Beichte des Ayatollah also begins by addressing God directly as ‘Herr’, but the religiosity implied is markedly different. Here, Khomeini is proud of the Islamic Republic he leaves behind, which exemplifies precisely what Nancy criticises in fusional communities, as the ayatollah believes his religious fundamentalism has returned the people to the supposed origins of their community. This leads to the creation of ideological enemies and Khomeini tells God how he shows these enemies of the state no mercy, using religion to justify his actions: ‘Herr, ich habe nach Deinem Gesetz gehandelt: / Das Buch und das Schwert’. This can be directly contrasted with SAID’s rejection of oppression in Psalmen: ‘ich will nicht unterworfen sein / nicht durch das wort nicht durch das schwert’ (P, p. 23). Moreover, the fictionalised Khomeini focuses in particular on how women are treated in order to maintain the ‘purity’ of his community: they cannot obtain employment, those caught committing adultery are stoned to death, polygamy has been reintroduced, the age of consent for females has been lowered to nine, and those sentenced to death are raped by revolutionary guards beforehand, so as not to die as virgins – this last brutal measure is the subject of ‘mina – eine begegnung’ in Ich und der Islam, a detailed and harrowing account of rape as punishment in the Islamic

399 Ibid., p. 47-8.
400 Ibid., p. 49.
401 Ibid., pp. 51-2.
Thus, _Psalmen_ can be regarded as revisiting the prayer format of SAID’s earlier publication in order to suggest an alternative both to the extreme fundamentalism of the Khomeini regime and to the resurgence of religious divisions in general in the post-9/11 world.

_Psalmen_ is also different from _Die Beichte des Ayatollah_ in that the psalms undermine religious classification, whereas Khomeini constantly refers to orthodox Islam in his monologue. As previously stated, _Psalmen_ can be viewed as the product of the mêlée of religious intensities, in that it takes inspiration from various sceptical religious traditions. This eclectic religiosity is implied in _Ich und der Islam_:

> ich bin in einer atmosphäre aufgewachsen, in einem land aufgewachsen, wo der islam das bestimmende element war. und ich will diesem islam gar nicht total entgangen sein. und ich will auch das christentum, mit dem ich heute hier in deutschland konfrontiert bin, gar nicht für mich abgelebt haben, ohne daß ich eine religion ausübe und ohne daß ich in eine kirche oder moschee gehe. denn die religiosität ist für mich ein viel höherer begriff, als daß ich jetzt kirchengänger wäre für eine bestimmte kirche oder moschee.

Together, SAID’s psalms constitute a singularised religiosity, an openness toward the divine that does not seek to finish identity and bestow a universalising meaning upon the world. They reflect Nancy’s view of prayer, not as absolute belief, but rather as the ‘possibility of never believing our prayers to have been granted, [...] and of abiding in that unique and exclusive faith’.

Moreover, with their emphasis on the openness of love and prayer, the religiosity of _Psalmen_ does not obscure or impede our interconnectedness, as Khomeini’s orthodoxy does. Indeed, _Die Beichte des Ayatollah_ ends with loneliness and isolation:

> Herr,

> ich weiß, daß mir nicht alles gelungen ist, was ich mir für Dich und den Islam vorgenommen hatte. Aber du [_sic_] weißt, wie einsam ich hier war,
umgeben von Zaudernden, die alles Revolutionäre behinderten und ewig nur Milde mahnten.
Herr,
vergib mir meine Schwäche und nimm mich zu Dir, damit endlich Schluß ist mit dieser Einsamkeit.405

By contrast, SAID’s psalms are passionate poems that suggest that our interaction within the inoperative community is the world’s heterogeneous sense, rather than any universalising ideology. Although the collection deals with a loss of religious transcendence, which Back and Galle view as characteristic of modern psalm poetry,406 it nevertheless also hints at Nancy’s understanding of transcendence as transcending the immanent self. Psalmen maintains an ambiguity between poetry and prayer that echoes this double meaning of transcendence. For Nancy, prayer perhaps only differs from poetry because it is accompanied by certain gestures, such as joined hands or kneeling,407 and even this distinction is somewhat blurred as a CD408 of Psalmen has been released (2010) with a saxophone accompaniment by Till Martin, echoing the original musicality of the psalms. SAID’s final psalm creates an ambiguity as to whether God has heard the speaker’s laments, asking the question: ‘herr / hörst du das geschrei der menge?’ (P, p. 105). Here, just as Nancy describes, prayers are a ‘passing-to-the-other’,409 they are ‘turned toward an outside and lets it come toward it’.410 Similarly, SAID describes poetry’s task as ‘zu kommen, anzuklopfen und zu gehen. wie ein fremder, der von seiner botschaft kaum etwas weiß’.411

Psalmen is a collection of prayers to a God that may or may not exist, reflecting SAID’s agnostic position, and although it has been suggested that the Psalmen focus on Man rather than God, and are therefore not truly religious,412 I would argue that it does not simply

405 SAID, Ich und der Schah / Die Beichte des Ayatollah, p. 60.
408 Some of the poems are slightly different on the recording.
410 Ibid., p. 135.
411 SAID, In Deutschland leben, p. 32.
412 Hildmann, p. 15.
allow the autonomous individual to usurp God’s guiding role – a criticism Nancy makes of atheism. God is regularly asked for guidance in Psalmen, and the following question taken from a psalm dealing with the genocidal atrocities of the twentieth century ambiguously implies both the significance of God for love in the world and also the need for cosmopolitanism to engage with religious belief:

und glaubst du
daß wir die versuchung zu einer noch radikaleren liebe überstehen
ohne dein wort? (P, p. 9)

**Conclusion: Moving Beyond Goethe’s Divan**

Although these authors focus on different areas, both their collections constitute a movement beyond Goethe’s West-östlichen Divan though their challenge to the divisive Islam/West binary. This poetry emphasises the complex identity of the singular being and its participation in the mobile relations of entwined cultural mêlées, unsettling any clear-cut identities. They hint not only at an identity outside of the binary division of Self/Other, but also at a worldly religiosity which, consistent with Nancy’s description of monotheism’s tendency to deconstruct itself, does not operate within the heaven/earth binary. Rather, the religiosity of these poems hints at an unexpected holiness beyond representation, often felt in sexual pleasure. In this regard, they creatively rework the ambiguous conflation of the sacred and profane found in Sufism (and indeed the Song of Solomon) in order to evoke a religiosity that allows the sense of the world to reside in the affective intensity of the shifting relations of its inhabitants.

In Şenocak’s Übergang, the Islam/West binary is undermined through touching tales that, as opposed to Gadamerian fusion, make ambiguous and surprising connections between the ruptures that followed the demise of Nazism and the birth of the Turkish Republic. These
historical situations in which identity was made a work, in turn, are contrasted with a non-
foundational sense of subjectivity and identity found in the text, calling to mind Şenocak’s
notion of a negative hermeneutics, that is to say, the absence of a symbolic Other. This can be
unpacked by an appeal to Nancy’s ontology, which allows us to understand Şenocak’s
cosmopolitanism as a radical openness, a singular-plural being, and not an ideological
universalising programme. Religious identities also behave in this way for Şenocak, and by
evoking the immanentist Sufism of the period when Islam was more tolerant of ambiguity, he
also hints at a religiosity beyond the monotheistic paradigm that still shapes thinking in both
the East and West.

SAID’s Psalmen is more specifically focused on religion than Übergang,
problematising not just institutionalised Islam, but also engaging with Judaism, Christianity
and Buddhism, not in order to fuse them through an interreligious negotiation, but rather to
blur religious distinctions and undermine their foundations as part of its challenge to the fixed
identities of the Islam/West binary. Together with the immanentist Sufi imagery, similar to
that found in Şenocak’s work, SAID uses poems in the form of prayers to hint at the divine in
otherness of the world, rather than a symbolic other world. Here, the text’s prayer format
highlights the deconstructive potential within the absent God of monotheism and shifts the
creative power of meaning-making away from a transcendent God and towards the world.
Thus, both texts, rather than place their faith in an ideology or an absent God that would close
down meaning and be divisive, look to the world as a totality of meaning with an open-ended
future. The deconstructive gestures of this poetry can be regarded as a postmodern
reimagining of Goethe’s West-östlicher Divan with important repercussions for contemporary
debates around Islam and the West in Germany and beyond. Indeed, I have argued that both
Şenock and SAID undermine such binaries in their poetry by emphasising a non-identitarian
religiosity that is open and contingent, rather than ossified and divisive. As I will discuss in
the following chapter, the deconstruction of the monotheistic paradigm is an equally fruitful way of approaching Zaimoglu’s cosmopolitanism and his religiosity, which is inspired by German Romanticism, uncovering further ‘Berührungspunkte’ that undermine the divide between Islamic and German culture.
Der neuste Ritter der Romantik?: Counter-Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism and Romantic Religiosity in the Work of Feridun Zaimoglu

Introduction: From Kanak Spokesperson to Neo-Romantic

Although scholars have begun to analyse the more recent writing of Feridun Zaimoglu (b. 1964 in Bolu, Turkey) in terms of its religiosity and cosmopolitanism, our understanding of his work continues to be obscured by the lasting impression of his polemical debut Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft (1995), currently available in its eighth edition and still the focus of much academic research. I will, however, shift the emphasis of my investigation towards Zaimoglu’s post-9/11 work, namely the play Nathan Messias (co-written with Günter Senkel in 2005 and amended for a rerun in 2009) and the novel Liebesbrand (2008), texts that I interpret as counter-Enlightenment critiques of the ideological nature of both universalist cosmopolitanism and organised religion. Like Übergang and Psalmen, these texts do not respond to religious identity conflicts by an ahistorical fusion of the so-called Abrahamic religions. Instead, they criticise such foundational thinking, whilst Liebesbrand also hints at an alternative non-foundational notion of religiosity and community that can be illuminated by the ideas of love and religiosity found in the writing of the German Romantics, Islamic mystics and also Nancy. Thus, like Şenocak’s blurring of Turkish and German histories, Zaimoglu too creates, to use Adelson’s term, touching tales that entangle the aesthetics and thought of German Romanticism and Sufism.

Nathan Messias, an audacious reimagining of Gotthold Ephraim Lessing’s Nathan der Weise (1779), shows the effect of a new messiah upon the religious communities of Jerusalem, intervening in contemporary debates surrounding religion and cosmopolitanism in the volatile Middle East. Here, rather than embodying the (supposed) reason and tolerance of the Enlightenment, Nathan heralds the arrival of a new religion that aims to convert everyone, leading to comparisons between the universalising and homogenising drive of both Enlightenment cosmopolitanisms and religious fundamentalisms. The play can be interpreted as part of Zaimoglu’s criticism of both organised religion and of the secular rationalism of the Enlightenment, as its tragic ending sees competing immanent communities smother any interfaith relationships that were previously there. Like Şenocak’s irreverence towards Goethe’s Divan, Zaimoglu’s play implicitly criticises Lessing, although its target is more the present-day instrumentalisation of the Enlightenment in contemporary Germany for the purpose of excluding Muslims – an understanding of the Enlightenment that privileges its critique of religion over its message of religious tolerance.

Zaimoglu does not merely criticise Enlightenment thought and religious orthodoxy, however. Liebesbrand, whilst similarly critiquing the underlying violence of universalism, equally hints at an alternative way of discussing religiosity and community that resonates with Nancy’s non-foundationalism. This highly successful novel is perhaps the most prominent example of Zaimoglu’s engagement with Romanticism to date and it explores the relationship between Sufism and Romanticism in its religiously loaded sexual imagery, suggesting that the potential for an uninstitutionalised spiritual alternative to the philistine world of atheism, consumerism and globalisation414 lies in the culturally entwined German and Islamic canons. The ambiguity of this touching tale destabilises the Islam/West dichotomy much like the poetry of the last chapter. Finally, I will also examine Zaimoglu’s

414 I am guided by Nancy’s understanding of globalisation. See pp. 44-6 of my introduction.
debt to Romantic cosmopolitanism by bringing it into dialogue with Nancy’s concept of the inoperative community, shedding light on the relationship between Zaimoglu’s ‘Romantic turn’ and his non-identitarian cosmopolitanism. Zaimoglu appeals, then, not only to a wide German and Islamic canon, but also to a broad understanding of the cosmopolitan canon.

Religiosity and Cosmopolitanism in Zaimoglu’s Thought

Zaimoglu is one of contemporary Germany’s most productive and controversial authors, and since Kanak Sprak, which is still often viewed as a piece of ethnographic fieldwork rather than literature, his profile as a writer of fiction and as a dramatist has grown. This prominence within the literary scene is reflected in the scholarly and media attention his work has received, and also the awards he has won – to name a selection, the Chamisso-Preis (2005), the Carl-Améry-Literaturpreis (2007), the Preis der Literaturhäuser (2012) and the Tübingen Poetik-Dozentur, together with Trojanow, which was published as Ferne Nähe (2008). His work is exceptionally varied, both in its form and content – he has written collections of monologues, plays, chamber operas, short stories, novels and a diary, and they all deal with a range of themes, including the ‘Kanak Attak’ subculture movement, folklore, the gentrification of German cities, and the Berlin art world. He has also exhibited paintings, and his novel Der Mietmaler (2013) contains postcard images of some of his portraits of women. Most important for this study, however, religious faith, always a latent presence in Zaimoglu’s earlier work, became, in the aftermath of 9/11, a dominant theme that is interrogated more deeply. Similar to Şenocak and SAID, multiple concepts of religion and religiosity figure in Zaimoglu’s writing, which highlights in particular the diversity within Islam. As this chapter will demonstrate, whilst his texts do not shy away from depictions of religious orthodoxy and violent extremism, they can also hint at a worldly and mystical

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religiosity that implies a movement beyond monotheism and a rejection of ready-made identities.

Given the variation within Zaimoglu’s (and Senkel’s) work, the cosmopolitan nature of his writing, by which I mean the manner in which it challenges any closed sense of community, has changed and developed over time. Whereas Cheesman initially views Zaimoglu’s cosmopolitanism as rooted in the international connections of the transatlantic hip-hop phenomenon, he notices a religious cosmopolitanism that challenges ‘dominant, left-liberal cosmopolitanism to lower its guard to presumed fanaticism’ emerging in the short story collection *Zwölf Gramm Glück*. Although a sustained intellectual involvement with religion and spirituality only really enters into Zaimoglu’s texts in 2004, Islam in particular is, as Yeşilada affirms, a ‘grün Faden’ that runs through much of his oeuvre, making him a particularly salient case study regarding the Muslim turn. The Islamist Yücel’s monologue in *Kanak Sprak* is, for example, widely cited as an example of an early engagement with Islam, and it equally foreshadows Zaimoglu’s Romantic turn, as Yücel refers to his Turkish parents as ‘philister’ for allowing themselves to be seduced by Western consumerism, a label given to proponents of the Enlightenment by the Romantics. Thus, despite a lack of essayistic writing on the subject in comparison to the other authors of this study, Zaimoglu must still be regarded as a central figure within Germany’s post-9/11 discussions of Islam, religiosity and cosmopolitanism.

Further to this, Littler has argued in her Deleuzian interpretation of *Liebesbrand* that Zaimoglu’s more recent writing is cosmopolitan ‘in its thinking beyond

416 Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, p. 74.
417 Ibid., pp. 75-6.
419 Yeşilada, ‘Islam in the writing of (Turkish-)German intellectuals’, p. 183.
identity’, echoing Adelson’s earlier comments concerning Zaimoglu’s ‘iconoclastic mode of representation’. In this regard, Nancy’s notion of the inoperative community is a fruitful way of approaching the non-identitarian character of Zaimoglu’s recent cosmopolitanism, which can be felt in texts such as the short story ‘Fünf klopfende Herzen, wenn die Liebe springt’ (2004) and the novel *Hinterland* (2009), in both of which the power of love reveals an intensity in our openness towards others that calls absolute individuality into question. Nancy’s contrast between a non-foundational ontological interrelatedness and the prevailing fusional sense of community can similarly provide an insight into the divergent formulations of both cosmopolitanism and religiosity in *Nathan Messias* and *Liebesbrand*. These texts are critical of so-called *Aufklärer*, who, in Zaimoglu’s terms, can be understood as militant secularists who regard themselves as rational, autonomous individuals and their own views as universal norms – part of what Cheesman means by ‘left-liberal cosmopolitanism’. In this respect, an exploration of Zaimoglu’s Romantic turn can shed light on the counter-Enlightenment character of his work that shuns all homogenising drives, be they based in religion or Reason. The way in which this non-identitarian approach to cosmopolitanism interacts with the religiosity of his fiction requires close scrutiny, and I will argue that, much like Şenocak’s and SAID’s poetry, *Liebesbrand* suggests not only a non-foundational notion of the self and community, but also a non-foundational religiosity based on openness and contingency, which lends itself to a Nancian philosophical lens.

‘For Zaimoglu,’ Cheesman argues, ‘championing popular, cosmopolitan religiosity means fighting on three fronts: against institutionalized religions, atheistic secularism, and

423 Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 104.
424 See Joseph Twist, “‘The Crossing of Love’: The Inoperative Community and Romantic Love in Feridun Zaimoglu’s “Fünf klopfende Herzen, wenn die Liebe springt” and *Hinterland*, *German Life and Letters*, 67.3 (2014), 399-417.
425 Cheesman, *Novels of Turkish German Settlement*, pp. 46-52.
fanatical fundamentalism. Unlike these ideological modes of thought, an uninstitutionalised religious intensity is central to Zaimoglu’s thinking:


This notion of a religious ‘Glutkern’ outside of rigid dogma can be elucidated by Nancy’s post-monotheistic concept of the divine as the otherness in the world that is left behind once monotheism deconstructs itself and its identitarian and ideological trappings are stripped away, and it will be crucial for my understanding of Zaimoglu’s work. Any approach based on identity and subjectivity is, I will argue, therefore inadequate for understanding both Zaimoglu’s religiosity and his cosmopolitanism. This post-ideological sense of the divine also forms part of Zaimoglu’s engagement both with the spiritual eroticism of Sufi literature and with Romanticism’s sense of the divine – as Frederick C. Beiser asserts, for Novalis’s radical spirituality, ‘the spirit, and not the church or Scripture, provides the supreme rule of faith’.

As previously stated, Zaimoglu’s writing is remarkably varied and the way he engages with religion in his texts can differ substantially. For instance, the trans-European novel *Hinterland*, the Ruhr revenge story *Ruß* (2011), and the play *Alpsegen* (co-written with Senkel, 2011) all engage with folk belief and superstition, which can be regarded as part of Zaimoglu’s critique of atheism’s totalising claims – for instance, the protagonist of *Ruß*

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426 Cheesman, ‘Nathan without the Rings’, p. 122.
427 Tom Cheesman and Karin E. Yeşilada, “‘Ich bin nicht modern” / “I’m not modern”: Interviews with Feridun Zaimoglu”, in Feridun Zaimoglu, pp. 39-69 (p. 46).
paints religious icons for a hobby. The novel Leyla (2006) – a fictionalised biography of the author’s Turkish mother – also engages with Islam, but in the form of culturally Islamic patriarchal traditions, rather than in terms of religiosity. Although it is perhaps Zwölf Gramm Glück and the controversial, yet widely successful monologue-based play Schwarze Jungfrauen (2006) that are Zaimoglu’s most obvious responses to post-9/11 Islamophobia, I have chosen to focus on the impact of the more obscure manifestations of religiosity in Nathan Messias and Liebesbrand and their debt to the Romantic tradition, all of which has wider implications for the theoretical debates surrounding cosmopolitanism, universalism and the inoperative community discussed in the introduction, and for the German national debate on Islam.

**Zaimoglu’s Counter-Enlightenment Stance**

Dorothee Kimmich (co-editor of Ferne Nähe with Philipp Ostrowicz) dismisses Zaimoglu’s involvement with Romanticism as merely superficial:

> Es ist also nicht die Tradition der belesenen und gelehrten Schreiber, in die er sich einreihen möchte. Wenn er ein “Romantiker” ist, dann sicher keiner, der sich über “progressive Universalpoesie” und die Funktion des modernen Romans den Kopf zerbricht.

Yet such a perception perhaps owes more to today’s sentimentalised view of Romanticism,

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430 It is telling of the representative role that cultural commentators expect from the writing of non-ethnic Germans that Leyla, a text that can easily be read as Migrantenliteratur, was widely regarded as Zaimoglu’s first successful piece of literature.

431 See Frauke Matthes, “’Der Fremde ... das war dein Vater”: Turkish Muslim Masculinities in Leyla’, in Feridun Zaimoglu, pp. 167-81.


Romanticism’s (mis)appropriation by German nationalists and the far right, Zaimoglu’s place of birth, the lasting impression of him as a spokesperson for disenfranchised Turkish-German youths, and the categorisation of his work as outside the German canon, than to a close examination of his texts. Zaimoglu has himself also downplayed the influence of secondary literature on Romanticism upon his writing, professing a devotion to a ‘romantische Ausdrucksgefühl’, rather than any deep intellectual engagement. Nonetheless, although he may seem an unlikely champion of Romanticism, his work shows the signs of a profound interest in both Romantic literature and its underlying philosophy. Assumptions must be put aside in order to closely examine Zaimoglu’s transition from mouthpiece for angry anti-establishment outbursts to Neo-Romantic; as Adelson observes, rather than pre-empting the meaningfulness of minority authors’ texts based on their biography, ‘each text must be interpreted for relevant frames of reference or contexts to be rendered meaningful’. 

Our appreciation of Romantic literature and its contemporary resonance is often hindered by an emphasis on the conservative politics of late Romanticism and, as William Arctander O’Brien argues: ‘Romanticism’s innovations in philosophy, poetics, politics, and religion have been obscured by a sentimentalized, even trivialized reception’. At the time of its formation in Jena, however, the mixture of genres and literary forms with philosophy, politics, and religion (part of what Friedrich Schlegel refers to as ‘progressive Universalpoesie’) was considered a radical departure from the cultural status quo. Romanticism, though not entirely reactionary, also stood in stark opposition to the

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434 As mentioned in the preceding chapter, this point is also made by Şenocak in terms of the ‘68ers’ rejection of Romanticism.
435 Cheesman and Yeşilada, pp. 64-6.
436 Adelson, The Turkish Turn, p. 12.
438 To brand the early Romantics as completely reactionary would be a gross oversimplification. There is some continuation and development of Enlightenment thought within Romanticism. See Wolfdietrich Rasch, ‘Zum Verhältnis der Romantik zur Aufklärung’, in Romantik: Ein literaturwissenschaftliches Studienbuch, ed. by Ernst Ribbat (Königstein/Ts.: Athenäum, 1979), pp. 7-21.
Enlightenment, disagreeing with its central principle that everything is explicable in the realms of science and reason. This Enlightenment paradigm was viewed as a rejection of more abstract concepts, such as religion, love and the imagination, which the early Romantics admired and celebrated. Zaimoglu imbues these arguments with a relevance for today’s Germany, rejecting the domestication of Romanticism that instrumentalises it to bolster nationalism by reminding us of its initial radicalism, just as he (and the other authors of this study) also refuse to tame the divine and rationalise the passion of love.

Zaimoglu’s scepticism towards the Enlightenment is present in many of his interviews and journalistic texts, such as his contribution to Güvercin’s *Neo-Moslems*, in which he discusses the anger directed at Muslims and the ostracisation of believers in contemporary debates:

> Die Aufklärer bekommen einen bösen Mund, wenn man sie der Denunziation überführt [...]. Auf die Vernunft können sie sich nicht beziehen, ihr Furor speist sich aus den Ressentiments wider den Eingottglauben.439

Just as the Romantics opposed the marginalisation of religion by the Enlightenment’s secular rationalism, so Zaimoglu allies himself with the Romantics in order to oppose the (supposedly cosmopolitan) secular elite’s equation of religion with identity conflicts and backwardness. As Şenocak argues, Islam is often excluded from German society on the grounds that it (allegedly) never went through a comparable process of Enlightenment to that which now underpins the dominant sense of German identity, but whilst Şenocak engages with the philosophy of the Frankfurt School in order to critique this dogmatic view of the Enlightenment from within German culture, Romanticism informs Zaimoglu’s counter-Enlightenment stance. Zaimoglu’s post-9/11 writing is therefore similar to Şenocak’s, in that it characterised not only by a broad understanding of the Islamic canon, but also a

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rediscovery of marginalised and, in the case of Romanticism, trivialised aspects of German culture, in order to expand our ‘Erinnerungshorizont’ beyond the prevailing monolithic and uniform view of national *Leitkultur*.

Zaimoglu’s engagement with the Romantics extends beyond the latter’s defence of religious faith, however. Zaimoglu is equally unconvinced of the Enlightenment’s emphasis on the rational, autonomous individual and its teleological view of history, which he sees as coupled with superciliousness towards what came before and what supposedly lies outside its reach$^{440}$ – a common criticism of universalist cosmopolitanism. This arrogant and Orientalising Enlightenment stance is identified amongst German liberals by Pratt Ewing, who notes a ‘German dichotomy that lines up modernity, secularism, cosmopolitanism, gender equality, and individual rights on one side and tradition, Islam, rural conservatism, patriarchy, and group conformity on the other’.$^{441}$ If ‘Roman Catholicism’ is substituted for ‘Islam’ in this binary, it equally mirrors common misconceptions of Enlightenment and Romantic values, which gives Zaimoglu’s interest in Romanticism a powerful contemporary significance. This counter-Enlightenment stance comes to the fore in *Nathan Messias* and *Liebesbrand*, which demonstrate the inherent violence of universalising, identity-driven ideologies, whilst also undermining Orientalist prejudices.

As Edward Said asserts, Orientalism is ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’,$^{442}$ and can be viewed as a means to justify colonialism’s ‘civilising mission’ of bringing Enlightenment values to those people deemed far removed from history’s telos. Yet an examination of the relationship between Romanticism and Orientalism can provide examples from the German literary canon of thinking outside of such universalism and indeed beyond a fusional sense of community, and

$^{440}$ Cheesman and Yeşilada, p. 46 and p. 56.
$^{441}$ Pratt Ewing, p. 79.
a brief analysis of the connection between these two concepts will not only illuminate my interpretations of Zaimoglu’s Sufi aesthetics, but also provide some possible reasoning behind his association with Romantic thought. Kontje’s publication *German Orientalisms* (2004) reiterates Said’s point that Germany made up for its lack of territorial expansion with ‘intellectual participation in European Orientalism’, but also addresses some of the gaps left by Said vis-à-vis the German context. Kontje regards Martin Wieland’s exotic Rococo literature and Goethe’s *Divan* (discussed in the previous chapter) as prominent examples of the idealisation of the East, as opposed to its quintessential portrayal as the enemy of Christendom. However, rather than an *idealisation* of the Orient (or rather an imagined Orient) that still fixes it and maintains its separation from Germany, Romanticism involves a German cultural *identification* with the East, in opposition to the rest of enlightened Europe that was beginning to mimic the French state’s post-Revolution process of homogenisation, and this is perhaps part of what attracted Zaimoglu to it. There is, nevertheless, still an unequal power dynamic in this identification that must be taken into account – seen, for instance, in Fr. Schlegel’s presumed intellectual authority and bias towards Christianity in *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808), a linguistic monograph, written after his conversion to Catholicism, that utilises the common roots of European and Asian languages in Sanskrit not only to overcome divides, but also to lend a new dignity and prestige to modern European languages.

Thus, although the Romantic tradition, especially early Romanticism, can provide examples of a thinking that extends beyond a fusional view of community within the German tradition, ‘[i]t is essential to keep in mind that romanticism was a profoundly protean

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443 Kontje, p. 6.
444 Ibid., p. 62.
445 Ibid., p. 89.
446 Ibid., pp. 106-07.
447 See James Hodkinson, ‘Moving Beyond the Binary?: Christian-Islamic Encounters and Gender in the Thought and Literature of German Romanticism’, in *Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture*,
movement, divided into distinct periods that are in some respects flatly contradictory’, as Beiser asserts. On the one hand, there has been much scholarly research into the influence of the late Romantics (especially figures such as Adam Müller and the Brothers Grimm) upon German nationalism. Yet, on the other, Carl Niekerk also emphasises Romanticism’s ‘openness toward other cultures’, commenting: ‘It is one of the paradoxes of Romanticism that the movement is perceived simultaneously as committed to pluralism and yet also as the birthplace of modern German nationalism.’ Consequently, a nuanced view of this diverse ‘movement’ is needed as regards its thinking beyond closed communities and the mythic and literary qualities of its texts. Equally, we must resist mapping the entirety of Nancy’s postmodern philosophy directly onto that of the Romantics, although references to the Romantics throughout his oeuvre and his book on the underlying philosophy of Jena Romanticism (co-written with Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe) demonstrate its importance for Nancy. Nonetheless, although the reasons behind their criticism of the Enlightenment can vary substantially, bringing Nancy and the Romantics into dialogue can help illuminate Zaimoglu’s non-identitarian cosmopolitanism and his critique of universalism’s suppression of difference. Indeed, as Beiser states: ‘Like the postmodernists, [the Romantics] were skeptical of the possibility of foundationalism, of universal standards of criticism, of complete systems, and of self-illuminating subjects.

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451 Ibid., p. 156.
The Religious Cosmopolitanism of Zaimoglu’s ‘Romantic Turn’

Scholars have recently begun to analyse how Romantic thought and literature figure in Zaimoglu’s writing, raising points that suggest a deeper understanding of Romanticism than Kimmich gives him credit for, and than he himself is willing to divulge. Much research has been devoted to Zaimoglu’s rebelliousness towards bourgeois norms, and in this regard, Hofmann argues that Zaimoglu is a ‘Romantic rebel’, whose fiction challenges ‘instrumental reason and the primacy of economic thought, in the name of imagination, unconditional love and a religion of the heart’. Hannelore van Ryneveld too has touched upon the Oriental and Romantic roots of Zaimoglu’s use of ‘Frauenanbetung’ (erotic Sufi imagery similar to that found in Şenocak’s and SAID’s writing), which Matthes develops by commenting on its religious aspects (both Christian and Islamic) in more detail. I will further elaborate on the religious and spiritual aspects of these themes, analysing the worldly religiosity of Liebesbrand that dismantles the boundaries set by fusional communities and thus allows the sense of the world to derive from the interrelatedness of its inhabitants, rather than a universalising ideology. In this regard, Zaimoglu provocatively turns the mainstream perception of religion as a foil to cosmopolitanism on its head, seeing an affective spirituality in loving and passionate relationships, which, as Nancy asserts, foreground our ontological interconnectedness.

Like Şenocak and SAID, Zaimoglu too hints at the deconstructive elements of the Islamic tradition in order to intimate a holiness in the alterity in the world. This can be detected in many of the short stories of Zwölf Gramm Glück (most notably ‘Gottes Krieger’.

‘Der Kranich auf dem Kiesel in der Pfütze’ and ‘Ein Liebesdienst’), in *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, and also in *Liebesbrand*, where it can be linked to Romanticism (more specifically Novalis). Contrary to the mystification of his biography, both by himself and by his posthumous publishers Fr. Schlegel and Ludwig Tieck, Novalis is not the pious Christian poet he is often held to be. As O’Brien contends, although Novalis ‘maintained a fervent personal and theoretical interest in religion’, he in fact had religious views that were quite unorthodox, which can be gleaned from the collection of fragments *Blütenstaub* (1798):


By stipulating that the choice of religious mediator must be free and that ‘alles Organ der Gottheit, Mittler seyn könne’, Novalis implies a religiosity, not unlike Nancy’s, that seeks to dismantle the separation of the worlds of God and humankind within monotheism. The religiosity at the centre of Novalis’s thought is, then, not a rigid and institutionalised Christianity, but rather a religiosity that allows for the material world to act as a mediator for God. As Paulina Kleingeld argues with regard to Novalis’s writing: ‘“Christianity” seems to serve as an umbrella term for religion and spirituality in general.’

Alongside their unorthodox religiosity, the early Romantics were also developing their own distinct ideas of cosmopolitanism in contrast to the universalist cosmopolitanism of the Enlightenment – indeed, the religiosity and cosmopolitanism of the Romantics are closely

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linked. They admired the Middle Ages not only as a pre-Enlightenment time when humankind and nature were more in tune with one another before the onset of large scale industrialisation and modern capitalism, but also for the period’s harmony. During this time the German states were part of the larger Holy Roman Empire and Christendom had yet to be divided by the Reformation, and the Romantics defended this medieval cosmopolitan spirit in the face of the Enlightenment view of the age as backwards and primitive, and of the Holy Roman Empire as a cumbersome and antiquated state. Significantly, due to the heterogeneity of the various Holy Roman states, this Romantic cosmopolitanism does not regard itself as a unity that would smother difference. As Niekerk argues, the Romantics approved of rather than sought to eradicate otherness:

[T]he Romantics rejected what they perceived as the Enlightenment’s outdated emphasis on universalism to embrace a notion of alterity that, at least on the surface, seemed to be more open to “irrational” elements in the world views and belief systems of other cultures.462

Novalis engages with this period in depth in his *Europa* speech463 (1799), which appears, upon first glance, as a conservative appeal for Europe’s return to Roman Catholicism.464 Yet, given Novalis’s unorthodox religious views, it is unlikely that *Europa* is a call for the return of a wholly Catholic Europe, and the majority of more recent academic criticism supports the idea that

the medieval image painted in “Christianity [sic] or Europe” plays a *symbolic* role and should not be taken as a literal description of the historical past or as a blueprint for the future. Rather, the romantic picture of medieval Europe is to evoke poetically the ideal of a re-unification of humanity, a cosmopolitan re-unification through “faith and love.”465

462 Niekerk, p. 147.
463 I have chosen to refer to the text otherwise known as *Die Christenheit oder Europa* by the original title *Europa*. The other title was added posthumously and supports a conservative reading of the text with which I disagree.
Europa functions as a conduit for many typically Romantic criticisms, and Zaimoglu’s comments mirror the speech’s disapproval of Enlightenment secularism. Novalis characterises Protestantism as a forerunner of the Enlightenment that removed all that was enigmatic and miraculous from the church, after which faith and love yielded to knowledge and greed.\textsuperscript{466} He claims:

\begin{quote}
Der anfängliche Personalhaß gegen den katholischen Glauben ging allmählig in Haß gegen die Bibel, gegen den christlichen Glauben und endlich gar gegen die Religion über. Noch mehr – der Religions-Haß dehnte sich sehr natürlich und folgerecht auf alle Gegenstände des Enthusiasmus aus, verketzerte Fantasie und Gefühl, Sittlichkeit und Kunstliebe, Zukunft und Vorzeit, setzte den Menschen in der Reihe der Naturwesen mit Noth oben an, und machte die unendliche schöpferische Musik des Weltalls zum einförmigen Klappern einer ungeheuren Mühle [...].\textsuperscript{467}
\end{quote}

This excerpt encapsulates the Romantic view of the Enlightenment, whose preference for a priori knowledge they viewed as an affront to abstract concepts such as religion and the imagination. The repetitive windmill serves as a well-known allegory for the uniformity and banality of the philistine world, which also features in the sound of the shutters at the beginning of Heinrich von Ofterdingen (1802) and in the opening stanza of In einem kühlen Grunde (1813) by Joseph von Eichendorff.

Europa also contains a strong critique of the Enlightenment’s understanding of cosmopolitanism. Novalis, as Kleingeld argues,

\begin{quote}
evokes an ideal that is [...] centered on emotion, spirituality, and concrete connectedness of human beings to each other; and it is meant to replace the focus on rational knowledge, material goods, and abstract moral and legal principles.\textsuperscript{468}
\end{quote}

This also comes to the fore in Novalis’s earlier text Glaube und Liebe oder der König und die Königin (1798), in which he advocates love as the primary source of cosmopolitanism,

\textsuperscript{467} Ibid., p. 515.
\textsuperscript{468} Kleingeld, ‘Cosmopolitanism in Late Eighteenth-Century Germany’, p. 521.
contradicting Kant’s *Zum ewigen Frieden* (1795):

Wie würden unsre Kosmopoliten erstaunen, wenn ihnen die Zeit des ewigen Friedens erschien und sie die höchste gebildetste Menschheit in monarchische Form erblickten? Zerstäubt wird dann der papiere Kitt seyn, der jetzt die Menschen zusammenkleistert, und der Geist wird die Gespenster, die statt seiner Buchstaben erscheinen und von Federn und Pressen zerstückelt ausgingen, verscheuchen, und alle Menschen wie ein paar Liebende zusammenschmelzen.\(^{469}\)

Fr. Schlegel too invested in the power of love to bring people together, and this is highlighted in his theory of the ‘Romantic Novel’:

Aber die höchste Schönheit, ja die höchste Ordnung ist denn doch nur die des Chaos, nämlich eines solchen, welches nur auf die Berührung der Liebe wartet, um sich zu einer harmonischen Welt zu entfalten.\(^{470}\)

Thus, just as the Romantics rejected the Enlightenment notion of cosmopolitanism based in rules and law, and saw love as the route to a harmonious world, Nancy too places emphasis on love’s ability to make the inoperative community more accessible to us and condemns universalising projects with a specified end-point.

As previously stated, Littler interprets the sexual passion of *Liebesbrand*, supported through intertextual references to Kleist’s *Penthesilea* (1808), as ‘a depersonalized force with both destructive and utopian potential’ which opens the novel up to readings ‘*beyond* identity’.\(^{471}\) I will expand upon this argument by closely analysing Zaimoglu’s Romantic references, and by bringing Romantic thought together with Nancy’s non-foundationalism in order to uncover the complex relations between Romantic love, religiosity, and the non-identitarian cosmopolitanism of Zaimoglu’s writing. Both Nancy’s and the Romantics’ ideas grapple with the same question of the individual’s place within community, and they inform my understanding of Zaimoglu’s cosmopolitanism. As Beiser asserts: ‘It was indeed the

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romantics who first identified and addressed some of the fundamental problems of modern civil society: anomie, atomism, and alienation.\textsuperscript{472} Thus, although a consensus may have developed among literary critics that Zaimoglu ‘is no longer seen as a radical writer [...] but as an “expert” on questions relating to Muslim life in Germany’,\textsuperscript{473} I hope to demonstrate that, despite moving on from the controversies of ghetto subculture, Zaimoglu has lost none of his radicalism and that his literature need not be understood as a reflection of Muslim life in Germany. Indeed, \textit{Nathan Messias} and \textit{Liebesbrand} continue to challenge the West’s grand narratives, German \textit{Leitkultur} and also Islamic orthodoxy, critiquing foundational and homogenising views of national and religious community in favour of a cosmopolitan one that is based on a radical openness towards the flows of our being-in-common and towards the alterity in our world.

‘Ich bin gekommen, die Zerstreuten einzusammeln’: Religious/Enlightenment

\textbf{Fundamentalism in \textit{Nathan Messias}}

\textit{Nathan Messias} invites comparisons with Lessing’s Enlightenment drama \textit{Nathan der Weise}, of which it is a creative reworking.\textsuperscript{474} Mirroring the setting of \textit{Nathan der Weise}, \textit{Nathan Messias} is staged in contemporary Jerusalem and is consequently embedded in the question of Palestine and in the city’s current deadly intercommunal struggles, although it also bears a wider significance for a world struggling to cope with its heterogeneity. The theatre critic Gerhard Stadelmaier somewhat sensationally referred to the 2005 premier of the play as ‘Lessing meets Al Qaeda’,\textsuperscript{475} and the brutality of Zaimoglu’s Nathan figure does indeed play

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{472} Beiser, \textit{The Romantic Imperative}, p. 2.
\item \textsuperscript{473} Matthes, \textit{Writing and Muslim Identity}, p. 221.
\item \textsuperscript{474} One thing that links many of Zaimoglu’s disparate texts is their (at times disputed) basis in other texts, be these interviews, Shakespeare plays, the Old Testament, or \textit{Nathan der Weise}.
\end{itemize}
on the post-9/11 association of religion (usually Islam) with violent identity conflicts. On the one hand, Lessing’s Nathan is the personification of Enlightenment tolerance, as the following oft-cited passage demonstrates:

\[
\text{Nathan: [...] Sind Wir unser Volk? Was heißt denn Volk?}
\]
\[
\text{Sind Christ und Jude eher Christ und Jude,}
\]
\[
\text{Als Mensch? Ah! wenn ich einen mehr in Euch}
\]
\[
\text{Gefunden hätte, dem es gnügt, ein Mensch}
\]
\[
\text{Zu heißen!}^{476}
\]

Zaimoglu’s Nathan, on the other hand, is a recently arrived messiah, preaching a new, all-encompassing religion that threatens to disrupt the status quo, in which religious leaders are able to control and influence their followers. Nathan Messias thus creates implicit parallels between the universalising tendencies of both orthodox religion and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism.

In Zaimoglu’s play, the Jewish mayor’s daughter Rebekka, initially romantically linked to the Muslim youth Jamal, becomes enraptured by Nathan’s preaching. She is tragically killed as the result of the zealous Christian Mika’el’s failed assassination attempt in the play’s final scene, and Mika’el is subsequently murdered by Jamal in an act of revenge.

This plot stands in stark contrast to the original, famed for its message of religious tolerance. In Nathan der Weise, Nathan, a wealthy Jewish merchant, is summoned before the Muslim sultan Saladin, who is in financial trouble. When asked what is the true religion, Nathan tells Saladin the famous ‘Ring Parable’,\textsuperscript{477} which is widely regarded as accepting all three of the so-called Abrahamic religions as equals, though there is some debate as to whether they are actually presented as equally false.\textsuperscript{478} Nathan’s daughter Recha was saved from a burning


\textsuperscript{477} Significantly, the Ring parable is absent from Zaimoglu and Senkel’s version, perhaps because they see it as a pedagogical, and therefore mythic device.

house by a Christian Templar knight, and Nathan arranges for them to marry. However, it emerges that the adopted Recha is not only the Templar’s biological sister, but that they are also both the children of Saladin’s brother, Assad. Thus, people of differing religious backgrounds are revealed to be long-lost members of the same family, suggesting an affinity between the three religions. Far removed, then, from these familial embraces as the curtain falls, the final scene of Nathan Messias is a blood bath.

Cheesman interprets the play as presenting ‘supposedly tolerant secularism and indubitably intolerant messianism [as] two sides of the same coin of utopian fantasy’. However, additional to the utopianism of these positions, I would argue that Nathan Messias also demonstrates how secularism, in the form of the Enlightenment’s universalist cosmopolitanism, and intolerant messianism are equally two sides of the same coin in terms of foundational ideologies that militate against the inoperative community. Indeed, both operate through the monotheistic paradigm of an other world that acts as a guiding principle, and both therefore have the potential to become fundamentalist dogmas that suppress difference and finish identities. ‘Rationalism and fideism are’, in Eagleton’s words, ‘each other’s mirror image. The other side of a two-dimensional reason is a faith-based reality.’ For Cheesman, the play’s main interest is Jamal’s “God of one’s own” of individualistic, pluralistic, postmodern society. However, I have argued that Beck’s vision of individualistic religious belief does not overcome the inherently divisive and identitarian nature of contemporary cosmopolitan theory, and Cheesman himself argues that Beck’s A God of One’s Own is unsuited to Zaimoglu’s rejection of the autonomous individual.

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479 Similar to the Christian Templar of Lessing’s play, Mika’el rescued Rebekka from a burning building (NM, p. 14).
480 Lessing, p. 627.
482 Eagleton, p. 148.
483 Cheesman, ‘Nathan without the Rings’, p. 141.
484 See pp. 54-8 of the Introduction.
485 Cheesman, ‘Nathan without the Rings’, p. 120.
Instead, I will focus on how Zaimoglu in fact equates the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism of Lessing’s Nathan, of which Beck is an heir, with the religious fundamentalism of his own Nathan. Whereas Cheesman views Lessing’s drama as ‘Enlightenment optimism [...] tempered with tragic realism’, I will argue, through an interpretation of the dramatic text supplemented by the 2009 performance directed by Neco Çelik at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße, that Nathan Messias is an altogether more forceful critique of the Enlightenment, indicating that universalist cosmopolitanism can ultimately only ever end tragically, just as Zaimoglu himself has remarked that those who hold a teleological view of history, in which the current state of their community is regarded as the peak of humanity, leave only graves behind them. Given the counter-Enlightenment character of Nathan Messias, it can be associated with Zaimoglu’s Romantic turn. Just as it has been argued that ‘Fünf klopfende Herzen’ and Liebesbrand are indebted to Kleist, Nathan’s arrival is a typically Kleistian ‘event’ that plunges the characters into turmoil without prior warning. The play’s tragic and violent characters at the mercy of their passions also lend the text a Kleistian tone, and its critique of the Enlightenment reflects Kleist’s own rejection of Enlightenment rationalism.

The Critique of Universalist Cosmopolitanism in Nathan Messias

Nathan Messias begins with a discussion between the mayor and his daughter about the new messiah who is attracting followers in the city. Whereas Rebekka believes what Nathan preaches, her father is altogether more cynical (NM, p. 4). Although the mayor regards Jewish law as holy, he tells his daughter to only believe what she sees (NM, p. 3), demonstrating his

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486 Ibid., p. 142.
487 I am thankful to the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse for providing me with a DVD copy of the performance, promotional material, reviews and photographs, and also to the Rohwohlt Theaterverlag for providing me with a copy of the unpublished script.
488 Cheesman and Yeşilada, p. 46.

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sceptical view on religious matters. For the fundamentalist Mika’el, the mayor is ‘einer von diesen Liberalen, für die alle Menschen gleich sind’ (NM, p. 17). According to Christopher Adamo, Lessing’s Nathan believes that

if it is rational to trust my own experiences as veridical and my elders as sincere, provided I am open to defeating conditions, I must grant it is rational for others to trust the veridicality of their experiences and the sincerity of their elders.\(^{490}\)

Thus, the sceptical mayor is arguably closer to Lessing’s Nathan than Nathan the Messiah is, not only because it is the mayor who has the daughter, but also because his apparent tolerance towards his citizens’ diversity in his public office as the secular (although in private not always impartial) head of a multicultural city can be likened to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. The mayor fulfils a Habermasian role in the city’s government in this regard, reflecting Habermas’s comments on religion in the public sphere:

Only the ideologically neutral exercise of secular governmental authority within the framework of the constitutional state can ensure that different communities of belief can coexist on a basis of equal rights and mutual tolerance, while nevertheless remaining unreconciled at the level of their substantive worldviews or doctrines.\(^{491}\)

This tolerance is, however, not upheld in private, where the mayor belittles the religious beliefs of many of his citizens. As an interreligious love triangle emerges and it becomes apparent that, although Rebekka and Jamal are a couple, Mika’el is also competing for her affections, the mayor appears at ease with Mika’el’s advances, but rejects Jamal. He argues that ‘Jesus war immer noch ein Jude’,\(^{492}\) whilst derogatively (and incorrectly\(^{493}\)) labelling Jamal a ‘Mohammedaner’ and a ‘Fellache’ (NM, p. 4), displaying racist tendencies.

\(^{490}\) Christopher Adamo, ‘One True Ring or Many?: Religious Pluralism in Lessing’s Nathan the Wise’, *Philosophy and Literature*, 33.1 (2009), 139–49 (pp. 145–46).

\(^{491}\) Habermas, *Between Naturalism and Religion*, pp. 2-3.

\(^{492}\) This mirrors the remark of the ‘Klosterbruder’ in the original: ‘Und ist denn nicht das ganze Christentum / Aufs Judentum gebaut? Es hat mich oft / Geärgert, hat mir Tränen g’nug gekostet, / Wenn Christen gar so sehr vergessen konnten, / Daß unser Herr ja selbst ein Jude war.’: Lessing, p. 595.

\(^{493}\) The label ‘Mohammedaner’ mistakenly conflates Muhammad’s role within Islam with Jesus’s within Christianity.
that reflect the contemporary demonisation of Muslims above other religious groups in the West. Moreover, he later shows himself to be a hypocrite when he corrects Mika’el’s description of Muslims as ‘Fellachen’ by parroting his daughter’s words from their previous conversation: ‘Ich darf richtig stellen: es sind moslemische Araber’ (NM, p. 16).

The mayor also seems to prefer to ignore religious matters, inviting similar criticisms to those directed at the secular nature of much contemporary cosmopolitan theory. Just as he attempts to dissuade Rebekka from seeing either Jamal or Nathan, he also tries in vain to exclude religious topics from his discussion with Nathan:

Nathan: Gottes ist der Osten und der Westen.494

Bürgermeister: Wir wollen uns bitte vernünftig unterhalten. Weshalb hast du nicht einen Bogen um Jerusalem gemacht?

Nathan: Bin ich dir eine Last?

Bürgermeister: Du allein nicht.

Nathan: Ich bin nicht gottverlassen.


This scene illustrates that cosmopolitanism cannot bring an end to identity conflicts whilst discounting and trivialising religious matters. The mayor also echoes Beck’s view on the individualisation of religious belief, as he tells Nathan: ‘Für mich gilt: Ein jeder soll seinen Glauben haben’ (NM, p. 34); and he wants Nathan to keep his religion a private matter: ‘Gut, nehmen wir einmal an, du hattest eine Vision […] Aber – wieso musst du es nach außen dringen lassen?’ (NM, p. 35). Thus, if this is the cosmopolitanism postulated by universalists, it is presented as superficial and lacking any real openness towards others outside of one’s own fusional sense of community and of self. These subjectivist approaches to cosmopolitanism based on the secular, rational individual are, then, implicitly critiqued, since

494 This quote, also used by Goethe in the Divan, comes from the Qur’an.
they do little to bring peace to war-torn Jerusalem and the mayor’s diplomatic talk with Nathan ultimately breaks down as both resort to violence (NM, pp. 35-6), although both cowardly and hypocritically enlist others to carry out their attacks.

Similar to the mayor, Jamal is also sceptical of Nathan, deriding him as a charlatan and ‘Landstreicher’ (NM, p. 13). In contrast to other characters however, Jamal, who dismisses doctrinal divisions and is reluctant to refer to Muslims as his people (NM, p. 13), does not make his own beliefs clear. Whereas Cheesman locates the play’s religious cosmopolitanism in the comparison between Jamal’s concerns that Nathan has deceived God (NM, p. 30) and Beck’s God of one’s own ‘who is just as powerless as his believers’, I view Jamal’s and Rebekka’s relationship as the most hopeful aspect of the play. Although their romance is brief, it demonstrates love’s power to connect people across identitarian divides, as Jamal is genuinely concerned about Rebekka’s well-being, and they display a tenderness towards each other on stage. Yet, whereas Rebekka once reciprocated his love, Jamal notices a change in her after her contact with Nathan: ‘Seitdem dieser ... Nathan aufgekreuzt ist, fühlst du dich über mich erhaben’ (NM, p. 14). The wordplay between ‘aufkreuzen’ (to show up) and ‘kreuzigen’ (to crucify) hints at Nathan’s position as the new messiah, and Rebekka’s attitude of superiority demonstrates that she has begun to believe Nathan’s truth claims and to elevate her religious identity over those of others. As Beck concedes, religious belief as an individual choice can lead to a ‘hierarchy of superiority and inferiority’, as those who have not made the same choices are excluded. The same can be argued for universalist cosmopolitanisms, which are often criticised for their arrogance towards so-called provincialism, and, as will be discussed in the following section, this arrogance can lead to brutally enforced homogenisation.

495 Cheesman, ‘Nathan without the Rings’, p. 141.
496 This is similarly the case in Zaimoglu and Senkel’s rewriting of Romeo und Julia (2006), in which the former is a Muslim and the latter a Christian.
497 Beck, A God of One’s Own, p. 55.
Religious Dogma, Cosmopolitan Universalism and Violence in Nathan Messias

Alongside the implied criticisms of Nathan’s messianic religious zeal, organised religion is also cast in a negative light in the play, resonating with the anti-clericalism of much of Zaimoglu’s writing. In Act 1, Scene 2, the leading rabbi, cardinal and imam meet with the mayor to discuss what action to take over the new messiah. Under Çelik’s direction, these three characters are all played by the same man, who, with his Zimmer frame, party hat, stilts, bedraggled appearance and shaky voice, gives the impression of a feeble, senile man (see fig. 1). The man’s noticeable elderliness implies that the three established monotheisms are on the wane, whereas the stilts represent their attempt to appear more powerful than they actually are. The split personality that leaves this man squabbling with himself groups these religions together, but not in the fraternal ecumenism of Lessing’s play and of the Abrahamic discourse. Any lasting interfaith unity amongst the clerics is out of the question, as they

\[498\] In Çelik’s play, the rabbi/cardinal/imam removes his stilts after he is forced to act by the mayor, implying a loss of authority and standing. This appears to be a painful transition.
initially quarrel about doctrinal differences that illustrate competing claims, rather than shared beliefs:


Kardinal: “Wer hat denn die Zinswirtschaft erfunden? Dem Herren ist der Zins ein Greuel […]”

Rabbi: “Hören Sie doch auf! Jesus war Jude. Das habt ihr uns nicht verziehen. Eure tollen Heiligen waren nichts weiter als Rädelsführer, und sie haben die Meute zu Mord und Todschlag angestachelt.” (NM, p. 6)

In contrast to the Abrahamic discourse, ‘shared’ heritage emerges not as unifying, but as a flashpoint, especially in the case of the shared holy city of Jerusalem; the cardinal refers to the Crusades as a ‘Rückoberung’ during a confrontation with the imam and the rabbi takes pride in the fact that Jerusalem’s holy sites are now under Jewish administration (NM, p. 8). Instead, the three religions appear similar in that they are portrayed as hypocritical ideologies that will conspire together to keep their followers under control, despite insisting upon their differences. This is verified as, when threatened by the popularity of Nathan, they eventually work together to plan his assassination. This underhanded deal to retain their power is, needless to say, not the cooperation that Lessing would have envisioned, once again suggesting a superficial cosmopolitanism, whereby solidarities are established only for selfish short-term gain – a criticism that ties in with Romantic arguments against Enlightenment cosmopolitanism: ‘For the romantics, the epitome of [...] social alienation was social contract theory, according to which the individual entered a group only if it suited his self-interest.’

Nathan’s new religion, on the other hand, is a rejection of the three institutionalised religions and it too can arguably be described as individualised, highlighting the susceptibility to fundamentalism in Beck’s theory. Nathan too makes a work of religious

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identity, selecting elements from other world religions in order to ‘write [his] own faith narrative’ that would replace all others – as will be made apparent, this can be contrasted with David’s openness towards the holiness of sexual experiences in *Liebesbrand*, which does not create ideological and identitarian divisions as it is orientated towards the divine in the world and not an ideal other world that must be attained. The opening exchange between the mayor and his daughter emphasises that Nathan is unshaven but has no beard (see fig. 2), indicating that Nathan’s religiosiy is unorthodox (*NM*, p. 2), and Nathan’s sermon in Act 2 dispenses with many features of religious orthodoxy that Zaimoglu criticises in his other texts, such as ‘Gottes Krieger’ and *Liebesbrand*: Nathan undermines Scripture, stating that God is within him and thus his body is Scripture (*NM*, p. 20); labels priests as heathens (*NM*, p. 22); and advocates a religion that is compatible with sexual pleasure (*NM*, p. 53). Here, Zaimoglu uses Nathan to critique organised religion without giving any positive examples that would function as an alternative, refusing his play the mythic status of Lessing’s.

Nathan proclaims: ‘Ich bin gekommen, die Zerstreuten einzusammeln’ (*NM*, p. 22). Yet, he presents himself as the rightful heir to the founding figures of the three monotheisms, creating a new identity category that reflects the supersessionist reality behind the inclusive term ‘Abrahamic’ and does little to overcome identity politics:

Abraham, Isaak und Jacob segnen mich.
Jesus, Sohn des Josef, segnet mich.
Mohammed, das Siegel der Propheten, segnet mich.
Diese Stadt soll erstrahlen in meinem Ruhm, der da ist das Himmelslicht. (*NM*, p. 21)

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501 This is a common tactic of Zaimoglu, which can be seen in the attacks on organised Islam made by fundamentalists in *Schwarze Jungfrauen*, and also in the anti-capitalist criticisms of Yücel in *Kanak Sprak* and the ‘Herzprediger’ in ‘Gottes Krieger’. In this way, his literature remains critical without providing the mythic foundation for another set of principles.
However, despite referring to all of the three main monotheisms, Nathan’s costume links him more closely to the Christian evangelicalism of the US. Unlike the other characters whose microphones are concealed, Nathan always uses a handheld microphone (see fig. 2), calling to mind charismatic born-again preachers and reminding us of other religious fundamentalisms beside those of Islam. Furthermore, the flexible space at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße allowed for the removal of chairs in order to make the audience sit around the stage on the floor. Together with the single tree, this created the imagery of the Sermon on the Mount, establishing further parallels with Jesus and Christianity. Kermani asks in Der Schrecken Gottes: ‘War Jesus in seiner Zeit nicht ein Extremist, der alles bedrohte, was galt und war?’; and Nathan too wreaks havoc in contemporary Jerusalem.

Nathan the Messiah’s message functions via the monotheistic paradigm, which is reflected in the Biblical style of language he uses and his strict separation of heaven and

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⁵⁰² Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 159.
earth: ‘Ich bin geschickt vom Gott meiner Anbetung, ich bin als reiner Geist geschleudert worden von ganz oben nach ganz unten’ (NM, p. 22). Moreover, Nathan the Messiah’s second sermon begins with the words of Luther, ‘Hier steh’ ich [...]’ (NM, p. 43), emphasising his role as radical religious reformer and linking him with Luther’s determinist conviction that God alone can provide salvation, which serves to strengthen the monotheistic paradigm by diminishing worldly power. Nathan’s Luther-inspired opening statement also reflects the connection Novalis establishes between Protestantism and the Enlightenment in Europa, whilst also hinting at a relationship between the turmoil unleashed by the Reformation upon the Holy Roman Empire (a point also raised in Liebesbrand) and the chaos Nathan creates in Jerusalem.

Similar to Beck’s comments on the enemies of cosmopolitanism that must be checked with force,\textsuperscript{503} Nathan’s new religion is belligerent against those with conflicting ideas of truth – he ends his sermon by inciting his followers to fight against the ‘Schandpriester’: ‘Rüstet euch, oh ihr Gläubigen, zum Kampf – die Große Erweckung hat begonnen’ (NM, p. 29). Nancy describes the inherent violence involved in maintaining communities founded on a supposed immanence and, true to this, Nathan’s followers brutally attack and murder an anonymous assassin (NM, pp. 33-4). Cheesman contends that, in the play,

nobody can escape their socially over-determined ethnic-religious identity, except by becoming a follower of a Messiah who creates a new identity-option, but promises only the same violence.\textsuperscript{504}

Universalist cosmopolitanism is equally a new ideological identity-option that functions via the monotheistic paradigm, and thus harbours the potential to cause conflict and coercion. Nathan’s religion aspires to unite the world under a single doctrine and, like universalist cosmopolitanism, this entails thinking in terms of the absolute individual and fusional communities based on a common identity, rather than accepting heterogeneity and open-

\textsuperscript{504} Cheesman, ‘Nathan without the Rings’, pp. 133-34.
endedness. Indeed, like the religious leaders before him, the charismatic messiah Nathan also acts as a symbol in which his followers may commune, as Rebekka indeed does. Consequently, as with other immanent communities, Nathan becomes worthy of sacrifice and Rebekka flings herself in front of Mika’el’s bullet (NM, p. 55). Zaimoglu thus implicitly denounces the liberals he refers to as Aufklärer for being just as implicated in ideological violence as the religious fundamentalists they criticise – it is apt, then, that Nathan accuses the mayor of speaking like a priest (NM, p. 34). Moreover, the play’s ending remains open and ambiguous. As the lightning flashes and rumbles are heard, it falls dark before Nathan’s power can be proved or disproved, and this can be viewed as a further critique of the Enlightenment, allowing space for the unknown, as the Romantics did.

On the surface, Zaimoglu’s Nathan is the harbinger of a new age that is free from religious divisions, mirroring the utopian cosmopolitan message of Lessing’s Nathan. The only difference is that Nathan the Messiah does this through a new religious ideology, rather than a cosmopolitan one – as Eagleton asks: ‘How far is the dream of a thoroughly rational future a substitute for heaven? Is “Progress” the liberal-rationalist translation of “after-life”?’ However, that Nathan should herald a new religion to replace those that came before it also echoes Lessing’s own thoughts on religion and reason. In Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts (1780), Lessing views religion as a divine method of guiding humans on their path towards pure Reason, and can therefore also be considered a religious cosmopolitanism. According to Robertson:

Lessing supposes that the revelations of Moses and Christ are God’s (or Providence’s) way of gradually educating humankind; their content could have been discovered by unaided human reason, but the providential process of education speeds things up. Thus the revelation of Moses was made to a savage and child-like people in the appropriately crude language of rewards and punishments; but when these moral lessons were in danger of being obscured by rabbinical over-ingenuity, a better instructor came in the person of Christ with a new schoolbook. Humanity will become mature when we

505 Eagleton, p. 95.
no longer need such artificial inducements to morality and are able to do good because it is good.\textsuperscript{506}

Christiane Bohnert also speaks of a ‘religion of reason’ in Lessing’s thought that ‘will transcend the particular religions’,\textsuperscript{507} which is reflected in the messianic claims of Zaimoglu’s Nathan. This religion of reason is referred to by Benno von Wiese as ‘Humanitätsreligion’\textsuperscript{508} and ties in with universalist cosmopolitanisms that are rooted in the notion that humans will all come to agree upon the same universal laws as they become more rational, their differences recede and identity reaches its completion. ‘Vollendete Humanität’, observes Wiese, ‘darf zunächst im Sinne Lessings vollendete Vernunft gennant werden.’\textsuperscript{509}

Consequently, to present Nathan as the founder of a new religion is not the radical departure from the original that it first seems.

\textit{Conclusion: Rejecting the Ring Parable}

As Cheesman states: ‘In both utopias [the messianic end time and Kantian “perpetual peace”], religious difference no longer makes any difference’, but meanwhile, conflict still persists.\textsuperscript{510} Nancy argues that ‘political or collective enterprises dominated by a will to absolute immanence have as their truth the truth of death’,\textsuperscript{511} and this is played out at the end of \textit{Nathan Messias}. Robertson states, describing Lessing’s play:

\begin{quote}
Dogmatic religious belief is set in opposition to natural human affection and honesty, and the play’s great strengths include its warm and attractive portrayal of flawed but convincingly and profoundly decent people.\textsuperscript{512}
\end{quote}

Zaimoglu and Senkel’s writing too sets religious fundamentalism against human affection –

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{506}{Robertson, ‘The Ambiguities of Toleration’, p. 113.}
\footnotetext{509}{\textit{Ibid.}, p. 172.}
\footnotetext{510}{Cheesman, ‘\textit{Nathan without the Rings}’, p. 136.}
\footnotetext{511}{Nancy, \textit{Inoperative Community}, p. 12.}
\footnotetext{512}{Robertson, ‘The Ambiguities of Toleration’, p. 114.}
\end{footnotes}
though their characters are flawed, not all are decent, however. Indeed, at the start of *Nathan Messias*, there is an interfaith relationship, implying a loving openness that ignores communal divides. Yet, by the play’s end, any crossing of love, as Nancy refers to it, is snuffed out as a will to immanence comes to dominate in the mind of Rebekka, who ultimately dies for her belief. Jamal, on the other hand, lashes out in murderous anger.

Thus, Zaimoglu and Senkel rewrite Lessing’s drama, replacing its optimism with tragedy, a tragedy that, in Nancy’s terms, is arguably more fitting for such a universalist plea for rational tolerance. Cheesman contends that ‘in some ways *Nathan Messias* is not so radical a rewriting of *Nathan der Weise* as its authors would like to think’, but I would contend that Zaimoglu and Senkel intended their Nathan to closely mirror Lessing’s. Indeed, both Nathans subscribe to a utopian ideology that would seek to transcend all others and that derives its meaning from a transcendental source – Zaimoglu’s from the new Kingdom of God and Lessing’s from the metaphysical realm of pure Reason. However, Zaimoglu does significantly depart from Lessing in that he exposes such thinking as inherently violent. Toshimasa Yasukata regards the ‘true’ religion of Lessing’s ‘Ring Parable’ as a ‘religion based on real and universal humanity’, in other words, universalist cosmopolitanism. For Zaimoglu and Senkel, it is seemingly better to give up all notions of a ‘true ring’, rather than seek to find it. Whereas the pedagogical example set by Lessing’s Nathan arguably makes the drama myth in Nancy’s sense, the lack of identification with Zaimoglu’s protagonist allows *Nathan Messias* to remain literature – as Zaimoglu states: ‘Jedes Vorbild macht sich lächerlich.’ Similar to Şenocak and SAID, Zaimoglu does not endorse any ideology, but rather highlights the violence bound up in ideological thinking. Although Zaimoglu does

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513 Cheesman, ‘*Nathan without the Rings*’, p. 142.
subtly hint at love’s ability to transcend the boundaries of fusional communities, *Nathan Messias* remains, unlike the poetry of the last chapter, a more pessimistic text by not hinting at an alternative, post-monotheistic religiosity. Such a religiosity does, however, become apparent in the passionate encounters of *Liebesbrand*, as will be discussed in the following section.

‘Nur die Liebe besitzt den Talisman ewigen Friedens’: Rival Religiosities and 
Competing Cosmopolitanisms in *Liebesbrand*

The above quotation describes Heinrich’s dreams of the blue flower in Novalis’s fragmentary novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, but it also encapsulates the plot of *Liebesbrand*: the protagonist David’s near-death experience in a coach crash, the heightened passion he experiences with Tyra and their subsequent separation. David is a self-consciously old-fashioned man and a self-professed ‘Romantiker’ (*L*, p. 54). His journey in pursuit of Tyra takes him from Germany to the Czech Republic and on to Austria, and along the way he is joined by Gabriel, an old friend, and he also becomes intimately acquainted with his tour guide Jarmila. *Liebesbrand* is the most salient example of Zaimoglou’s Romantic turn to date. Love, desire and sexuality play a central role in the novel, as David is faced with a choice between Tyra and Jarmila, yet its erotic scenes not only suggest Romantic love, but also the imagery of Sufi divan poetry, highlighting the shared religious dimension of love within these traditions. Passion, I will argue, provides access to a sense of the divine beyond monotheism in the novel, creating an alternative to the philistine world of atheism, perfunctory religious observance and consumerism, whilst also foregrounding our interconnectedness.

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Nancy’s separation of love and desire can further illuminate the relationship between David and the women, and in turn between humans and the divine. According to the Sufi al-Huḡwīrī: ‘There is a difference between one who is burned by His Majesty in the fire of love and one who is illuminated by His Beauty in the light of contemplation.’ This difference (perhaps between God’s wrath and his love) is played out in Liebesbrand through Tyra, the dangerous femme fatale, and the loving Jarmila respectively. Alongside the different religiosities they convey, these women also embody contrasting views of cosmopolitanism.

Liebesbrand can, then, be read as a continuation of Zaimoglu’s counter-Enlightenment critique of universalist cosmopolitanisms in favour of a Romantic cosmopolitanism of love that suggests an ontological interrelatedness. Thus, whereas Littler argues that love and desire in Liebesbrand both constitute a ‘non-discursive yet meaningful experience which connect[s] the individual to the social and exceed[s] the limit of subjectivity’, by viewing desire as separate to love in its unattainable aim of union with the beloved, I regard Tyra’s relationship with David as characterised by a false subjectivity and a violent appropriative movement.

Fr. Schlegel comments: ‘Das Geliebte zu vergöttern ist die Natur des Liebenden’. Thus the so-called Oriental tradition of the adoration of women is equally locatable within German Romanticism, perhaps connected to the Romantic view of the Orient as containing ‘das höchste Romantische’, though also certainly indebted to Romantic Medievalism. In an interview with SPIEGEL ONLINE shortly after the publication of Liebesbrand, Zaimoglu highlights both the German and Oriental origins of this conflation of human and divine love:

Ich selbst fühle mich der deutschen Romantik zugehörig. Aber wegen meiner Biografie und meines Namens werde ich automatisch der orientalischen Seite zugeschlagen. Dabei unterscheiden sich diese beiden Konzepte gar nicht so sehr. Das Minnesängersche, die Körperlichkeit, das

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519 Schlegel, p. 66.
520 Ibid., p. 312.
Minnesang often includes holy depictions of female love interests, equating them with the Virgin Mary, and similar to David’s longing, ‘[d]ie hohe Minne wollte nicht die sinnliche Erfüllung, sondern ein empfindsam gesteigertes Fühlen und ein sehnsüchtig ausharrendes Verlangen’. The emphasis on embodied experience and affective religiosity that Minnesang, Sufism and Romanticism share highlights their deconstructive potential for the monotheistic paradigm. This touching tale between Romanticism and Sufism undermines the Islam/West binary, establishing an ambiguous connection between Islamic and German culture. Yet, rather than viewing love in Liebesbrand as an intercultural third space, as Saniye Uysal Ünalan does, I regard it as a more radical destabilisation of not only the East/West, but also of the heaven/earth and Self/Other binaries.

David’s Romantic/Sufi Longing for Love

Liebesbrand begins with a traffic accident, a Kleistian event similar to Nathan’s arrival:

‘Es wurde dunkel, es wurde hell, dann aber starb ich. Ein Stoß – mehr brauchte es nicht, um mich zu töten’ (L, p. 5). The use of light here mirrors the start of Heinrich von Ofterdingen’s journey, establishing a connection between the two protagonists at the novel’s very beginning:

Die Eltern lagen schon und schliefen, die Wanduhr schlug ihren einförmigen Takt, vor den klappernden Fenstern sauste der Wind; abwechselnd wurde die Stube hell von dem Schimmer des Mondes.

Just as Heinrich’s dream of the blue flower unleashes a longing within him, setting him on a

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524 The car crash in ‘Fünf klopfende Herzen’ is a similar Kleistian event.
525 Novalis, Heinrich von Ofterdingen, p. 195.
fantastic journey and allowing him to escape the philistine world, the bus accident has an equally profound effect upon David’s life, as he is given first aid and water to drink by Tyra and immediately falls for her. As discussed earlier, the eroticism of SAID’s Psalmen can be linked to the Song of Solomon, and the water given to David by Tyra also connects him to this book of the Bible, as it fails to extinguish his ‘fire of love’: ‘the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it’ (Song of Solomon: 8.6). There are parallels between David’s and Heinrich’s longing, as the elusive Tyra appears before David in the midst of the blue flashing lights of emergency services vehicles and also wears a blue enamelled ring (L, p. 7), alluding to Novalis’s ‘blaue Blume’. Novalis states that the philistine is trapped in everyday monotony, and David describes his Romantic quest as the search for ‘[e]in kleines bißchen von etwas anderem als das immergleiche’ (L, p. 99). Thus, as much as it is a geographical journey, Liebesbrand is also a journey from the philistine to the Romantic world. Yet, rather than Nathan’s wilful individualised religiosity, it is not David’s own agency, but rather outside influences that bring David closer to the divine, suggesting vulnerability and an openness to various intimations of holiness.

Whereas references to the Romantic/philistine binary in ‘Fünf klopfende Herzen’ suggest an intensity of existence brought about by Fernando’s surrender to the forces of the inoperative community, here this theme acquires a more religious dimension. Novalis remarks on the philistine’s mechanical religiosity in Blütenstaub:


526 I use the translation of the King James Bible.
In contrast to the philistine, however, David has been described as having an ‘acute sensitivity to spirituality’. This is supported by his association with Novalis’s comments, as David similarly wants nothing to do with the pomp of the cathedrals of Prague and Vienna (L, p. 291 and p. 373), but rather begins a relationship with Tyra that allows her to be regarded as a Novalisian/Sufi mediator for the divine, and a textual reference connects Tyra to Blütenstaub as she emerges from a forest in Vienna with pollen on her shoes (L, p. 325).

In terms of Frauenanbetung in the novel, David comes into contact with various Turkish men who idolise the female doctors and nurses whilst recovering from the bus accident in hospital. Messer (the patients are named after their ailments or the weapon of their assault) harbours an especially intense desire for his doctor. The Romantic terminology is obvious as he references the lily in a typically Romantic nod to the Virgin Mary: ‘Ich kenne nur eine Lilie der Reinheit, und das ist die herrlich schöne Frau Ärztin’ (L, p. 28). Yet, in stark contrast to his fellow patients, David is initially sceptical of love:

[I]ch kannte Feuerzeugfunken, aber keinen Liebesbrand im Herzen, ich war im Westen verdorben, ich war ein durch und durch degenerierter Mann des Abendlandes, und von der Tradition der orientalischen Frauenanbetung hatte ich keine Ahnung (L, p. 31).

Given what Zaimoglu states about the origins of Frauenanbetung, we must take this comment as a form of self-irony, setting up an Oriental stereotype only to show how it is unfounded. It is contrasted with a later scene:

Wir gingen an einem Gotteshaus vorbei, das überirdisch schön erleuchtet war [...]. Plötzlich verspürte ich eine große Sehnsucht, ich sehnte mich nach etwas, das mich größer und glücklicher machen sollte – lass das sein, dacht ich, davon wird ein Mann nur krank. (L, pp. 43-4)

The connection with Romantic longing is apparent here, as is the latent danger Zaimoglu

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associates with it. The otherworldly appearance of the mosque suggests a link between
david’s Romantic awakening and religion, or more specifically Islam, and later on he
describes his first encounter with Tyra as feeling like God shaking him by the shoulder (L, p.
79). Furthermore, shortly after having seen the illuminated mosque, David hears ‘die Klänge
eines Klagegesangs’ (L, p. 44) in a scene that echoes Heinrich’s encounter with Zulima,\textsuperscript{529}
underpinning connections between David’s love, Heinrich’s Romantic longing, and Islam.
Tyra’s name is the feminine equivalent of Thor, the Norse God of thunder (L, p. 94), which
also serves to emphasise the religious connotations of their relationship. The ‘donnernden
Hammerschläge’ (L, p. 6) heard by David during his rescue and the thunderstorms which
happen at various points in the novel whilst he is thinking of her (L, p. 358) acquire new
significance in this light, suggesting a supernatural power on her part.

Thus, David unwittingly embarks on a Sufi/Romantic quest of sorts, and this also
involves a renunciation of capitalism. Similar to the protagonist of ‘Der Kranich’ who
approaches God through purification and loss of worldly goods,\textsuperscript{530} the flames of the bus
accident become the flames of purgatory for David (L, p. 5), a fire that also consumes his
possessions. In contrast to his former life as a stockbroker, David is not upset by this loss:

\begin{quote}
Mann hatte mir so viele Geschichten über das Himmelreich erzählt, daß ich
den Glauben daran fast verloren hatte, aber auch nur fast – ich freute mich
in diesem Fall über den Verlust meines bißchen Besitzes (L, p. 52).
\end{quote}

Whereas before the accident he had planned a holiday to ponder new ways of generating
more capital (L, p. 23), suggesting he was part of the economically obsessed philistine world,
David’s new rejection of capitalism can be coupled with his new religiosity and Romantic
sensibility, marking his escape from the philistine world in search of alternative sources of
power in love and spirituality. Special attention is given to the medieval features of Tyra’s
town Nienburg with an implied critique of capitalism. Upon his arrival, David imagines it in

\textsuperscript{529} Ibid., p. 224.
the Middle Ages as a fortified town, though presently the old defensive walls are somewhat unbefittingly filled with tanning salons, banks and chemists (L, p. 88). He also notices an inscription dating from the early modern period, but perhaps alluding to an earlier age: ‘An Gottes Segen ist alles gelegen, erbaut im Jahre des Herren 1643.’ His response evidences his abandonment of capitalism in favour of pursuing the religious ‘Glutkern’:

Überall stieß ich auf die Herrschaft des Geldes und des Gesetzes, doch manchmal fand ich Zeichen von Menschen, die eine andere Kraft wirken sahen, deren Vertrauen eine andere Quelle kannte (L, p. 90).

David’s passing comment also highlights an aversion to the restrictive control of laws, which resonates with his rejection of the rules and conformity both of religious institutions and, as will be discussed later, of the Enlightenment understanding of cosmopolitanism based on international law and participation in globalised markets.

This criticism corresponds with ‘Romantic anticapitalism’, a term used by Robert Sayre and Michael Löwy to designate the Romantics’ criticism of the emerging bourgeoisie through the evocation of a medieval pre-capitalist past.531 As discussed above, although the Romantics did not advocate a return to medieval society, they did Romanticise the Middle Ages to serve as an allegory for a possible future. For instance, Novalis evokes an idealised image of the medieval philanthropic merchant, presenting medieval economics as more socially responsible:

67. Der edle Kaufmannsgeist, der ächte Großhandel, hat nur im Mittelalter und besonders zur Zeit der deutschen Hanse geblüht. Die Medicis, die Fugger waren Kaufleute, wie sie seyn sollten. Unsere Kaufleute im Ganzen, die größten nicht ausgenommen, sind nichts als Krämer.532

Through David’s Romantic awakening, spirituality is presented as an alternative to capitalist society, and alongside the association with Romantic medievalism, this critique of capitalism

also ties in with the Islamic views on profiteering. There is, then, arguably some theological weight behind the spiritual alternative to superficial consumerism and free-market capitalism found in Zaimoglu’s Romantic rebellion.

Together with his rejection of institutionalised religion, anti-capitalism equally forms part of Zaimoglu’s Nancian rejection of hegemonic systems of mass identification, as globalised capitalism is often blamed for the establishment of a homogeneous ‘McWorld’ in which not only our high streets become saturated with the same businesses and our cinemas with the same Hollywood blockbusters, but equally we become increasingly unable to imagine alternatives to the Western neoliberal system that dominates the globe. Moreover, Nancy further regards the capitalist system as detrimental to the inoperative community, since capital places ‘the identity and the generality of production and products’ above community.\(^{533}\) Zaimoglu’s religiosity, therefore, not only highlights the interconnectedness of people through love, but equally through its anti-capitalism, which allows David to be viewed as a singular being, rather than atomised and interchangeable parts of the capitalist system’s workforce.

This departure from the philistine world is not only indicated through references to Novalis, but also Clemens Brentano’s *Der Philister vor, in und nach der Geschichte* (1811). Brentano’s scathing portrayal of the philistine depicts the Devil as an *Aufklärer* and the smoking salons which the philistines frequent to discuss philosophy as temples,\(^{534}\) creating a certain resonance with Zaimoglu’s critique of arrogant proponents of secularism. Tobacco and slippers are the calling cards of Brentano’s philistine,\(^{535}\) and with his initial relationship at an end, David contemplates taking up smoking again: ‘ich hatte es tagelang ohne Tabak ausgehalten, jetzt wurde es Zeit, zum alten öde Leben zurückzufinden’ (*L*, p. 80). Yet

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\(^{533}\) Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 75.


through his Romantic/Sufi longing for Tyra, David seemingly reaches a more intense existence, which is emphasised through juxtaposition with his left-wing cousin, who lives by the rules of logic (L, p. 21) and speaks with the strict voice of reason (L, p. 121). Religion is numbing rather than stimulating for the Novalisian philistine, and Brentano’s emphasis on tobacco also suggests a similar lack of intensity that needs to be compensated for. Yet, whereas David used to drink just to get through the day (L, p. 166), in a departure from the traditional Sufi link between drunkenness and ecstasy, he now abstains from alcohol, suggesting a will to leave behind the numbing philistine world. Conversely, he says of his cousin:

Es war mir bekannt, daß dieser Mensch wegen eines Drogendelikts im Gefängnis gesessen hatte, daß er auf die Kraft baute, die sich vom Vater auf den Sohn übertrug, sein Vater hatte sich mit Gott und seinen Freunden, Bekannten und Verwandten angelegt und war dann doch davongekommen. (L, p. 21)

David remarks, underlining the similarities between Romantic and so-called Oriental concepts: ‘Ich war angewidert von diesem aufgeklärten Idioten, der Blut, Familie, Ehre, Gefühle und Heimatliebe für Mißtöne im orchestrierten orientalischen Krach hielt’ (L, p. 22).

For Zaimoglu, the philistine world appears to represent all systems of unthinking mass conformity and all claims of universal truth that obstruct our access to the inoperative community, be it Nathan’s religious revolution or the ‘dominant, left-liberal cosmopolitanism' represented by David’s cousin that seeks to rationalise all attachments and eliminate all mystery from the world. Indeed, unlike the affective religiosity discussed in relation to Tyra, his cousin domesticates religion, turning it into mere tradition that is too

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536 This is also the case in Schwarze Jungfrauen, where one of the women starts to smoke after her lover leaves her: Feridun Zaimoglu and Günter Senkel, Schwarze Jungfrauen (Reinbek: Rowohlt Theater Verlag, 2006), pp. 18-9.
537 This echoes the comments of the narrator in ‘Gottesanrufung II’: ‘Ich mache mir nichts aus Atheisten, es sind meist klassische Hefeweizensäufer oder Weintrinker, die das Leben, auf das sie bauen, nicht ertragen. Ohne Drogen kommen sie nicht aus, ihr chemischer Humanismus widert mich an.’ Zaimoglu, Zwölf Gramm Glück, p. 92.
538 Cheesman, Novels of Turkish German Settlement, pp. 75-6.
mechanical to access any religious intensity. Novalis states that the philistine counts a wedding or parish fair as a religious experience, and David’s cousin’s religious experiences similarly reach their height at his son’s circumcision party (L, p. 118). Thus, the cousin arguably performs these religious rituals out of allegiance to an ethnic identity, rather than belief, and this can be contrasted with David’s affective spirituality that resists identity formation.

_Kisses and Bites: Love, Desire, and the Competing Religiosities of Liebesbrand_

Complicating matters concerning David’s Romantic journey, his love for Tyra is constantly undermined, as Tyra’s relationship with David is characterised by both a violent desire and a reluctance in love on her part (L, p. 249, p. 276 and p. 373), linking her with the Amazon queen Penthesila of Kleist’s drama, who ultimately devours Achilles with her dogs. Tyra has been associated with Penthesila through her doctoral research into the ‘Marketenderin’ (a prostitute for soldiers on the battlefield), locating her work within the context of sex and war, and further to this her request that David assault a homeless man (L, p. 271) reflects how Achilles’ brutal treatment of Hector woos Penthesilea. David too uses bellicose language to reflect upon his love life, describing himself as ‘ein kampfmüder Soldat’ (L, p. 31) and declaring that Tyra ‘wollte Kampf und Krieg im Bett’ (L, p. 105).

Tyra thus behaves towards David with a strange mixture of tenderness and aggression, just as Penthesilea fails to distinguish between kisses and bites:

– So war es ein Versehen. Küsse, Bisse,
  Das reimt sich, und wer recht von Herzen liebt

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539 David is woken by the hotel chambermaid who resembles ‘eine Zofe aus vergangenen Tagen’ (L, p. 107) in a subtle nod to Penthesilea’s role as queen.
540 Tyra’s behaviour is similar to the female love interest of Zaimoglu’s short story ‘Götzenliebe’ (2004).
Although Tyra first appears shy and virginal in the bedroom, her hands folded in prayer (L, p. 102), both conforming to expectations of an archetypical pious Romantic love interest and also hinting at her future conversion to Catholicism, this chaste image rapidly transforms:

[Z]ötzlich warf sie sich auf mich und fing an, mich wild zu küssen, die harten Küsse taten weh, ihre Zähne drückten auf meine Lippen, ihre Hände rissen an meinem Fleisch, es war ein Anfall von überlegter Wildheit (L, p. 103).

His emphasis on Tyra’s wildness, her bites and even the red lipstick appearing like blood on her teeth (L, p. 8) all hint at Penthesilea’s final barbarous and cannibalistic act:

Sie schlägt die Rüstung ihm vom Leibe reißend,

Den Zahn schlägt sie in seine weiße Brust.

As the scene in Liebesbrand continues, so the ambiguity between kisses and bites increases, mirroring Achilles’ death, and tragically foreshadowing what their relationship could amount to: ‘sie biß mich in die Brust’ (L, p. 105). Thus, rather than the momentary contact of singular beings that Nancy associates with love, Tyra’s behaviour can be viewed as the desired appropriation of an other, for which Penthesilea’s cannibalistic act provides a strong metaphor.

Like Penthesilea, Liebesbrand contains the same ambiguity between brutality and passion. However, this is complicated by the similarity of the imagery of Penthesilea and Sufi poetry. During David and Tyra’s love scene, the carpet of their hotel room is decorated with a pattern of roses (L, p. 101), alluding not only to the procreative ‘Rosenfest’ of the Amazons, but also to the Islamic vision of heaven as a garden (Jannah) and to the rose gardens symbolic of love found in Sufi poetry. This imagery also mirrors the Sufi symbolism of the nightingale (Sufi/lover) and the unresponsive, thorny rose (God/beloved), reflecting the

543 Ibid., p. 254.
544 Ibid., p. 241.
conflict between the spiritual David, who longs to love and be loved (as the meaning of his name suggests), and Tyra, who is characterised by a violent desire and an indifference towards love. In this respect, parallels may also be drawn between David and the Sufis who resolved to accept both God’s love and terror, and also between Tyra and the wrathful God of the Old Testament and the Qur’an.

As the above quotation from al-Huḡwīrī suggests, there are two sides to God’s love. For example, the Book of Hosea, as Kermani points out, presents God as ‘rasend vor Liebe’, and Tyra’s brutal desire, like Nathan’s rage and Biblical language, supports, I would argue, her association with the rule-giving God of the monotheistic paradigm, rather than the other deconstructive intimations of the divine that David seems to be drawn towards. Therefore, in contrast to Litter’s interpretation in which desire and love are equated as experiences which ‘exceed the limits of subjectivity’, I argue that Nancy’s understanding of desire as ultimately flawed and detrimental to the inoperative community indicates Tyra’s association with fusional communities, tying in with her conversion to Catholicism during a trip to Naples, after which a pilgrim’s medal replaces her blue ring (L, p. 315), mirroring how Romanticism grew more conservative over time – personified in Fr. Schlegel’s conversion from Pantheist to Catholic. Her conversion is problematic, for, although Novalis believed that one should be free to choose a mediator for God, he also believed that those mediators ought to be acknowledged as such and Tyra will not get up when David confronts her in the aptly named Servitenkirche: ‘du kannst doch nicht vor einem Götzen aus Wachs niederknien’ (L, p. 369).

Tyra’s strict observance eventually leads to their relationship’s demise, which is

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545 This destructive passion equally forms part of the Turkish literary topos kara sevda (a kind of melancholia, literally ‘black love’), which Zaimoglu associates with Romanticism in his comments on Fatih Akin’s film *Gegen die Wand* (2004): Feridun Zaimoglu, ‘Sex, Drogen und die Schocks der Moderne’, in *Gegen die Wand: Das Buch zum Film*, ed. by Fatih Akin (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), pp. 209-13 (p. 213).
548 O’Brien, p. 221.
signalled by the setting of their last encounters almost exclusively in Viennese graveyards. In this regard, parallels may be drawn between the failed striving of the Romantic hero and the impossibility of union with God, as Matthes argues, but their relationship equally reflects Nancy’s understanding of desire as the impossible ‘law of completion of being’, whereas love is, in contrast, ‘a moment of contact between beings, a light, cutting, and delicious moment of contact, at once eternal and fleeting’. Nancy’s comments on the impossible notions of completion surrounding how we think about love resonate with the concept of Romantic Irony; as Fr. Schlegel states: ‘Sie enthält und erregt ein Gefühl von dem unauflöslichen Widerstreit des Unbedingten und des Bedingten, der Unmöglichkeit und Notwendigkeit einer vollständigen Mitteilung’. Lothar Pikulik clarifies this as an engagement with the binary opposition of the conditional and absolute, the real and the ideal and the finite and the infinite in our consciousness. David’s friend Gabriel tells of how his former Italian girlfriend dubbed him a ‘Prothesengott’, explained as a Freudian term for ‘ein lächerlicher Mensch, der die Gottgleichheit anstrebte’ (L, p. 159), placing his (and in turn David’s) futile attempts at ideal fulfilment in the context of religion and Romantic Irony, and a lasting relationship with Tyra does indeed remain out of David’s reach. Yet, much like Nancy’s (and Şenocak’s) fragmentary notion of identity, this idea of love need not necessarily be understood as a lack or deficiency, but rather as something that must remain incomplete.

Thus, whereas David is a spiritual figure, whose affective religiosity is worldly and unmediated by institutions or ritual, his cousin and post-conversion Tyra both conform to a communal, foundational view of religion. It is, then, unsurprising that Tyra’s Catholicism

550 Matthes, ‘Männliche Sehnsucht in (türkisch-)deutscher Gegenwart’, p. 94.
551 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 92.
552 Schlegel, p. 19.
leads to her and David’s separation. This outcome is foreshadowed by Gabriel’s relationship with the unnamed Italian woman (a somewhat stereotypical Catholic equivalent of the veiled Muslim woman of ‘Gottesanrufung I’), which is devoid of any physical passion because of her orthodox belief, leading him to remark: ‘ich war bereit, sie zu heiraten, aber ich war nicht bereit, neben ihr zu liegen und mir jegliche Phantasie zu verbieten’ (L, p. 145). She even tries to convert him (L, p. 143), suggesting an Evangelicalism that does not allow for a plurality of opinion, just as Tyra’s association with cannibalism reminds us of the other meaning of ‘assimilate’. When her mother begins to talk of the purity of the Virgin Mary, Gabriel realises it is for ecclesiastical reasons that her daughter denies their relationship a physical and erotic dimension (L, p. 144). His cautionary tale serves as a warning to David, and Tyra is in fact linked to the Virgin Mary at various points in the final stages of the novel, alluding to Romantic aesthetics, yet also hinting at the end of their passionate relationship. For example, he is reunited with Tyra inside the Mariahilfe-Kirche (L, p. 310), where she is kneeling in prayer before a Marian statue (L, p. 314). David also insults Tyra by calling her a nun (L, p. 363), suggesting that her new belief will put an end to their erotically charged relationship, which it ultimately does. Parallels can, then, be drawn between Tyra and Rebekka, whose belief in Nathan leads to her break-up with Jamal.

Furthermore, the rules of the Amazon state equally mirror how Catholicism prevents Gabriel’s Italian girlfriend and Tyra from enjoying passionate relationships. These all constitute a ‘Liebe mit Spielregeln’ similar to orthodox Islam depicted in ‘Gottesanrufung I’: Zaimoglu, Zwölf Gramm Glück, p. 90. There is a religious aspect to the Amazons, as the Gods Mars and Ares have significant roles and Penthesilea tells Achilles that the Amazonian laws come ‘aus der Urne alles Heiligen’. Reminiscent of the suppression of physical passions by orthodox religions, Hilda M. Brown argues that the Amazon state is ‘ossified around an unworkable policy which is encoded and

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554 These all constitute a ‘Liebe mit Spielregeln’ similar to orthodox Islam depicted in ‘Gottesanrufung I’: Zaimoglu, Zwölf Gramm Glück, p. 90.
556 Kleist, Penthesilea, p. 213.
rigidly maintained by religious ritual, promoted by hard-liners’. Even before Tyra’s conversion, she sets a time limit of one night on her and David’s relationship (L, p. 108), reflecting how the time Amazons can spend with their sexual partners is regulated by the ‘Rosenfest’. Furthermore, in the essay ‘Schmutz meiner Seele: Kleist und die Liebe’ (2013), Kermani argues for a Biblical understanding of passion in *Penthesilea* and interprets Penthesilea’s cannibalism as an allusion to Holy Communion, which strengthens the link between Tyra, the Amazon state, and institutionalised religion. Contrary to Orientalist discourse, it is, then, the Westerner Tyra who becomes orthodox and the arguably Eastern cousin who is mechanically observant – a common characteristic of the persistence of religious traditions within secularised societies. A criticism of *Liebesbrand* might be that it merely reverses, rather than deconstructs this binary. However, a further layer of complexity is added if the origin of the Amazons (so influential for Tyra’s character portrayal) in present day Turkey is taken into account, and also if the text is read in the context of the Sufi/Romantic origins of its post-monotheistic Frauenanbetung. In this light, the various religiosities of *Liebesbrand* can be regarded as destabilising the Islam/West dichotomy by showing both sides as capable of both communal views of religion that obstruct our ontological interrelatedness and alternative sensual religiosities that allow for an openness to others.

Whereas David’s open religiosity and Tyra’s violent desire and Catholicism appear incompatible, Jarmila can be associated with love and a post-monotheistic religiosity inspired by Sufism, although her religious associations are perhaps not as overt as Tyra’s. Her profession as a tour guide mirrors her role as David’s spiritual guide, referred to in Sufi terms as a ‘Pir’, ‘Murshid’ or ‘Shaikh’; her perfume smells of roses (L, p. 180), just as scent is often

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used in Sufi poetry to hint at the beloved to those who have yet to see him/her,\(^{559}\) and the
room he and Jarmila share in Brno has rose-patterned bed sheets and a rose garland around all
four walls \(L, \text{p. 219}\), hinting at the Sufi garden’s ‘harmony between sensual and spiritual’.\(^{560}\)
It also mirrors the room David shares with Tyra and evokes the rose garlands joyfully woven
by the Amazons in Kleist’s drama,\(^{561}\) creating an ambiguity between Tyra and Jarmila which
blurs the opposing aspects of God’s wrath and love that they embody. As Littler points out,
supporting her reading beyond identity: ‘David and Jarmila make passionate love in one of
three scenes in the novel where the pronoun “she” could equally apply to either of the
women’.\(^{562}\) Nonetheless, although Jarmila does lightly bite David during an intimate moment,
their sexual encounters never become as violent as those between David and Tyra. Jarmila
stops herself and demonstrates her compassion for David and her unwillingness to
appropriate him, telling him: ‘du bist nicht mein Spielzeug’ \(L, \text{pp. 215-16}\).

Though David may cup Jarmila’s breast, they do not engage in sexual intercourse
during their first night together, reminding the reader of David and Tyra’s previous
conversation:

Bist du ein Romantiker? Sagte sie lächelnd.
Ich bin vor allem etwas altmodisch, sagte ich, deshalb reicht es mir, daß wir
hier einfach nur liegen. \(L, \text{p. 102}\)

There is, therefore, touch between lovers, as opposed to the libido of desire, suggesting an
openness that does not consume the other and an affective religiosity based on love. Jarmila’s
demand that David cup her right breast whilst they sleep (alluding to the Amazon tradition of
removing the right breast to improve archery skills) also serves to further emphasise that she
is not Tyra \(L, \text{p. 229}\), just as her refusal to become a prostitute \(L, \text{p. 265}\) separates her from

\(^{560}\) Julie Scott Meisami, ‘Allegorical Gardens in the Persian Poetic Tradition: Nezami, Rumi, Hafez’,
\(^{561}\) Kleist, *Penthesilea*, pp. 175-76.
Tyra the ‘Marketenderin’. Further characteristic of Nancy’s understanding of love, Jarmila’s outlook extends beyond fusional views of community and absolute subjectivity, as she believes that the donation of plasma increases her number of relations: ‘Mein Plasma wird gebraucht. Es fließt in den Adern anderer Menschen. Auf diese Weise bekomme ich Verwandtschaft’ (*L*, p. 263). David is sceptical, but Jarmila claims that it is a relationship without the usual obligations (relations asking for money, gossiping about you, etc.), implying, as Littler argues, that it is not only territorial borders, but also the boundaries of the body that are porous in the novel. Standing in contrast to Tyra, Jarmila’s attitude hints at the laceration of subjectivity associated with the ecstatic nature of being, rather than the world of the atomised individual. Jarmila’s ontological ecstasy can be linked to Sufi concepts of ecstasy, but it is equally significant in terms of the competing conceptualisations of cosmopolitanism present in the novel.

*Enlightenment and Romantic Cosmopolitanisms in Liebesbrand*

As previously stated, David’s comments on a driving force other than laws or money not only link him to an unorthodox religiosity, but also to the Romantics’ critique of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism’s focus on international law, sovereignty and global trade, and alongside the associations of Tyra and Jarmila with orthodox religion/desire and mysticism/love, it could be argued that they also evoke the ideas of universalist cosmopolitanism and Romantic cosmopolitanism respectively. In *Blütenstaub*, Novalis refers to the specifically German potential to look back upon a cosmopolitan history, in contrast to the French, whom he excludes despite the inclusion of French-speaking regions within the Holy Roman Empire and their rival claim to Charlemagne. This opposition of the German and French systems is also discussed in *Europa*, alluding to Romanticism and the Enlightenment respectively. As

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Kontje outlines, for Novalis:

France stands for a modern nationalism arising out of the Enlightenment that is by nature bellicose, mercenary, and separatist, dividing Europe into warring factions, while Germany represents a spiritual and poetic revolution that could bring peace and unity back to Europe.  

Thus, whereas the regions of the Holy Roman Empire enjoyed a plurality of identities and permeable boundaries, the regions of France ‘became increasingly interconnected and homogeneous, while borders against external foes were more sharply drawn’.  

As Anderson contends:

In the modern conception, state sovereignty is fully, flatly, and evenly operative over each square centimetre of a legally demarcated territory. But in older imagining, where states were defined by centres, borders were porous and indistinct, and sovereignties faded imperceptibly into one another.  

Thus, the Romantics favoured the more fluid and heterogeneous dynastic realm, in comparison to the later nation state.

France, although Kontje associates it with nationalism here, is equally linked to Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, such as that advocated by the German Kant, due to its supposedly universal constitution, which theorists such as Habermas and Beck continue to view as the cornerstone of a cosmopolitan state today. Yet, in a plea for a greater amount of unity in Europe, whilst still condemning the suppression of difference, Novalis evokes the Holy Roman Empire instead, with its ‘cosmopolitan and diverse composition of […] inhabitants’ drawn from territories in modern-day Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Czech Republic, Italy, France, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Belgium and Poland. Liebesbrand too evokes this pre-national era of the Holy Roman Empire, since the action takes place primarily in Kiel, Nienburg, Prague and Vienna – cities that, although

565 Kontje, p. 85.  
566 Ibid., p. 99.  
567 Anderson, p. 19.  
in three separate countries today, were all once settlements within the Holy Roman Empire. In a scene that subtly alludes to the interconnectedness of this age, trains to Berlin and Vienna are standing at different platforms ready to depart from a Prague train station (L, p. 220). Furthermore, by shifting the plot from one country to another without initially defining the location clearly, Zaimoglu diminishes the importance of borders – a narrative technique repeated and intensified in *Hinterland*.

This return to the view of Prague at the centre of Europe, as it had been for centuries as part of multiethnic empires, has become increasingly common after the collapse of communism, before which Prague was firmly located to the East of the ‘iron curtain’. The shifting fortunes of the Czech Republic serve as a reminder that the nation state is the product of history, and therefore susceptible to change again. Indeed, the interconnectedness of the Holy Roman Empire may also be felt in today’s EU. However, parallels may also be drawn between the EU and postrevolutionary France, the Holy Roman Empire’s philistine opposite. Despite the EU motto ‘United in Diversity’, which suggests the singular-plural, Turkey’s Muslim citizens would make the union seemingly too diverse for many, leading to accusations that the EU is a ‘Christian club’ or ‘Fortress Europe’. Kontje views Novalis’s *Europa* as presenting ‘a gentler German cosmopolitanism that will [not only] reawaken the prenational spirit of European unity[, but also] reconnect Europe with the East’, 569 and, as quoted above, he describes the France of Novalis’s time as having an increasingly interconnected and homogeneous interior, and an increasingly defensive exterior. Derrida expresses the same criticism directed at current EU foreign policy: ‘At a time when we claim to be lifting internal borders, we proceed to bolt the external borders of the European Union tightly.’ 570 Consequently, *Europa* is a text with particular significance for Zaimoglu as a Muslim German citizen, for Germany and the wider EU is faced with the choice between

569 Kontje, p. 95.
disallowing alterity to create communal unity, or embracing singularity and acknowledging cross-border connections, between the models of France or the (Romanticised) Holy Roman Empire.

Jarmila, as a person born in Germany but who grew up in the Czech Republic (L, pp. 179-80), hints at the often porous nature of the German-Czech border. She is difficult to categorise in terms of her nationality and refuses to do so herself. Her speech in which she expresses her favourite aspects of Prague does not erase the city’s cultural and ethnic differences, but is rather characteristic of the idealised cosmopolitanism of the Holy Roman Empire; she extols not only the city’s gastronomy, architecture and fashion, but also outsiders like the Jews, who were not only a religious but also a linguistic minority (L, p. 214). She therefore praises the culture of Prague without using it as the foundation for a shared homogenous identity. Although the question of whether Jarmila is German or Czech plagues David at times (L, p. 180 and p. 190), as Littler indicates, David’s remarks about the Czech monument to the victims of communism (L, p. 271) also speak of a disregard for ‘the ritual interpretation of the past which aims to confine it within pedagogical narratives of nation’. 571

These competing cosmopolitanisms (Romantic/German and Enlightenment/French) can be illuminated with reference to Nancy’s critique of universalism and his concept of community based on the interconnectedness of human beings, which, as I have argued, can be viewed as a nonfoundational alternative to homogenising neo-Kantian cosmopolitan theories that are critiqued in Nathan Messias. Parallels can also be drawn between Romantic cosmopolitanism’s emphasis on our interrelatedness through love and love’s power to render the inoperative community more accessible to us, what Nancy calls the crossing of love. Indeed, Zaimoglu presents love as cosmopolitanism’s glue in Liebesbrand as relationships develop without any basis in a shared identity, just as Novalis writes with reference to Kant:

‘Nur die Liebe besitzt den Talisman ewigen Friedens – Da nur, wo sie erscheint, fließen die Massen in Eins.’

In contrast with David and Jarmila’s transnational sensibilities, Tyra’s remarks again suggest a fusional community in which some members are not ready to view outsiders as part of their group:

Du bist doch kein Deutscher, sagte sie.
Doch, ich bin eben etwas später dazugekommen ... (L, p. 94)

Thus, whereas Jarmila is characterised by an openness towards alterity that echoes both Şenocak’s negative hermeneutics and Nancy’s inoperative community, Tyra is unwilling to accept difference, and her turn to Catholicism only strengthens this reluctance. Just as her PhD thesis on the Thirty Years’ War connects Tyra with Penthesilea, it also links her to the early modern period, an era ‘associated with the “birth” of absolutism, of the standing army, and of an international order based on sovereign states’. Significantly, it is the period in which the spiritual and cosmopolitan union of Europe celebrated by the Romantics vanished and great leaps were made towards our modern capitalist economy. Tyra can, therefore, be associated with the shift towards nationalism of the early modern period that culminated in the militant homogenisation of postrevolutionary France.

The Thirty Years’ War can be viewed as a religious war of Protestant estates against Catholic monarchies, an interpretation advocated by Novalis in Europa, in which he speaks of the continent’s great inner schism that lead to destructive wars which were seized upon by princes to further consolidate their power. This intercommunal religious conflict is mirrored in Tyra’s (and also Nathan’s) own unyielding religious beliefs. Moreover, Tyra’s

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572 Novalis, Glaube und Liebe, p. 483.
574 Ibid., p. 568.
575 Ibid., p. 570.
university department is housed ‘im Blauen Turm’ on ‘Platz der Göttinger Sieben’, linking her studies to a more nationalist Romanticism – the secretary on the phone reminds David that the Brothers Grimm were part of the famous protest group (L, pp, 138-139). This is, then, the other side of Romanticism’s engagement with the Middle Ages that idealised medieval German culture due to its supposed freedom from foreign influences.\textsuperscript{577} Thus, whereas David informs Jarmila that he wishes to experience the living culture of Prague as it is now, rather than the ‘konservierte Kultur’ presented in museums and monuments (L, p. 178), ‘[Tyras] Welt dreht sich um tote Frauen und Männer’ (L, p. 274).

An exploration of the debt to Kleist in \textit{Liebesbrand} can shed further light on the un-Nancian notions of statehood Tyra evokes. Alongside the links between Tyra and the Amazons established through war and desire, Kleist’s Amazon state can also be regarded as a similar criticism of France to that found in Novalis’s \textit{Europa}, furthering associations between Tyra and the ‘bellicose, mercenary, and separatist’\textsuperscript{578} version of nationhood Novalis saw in postrevolutionary French universalism. Indeed, it is worth noting that Zaimoglu would have begun writing \textit{Liebesbrand} around the time of the bicentenary of the demise of the Holy Roman Empire at the hands of Napoleon in 1806, and that it was published 200 years after \textit{Penthesilea}. Maike Oergel contends that ‘the dialectic between the liberating and revolutionary origin of the Amazon state and the rule-ridden anti-individualism of its conservative phase’ reflect postrevolutionary France’s ‘perceived moral and political failure evident (from the German perspective) in the bloodbath of the Terror, the rise of Napoleon, and French military expansion’.\textsuperscript{579} Consequently, the Amazons also serve to highlight the same criticism that Novalis makes against French universalism’s suppression of difference.\textsuperscript{580}

\textsuperscript{577} Gottfried Salomon, \textit{Das Mittelalter als Ideal in der deutschen Romantik} (Munich: Drei Masken, 1922), p. 46.
\textsuperscript{578} Kontje, p. 85.
\textsuperscript{580} Furthermore, Helen Watanabe-O’Kelly states that sisterhood is a ‘mirage’ in \textit{Penthesilea}, suggesting, as I have argued, that the bonds created by universalist cosmopolitanisms are superficially based on personal gain,
Although some scholars have viewed Kleist’s Amazon state in a positive light,\(^{581}\) I would argue that Kleist can be associated with more conventional Romantics who, despite agreeing with the Revolution’s principles, did criticise its outcomes. Beiser argues: ‘The problem facing the romantics [...] was how to have the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the Revolution without the materialism, egoism, and anarchism of France’,\(^{582}\) to which I would add universalism. This suppression of alterity is, of course, expressed through the Amazons’ rejection of men, and in a comment that can be linked to the anti-cosmopolitan nature of the Amazons, David tells Tyra:

Für dich ist ein Mann deshalb schon ein Feind, weil er ein Mann ist. Du bist eine biologische Faschistin [...]. Der Faschismus und der Feminismus haben eines gemeinsam, [...] die biologische Konstante. Der Faschist glaubt an die Rasse. Die Feministin an das Geschlecht. \((L, p. 104)\)

David’s statement, whilst conveying an oversimplified and misguided notion of feminism, does establish a link between Amazonian gender relations and contemporary ethnic and religious relations in the novel. Although the Amazons declare men their enemy, they rely upon men to provide the children of the next generation. Their vital need for men only to expel them in order to maintain the purity of their community bears a resemblance to the German treatment of the so-called Gastarbeiter, who, despite their significant contribution towards the rebuilding of the Federal Republic, were asked to leave after their visas had expired. Consequently, through associations with the Amazon state’s restrictive views that demand uniformity, the fundamentalist aspects of Tyra’s character and the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism she embodies become more pronounced.


\(^{582}\) Beiser, Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism, p. 241.
Kleist, like the other more conventional Romantics, prioritises feelings over reason: ‘und doch wohnt das Glück nur im Herzen, nur im Gefühl, nicht im Kopfe, nicht im Verstande’. Consequently, I would agree with Walter Müller-Seidel and Dieter Harlos who (negatively) interpret the Amazon state as the logical fulfilment of Enlightenment principles, in which even love is subject to (attempted) rational regulation. Tyra’s association with the Amazon state, then, serves to buttress her link both to Novalis’s interpretation of the Thirty Years’ War as the beginning of the modern style of nationhood and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism found in postrevolutionary France and also to her pleasureless Catholicism, cementing Tyra’s link with fusional communities, in comparison with Jarmila’s openness. However, just as the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism of the mayor in Nathan Messias was unable to rationally control the competing religions of Jerusalem, so too is Tyra (and Penthesilea) unable to contain her emotions, implying that any attempt to subordinate feelings to reason is a flawed and futile venture.

**Conclusion: A Romantic Cosmopolitanism of Faith and Love**

David is, then, confronted with a choice between the supernatural figure Tyra and the less dangerous Jarmila, and the ideas of monotheism/desire/homogeneity and post-monotheism/love/heterogeneity they respectively personify. This typically Romantic choice between two women, one potentially much more dangerous than the other and possibly even inhuman, echoes how Florio must choose between Bianka and the statue of Venus turned flesh in Eichendorff’s *Das Marmorbild* (1818). This theme is also present in other Romantic works, such as Christian’s choice between his wife and the ‘Waldweib’ in *Runenberg* (1804) by Tieck and Anselmus’s choice between Veronika and Serpentina in *Der goldene Topf*.

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585 A similar point is made is Kermani’s *Du sollst* (2005), as discussed in the next chapter.
(1814) by E. T. A. Hoffmann, but these novellas’ ambiguous endings see the protagonists choose the otherworldly women, after which they either die (like Achilles) or are transported to a more Romantic world. Just as Florio does not choose the magical woman and lives, so David (again, not through his own autonomous will) does not stay with Tyra, whose deific name even suggests a subtle reference to Eichendorff’s novella – the Italian setting of Das Marmorbild establishes the connection with the Roman Goddess Venus, just as Tyra’s association with Thor of Germanic mythology reflects her position as a German. The dichotomy of the two women is, however, not entirely clear-cut, as there is often an indistinctness between Tyra and Jarmila. There is ambiguity in the rose symbolism surrounding them, alluding to both Sufism and Penthesilea, and this confusion also mirrors events during the masquerade ball in Das Marmorbild, where roses also serve to create uncertainty as, seemingly, Bianka gives Florio a rose and the Venus statue is seen playing with a rose in the garden.586

Just as Nancy associates the fusional view of community, fostered by desire and universalism, with death, David’s passionate encounters with Tyra are far more violent and their relationship far more destructive, provoking the question from Jarmila: ‘Liebst du Frauen, die dich verwüsten? ...’ (L, p. 293). Whilst contemplating Tyra’s rejection, David feels like a corpse (L, p. 238), signalling the destructive nature of their relationship, just as Achilles is eventually killed by Penthesilea and the same is tragically foreshadowed for Florio, whose lips are described as pale587 and who sees his own death by drowning during a dream of beautiful sirens.588 As well as David’s preference for Tyra seemingly putting him in peril, her association with institutionalised religion and difference-denying universalism establish her as the antithesis of the more spiritual and open David. Consequently, Jarmila

587 Ibid., p. 391.
588 Ibid., p. 395.
would appear a more fitting choice, and David is advised against seeing Tyra twice by the
guardian figure Gabriel (L, p. 260 and 306), who lives up to his celestial namesake, and even by a couple who observe them in a café, whose comments imply, as I have argued, that what he experiences with Tyra is in fact not love: ‘Die Liebe kommt später’ (L, p. 254).

Significantly, the couple from the café met in Heidelberg, a centre of Romanticism and home to Eichendorff whilst Das Marmorbild was written. Their pleas with David to turn to Jarmila reflect Florio’s decision to reject the dangerous yet alluring Venus statue and remain with Bianka.

A relationship with Jarmila does appear plausible at the novel’s open end: after their telephone conversation Jarmila and David both say goodbye with ‘bis bald’ (L, p. 375). This outcome arguably supports Ryneveld’s interpretation of the ending as David’s return to the philistine world, and the outcome of Das Marmorbild when Florio finds Bianka dressed in men’s clothes can equally be viewed as the suppression of sexuality and desire on Florio’s part. Yet, whereas Florio’s choice of Bianka over the Venus statue has been interpreted as a choice of Christianity over Paganism and a rejection of sexual temptation, the prospect of a relationship with Jarmila rather than Tyra ultimately implies an understanding of both faith and love that is centred on a radical openness, as opposed the communal union and a pleasureless Christianity that Tyra (and arguably Bianka) represent. Liebesbrand therefore subverts the outcome of Eichendorff’s novella, rejecting his piousness in favour of a post-monotheistic intimation of the divine in passionate relationships.

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589 In the Islamic tradition, it is Gabriel who guides Muhammad on his ascent towards God.
590 Ryneveld, p. 173.
591 Eichendorff, p. 427.
Conclusion: A Counter-Enlightenment Critique of German *Leitkultur*

Religion (most notably Islam, though not exclusively) is arguably the most dominant theme of Zaimoglu’s entire work so far, and although his writing is constantly developing in new directions, his recent plays (co-written with Senkel) *Moses* (2013), the dramatisation of Moses’ life around that time that he receiving the Ten Commandments, and *Die zehn Gebote* (2015), which explores the meaning of religion in war, indicate a continued intellectual and creative engagement with religiosity. In the face of post-9/11 secular discourses which diametrically oppose the Enlightened West and a barbarous Islam, Zaimoglu’s work is permeated by a religious cosmopolitanism that criticises Enlightenment thinking, both in terms of the absolute individual and of the teleological progression of history towards Reason. This lends his writing a particularly Romantic tone, which can be further illuminated by an appeal to Nancy’s criticism of universalism and his concept of the monotheistic paradigm.

Like Şenocak and SAID, Zaimoglu is critical of religious orthodoxy and fundamentalism, yet, as I have argued, *Nathan Messias* and *Liebesbrand* differ from the poetry of the last chapter in that they are also critical of identitarian understandings of cosmopolitanism, viewing both as inherently violent and homogenising ways of organising community. Zaimoglu’s Nathan, a militaristic messiah, plunges Jerusalem into further intercommunal conflict with his new religious doctrine that would supersede all others, drawing parallels between the universalising messages of both the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism espoused by Lessing and the doctrines of institutionalised religions. Tyra, albeit with some ambiguity, is similarly linked to universalist ideologies by association with postrevolutionary France, Catholicism, and Biblical and Qur’anic monotheism. Both figures are characterised by violence, as Nathan directs his followers to attack enemies and Tyra
behaves towards David with a Kleistian mixture of passion and brutality. Thus, rather than the usual assumption that religious orthodoxy and Enlightenment cosmopolitanism are diametrically opposed, Zaimoglu stresses their common foundation in a fusional understanding of community and their joint adherence to the monotheistic paradigm that derives a supposedly universal meaning from outside the world, disregarding the world’s heterogeneity. This can be viewed as a critique of German Leitkultur, which increasingly asserts its Enlightenment credentials as the defining factor that separates it from the Islamic world.

Nevertheless, Liebesbrand especially also hints at a non-foundational alternative to these models that is centred on openness towards others, rather than a shared identity that excludes outsiders. David and Jarmila’s relationship (again with some ambiguity) is characterised by a shared loving openness and scepticism of national and religious identities, rather than the violence of communal fusion and appropriative desire. This emphasis on the interconnectedness of people through love links the pair with Novalis’s (and also Fr. Schlegel’s) notion of Romantic cosmopolitanism, which is further compounded by allusions to the Holy Roman Empire. Furthermore, Jarmila is also connected with the Sufi/Romantic concept of Frauenanbetung, suggesting, like Şenocak and SAID’s poetry, a worldly post-monotheistic religiosity that would be compatible with the inoperative community’s non-foundationalism. Just as love unites David and Jarmila across identitarian and subjective divisions, so too do Jamal and Rebekka come together across the religious divide. Yet, whereas David and Jarmila’s love remains a possibility, Rebekka’s death lends Nathan Messias a more pessimistic tone.

It is, then, love that is central both to the ontological interconnectedness and also the religiosity alluded to in Zaimoglu’s writing. Consequently, he refutes the commonly held assumption that religion is cosmopolitanism’s foil by suggesting a Sufi/Romantic
singularised religiosity that both stems from, and allows us to recognise, our being-in-common. Nancy states: ‘nothing leads to god, neither art, nor nature, nor thought, nor love. The gods come or do not come. They impose their presence or they withdraw’. Similarly, Zaimoglu’s protagonists never achieve the religious ‘Glutkern’ through their own striving, and are instead carried nearer to the divine by exterior forces, emphasising the importance of being-with. This susceptibility to exterior forces has ontological implications, demonstrating the impossibility of being an absolute individual and also the violence of autonomous self-assertion and homogenisation, in comparison to a radically open subjectivity. This defencelessness against violence also characterises the religiosity of Kermani’s fiction, as will be explored in the next chapter.

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Between Terror and Love: The Religiosity of Navid Kermani’s Fiction

Introduction: Fighting Fundamentalism through Scholarship and Literature

Navid Kermani was born (1967) to Iranian parents in Siegen, in what was then West Germany, and he enjoys dual citizenship. His literary debut, *Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten* (2002), makes him the most recent arrival on the literary scene analysed in this thesis, but he was perhaps the quickest to respond to post-9/11 debates both in his fiction and his journalistic writing. Nevertheless, much like SAID, Kermani’s reception has been restricted by an emphasis on Turkish-German authors within minority German Studies. Although Kermani holds a chair at the Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung and has won various lectureships and awards, including the prestigious Kleist-Preis (2012) for his entire oeuvre, little research has been conducted into his literary work. What research has been carried out focuses on identity as an intercultural negotiation that either ironically foregrounds aspects of Muslim or German identity at different times for utilitarian reasons, or intentionally blurs religious boundaries in the name of tolerance in order to leave room for doctrinal differences. In contrast to these identity-driven approaches, I will examine how the religiosity of Kermani’s fiction, much like that of the other authors under consideration here, can be regarded as beyond identity – although, much like SAID, the religiosity of Kermani’s fiction is more overt than Şenocak’s and Zaimoglu’s.

595 This is because the Iranian state does not recognise renunciation of citizenship.
596 Henceforth abbreviated to Neil Young.
I will argue that Kermani draws upon the mystic traditions of Islam and other world religions in order to explore the ideas that form part of his academic inquiries in his fiction, exploring both God’s love and terror in Neil Young, *Du sollst* (2005) and *Große Liebe* (2014), hinting both at the wrathful God of the Old Testament and the Qur’an, and yet also at the deconstructive potential of a worldly religiosity. Neil Young, for example, establishes parallels between the aesthetic features of the Qur’an and Young’s rock music, locating significance in the affective experience of listening, rather than in the actual meaning of the words. In this regard, music becomes a source of holiness beyond the monotheistic paradigm that opens within the world, rather than existing in a separate world. Like many of the texts discussed previously, *Du sollst* and *Große Liebe* use love and desire to convey different ideas of the divine, just as God is capable of both tenderness and aggression in the Old Testament and the Qur’an. Whereas *Du sollst*, similar to *Liebesbrand*, mostly evokes a wrathful God, *Große Liebe* focuses on God’s love, and on the ways in which love brings our interconnectedness to the fore. Both, however, locate the divine in profane sexual experiences, intimating a worldly religiosity that is not governed by the same sexual conservatism of contemporary Islamic orthodoxy and fundamentalism. As in previous chapters, I do not regard these texts as the representation of various strands of Islam, but rather as the innovative imagining of a singularised Islam that in fact challenges conventional religious denominations. In this regard, Kermani’s fictional work can suggest a religiosity that is compatible with the inoperative community, both in its lack of communal unity amongst believers and in its susceptibility to change due to an abandonment of fixed notions of what it means to be a Muslim. The texts under discussion here can therefore be viewed as literature in Nancy’s sense.

Although his literary debut was published after 9/11, and thus his response to it cannot be traced through changes in his published work, the newspaper articles from 2001-05
collected in *Strategie der Eskalation: Der Nahe Osten und die Politik des Westens* (2005) demonstrate a profound engagement with the impact of global Islamic terrorism that is comparable with *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben* by Şenocak, *Ich und der Islam* by SAID, and the emergence of Zaimoglu’s religious cosmopolitanism in *Zwölf Gramm Glück*. Indeed, in an article for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* as early as 13 September 2001, Kermani argues against the dichotomisation of Islam and the West in the wake of Al-Qaeda’s attacks:

> Es sind die Muslime selbst, die unter dem Fanatismus der Taliban, der iranischen Staatsajatollahs, der puritanischen Petromuslime auf der arabischen Halbinsel leiden, die ihn millionenfach fliehen [...]. Es gibt kein Wir, das westlich, und ein Ihr, das muslimisch wäre, so tatkräftig Terroristen vom Schlag Bin Ladens an genau dieser Polarisierung arbeiten, so nahe sie von der westlichen Kommentierung gelegt wird.

It is against this post-9/11 perception of a clash of civilisations that Kermani writes to destabilise religious identities, and therefore much like the other authors discussed here, Kermani can also be linked to the Muslim turn in contemporary German literature.

Like Şenocak, Kermani is perhaps best known in Germany for his journalistic work, which often deals with conflicts in the Muslim world, and the oppressive regime in Iran in particular – these articles have been collected in *Iran: Revolution der Kinder* (2000), *Schöner neuer Orient: Berichte von Städten und Kriegen* (2003), *Strategie der Eskalation* and *Ausnahmezustand: Reisen in eine beunruhigte Welt* (2013). His insight into and knowledge of intercommunal conflicts around the globe and his arguments for a more cosmopolitan society have earned him both the Hanna-Arendt-Preis (2011) and the Buber-Rosenzweig-Medaille (2011), and this acute awareness of the inherent violence of identity and his willingness to think beyond identitarian divides is, I will argue, also reflected in his literary writing.

Kermani’s rising prominence and success as a public intellectual is evidenced in particular by the recent series of articles on Iraq published in *Der Spiegel* (2014) and also by his invitation

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to address the Reichstag for the celebrations surrounding the 65\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of the *Grundgesetz*. In addition to his essays and his academic writing, which I will return to shortly, Kermani’s literary writing, much of which has just entered into its second print run, also deserves wider attention for its intervention into contemporary debates surrounding Islam, Germany and cosmopolitanism.

*Literature and Cosmopolitanism in Kermani’s Thought*

Alongside the issues of geopolitics and war that receive greater public attention, Kermani’s questioning of identity also leads him to comment on matters closer to home, the polarisation of German society along religious lines being the central topic of *Wer ist Wir*, as discussed in the introduction. Together, the texts collected in *Wer ist Wir*, the provocatively titled pamphlet *Vergesst Deutschland! Eine patriotische Rede* (2012) and *Zwischen Koran und Kafka: West-östliche Erkundungen* (2014) convey an understanding of literature as the interruption of communal myth-making, much like Nancy argues. Indeed, Kermani repeatedly critiques thinking in terms of clearly defined, immanent communities and identities, such as in ‘Lob der Differenz’ from *Wer ist Wir?: ‘Die Wirklichkeit eines Lebens, eines jeden Lebens, ist so viel komplizierter, diffiziler, als daß sie sich auf so einen abstrakten Begriff wie den der Identität reduzieren ließe.’\textsuperscript{600}

These essays on contemporary German society often centre around Islam; the essay ‘Bibel, Bush und Berlusconi – Der Islam wird schuld’ (2002), for example, is critical of German-language writers such as Günter Kunert and Elfriede Jelinek who, whilst making insightful political criticisms in their literature, can be accused of sweeping generalisations when it comes to their comments on Islam is the press.\textsuperscript{601} In contrast to such generalisations,

\textsuperscript{600} Kermani, *Wer ist Wir?*, p. 130. Like Şenocak, an engagement with the Frankfurt School’s critique of identity could have contributed to this stance, and Kermani does acknowledge a debt to Adorno elsewhere: Kermani, *Zwischen Koran und Kafka*, p. 9 and p. 11.

\textsuperscript{601} Kermani, *Strategie der Eskalation*, pp. 35-6.
although Kermani does admit to feeling compelled by the Islamophobic media to group himself with other Muslims out of solidarity, he ultimately ‘will keinem öffentlichen “Wir” angehören’, and his understanding of the author’s role as writing against such communal compartmentalisation is demonstrated in the following quotation:

"Mein Auftrag als Schriftsteller – und genauso als Wissenschaftler – ist es hingegen gerade, mich kollektiven Zugehörigkeiten zu entziehen, sie in Frage zu stellen, sie zu verwerfen. Literatur will die Wirklichkeit nicht auf einen Punkt bringen, sie formuliert keine Lehrmeinungen, gibt keine Stellungnahmen ab, stellt keine Thesen auf. Sie versucht die Wirklichkeit in ihrer Ambivalenz zu beschreiben und sperrt sich damit, muss sich sperren gegen jedes politisch, national oder religiös kollektivierende Attribut."

Kermani thus regards a cosmopolitan scepticism towards established communities and identities as literature’s raison d'être, and in his essays he repeatedly stresses the self-critical tendencies of German literature (even how it often rejects Germany itself), rather than its mythic, nation-building role. For instance, in Vergesst Deutschland!, his speech at the opening of the 2012 Hamburger Lessingstage, he praises the Enlightenment author’s openness towards alterity and his critical stance towards German society, judging him by the standards of his own time. Thus, if Kermani speaks approvingly of the Enlightenment, it is its questioning and sceptical beginnings that he has in mind, rather than its drive towards homogenisation and its petrification into a divisive ideology, on which Zaimoglu tends to focus. Like both Şenocak and Zaimoglu, however, Kermani also acknowledges reason’s limitations, referring to the ideological instrumentalisation of the Enlightenment during the 2012 ‘circumcision debate’ as ‘Vulgärrationalismus’.

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602 Ibid., p. 59.
605 The circumcision debate was started by a court ruling in May 2012 that classified the practice as unlawful bodily harm. Although Germany’s Muslims also contributed to discussions, the debate was mostly viewed in relation to Jewish customs, given the historical context of Nazism.
Kermani similarly highlights the critical stance towards German nationalism of other celebrated ‘national’ writers, such as Friedrich Schiller, Hölderlin, Heinrich Heine and Georg Büchner:

Gewiß nicht alle, aber doch auffallend viele jener Autoren, die heute vom Fernsehen als Großdeutsche trivialisiert werden, waren in ihrer eigenen Zeit Sonderlinge und Dissidenten [...]. Wenn hurra-patriotische Bestseller heute sogar den Autor des Wintermärchens als Grund ihres Nationalstolzes anführen, ist das absurd.

It is, then, unsurprising that Kermani singles out Franz Kafka, ‘einen deutschen Schriftsteller, der nicht deutsch war’, as his key example from the German literary tradition. For Kermani, German literature and the German nation cannot be directly mapped onto one another:

Nicht nur Kafka entzieht sich der nationalen Zuschreibung, Vereinnahmung, Identifikation. Die deutsche Literaturgeschichte als Ganzes zeigt sich auffallend oft widerspenstig gegenüber Begriffen wie Nation, Reich, Vaterland.

He therefore suggests an understanding of German literature that goes beyond, and in fact often in direct opposition to, the territorial boundaries and politics of the German state, arguing that undermining Germany is in fact German literature’s most important leitmotif – a view that Zaimoglu’s engagement with Romantic cosmopolitanism also supports. In this regard, he argued during his speech before parliament that Vergangenheitsbewältigung is a misguided project, since Germany has never enjoyed a ‘normal’ relationship with its past or a relaxed attitude towards nationalism. This cosmopolitan understanding of literature as not the means towards identity formation, but rather ‘die Verteidigung des Marginalisierten und

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607 This is perhaps a reference to Sarrazin.
608 Kermani, Vergess Deutschland!, p. 29.
609 Kermani, Zwischen Koran und Kafka, p. 212.
610 Ibid., p. 215.
611 Ibid., p. 345.
die Bestreitung des Herrschenden’,\textsuperscript{612} is carried over into the religiosity of Kermani’s fiction and indeed his academic writing, which challenges orthodoxy and fundamentalism.

Religiosity in Kermani’s Thought

Just as Kermani writes to undermine a monolithic sense of German culture and society in his essays, he similarly writes not to strengthen, but to destabilise Islam’s mythic foundations in the literature under scrutiny here. As for Şenocak, SAID and Zaimoglu, religiosity (in particular a wide understanding of Islamic tradition) is central to Kermani’s fiction, but Kermani’s PhD in Islamic Studies allows him to speak with particular authority on the subject. He has published two highly praised scholarly monographs, both of which have been translated into English: *Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (2000), a study of the significance of the Qur’an’s literary and poetic qualities for worship; and *Der Schrecken Gottes*, an examination of mystics and dissidents within the three monotheisms, whom Kermani contrasts with ‘Bigotten oder Buchstabenfrommen’.\textsuperscript{613} The objects of his scholarly analysis have, I will contend, fed into the sceptical and mystical religiosity of his own fiction, and are therefore key to understanding the often strange and surprising occurrences in his literary work. Similar to the Postra movement’s efforts to expand the Islamic canon, the fiction analysed here broadens not only Islamic, but also German culture by engaging with the sceptical and mystical elements of Islam that, I have argued, contain the potential to deconstruct the monotheistic paradigm, that is to say, the existence of an exterior universalising organising principle that is thought to shape our sense of the world.

Like the Islamic dissidents he studies, Kermani also maintains a questioning relationship with religion himself. As stated in my introduction, although Kermani considers himself a Muslim, he, like many other Muslims, does not allow an orthodox interpretation to

\textsuperscript{612} Kermani, *Vergesst Deutschland!*’, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{613} Kermani, *Der Schrecken Gottes*, p. 11.
determine all aspects of his behaviour. In *Wer ist Wir*, he asserts that to define a Muslim through adherence to the religion’s institutionalised rules alone (orthodoxy) could itself be deemed a fundamentalist view, in that it leaves no room for ambiguity. He ascribes this fundamentalist mindset to so-called ‘experts’ who would define him as a ‘gemäßigter’ rather than an ‘echter’ Muslim, and he links fundamentalism with the pigeonholing of fusional communities more generally:

In der Breite ist der Fundamentalismus seit seinen Anfängen im frühen zwanzigsten Jahrhundert bis heute überall – sei es im Nahen Osten, in Südasien oder den Vereinigten Staaten – eine Bewegung, die den einzelnen einbindet in die klar umrissene Ordnung eines Kollektivs, das streng unterschieden ist von anderen Kollektiven.\(^\text{614}\)

In contrast, he defends his position, saying: ‘[Dem Experten] würde ich erstens entgegnen, daß ich meinen Glauben sehr wohl als “echt” empfinde.’\(^\text{615}\) For Kermani, a personal experience of the holy is more important than following the dogma of organised religion. As in the work of the other authors of this study, rather than embracing ready-made religious identities and ideologies, it is unexpected religious intensities with a deconstructive potential beyond representation that characterise Kermani’s fiction.

Kermani does not shy away from the more difficult and darker areas of Islam. His book *Dynamit des Geistes: Martyrium, Islam und Nihilismus* (2002) questions whether the contemporary form of Islamic fundamentalism that is characterised by suicide attacks can be traced within the history of Islam or whether it is a product of modernity, and *Vergesst Deutschland!* discusses the strange banality of terrorists’ former lives. Moreover, his novel *Kurzmitteilung* (2007) is set around the time of the 7/7 bombings in London, and both Al-Qaeda and torture in Iran are discussed in his lengthy avant-garde novel *Dein Name* (2011). I would therefore submit that, similar to Nancy, Kermani’s writing, be it journalistic, literary or academic, can be regarded as a cosmopolitan response to the many identity conflicts that

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\(^{614}\) Kermani, *Wer ist Wir?*, p. 15.

currently engulf our world. Yet, whereas his non-scholarly essays and articles tend to focus on the horrors of identity-driven religious wars and intercommunal conflicts, his literature, I will demonstrate, also often involves the imagining of a religiosity beyond identity. As Jordan argues, Kermani is an author who, whilst referring to identities within his journalistic publications on Islam in Germany, is free to explore and problematise similar topics in his literary work in a more radical way. Thus, I will explore how, much like Nancy’s understanding of literature, Kermani’s fiction undermines our current framework of identities in a cosmopolitan way.

‘[E]twas sagte mir, ich solle es lassen und mich weiter der Musik hingeben’: Rock ‘n’ Roll and Religiosity in Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten

Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten begins as the story of a baby with painful wind who can only be sent to sleep by the music of the Canadian rock star Neil Young, and develops into an exploration of mysticism, in which listening to Young’s music is presented as a quasi-religious experience. Just as Kermani’s scholarly monograph Gott is schön discusses the importance of the aesthetics of the Qur’an, Neil Young too hints at a religiosity whose meaning is in the affective experience of listening, rather than forming an ideology from the literal meaning of the words as they are spoken. Gifted contemporary recitationists, who must improvise new melodies for the Qur’an and not sing to a plan, still find fame and acclaim in the Muslim world today, which is testimony to the significance of this tradition for Muslims. As Kermani explains, this is something specific to Islam amongst the monotheisms:

   This does not mean that the evolution and practice of Christianity – or any other religion – can be imagined without the aesthetic fascination of specific sites, texts, hymns, images, scents, actions, gestures and garments. Protestantism would certainly never have spread so quickly in the German-

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speaking regions if it had not been for the rhetorical force of the Lutheran Bible. Yet in the portrayal of their past by the Christian, or more specifically, Protestant community, the aesthetic momentum is less significant, however relevant its role in religious practice.\textsuperscript{617}

For instance, there are various accounts within the Islamic tradition of people converting, crying, screaming, experiencing ecstasy, or fainting upon hearing beautiful recitations of the Qur’an. As Kermani asserts:

Berichte über die Verzückung, das Staunen, die Ekstase, die Mohammeds Rezitationen bei ihren ersten Hörrern hervorgerufen haben sollen, zieren noch heute orthodoxe Abhandlungen über den Koran und werden von muslimischen Autoren als der überzeugendste Beweis für seinen göttlichen Ursprung vorgebracht.\textsuperscript{618}

In this regard, Kermani foregrounds a worldly aspect of Islam, namely its aesthetic quality and reception, that can be understood as conducive to the deconstruction of monotheism. Whereas fundamentalists and organisations such as the DIK tend to prioritise the Qur’anic interpretation that suits their agenda and eliminate ambiguity, Kermani foregrounds the importance of its aesthetics in his scholarly writing and also, I will argue, in Neil Young, which can be regarded as literature in Nancy’s sense, in that its religiosity cannot be instrumentalised for sectarian political or ideological reasons.

Perhaps because of its worldly aspect and distance from doctrine, the aesthetic aspect of the Qur’an’s reception was especially emphasised by medieval Sufis, whose tradition of samāʾ (meaning ‘listening’) regards music, dance and Qur’anic recitations as possible routes to ecstasy and union with the divine.\textsuperscript{619} Following on from this Sufi tradition, Kermani gives a spiritual significance to music and entertainment here, which remain a contested area within orthodox Islam, particularly amongst the followers of Wahhabism. Moreover, by expressing this through a discussion of Young’s music, he refutes German stereotypes of Islam’s

\textsuperscript{618} Kermani, \textit{Gott ist schön}, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{619} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 370-76.
incompatibility with contemporary Western life, finding a link between the Qur’an and Neil Young, just as Şenocak would discuss his position ‘zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’ some three years later.

The Aesthetic Moment and God’s Terror

The reader is left in no doubt as to the religious nature of Neil Young, as religious vocabulary is used to describe Young’s music throughout the book. For instance, the narrator states, echoing the etymology of Islam: ‘etwas sagte mir, ich solle es lassen und mich weiter der Musik hingegeben’ (NY, p. 24; my emphasis). Furthermore, the significance the narrator locates in the beauty of Young’s music reflects the aforementioned importance placed on the Qur’an’s aesthetic qualities by Muslims. Kermani demonstrates in Gott ist schön that the poetic and literary quality of the Qur’an is a significant part of what makes Muslims regard it as an authentic and holy text:

Der Glaube an die Wortkunst der Araber und die stilistische Unübertroffenheit des Koran, die Behauptung, niemand unter den sprachbegabten Arabern habe es vermocht, dem Koran etwas Besseres, Schöneres, Hinreißenderes entgegenzusetzen, gehört spätestens seit dem zehnten Jahrhundert zu den identitätsstiftenden Elementen der muslimischen Glaubensgemeinde.620

This attention to aesthetic detail associated with the Qur’an is reflected in the narrator’s detailed analyses of Young’s music:

[The Last Trip to Tulsa ist] mal meditativ, mal schroffe Rezital einer Lyrik, die sich bewußt dem Reimzwang sowie den Assonanzen und Dissonanzen der Sprache unterwirft und eben dadurch mit jeder Strophe in eine andere Richtung treibt, mit jedem Vers eine Überraschung erlebt. (NY, p. 12)

By playfully equating Young’s music and Qur’anic recitations in such a way, Kermani arguably undermines one of Islam’s central tenets by dethroning the Qur’an in terms of its

620 Ibid., p. 19.
unassailable beauty, destabilising Muslim identity by suggesting that Young can challenge the Qur’an’s aesthetic supremacy.

However, terror as well as beauty shape the reception of Young’s music in the text, as Neil Young opens with the narrator describing his daughter’s colic as God robbing her of the memory, and worse still the safety and comfort of paradise. Referring to her illness as ‘[d]rei Monate der Folter’ (NY, p. 7), the narrator contradicts today’s prevailing image of God as exclusively loving and caring. The narrator speaks of God’s ‘Verbrechen[...] an der Menschlichkeit’ (NY, p. 8), implying, in a similar way to SAID’s Psalmen, a religiosity that quarrels with God, shifting meaning away from a divine Other and towards the world. This topic also emerges in a quote from Young himself: ‘The Old Testament is where God is always pissed’ (NY, p. 146); and the narrator too detects in Young ‘derjenige, der mit der Religion ringt und hadert, auf die Weichspülungen der zeitgemäßen Kirchen und des New Age als eine zu billige Antwort schimpft’ (NY, p. 40). Thus, similar to the figures of Nathan and Tyra in Zaimoglu’s writing, Kermani also emphasises God’s wrath in a way that is at odds with organisations such as the DIK, which play down the more brutal aspects of the Qur’an in order to distance Islam from violence. This direct engagement with God’s terror also implies a refusal to value one Islamic identity over another, and the text is therefore compatible with Nancy’s rejection of predetermined identities, even at the risk of reinforcing stereotypical associations of Islam with violence. It equally demonstrates that Kermani is willing to confront the more problematic aspects of Islam. This focus on the brutal side of God also echoes a central argument of Der Schrecken Gottes, in which Kermani states that mystics regarded the questioning and criticism of God as ‘vielleicht das intimste Moment des Glaubens’, 621 that is to say, as a way of bringing God closer, just as the deconstruction of monotheism overcomes the strict separation of God and humankind. Thus, it can be argued

621 Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 211.
that ultimately something positive comes from our protests against the apparent injustice of God’s terror, as we shift meaning towards our world.

The narrator of *Neil Young* also regards the themes of lost paradise, beauty, transcendence and terror in the album *Cortez The Killer* as ‘die Mystik Neil Youngs’ (*NY*, p. 72), and he later directly compares Young’s music with that of the Persian mystics, in that its repetitions carry the listener to another sphere (*NY*, pp. 97-8). Echoing the out of body experience sought by whirling dervishes or the pilgrims who circle the Ka’aba in Mecca, the narrator describes a similar effect brought about by Young’s song *Round & Round*, whose opening lyrics are ‘Round and round and round we spin’: ‘Im Hin und Her und Her und Hin der Musik und des Lebens vergeht jeder Sinn’ (*NY*, pp. 125-27). Young too is quoted as recounting his experience whilst playing as disorientating and ‘wie ein euphorischer, kosmischer Orgasmus’, which the narrator relates to the Sufi notions of ecstasy and *fanā*, the annihilation of the self (*NY*, p. 139). The narrator’s relationship with a former lover, however, also prompts this response from him, linking the affective experiences of love and music and reflecting Nancy’s concept of the crossing of love that opens up our subjectivity:

Daß sie es mir offenbarte, daß ich die Offenbarung wahrnahm, daß sie meine Wahrnehmung spürte, ohne sich ihr zu entziehen, daß ich ihre Entscheidung dankbar empfand, daß sie die Dankbarkeit als Fürsorge, Achtsamkeit, Liebe auslegte, die ihr Vertrauen rechtfertigten, daß sich all dies gleichzeitig ereignete und wir, ohne [...] uns nur bewußt zu machen, eine Gegenwart teilten – das ist doch wertvoll. Entweder sind ihr so viel mehr Schätze zugefallen als mir, daß sie die Nähe, die mich für immer von ihr infiziert hat, vergessen kann, oder sie und alle anderen sind blind für das wenige, das uns von der Welt außerhalb der unseren zuteil wird. (*NY*, p. 119)

Thus, unlike the emphasis on subjective autonomy in Beck’s *A God of One’s Own*, Kermani implies here a religiosity that undermines subjectivity through a loss of any closed sense of self, a theme that reoccurs more prominently in *Große Liebe*.
Listening, but not to Lyrics

The ‘Gleichzeitigkeit von Lust und Schrecken’ (NY, p. 110), which also characterises the other texts discussed in this chapter, forms part of how the narrator is affected by Young’s music, suggesting a post-monotheistic religiosity whose meaning lies in the affective experience of listening, rather than specific understanding of the lyrics, that is to say, in presentation rather than signification. This view is reflected in the narrator’s response to Last Trip to Tulsa, a song about a man felling a tree for no apparent reason: ‘Aber das könnte man über alle Dinge des Lebens sagen, das nicht sinnlos, sondern sich selbst Sinn ist’ (NY, p. 29).

In a similar way, it is not the meaning of the lyrics that is important, but rather the act of listening itself, as being affected by the music carries its own spiritual significance. The narrator also admits to not understanding many of Young’s lyrics (NY, p. 55), and the significance of semiotic meaning-making is further diminished as the narrator states: ‘Was mich anrührt ist, weniger die Bedeutung des Textes als vielmehr die kreisende oder wiegende Bewegung, die er im Einklang mit der Musik erzeugt’ (NY, p. 125). Similar to the Qur’an, some of Young’s lyrics involve themes that are incompatible with the deconstruction of monotheism – Pocahontas, for instance, speaks of salvation (NY, p. 79) –, but it is the deconstructive element, the worldly effect of the music, that is emphasised here. Indeed, the beat of the song Down by the River contradicts any notions of redemption that may be found in Young’s lyrics, conveying life ‘als langen Marsch, der zu nichts führt’ (NY, p. 95).

The narrator’s, his daughter’s and Young’s own responses to the music therefore echo the reported effects recitations of the Qur’an supposedly had on converts to Islam, and the title of the book itself reveals a connection with the mystical tradition of samā’ through Das Buch der vom Koran Getöteten by the Sufi scholar Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Tha’labi – a text discussed in Gott ist schön. According to Tha'labi, Allah once chose to kill people listening to a recitation of the Qur’an as a reward for their exemplary piety, so that they may
be at his side in paradise.\textsuperscript{622} Those listening die, however, not because of any excessive enjoyment, but rather because they piously fear God’s coming judgement, which again emphasises God’s terror.\textsuperscript{623} Consequently, both the people killed by the Qur’an in Tha’labi’s text and the narrator’s daughter, and the Qur’an and Neil Young’s discography are equated in the text. Indeed, the narrator claims that Neil Young’s \textit{Last Trip to Tulsa} soothes his daughter because it reminds her of the paradise she has just left and the paradise that is to come.

Moreover, although his daughter is not killed by Young’s music, similarities between the states of sleep and death are alluded to in his lyrics: ‘well i used to be asleep you know, with blankets on my bed. i stayed there for a while ’til they discovered i was dead’ (\textit{NY}, p. 22).

Although Young merely sends the narrator’s daughter to sleep, his music – specifically \textit{Down by the River} with the lyrics: ‘I shot my baby / Down by the river / Dead’ (\textit{NY}, p. 105) – does, nevertheless, prompt the narrator to ponder the inescapable nature of death:

\begin{quote}
\end{quote}

This song, with its combination of delight and terror, made the narrator feel as though he was choking, reflecting the pain often associated with divine revelation:

\begin{quote}
Sie ist ein Schlag gegen den Kopf, ach was, ein dauerndes Schlagen, permanenter Schmerz, genau so haben es die Bücher beschrieben, man muß nur die Berichte von den Offenbarungen lesen, der Engel würgt die Propheten, die vor Angst und Schmerz sabbern.\textsuperscript{624}
\end{quote}

Thus, it is not simply that Young is singing about death, but rather the narrator’s reception of the music itself that leads him to establish the connection with \textit{Das Buch der vom Koran}

Conclusion: The Spirituality of Sound

It can therefore be argued that Young’s music unleashes a moment of singularised religiosity, based on the narrator’s openness towards a mêlée of cultural influences that stem from his obsession with Young and his knowledge of Islamic mysticism, destabilising the Islam/West dichotomy through an unexpected touching tale. In this regard, comparisons can be made with Rushdie, whose essay ‘Is Nothing Sacred?’ (1990) argues that art can provide us with a secular transcendence that mediates between the material and the spiritual:

What I mean by transcendence is that flight of the human spirit outside the confines of its material, physical existence which all of us, secular or religious, experience on at least a few occasions. Birth is a moment of transcendence which we spend our lives trying to understand. The exaltation of the act of love, the experience of joy and very possibly the moment of death are other such moments. The soaring quality of transcendence, the sense of being more than oneself, of being in some way joined to the whole of life, is by its nature short-lived. Not even the visionary or mystical experience ever last very long. It is for art to capture that experience, to offer it to, in the case of literature, its readers; to be, for a secular, materialist culture, some sort of replacement for what the love of god offers in the world of faith.\(^\text{625}\)

In the case of Neil Young it is music that prompts this response, tying in with the Sufi tradition of *samā’*, which Kermani attempts to evoke in literature. The text’s continuous prose without chapter breaks implies the ephemeral nature of this moment of transcendence, which comes to an end as the effect it has upon the narrator’s daughter wears off (NY, pp. 167-68). This fleeting nature of holiness is further echoed in the Zen story featured in the text:

\(^{625}\) Rushdie, p. 420.
“Alter, bitte sage mir, was du weißt. Was ist Erleuchtung?”

Der Greis lächelt ihn an. Dann läßt er seine schwere Last von der Schulter gleiten und richtet sich auf.

“Ja, ich sehe!” ruft Milarepa. “Meinen ewigen Dank! Aber [...] was kommt nach der Erleuchtung?”

Abermals lächelt der Greis, bückt sich und hebt seinen schweren Sack wieder auf. (NY, p. 28)

Similar to Rushdie’s comments, Young’s music leads to discussions on moments of transcendence such as birth, death and joy (mostly in the form of sex). Thus, similar to the sexual imagery of Şenocak’s, SAID’s and Zaimoglu’s work, the experience of Young’s music is arguably an embodied and affective experience of the divine, suggesting in an overtly heretical fashion that there is a religious dimension to Young’s music that blurs the divide between the sacred and the profane. Equally, Nancy regards birth and death as important moments in which we recognise ourselves as finite beings within the inoperative community, as ‘in some way joined to the whole of life’ by our ontological interrelatedness. Just as the other texts under analysis here repudiate the incompatibility of religious belief and cosmopolitanism by hinting at a religiosity with love at its centre that in fact serves to lacerate subjectivity, these parallels between moments of religious and secular transcendence in Kermani’s work and Nancy’s non-foundational ontology suggest a religiosity that opens people up to their being-in-common, rather than enclose them within an immanent identity.

Rather than the individualised religiosity described by Beck or the ‘moderate’ Islamic identity endorsed by the DIK, Neil Young can be viewed in terms of a post-monotheistic religiosity whose lack of identity and ideology, I have argued, make it cosmopolitan, even if it does draw attention to God’s capacity for terror as much as love. The text can, then, be understood as literature in both Kermani’s and Nancy’s terms, as its religiosity resists any possible ideological or identitarian appropriation. Rather than the representation of an immanent Islamic identity, I would argue that by emphasising the worldly and affective experience of listening, Neil Young makes new connections and imagines a hitherto
unexplored post-monotheistic religiosity. This can be viewed as a direct response to the post-9/11 moment, as Kermani has emphasised how Osama bin Laden’s antiquated Arabic and clear, modest manner of reciting the Qur’an lend themselves to fundamentalism:

[While] other speakers grotesquely raise and lower their voices when they recite the Revelation, Osama bin Laden proceeded in the same solicitous tone, as if he wished to persuade his audience through the clarity of his message alone.626

Thus, whereas Neil Young stresses the importance of the aesthetic experience and not the ideological message, bin Laden attempts to destroy any ambiguity. It is, therefore, ‘the assertion of a single, eternally valid, literal interpretation’627 characteristic of fundamentalism that the religiosity of Neil Young seeks to resist, and Du sollst is similarly ambiguous in nature.

‘Mit ihm kam sie in Bett vor wie in einer Kirche’: Sexuality, Spirituality and the Quarrel with God in Du sollst

Whereas music is the focus of Neil Young, Du sollst, similar to the other texts discussed previously, emphasises the deconstructive potential of locating the divine in passionate, sexual relationships. Furthermore, whereas Neil Young arguably emerges from within the Islamic tradition and broadens it out, Du sollst also draws heavily upon Jewish and Christian influences. Indeed, it is a collection of mostly erotic short stories that take the Ten Commandments as their starting point, such as ‘Habe keine fremden Götter vor Meinem Angesicht. Mache dir keinen Götzen noch ein Bildnis’, in which a couple in bed fantasise about erotic experiences with other people. The text as a whole opens with a depiction of heaven and hell, which corresponds with the notion of a controlling God implied by the use

626 Kermani, ‘Silent Sirens’, p. 12.
627 Ibid., p. 12.
of the Ten Commandments, a God who, in order to direct the behaviour of believers on earth, punishes and rewards in the afterlife. Echoing the Muslim garden-paradise Jannah, Du sollst begins with the description of a beautiful garden behind eight gates, with further divisions inside representing the various subdivisions of heaven. However, the people waiting outside these gates are disturbed by loud screams from behind other red gates, the seven gates of hell, referred to as Jahannam by Muslims. We are told: ‘hinter den roten Türen, da sei eine Hölle, in der Menschen geschlachtet würden, ohne zu sterben’ (DS, pp. 5-7). Yet, although Du sollst’s title and use of the Ten Commandments as inspiration for each chapter are evocative of this authoritarian God of the monotheistic paradigm who guides us from beyond the world, Kermani shifts religious meaning towards the world in this text by implicitly critiquing such religious rules, and by equating divine and profane experiences, suggesting a post-monotheistic, non-prescriptive religiosity that problematises any clear-cut separation of religious denominations.

Violence, Desire and the Monotheistic Paradigm

Jordan regards opposition to taboos as a fundamental aspect of Du sollst, and religious language is indeed provocatively used throughout the text to describe sexual experiences: ‘Mit welcher Zartheit er ihr den Slip abgenommen hatte, wie eine Reliquie’ (DS, p. 44). The explicitly sexual nature of many of the collection’s short stories echoes the mixture of human and divine love in Sufi poetry and Biblical texts such as the Song of Solomon. Similar to Tyra’s brutal desire in Liebesbrand, the scenes of Du sollst can also take on a sadomasochistic tone, which can be associated with the wrathful God of monotheism. For example, in the first chapter, ‘Ich bin dein Gott’, the lover displays the domineering qualities of both the Biblical and Qur’anic God, and also of traditional religious patriarchal structures.

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He appears omniscient, saying: ‘Ich habe dich erforscht. Ich kenne dein Herz’ \((DS, \text{p. } 12)\); and demands worship: ‘Ich werde dich beschützen. Du wirst mich verehren’ \((DS, \text{p. } 17)\). Thus, whereas an idea of love as fleeting moments of openness and contact is evoked in Neil Young and, I will assert, Große Liebe, the relationship here is assigned a permanence, implying the unachievable stasis and fusion of desire. What is more, this union is to be achieved through violence, which adds a sadomasochistic dimension to the text: ‘Ich werde dich fesseln, nein, nicht so, mit Stacheldraht. Ich werde mich daran berauschen, dich zu quälen’ \((DS, \text{p. } 12)\). This can be regarded as part of how Du sollst flouts religious taboos, playing with associations between death and the orgasm and confronting orthodox believers with the sexual aspects of not only mystical traditions, but also established Holy Scripture – the Book of Hosea, as Kermani mentions in Der Schrecken Gottes, symbolically depicts the relationship between God and his people as an unhappy love affair that ends in sexual abuse.\(^{629}\) This implies a jealous God who is prone to react with brutality, and the notion of desire as ‘infelicitous love’\(^{630}\) in the text suggests both the ultimate impossibility of divine union and also the violence and coercion bound up in the monotheistic paradigm’s association with communal fusion.

The Fall is also evoked here, as the lover says:

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Here, the word ‘hingeben’ again reminds the reader of the etymology of Islam, suggesting a mixture of religious sources with the profane. Although Kermani does draw heavily upon the Islamic mysticism of his scholarly research for inspiration, I would argue that Du sollst draws more from the other monotheistic religions than his other texts discussed here. Indeed, such

\(^{629}\) Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 128.
\(^{630}\) Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 98.
intimations of God as jealous and angry can be found in the three holy texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and thus Du sollst, although at times hinting at monotheistic understanding of God, nevertheless avoids appropriation by any specific religious group, just as Jordan argues that Jesus is ambiguously presented in ‘Von der Zärtlichkeit’ from the short-story collection Vierzig Leben (2004).

God’s terror is further evidenced in the chapter ‘Gedenke des Tags der Feier, ihn zu heiligen’, in which a man is subject to an unexplained and violent attack from his female lover, who stabs him in the neck with a broken bottle. The coercion of the monotheistic paradigm is again present here. The demanding nature of the woman in this chapter and the apparent impossibility of her satisfaction impede any union between the two protagonists, reflecting the thoughts of religious sceptics on the cognitive dissonance of belief in the all-powerful, prescriptive God of monotheism who creates a flawed humanity destined to be punished. Indeed, the allusions to an authoritarian God in Du sollst regularly contrast with the various characters who constantly fail to obey the Commandments on which their narratives are based. That so many of the protagonists fail to adhere to God’s law raises questions about its viability, perhaps indicating a preference for a non-prescriptive religiosity. This ancient theological issue is explored in Kermani’s scholarly work Der Schrecken Gottes: ‘Wie kann Gott den Frevel seiner Geschöpfe wollen und die für etwas strafen, das Er vorbestimmt hat [...]’?

‘Morde nicht’, the story of a woman who is trying to stop the sexual advances of a man, similarly features a mixture of sexual and violent imagery, as his erect penis reminds her of a weapon (DS, pp. 56-7). Although the man promises to make her happy (DS, p. 57), she is reluctant to have sex, and just before he is about to penetrate her, she effortlessly kills him:

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Es war zu spät, um ihn zu retten. Daß sie die Muskeln zusammensog, genügte, um ihn abzustoßen. Es war ein federleichter Schlag, ein Zucken nur. Sie schob ihn zur Seite und ließ ihn ausgestreckt hinter sich zurück. (DS, p. 60)

If the imagery of this text is viewed in Sufi terms, the man’s libido and hastiness for sex can also be regarded as a wilful desire for union with God, rather than an openness towards the divine that would be characterised by love. Indeed, viewed in this way, God is the unwilling party here, as the woman is repelled by horrid smells (DS, pp. 57-9) and thoughts of hell (DS, p. 56). By highlighting God’s wrath, Du sollst reminds us that the medieval mystics accepted God’s anger, but it also undermines trends within the three monotheisms to airbrush out God’s more brutal characteristics and present him as entirely loving and forgiving. Such portrayals of God do violence to holy texts, as Kermani states in Der Schrecken Gottes:


Kermani’s scholarly work also points out that this can happen through poor translation, such as ‘God the destroyer’ becoming ‘God the all powerful’ in the German translation of the Bible634 – a point also raised in the last chapter of Du sollst (DS, p. 136).

Although I agree that such sexualised allusions to God can, as Jordan maintains, be read as a response to the taboos of orthodox religion, they can, however, also be viewed as a fundamental examination of humankind’s relationship with God and the divine, be it in the form of institutionalised religion or a post-monotheistic religiosity. In contrast to the above stories, an openness towards God that reflects Nancy’s understanding of love is hinted at in ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’, in which a couple forbid themselves the use of the word ‘love’, just as the pronunciation of God’s name (YHWH or

633 Ibid., p. 161.
634 Ibid., p. 124.
the Tetragrammaton) is forbidden in Judaism. Here, the man is described as an ascetic in that he appears to hold back his passion: ‘Seine Askese erbitterte sie. Aber die Sorgsamkeit seines Bekümmerns und die Leidenschaft seines Körpers waren mehr, als sie je von einem Mann erfahren hatte’ (DS, p. 33). Yet his partner does not doubt his love, and the emphasis on bodily passion cannot be understood in terms of the world-transcending denial of earthly pleasures found in early ascetic manifestations of Sufism. Further religious terminology stresses the world-affirming religious aspect, but equally the solemnity of their sexuality: ‘Mit ihm kam sie in Bett vor wie in einer Kirche’ (DS, p. 35). Thus, the violent desire of the other stories is absent, as the couple here experience love without ever saying it, hinting (just as was the case in Neil Young) at a significance that lies in the act, rather than in linguistic meaning-making: ‘Wenn er sie küßte, so hatte er gedacht, würde sie ihm seine Liebe glauben, ohne daß er sie aussprach’ (DS, p. 32). Again, this privileges presentation and not signification, similar to the power of music in Neil Young and that of demythified prayer in Psalmen, both of whose spiritual significance lies in their being itself and is not derived from elsewhere.

Our notions of love are, according to Nancy, plagued by impossible ideas of completion, and

[t]hat is why one would want to separate oneself from love, free oneself from it. Instead of this law of completion of being, one would want to deal only with a moment of contact between beings, a light, cutting, and delicious moment of contact, at once eternal and fleeting.635

As previously argued, parallels may be drawn between Nancy’s notion of love and his writing on the divine, for, just as it is preferable to escape love’s promise of perfect unity (what Nancy actually regards as desire), so

[t]he lack of divine names – the suspension of prayer, of worship – would thus be a way for the sacred to keep itself in reserve, to withhold itself, and

635 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 92.
as a consequence, thereby to offer itself.\textsuperscript{636}

This lack of divine names mirrors how ‘love is always present and never recognized in anything that we name “love’‘,\textsuperscript{637} and whereas the passions of the collection’s other couples often end in violence and death, by refusing to give their love an identification and yet remaining open to one another, the couple here experience true love: ‘Sie waren eins geworden’ (\textit{DS}, p. 34). Consequently, the relationship here can be viewed as an openness towards the divine, indicating a physical, post-monotheistic religiosity that is both removed from the burdens of orthodox religion, and also exists outside of identity and representation, as it has no name with which to inscribe it within our present system of thought.

Nancy argues that love renders the inoperative community more accessible. Whereas desire is one-sided, love reveals our existence outside of ourselves and the interrelatedness of being, and whereas desire is the impossible demand for union, ‘love’, as Catherine Kellogg argues, ‘does not deliver absoluteness, it does not produce a perfect reunion; rather, love is an experience of the impossibility of pure immanence’.\textsuperscript{638} This is significant for interpretations of \textit{Du sollst} as, on the one hand, the desire for a ‘perfect reunion’ with God is repeatedly undermined by God’s violent nature, but equally as, on the other, the couple who share a loving openness to one another ultimately achieve a fleeting unity of sorts. As previously stated, there is some ambiguity between institutionalised religion and mysticism in terms of God’s wrath, and the text suggests both the Sufis’ acceptance of the terror of God and the authoritarian dogma of organised religion. An ambiguity also lies in the implied damnation of the lover in many of the stories, since it evokes both the monotheistic God of organised religion and equally the Sufi for whom ‘death means the annihilation of the individual qualities, the lifting of the veil that separates the primordial beloved from the lover created in

\textsuperscript{636} Ibid., p. 120.
\textsuperscript{637} Ibid., p. 93.
Nevertheless, the story ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’ does highlight an alternative tendency within the Sufi tradition towards the deconstruction of monotheism, which can be regarded as less violent, much like Jarmila’s role in contrast with Tyra’s in Liebesbrand.

Sadomasochism and Humankind’s Relationship with God

In summary, the shorter chapters of Du sollst mirror the writing of religious mystics who drew parallels between the relationship between God and humankind and experiences of love and desire, and who also imagined a more sensual religiosity that does not place restrictions upon corporeal pleasure. These themes come together in the final longer chapter, ‘Fürchtet nichts, denn um euch zu prüfen, ist Er, Gott, gekommen und damit Seine Furcht euch gegenwärtig sei, auf daß ihr nicht sündigt’, which takes the form of a police statement written by a member of a university theology department on the subject of his relationship with an older professor who has disappeared. Like the text’s use of the Ten Commandments, the form of the final chapter as a police statement again conveys a sense of law and authority, yet as the statement continues it becomes apparent that the professor is not religious in any orthodox sense. Indeed, after discovering a strange note from a former lover under the professor’s door, the professor and the narrator develop an odd relationship, in which the narrator is required to masturbate and verbally abuse the professor on a daily basis. This continues until the narrator forces him to denounce God in front of the faculty, which he does after removing his clothes and ejaculating onto a book (most likely a holy text). He then leaves the university and narrator behind. Jim Wafer divides the homosexual symbolism of Sufi literature into the tropes of the ‘vision complex’ and the ‘passion complex’, where the former can be understood in terms of God’s presence in things of beauty (as previously

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639 Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam, p. 135.
discussed in relation to the aesthetics of the Qur’an) and the latter ‘entails a symbolic physical interaction in which the lover is wounded or killed by his beloved’. Consequently, the sadomasochistic relationship between the two men in this final chapter can be regarded as drawing upon the passion complex of Sufi literature in order to hint at the divine in the alterity of the world.

As previously stated, the professor’s religiosity does not reflect the contemporary message of institutionalised religions, as he views God as ‘düster’, ‘hinterhältig’ and jealous of those who love (DS, p. 110). He does not trust God to provide salvation in death, and believes God only gives us an awareness of consolation in order to torment us with desire (DS, p. 102), a view that resonates with the Islamic mystic ʿAṭṭār. Furthermore, as the professor quotes from various different holy texts in their original languages, he avoids being categorised within one religion, and the narrator’s remark upon seeing him in the nude indicates the difficulty in ascertaining the professor’s religious denomination: ‘warum er beschnitten war, habe ich mich erst hinterher gefragt, er war doch kein Jude, oder habe ich mich getäuscht?’ (DS, p. 139).

The narrator also mentions that the professor’s religious morals do not forbid him corporeal lust (DS, p. 101), and that sexual acts are almost rituals for him (DS, p. 107). The narrator states jokingly that the professor ‘gehöre statt einer Büch- einer Bumsreligion an’, and this is further elaborated as the narrator makes clear that the ‘revelations of the body’ mean more to the professor than those of Holy Scripture, because through Scripture we can only experience the revelations of others, whereas the body enables us to experience them first-hand (DS, pp. 116-17) – here, as in Neil Young, the divine is located in the act and not any ideological message. This depiction of an unmediated and embodied experience of the


641 Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 206.
divine that does not require an accompanying dogma also reflects similar experiences in some of the shorter chapters of *Du sollst*, hinting at the attitudes of some Sufis for whom “[i]o break the ink-pots and to tear the books” was considered [...] the first step in Sufism’. 642 However, similar to ‘Morde nicht’, a perfect union often escapes the professor, such as when performing oral sex the smell and taste of his partner becomes unbearable (*DS*, pp. 118-19).

As well as pleasure, pain plays an equally important role in the professor’s spiritual life:

Daß er litt, daß jedes Leben Leiden sei – und zwar je schlimmer, desto wahrhaftiger das Leben –, das nahm er als gottgegeben hin, nein, er nahm es an, er bejahte es, die Passion war ihm wie eine Adelsbeurkundung. (*DS*, p. 101)

This comes to the fore in the sadomasochistic relationship that emerges between the narrator and the professor, a theme already discussed in connection with David and Tyra’s relationship:

Vielleicht daß es etwas Religiöses war, diese Buße, ein selbsterfundenes Ritual, die Erfüllung eines Eides, wenn ich wüßte. Ich möchte mich nicht entschuldigen, aber er spornte mich regelrecht dazu an, ihn als pervers bloßzustellen, als alt und häßlich vorzuführen, ihn wie ein Haustier zu behandeln (*DS*, pp. 143-44).

Drawing further parallels with the mystic ’At‘ār can shed light on this strange relationship.

Kermani states:

Streckenweise schildert Attar das Verhältnis zwischen Gott und Mensch geradezu als sexuell aufgeladenen Sadomasochismus. Dazu gehört nicht nur das Moment des genußreichen, gewollten Leidens, sondern auch das der Unterwerfung, der völligen Willenlosigkeit, die als Freiheit empfunden wird. 643

This is fitting, as the narrator comes to regard himself as a godlike figure for the professor.

643 Kermani, *Der Schrecken Gottes*, p. 205.
However, ‘Aṭṭār holds this relationship to be a mutual necessity, and that God needs the slave just as much as the slave needs to submit to God’s will is echoed in the narrator’s remark: ‘Ich war der Schwache, und ich war sein Gott’ (DS, p. 152). Islam’s central tenet of submitting to God’s will is played out in a profane setting in the final story, as it is in the short story ‘Vom Gehorsam’ in the earlier collection Vierzig Leben, in which a youth finds freedom in submission as he is forced to water plants for forty days as a punishment for pretending to ejaculate on the family Bible (a motif revisited in Du sollst).644

As outlined earlier, the narrator demands that the professor denounce God publicly, which he does after desecrating a holy book, an act that constitutes a rejection of the importance of scripture. The narrator interprets this event as follows: ‘Vor die Wahl gestellt, hatte er den allmächtigen Gott zugunsten der letzten Regung aufgegeben, die er aus seinem Körper noch auszuwringen vermochte’ (DS, p. 152). This need not, however, be viewed as the total rejection of God, but rather the rejection of the monotheistic understanding of God in favour of the affective, post-monotheistic one that is suggested by his sexual acts. During his final speech, the professor states: ‘Gott selbst sei gekommen, er habe die Menschen in den Arsch gefickt’ (DS, p. 153); and although this is shocking to the other members of the theology department, it is not a radical departure from his previous derogatory statements about God. His last act before leaving is to slice open his mouth with a pair of scissors and then enjoin the narrator to pray with him. The Qur’an quotation left behind by the professor is a description of hell, echoing the opening passage of the collection, and implies that he was punished for denouncing God; his act of self-harm leaves the professor unable to speak, only managing a moan, mirroring directly the quotation from Muhammad left behind: ‘Bei Gott, diese Leute werden hernach nicht mehr ein Wort sprechen […]. Sie beginnen mit einem Seufzen und enden mit einem Stöhnen’ (DS, pp. 156-57).

644 Navid Kermani, Vierzig Leben (Zürich: Ammann, 2004), p. 27.
Comparisons can be drawn here between the professor and Job, who too acknowledged the terror of God. Within the Muslim tradition, Job’s wife, under the influence of Satan, demanded that he turn away from God, but Job chose not to.\(^{645}\) It is, therefore, perhaps because the professor gave in to the narrator’s demands that he is seemingly punished by God. However, this passage also ties into the significance of breath and breathing for mystics such as Ibn ‘Arabi, for whom the sighs and gasps released during sexual intercourse were evidence of divine inspiration:

Aber nicht nur in der göttlichen Schöpfung erkennt Ibn Arabi einen Akt der Liebe – umgekehrt erkennt er auch in der körperlichen Liebe der Menschen einen Schöpfungsakt, der sich mimetisch zur Erschaffung des Menschen verhält. Dabei bezieht er das Stöhnen, das Mann und Frau bei ihrer Vereinigung ausstoßen, so konkret wie nur irgend denkbar auf die Systole und Diastole des menschlichen Geistes.\(^{646}\)

In this regard, the extreme feelings of love and terror explored in the text are linked, and both contain a deconstructive potential in their emphasis on embodied, affective experience. This remains ambiguous, however, as the violence can equally be associated with the punishing monotheistic God of the Old Testament and the Qur’an. Furthermore, just as I have argued for an understanding of listening to music in Neil Young and the nameless love of ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtgern’ as affective experiences beyond semiotic meaning-making, gasps and moans also imply a sense of speech or communication outside of linguistic signification.

I would therefore argue that Andreas Krass dismisses both the spiritual potential of the professor’s homosexual relationship and the ambiguity of his ‘punishment’ when he critiques the text for presenting ‘homosexuality as a descent into hell’;\(^{647}\) and whereas Jordan

\(^{645}\) Kermani, Der Schrecken Gottes, p. 208.
\(^{646}\) Kermani, Zwischen Koran und Kafka, p. 145.
views the professor as a delusional hypocrite.\textsuperscript{648} I would interpret this chapter as an exploration of the relationship between God and humankind in terms of sadomasochism and the sensual religiosity of the mystics. The professor emphasises that he is not a homosexual as this is forbidden by God, and certainly, in many Islamic cultures (such as Iran’s) he would traditionally not be regarded as a homosexual. Moreover, the professor does not live solely according to interpretations of scripture, as argued by Jordan, but in fact prioritises the revelations of the body. Consequently, I view the professor as evocative of mystics who equate God’s potential for both care and wrath with the sexual and violent nature of some relationships. Furthermore, this use of a relationship between two men to evoke humankind’s relationship with God echoes Şenocak’s call to engage with erotic medieval Sufi poetry that explored the multiplicity of homo- and heterosexuality, in contrast with the heteronormative gender relations of \textit{Liebesbrand}, for example.

\textit{Conclusion: Sollte Ich?}

Thus, as well as a response to the taboos of orthodox religion, \textit{Du sollst} can be read as a literary investigation of the mystics who are the objects of Kermani’s scholarly research, exploring ways in which the holy can be glimpsed in the secular setting of sexuality. Both mystical and established religious texts from the three monotheisms, together with intense profane experiences, all feed into and contribute towards contrasting intimations of the divine – as previously stated, the idea of a post-monotheistic religiosity must be understood as existing in tandem with monotheism. The majority of the chapters of \textit{Du sollst} seem to evoke the authoritarian God of the Old Testament and the Qur’an and are characterised by a violent desire, emphasising the unendurability of God’s law, just as the figure of Tyra in \textit{Liebesbrand} implicitly critiques the futility of suppressing one’s feelings in order to subscribe to either

\textsuperscript{648} Jordan, ‘Für eine kämpferische Toleranz’, p. 254.
religion’s or Reason’s impossible demands. The text can thus be read as a quarrel with God, critiquing the prescriptive nature of the monotheistic paradigm. As Kermani argues, mystics believed this quarreling brought them closer to the divine, and, as I have argued, this also deconstructs the monotheistic paradigm by shifting meaning towards the world.

The divide between divine and human love is indeterminable in these stories. The lovers’ union in ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’, in contrast to the other chapters, implies that holiness lies in an openness towards the divine in the alterity of the world, that is to say, a non-prescriptive religiosity that, rather than placing restrictions upon sexual behaviour and dividing people up into clearly defined communities, serves to open people up to the passions that result from their interconnectedness within the inoperative community. This religiosity is of central importance to contemporary debates around Islam in Germany, as it demonstrates the capacity within Islam (and the other monotheisms) for a cosmopolitan openness that exceeds ethnic and religious divisions. In this respect, *Du sollst* echoes the emphasis medieval Sufis placed on an unmediated relationship with the divine, as opposed to law-abiding obedience of scripture.

Kermani also depicts problematic areas for religion, such as fundamentalist belief and God’s terror. Writing just after the 7/7 bombings, Şenocak asks:

Ist der Gott der heiligen Bücher wirklich so gewaltfrei, wie man es in diesen Tagen immer wieder zu hören bekommt? Gibt es nicht auch einen zürnenden, strafenden, einen Rechenschaft verlangenden Gott der drei monotheistischen Religionen, zumindest gleichberechtigt neben dem barmherzigen, vergebenden Gott?649

Here, Kermani explores humankind’s relationship with God, both in terms of orthodox religion and mystical interpretations, through depictions of character constellations that can be either brutal or kind in their passion. This is an important point within the context of contemporary Islamic terrorism, as the position of organisations such as the DIK that seek to

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649 Şenocak, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, p. 32.
promote their ‘tolerant’ version of Islam as the true interpretation and undo German stereotypes is revealed as ultimately flawed and limited.

For the protagonists of this collection, a connection with God can result in either joy, pain or, worst of all, death and this is also representative of the writing of mystics who accepted both God’s love and his terror. Viewed through Nancy’s concepts of love and desire, humankind’s relationship to God can be understood in contrasting ways – the former (love) as an openness towards God and the latter (desire) as the problematic autonomous will for divine union. As Kermani pointed out during his acceptance speech for the Kleist-Preis, it is the extremes of experience – of love, desire, death and religious fervour – that makes the Bible great literature, and he arguably reanimates both the German and the Islamic canons through the Biblical love of these stories:

Solche Verhältnisse der Liebe, die die Bibel vor zwei- bis dreitausend Jahren festhielt, sind realer, erfahrungsgesättigter als alle Romanzen, die seither geschrieben wurden - nicht bloß schmerzlich, sondern schmutzig [...] Der Gott der Bibel ist nicht lieb, er ist cholerisch, zornig, rachsüchtig und mordend, er ist großmütig, erbar mend, zärtlich und beschützend, er ist rasend, der Gott der Bibel, nicht weniger als Pen tesilea und Achill ist er rasend vor Liebe. Und auch die Menschen der Bibel lieben nicht wie im Vorabendprogramm, sondern ohne Maß; sie verschreiben sich ihrem Herrn buchstäblich mit Haut und Haaren, sind unterwürfig, aber auch rebellisch, werben um den Herrn, wenn er sich ihnen entzieht, und beschimpfen ihn, wenn er sie mißhandelt, klagen die Zuneigung des Geliebten in immer neuen Worten ein. Das macht die Bibel groß, groß auch für Ungläubige: Sie erzählt nicht von Übersinnlichem, sondern von der irdischen Erfahrung in der gesamten Bandbreite und also über das Vertraute, das Angenehme, das Gefällige hinaus. Insofern ist die Bibel göttlich, als sie menschlich ist im Extrem. Es ist, was auch Kleists Dichtungen groß, was sie hier und dort göttlich macht. Es ist, was der deutschen Literatur heute am meisten fehlt.

Kermani draws attention to the worldly, profane experiences depicted in the Bible through emphasis on an affective spirituality, underlining areas with the potential to unsettle identities based on the monotheistic paradigm, and *Du sollst* can be understood along similar lines as the extreme and profane experiences it depicts hint at a holiness that opens within the world.

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650 Kermani, *Zwischen Koran und Kafka*, pp. 159-60.
Rather than providing the basis for a new Islamic identity, Kermani hints at an openness of the self towards the divine that can act as an alternative to restrictive laws and divisive nature of institutionalised religion. He saw this Biblical passion in Kleist’s writing, just as Zaimoglu explores it in Liebesbrand, and both Du sollst and Liebesbrand explore these conflicting aspects of God in detail. Yet, whereas Du sollst prioritises terror and wrath, Große Liebe, Kermani’s latest novel, emphasises love.

‘Der Himmel auf Erden’: Ephemeral Love and Worldly Religiosity in Große Liebe

Große Liebe is a nameless narrator’s 100-page account of his first true love as a fifteen-year-old in early ‘80s West Germany, and, particularly like the chapter ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’ in Du sollst, it ambiguously deals with human and divine love. Written a page a day,651 the text alternates between the narrator’s memories and quotations from Sufi texts. Große Liebe is, then, similar to Neil Young, in that the narrator’s experiences are explicitly brought into dialogue with mystical discourses from a broad Islamic tradition, and also to Du sollst, in that it expands upon its theme of love in order to hint at a worldly, post-monotheistic religiosity that can accommodate sexual pleasure. However, as in Kermani’s previous texts, this involves a combination of both love and terror – the feelings of the youth are both ‘herrlich und furchtbar’ (GL, p. 8) –, leading to frequent comparisons between the fifteen-year-old protagonist and Majnun, whose love-sick madness exemplified for medieval Sufis the annihilation of the self (fanā) in love:


651 This affects how the book is organised. Rather than ordinary page numbers, it is divided up into 100 sections, some of them carrying over onto several pages, meaning that exact page-number references cannot be given.
im Gebet nach Leila” – als habe der Junge auf dem Schulhof unaufhörlich
die Schönste angestarrt. (GL, p. 15)

The text features various excerpts from the legend of Layla and Majnun, a tragic love story
with origins in the Arabic oral tradition that continues to inspire many texts throughout the
Islamic world, finding its most famous expression in the Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi’s 1192
version. In Nizami’s tale, The Story of Layla and Majnun, the young Qays and Layla fall in
love, but her father forbids them to marry. Qays’s unfulfilled love drives him to madness,
earning him the name Majnun (meaning ‘Possessed’), and he becomes a hermit, wandering
the desert composing beautiful poetry with only his animal helpers for company. Layla is
forced to marry another, but remains loyal to Majnun, and she eventually dies of a broken
heart. Majnun travels to her tomb upon hearing the news, where he also dies and is buried
beside her.

Große Liebe is explicitly divided up into the different stages of love identified by
Sufis: the encounter, becoming acquainted, the first touch, union, ‘remaining in annihilation’,
and finally doubt (GL, p. 29). The initial part can be regarded as part of the vision complex –
glimpsing holiness in beauty –, and the beloved is constantly referred to as ‘die Schönste’ in
the text. Moreover, her actual name is Jutta, the German variant of Judith, meaning ‘she will
be praised’, highlighting both her religious significance and the praise she receives for her
beauty. Unlike Layla and Majnun, who only meet briefly in a park and never touch, the
narrator and Jutta share a kiss, after which love becomes a more embodied and direct
experience of the divine for the boy. Particular attention is given to the physical feeling of his
tongue on the gap in her front teeth (GL, p. 6), and this physicality is again intensified around
the time that they have sex. However, Jutta becomes withdrawn shortly afterwards, implying,
like The Story of Layla and Majnun, the fleeting nature of both love and religious
transcendence, and this causes the protagonist to question his relationship with her and
whether or not they experienced any form of union.
More so than in Kermani’s previous texts discussed here, love’s potential to destabilise subjectivity, an idea that both Nancy’s non-foundationalism and Islamic mysticism share, comes to the fore in Große Liebe. Indeed, this is the topic of the first section, an anecdote from the mystic ’Aṭṭār of a conversation between a king and a beggar:

“Na, du würdest wohl auch gern ich sein”, ruft der König spöttisch von seinem Elefanten herab. “Nein”, antwortet der Alte, “ich möchte nicht ich sein” (GL, p. 1). Große Liebe therefore hints at a worldly religiosity that undermines subjectivity and also, as the power relations of ’Aṭṭār’s quote suggest, challenges dominant hegemonic structures, such as institutionalised religions. The narrator states that, whereas puberty is normally regarded as a search for the self, that is to say, the time when we seek to establish our individual identity, for him it was characterised by a loss of self (GL, p. 3), just as Majnun too states: ‘Love has moved in and adorned the house, my Self has tied its bundle and left.’

This brief experience (not even a week) has a profound transformative effect upon the boy, which can be glimpsed in his altruistic outlook and interconnectedness with others, a theme that is also present in Kurzmitteilung, as the protagonist Dariusch’s behaviour takes a selfless turn after his kiss with Maike Anfang and her death. In this regard, the narrator refers to his former self in the third person throughout, as he does not recognise himself in the fifteen-year-old anymore, since acquiring a stronger sense of personhood:


The religiosity of Große Liebe results in a weakened and unstable sense of self and can thus be regarded as non-identitarian. It equally cannot be understood in terms of the monotheistic

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God who punishes to direct the behaviour of those on earth, since it emerges from a worldly romance, and this rejection of the coercive nature of monotheism is found in the quotation on the thirty-third page from the eighth century mystic Rābi‘a al-ʿAdawiyya: ‘Ich will die Hölle löschen und das Paradies verbrennen, damit Gott nur noch seiner ewigen Schönheit wegen geliebt wird’ (GL, p. 33).

Deconstructing the Monotheistic Paradigm with a Kiss

Große Liebe contains various symbolic spaces that acquire spiritual significance in the narrator’s retelling, such as the location where the protagonist first meets Jutta: the connecting corridor between the school’s two buildings (GL, p. 6). Like Layla and Majnun, the two first meet and fall in love at school, and it is in the connecting corridor, which evokes their coming (supposed) union through architecture, that the narrator first notices the all-important gap between his beloved’s teeth as she smiles at him. As previously stated, the gap in her teeth is often singled out as part of her attractiveness, forming part of the initial vision complex of the protagonist, whereby, like in Neil Young, holiness is located in something because of its pleasing aesthetics. The beloved’s beauty is praised again in another symbolic space: by the stream in the school grounds. Here, she appears like a divine apparition: ‘auf ihren blonden Haaren die Sonne, die zu der Jahreszeit noch nicht wärmte, jedoch ihrem Kopf mindestens in der Einbildung des Jungen so etwas wie einen Heiligenschein verleih’ (GL, p. 10). This setting carries connotations of the Islamic garden-paradise, which is later confirmed in a description from the Qur’an: “darunter hin die Ströme fließen”, und die Bewohner des Himmels sind “geschmückt mit Spangen von Gold [...]” (GL, p. 37). Moreover, this space also echoes an account of Layla given to Majnun by her messenger:

I thought I was looking through the trees at a veiled star which has just dropped from the sky, a moon, a sun! I can only say that she was sitting there in this garden as if she herself were part of the Garden of Paradise [...].
A little stream ran through the oasis, but when this girl, with eyes like a gazelle, began to talk, the words emerged from the well-spring of her lips so sweetly that all the other rippling waters ceased to murmur and to splash, listening to her dreamily.653

Yet, although this suggests a worldly religiosity, inspired by the immanentist Sufi tradition, the boy and his beloved remain separated at this point, much like Layla and Majnun. His worry that she will disappear ‘ins Jenseits der Berufswelt’ and his feeling of being ‘ein Kind, das den Kopf ans Schaufenster [...] drückt’ imply the separate worlds of God and humankind characteristic of monotheism (GL, p. 11). Nonetheless, they eventually have a conversation (GL, p. 14), and his love appears to instil into him an altruism and an awareness of his interrelatedness with others. The narrator states that the Sufis viewed ‘Gunsterweisung’ as part of falling in love (GL, p. 17), and Nancy similarly notes the altruism of the lover:

The shared world as the world of concern-for-the-other is a world of the crossing of singular beings by this sharing itself that constitutes them, that makes them be, by addressing them one to the other.654

This change in behaviour is evidenced in the protests for nuclear disarmament that they become involved in. Indeed, he does not throw himself into a corner ‘jammernd und klagend’ like Majnun, with no interest in the ‘die großen Umwälzungen der Zeit’ (GL, p. 20), but rather holds ‘ein flammendes Plädoyer für die Gewaltfreiheit’ during one of the protest group’s meetings (GL, p. 24). Furthermore, it is during a second demonstration against the construction of a motorway that the fifteen-year-old feels his love reach its zenith (GL, p. 73). As will be discussed later, this attitude disappears after the supposed union, suggesting a change in outlook not characterised by love’s opening up of subjectivity, but by desire.

Nonetheless, departing from The Story of Layla and Majnun, the next stage in the lovers’ relationship is their first kiss, which is described as follows: ‘Sie küßten nicht, sie wurden geküßt. So empfanden sie es beide und sprachen auch darüber’ (GL, p. 31). This

653 Nizami, pp. 152-53.
654 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 103.
feeling of being kissed, rather than kissing, suggests not only the ecstasy of Sufism, but also the openess Nancy associates with love’s fleeting contact, and the kiss in particular: ‘One hour of love is enough, one kiss alone, provided that it is out of love – and can there, in truth, be any other kind? Can one do it without love, without being broken into slightly?’ This is, once again, a worldly, affective experience of the divine which acts to deconstruct the monotheistic paradigm, and the narrator asserts this worldliness: ‘Er [der Junge] selbst jedenfalls hätte keinen einzigen Kuß, schon gar nicht den Anblick und dann sogar die Berührung ihres nackten Körpers tauschen wollen gegen Sphärenklänge’ (GL, p. 37). The boy has, however, high (or, as Nancy would argue, unrealistic) expectations regarding love, involving the eternal fusion of individuals – ‘eine Verbindung [...] die den Namen Liebe verdiente’ (GL, p. 4 and 27), which is often expressed in the mystical symbolism of drowning (istighrāq) in God’s love (GL, p. 13). Here, much like in Liebesbrand and Du sollst, divine union can be linked with the violence and appropriative nature of desire and the corresponding notions of fusional community and monotheism. Indeed, Layla and Majnun are only united in death.

Divine Union and Doubt

After the kiss, the next stage is union and this again occurs in a symbolic space. Jutta’s bedroom is decorated with Indian scarves, which hint at the Oriental origins of both Sufism and of the legend of Layla and Majnun; there is a poster of Picasso’s Dove, causing the boy to regard the room as ‘eine politische Utopie’ (GL, p. 41); and the room’s ‘feuergelben’ walls (GL, p. 53) also mirror the flames of their passion. Moreover, religious terminology is once again used to describe die Schönste. She is ‘eine Priesterin, die erst im letzten Augenblick entscheidet, ob sie Einläß ins Heiligste ihm gewährt’ (GL, p. 39), and this holiness is

655 Ibid., p. 96.
656 This contrasts with the protagonists of ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’ who refuse to use the word ‘love’.
eventually glimpsed in her pubic hair, which is described as ‘ein himmlischer Garten’ (GL, p. 42), blurring distinctions between the sacred and the profane through imagery of the Islamic garden-paradise. Initially, their love continues to be coupled with the same openness and loss of subjective autonomy associated with the kiss, which is reflected in the passage that directly follows their first sexual encounter:


Thus, like Majnun (and David in Liebesbrand), the narrator is not the master of his own destiny, but rather remains open to unexpected experiences of the divine: ‘I, the man with the blackened face, have not chosen the way, I have been cast on it.’ Furthermore, after sex, they lie side by side, ‘auf seltsame Weise jeder für sich, ohne eine Trennung zu fühlen’ (GL, p. 47), implying an ecstatic, interrelated sense of being. In this vein, the symbolic connecting corridor where they first meet is mentioned again during the passage dedicated to their sexual encounter, as he passionately races up and down her body with kisses ‘wie eine Putzkolonne den Gang, der zwei Gebäude des Gymnasiums verband’ (GL, p. 44).

Their sexual union is, however, not ideal, just as love, for Nancy, ‘does not produce a perfect reunion’, but is rather ‘an experience of the impossibility of pure immanence’. For instance, the inexperienced fifteen-year-old is struck with such fear ‘daß seine Erregung bis auf weiteres abgeschwollen blieb’ (GL, p. 44), and is so afraid of premature ejaculation, that he thinks of visits to the dentist (GL, p. 50). The union fails by the adult narrator’s own standards, since ‘eine ideale Vereinigung keinem Balanceakt gleichen sollte und die weibliche Ekstase nicht in Zeitlupe herbeizuführen war’ (GL, p. 52). Thus, as in Du sollst, fear and terror are coupled with love and passion in Große Liebe, leading to an imperfect

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657 Nizami, p. 53.
658 Kellogg, p. 344.
union, which is also reflected in his hangover the morning after (GL, p. 54). They drink wine and smoke marijuana before going to bed, further implying feelings of transcendence through allusions to the wine-symbolism of Sufi poetry, but his hangover the next day is linked with his pain and hints at the temporary nature of this transcendence. As the narrator of The Story of Layla and Majnun states: ‘He who is drunk for the first time, becomes deeply drunk indeed. And heavy falls he who has never had a fall before.’

It is these preoccupations and fears that lead to the next stage of doubt in the text, as the boy questions his ability to please his beloved (GL, p. 53). It is also at this time that Jutta breaks all contact with the protagonist, mirroring how experiences of the divine are often thought of as ephemeral and felt only as they withdraw – in Nancy’s words: ‘God is the being we are not, which is not at our disposal, either, but which appears or disappears before the face of the existing, mortal beings we are’. Now, the openness that previously characterised the boy’s experiences of love turns into a wilful desire for union, and a search for the self. The narrator contends:

Er selbst hatte ja kaum ein Bewußtsein von sich selbst, begriff noch lange Zeit nach der Trennung nichts; ich jedoch glaube, daß sich daselbst wieder die Ichsucht regte, so früh und von der Schönsten vorerst unbemerkt, die selbst der Größten Liebe zum Verhängnis werden kann. (GL, p. 63)

Rather than a fleeting contact that would suggest a non-foundational religiosity, the protagonist contemplates asking his beloved to marry him, suggesting a turn towards permanence and perhaps orthodoxy (GL, p. 67). At this point, he appears less interested in campaigning against injustices, attending the protest meetings only for the selfish reason of finding Jutta: ‘Mit ausgestreckten Beinen, halb liegend im Eingang gelehnt, tagträumte er, daß als nächstes die Schönste der Bürgerinitiative einträfe’ (GL, p. 65). Here, the young boy

659 Nizami, p. 17.
660 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 131.
can be regarded as being in the mindset of the absolute individual in his desire, in contrast to
the openness he experienced whilst in love.

Nevertheless, the adult narrator looking back is more convinced of the fleeting nature
of the divine that his younger self:

Allenfalls hat er [der Junge] zum ersten Mal geahnt und vielleicht in einer
Zehntelsekunde zwischen zwei Gedanken erfahren, daß man tatsächlich
etwas anderes sein kann als immer nur ich. (GL, p. 66)

This first experience of love is again given a religious dimension here, but a worldly one in
line with the immanentist tradition of Sufism. For example, the importance Ibn ʿArabī places
on the gasps, sighs and breathing associated with love-making is again emphasised:

Im Seufzen der sexuellen Verzückung, [...] das zugleich ein Stöhnen ist,
atmet Gott durch die Liebenden hindurch. Er ist, christlich vergleichbar nur
dem Vorgang der Eucharistie, physisch im Menschen gegenwärtig. (GL, p. 66)

Thus, the adult narrator sees a loss of subjectivity in his former self, and this, in turn, causes
the wider world to appear to him as ever-changing and interconnected:

Seltsam, wie sich die Zärtlichkeit, die er für die Schönste empfand, auf dem
Schulhof übertrug, der nicht mehr die verhaßte Teerwüste zwischen
Betonsilos war, sondern jedenfalls in den großen Pausen ein Menschenquirl
voll von Stimmen, Bewegungen, Farben. (GL, p. 68)

The doubt surrounding his fifteen-year-old self’s notions of love and union is also
viewed through the prism of the Sufi tradition, and the narrator again draws upon mystical
thought in order to explore his former feelings in this regard:

Verstehe ich Ibn Arabi recht, wird der Liebende also schwermütig, weil ihm
aufgeht, daß er sich das Einssein mit der Geliebten nur eingebildet hat –
dabei liegt die Illusion darin, die Vereinigung für eine Illusion zu halten.
(GL, p. 77)

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661 This resonates with the combination on sex and the Eucharist in the Kleistian imagery of *Liebesbrand.*
Further Sufi thought undermines the notion of union/fusion, suggesting a state not dissimilar to Nancy’s laceration of subjectivity in the crossing of love:

Statt in einer allgemeinen äußeren Umgebung wie im Drogenrausch löse sich Subjektivität in der sexuellen Verzückung in einem konkreten Gegenüber auf, in das der Liebende eindringe und das er zugleich umfange.

(GL, p. 82)

The religiosity of the text can, then, be understood as an ephemeral singularised openness, rather than any static fusion.

Towards the novel’s end, Jutta’s absence causes further pain and suffering on the fifteen-year-old’s part, which the narrator compares to Job’s suffering, caused by God in order to test his righteousness (GL, p. 83). Thus, the young protagonist must accept pain as well as love, just as the Sufis acknowledged both God’s love and terror, and just as Majnun sees in Layla ‘good and bad, my sickness and my cure’.  

The narrator asks himself if he came on too strong (GL, p. 85), questioning his wilful desire for union. Be that as it may, after reflecting upon his first love, the adult narrator is, ultimately, also left with a sense of openness and ontological interrelatedness, similar to that which he experienced in the school playground:

Der Gedanke machte mich zittern, daß all diese Menschen, auch die Freunde, meine ich, nicht nur die Mädchen und jungen Frauen, alle ungefähr in meinem Alter, an diesem oder jenem Ort ebenfalls in den üblichen Bahnen heutigen Lebens fortfahren und sich also ein Netz von Menschen, von Gleichaltrigen über die Erde spannt, mit denen ich eigentlich verbunden sein müßte, weil die Freundschaft oder Liebe doch einmal unverbrüchlich war. (GL, p. 87)

Here, a sense of love beyond passion and Eros is evoked, suggesting, along with Nancy, that various forms of love affect us ontologically, and that love is ‘perhaps nothing but the

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662 Nizami, p. 167.
indefinite abundance of all possible loves, and an abandonment to their dissemination, indeed to the disorder of these explosions’. 663

Conclusion: Surpassing Majnun

Whereas terror is the main element of Du sollst, reflecting the violence bound up in the monotheistic paradigm, Große Liebe, much like the short story ‘Erhebe nicht Seinen, deines Gottes Namen zu Nichtigem’, focuses more on how holiness can be glimpsed in the worldly experience of love and how this can undermine our subjectivity. As is stated in the text:

\[\text{Der Himmel auf Erden ist es, wo es dem anderen, dem oder der Geliebten genauso ergeht, wo beide nichts mehr wollen, nur noch gewollt werden – aber von wem? Genau hier ist die Stelle, wo in der Mystik von Gott und in neueren Literaturen von der Auflösung der Personalität gesprochen wird [...]. (GL, p. 66)}\]

These two non-subjectivist understandings of love are, I have argued, explored in the text, establishing parallels between both a non-foundational religiosity and a non-foundational sense of self. Whereas Majnun remains distant from Layla, leaving the narrator to wonder: ‘Was it really possible, then, to steal a glance at paradise on earth?’, 664 the protagonist of Große Liebe does seem to glimpse the divine in worldly passion, although he too has his doubts. In place of the foundational understanding of both religion and the self that characterises Western consciousness, there is both doubt and an openness towards the other in Kermani’s text, be this a divine or human other. The wilful desire for fusion is undermined in the text, suggesting a contrast similar to that found in the characters of Tyra and Jarmila in Liebesbrand, and like David, the fifteen-year-old fails to win back Jutta, despite his attempts.

Yet, the many quotes from Sufi thinkers favour this radical sense of openness, rather than any subjective autonomy: ‘Eine Weile umkreiste ich das Haus Gottes’, formuliert Bayazid

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663 Nancy, Inoperative Community, p. 83.
664 Nizami, p. 186.

Große Liebe can therefore be understood as implying a post-monotheistic understanding of religiosity that is without identity and ideology, and that is glimpsed in the alterity in our world. Much as Jordan argues in relation to Du sollst, Große Liebe also challenges the taboos of orthodox Islam. However, it equally undermines the German equation of Islam with sexual conservatism. Indeed, the various erotic accounts by Islamic mystics quoted at length stand in contrast to how Protestantism is portrayed in the text. The town where Jutta lives, for example, is said to be influenced by a particularly strict form of the religion that appears unaffected by the sexual revolution of the sixties (GL, p. 42). In this regard, the protagonist’s scruffy appearance is ironically seen by the town as ‘etwas geradezu Gotteslästerisches’ (GL, p. 78), which can also be said of how he blurs the sacred and the profane as an adult. This is telling since Protestantism (especially Calvinism) rejects the worldly aspects of religion and places emphasis on our inability to change what God has already determined.

**Conclusion: A Sceptical Spirituality**

Like the other awards associated with cosmopolitanism that he has won, such as the Hanna-Arendt-Preis, Kermani was also nominated for the Hessischer Kulturpreis in 2009 along with a Catholic, a Protestant and a Jew, in order to support and foster interreligious dialogue. However, what was supposed to be symbolic of a harmonious multi-faith Germany quickly became embroiled in controversy, as Kermani’s award was withdrawn because his controversial article in the Neue Züricher Zeitung on the painting Crucifixion by Guido Reni from that year sparked criticism from the two Christian awardees, the Cardinal Bishop of Mainz, Karl Lehmann, and the former president of the Lutheran Church in Hesse and Nassau,
Peter Steinacker. In the article, Kermani criticises the Christian/Catholic symbolism of the cross for a ‘bis hin zum Pornografischen’ celebration of martyrdom and a barbaric and somatophobic ‘Hypostasierung des Schmerzes’ that contributes towards what he defines as a Catholic tendency to merely lament the state of the world, rather than seek to improve it. Reni’s non-violent depiction of the crucifixion is, in contrast, more acceptable to Kermani:

Gerade weil sein Schmerz kein körperlicher ist, nicht Folge denkbar schlimmster, also ungewöhnlicher, unmenschlicher Folterungen, stirbt dieser Jesus stellvertretend für die Menschen, für alle Menschen, ist er jeder Tote, jederzeit, an jedem Ort. Sein Blick ist der letzte vor der Wiederauferstehung, auf die er nicht zu hoffen scheint.

For Kermani, because it is not depicted as the result of an unspeakably inhumane act of torture and conveys some sense of doubt and scepticism, Reni’s painting is more readily identifiable with other deaths, and is therefore paradoxically worldlier. As Kermani states:

Er blickt in den Himmel, die Iris aus dem Weiss des Auges beinahe verschwunden: Schau her, scheint er zu rufen. Nicht nur: Schau auf mich, sondern: Schau auf die Erde, schau auf uns. Jesus leidet nicht, wie es die christliche Ideologie will, um Gott zu entlasten, Jesus klagt an: Nicht, warum hast du mich, nein, warum hast du uns verlassen?

This article therefore emphasises a more questioning and world-affirming religiosity that seeks to challenge both the unifying drive of institutionalised religions and also the injustice of God’s actions, which, I have argued, is also true of Kermani’s fiction. Despite the conclusions that the board of the Hessischer Kulturpreis drew, this is, I would argue, what makes Kermani’s writing so important for contemporary debates surrounding religion and cosmopolitanism. Indeed, the texts discussed here not only contradict the prevalent German stereotypes of Islamic terrorism and fundamentalism that contribute towards the

667 Ibid.
668 Ibid.
German/Muslim dichotomy, they also evoke a sceptical and mystical Islam in order to convey a cosmopolitan sense of openness towards others and undermine the stable and coherent sense of self that Nancy views as contributing towards identity conflict. Moreover, the scepticism within *Neil Young, Du sollst* and *Große Liebe* towards the idea of God as the subject of the world resists the impotent lamentation of the state of things that Kermani sees in Catholicism, but is equally present in the other religions, suggesting instead a religiososity with the potential for effecting change in the here and now.

Although Islam, and not Christianity, is more central to the texts analysed in this chapter, it is the scepticism and immanentism found in the three monotheistic traditions that is of interest to Kermani. Like the above article, Kermani’s academic research for the most part engages with sceptical and mystical aspects of the monotheisms in order to uncover what I would describe as their potential for deconstruction, and this translates directly into his fiction. *Neil Young* and *Große Liebe* foreground how the divine can be glimpsed in the worldly experience of beauty, the former focusing on the effect of music and the latter on a female object of desire. In *Neil Young*, the Islamic traditions surrounding the aesthetic reception, as opposed to the ideological interpretation, of the Qur’an are drawn upon in order to hint at religiosity beyond the monotheistic paradigm. Similarly, *Große Liebe* too is influenced by Sufism’s blurring of the sacred and the profane in sexual encounters, conveying a religiosity that emerges from the alterity of our world and our passion towards others.

Nevertheless, this is no simplistic equation of Sufism with love and tolerance. Kermani is also keen to point out the feelings of terror that often accompanied the Sufi’s love, and this is especially so in *Du sollst*, which can be read as a wider engagement with the three monotheisms than the other texts. Here, it is the jealous and punishing God who guides us from beyond the world that is most prevalent, and thus the more violent aspects are not
excluded from Kermani’s broad understanding of Islamic tradition. Just as Şenocak argues for a dialogue amongst Muslims in order to combat Islamic terrorist movements, Kermani too asserts that merely claiming that violence is not part of Islam is not enough:

In dem Augenblick, da sich Terroristen auf den Islam berufen, hat der Terror auch etwas mit dem Islam zu tun. Wir müssen die Auseinandersetzung mit der Lehre suchen, die heute weltweit Menschen gegeneinander aufhetzt und Andersgläubige ermordet oder erniedrigt.

Rather than taking God’s terror as an example for our own behaviour, these texts question it, demonstrating a sceptical engagement with it, which contributes towards the deconstruction of the monotheistic paradigm.

Taking these texts as a collection, Kermani demonstrates the contrasting sides of God found in mysticism, the Old Testament and the Qur’an – much like in Liebesbrand, God can be characterised by both terror and love. However, the texts seem to be implicitly critical of the wrathful God that is more readily identifiable with the ideological function of the monotheistic paradigm, associating such a religiosity with violence, whereas the contrasting openness of love and its destabilising of subjectivity implies a cosmopolitan religiosity that is not conducive to conflict. This religiosity is also beyond representation, in that it figures in unexpected ways, such as alternative rock music and childhood sweethearts, destabilising conventional Islamic symbols and identities. In this regard, Kermani’s academic background provides for thoughtful and nuanced examples of the Muslim turn in contemporary German literature, and he deserves as much scholarly attention as his Turkish-German contemporaries.

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669 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, p. 29.
Conclusion

Germany and Islam: Abolition or Renewal?

Expanding the Notion of German Culture from within

In den folgenden Jahrzehnten setzte überall im Land der Verfall von Kirchen, Schlössern und Museen ein. Die Deutschen, die sie hätten besuchen können, wurden immer älter, und es waren auch immer weniger. Die wachsende Zahl der muslimischen Mitbürger interessierte sich nicht für diese kulturellen Stätten.\(^{671}\)

The above scene comes straight out of Sarrazin’s paranoid imagination. It is an apocalyptic scenario from the final chapter of *Deutschland schafft sich ab*, describing Germany’s possible future if current levels of migration to the Federal Republic are allowed to continue. In it, German cathedrals fall into disrepair (in comparison to the ‘wunderbar restaurierten Hagia Sophia’, naturally) and a future Muslim mayor of Weimar refuses to support the restoration of the Herzogin-Anna-Amalia-Bibliothek after it again catches fire.\(^{672}\) It is easy to dismiss such hypothetical scaremongering as ridiculous, and Sarrazin himself states that it is over-exaggerated ‘satire’, although not entirely unrealistic in his view.\(^{673}\) Nevertheless, such descriptions demonstrate how much of the post-9/11 Islamophobia in Germany is based on the assumption that Germany’s Muslims have no interest or participation in German culture, an assumption that this thesis undermines. ‘Wer wird in 100 Jahren “Wanderers Nachtlied” noch kennen?’ Sarrazin asks, ‘Der Koranschüler in der Moschee nebenan wohl nicht.’\(^{674}\) That he should refer in this way to Goethe, perhaps the symbol of German culture, ignores how Goethe in fact engaged with Islamic literature himself in the *West-östlichen Divan*. Şenocak asserts:

\(^{671}\) Sarrazin, p. 401.
\(^{672}\) Ibid., p. 402.
\(^{673}\) Ibid., p. 396.
\(^{674}\) Ibid., p. 393.
Wer heute darüber diskutiert, ob der Islam ein Teil der deutschen Kultur sei, kennt weder seinen Goethe noch seinen Lessing und schon gar nicht Rückert, den genialen Übersetzer aus den orientalischen Sprachen. Er weiß nichts über die muslimischen Engelmotive bei Rilke.\textsuperscript{675} 

It is, therefore, not in spite of their engagement with Islam that Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani all emphatically situate themselves within German literature, although, as previously mentioned, there is some discrepancy between the poetry of the Divan and its accompanying prose (the Noten und Abhandlungen) which has led to debates around the extent to which Goethe actually opened himself up to Islamic culture.

In contradiction to Sarrazin’s misinformed prejudices, the position of these Muslim authors within the German literary tradition is difficult to dispute. My first chapter, for example, discusses how Şenocak and SAID directly engage with Goethe’s Divan. Alongside his criticism of Goethe, I have also explored how the Frankfurt School inspires Şenocak’s critique of the hermeneutic paradigm, and I could equally mention how he identifies specifically with the German-Jewish poets Else Lasker-Schüler, Nelly Sachs, Celan and Heine.\textsuperscript{676} Likewise, Psalmen by SAID, who is more reverent towards Goethe than Şenocak, can be considered part of the long German tradition of psalm poetry, which began with Luther and Opitz, the two people most widely held as being responsible for proving the German language’s suitability for literature. My second chapter demonstrates Zaimoglu’s profound debt to the literature and philosophy of German Romanticism and his critical engagement with the German Enlightenment tradition, and although not discussed here, his epistolary novel Liebesmale, scharlachrot (2000) too has an intertextual debt to Goethe’s novel Die Leiden des jungen Werthers (1774). Finally, Kermani also engages with the Divan in his essay ‘Gott-Atmen: Goethe und die Religion’ in Zwischen Koran und Kafka, an essay collection that deals with many of the authors and traditions mentioned above and more, and

\textsuperscript{675} Şenocak, Deutschsein, p. 106.  
his critical thought also shows evidence of the Frankfurt School’s influence, such as when he states:

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\text{Identität ist per se etwas Vereinfachendes, etwas Einschränkendes, wie jeder Art von Definition. Es ist eine Festlegung dessen, was in der Wirklichkeit vielfältiger, ambivalenter, durchlässig ist.}^{677}
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Even a brief glance at the work and biography of the aforementioned canonical German \textit{Dichter und Denker} demonstrates that culture is always a matter of a mêlée of influences; Goethe was inspired by his time in Italy, just as Heine was by France and the Frankfurt School by California. As Appiah asserts:

\[
\text{If the argument for cultural patrimony is that art belongs to the culture that gives it its significance, most art doesn’t belong to a national culture at all. Much of the greatest art is flamboyantly international; much ignores nationality altogether.}^{678}
\]

As I discuss in the third chapter, Kermani’s understanding of German literature reflects its international outlook, emphasising both its tendency towards self-criticism and its incongruence with Germany’s shifting state boundaries and political goals, and I see the same scepticism towards cultural and political nationalism in the writing of the authors analysed here.

\text{Sarrazin regards Germany as slowly drifting towards oblivion: ‘Deutschland wird nicht mit einem Knall sterben. Es vergeht still mit den Deutschen und mit der demografisch bedingten Auszehrung ihres intellektuellen Potentials.’}^{679} \text{ I would, however, counter this argument with an understanding of Germany as not destroying or abolishing itself, but rather renewing itself, as is proposed in \textit{Manifest der Vielen}. The Muslim turn in German literature and the increasing participation of Muslims in other areas of German public life are shaping the cultural scene at the beginning of the twenty-first century and this is, I would contend,}

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677 Kermani, \textit{Wer ist Wir?}, p. 17.
679 Sarrazin, p. 393.
part of the many transformations that take place within the wider cultural mêlée, just as Christianity itself came initially from the East and Islam influenced the Germany and Europe of the past. Indeed, the Sufi mystic Ibn ʿArabī, whose thought is central to Kermani’s fiction in particular, came from Moorish Spain, and thus Kermani arguably re-establishes a connection with a forgotten European Islamic heritage in his writing. Although the drive to halt such transformations, fix identities and ‘purify’ cultures is perhaps part of a historically specific need for a stable and coherent sense of self, I would argue that, ultimately, such thinking leads to stagnation and conflict, and obscures the cosmopolitan potential these authors locate in the heterogeneous nature of identity and in the interrelatedness of being.

Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani are therefore not to be considered as peripheral and expendable ‘Muslim-German’ minority authors, whose work serves only to bring Oriental flair to the German literary scene. Rather, the complex and innovative notions of religiosity, community and identity conveyed in their writing are of central importance to contemporary debates around otherness, inclusion, religion, fundamentalism and cosmopolitanism in Germany and beyond. As Pornschlegel comments, the German attitude is too often:

Mitreden in unseren Angelegenheiten sollt und könnt ihr mangels “citizenship” und guter deutscher Herkunft nicht, auch wenn es dabei um eure Aufenthaltsgenehmigungen und Rentenkassenbeiträge geht, aber eure wunderbar fremdländische Kultur interessiert uns natürlich.680

Translated into literary terms, the work of non-ethnic German writers is often received as mere exotic cultural enrichment that is a passive symptom of broader intellectual movements, as opposed to being taken seriously for its contribution to current philosophical and political debates and literary trends – a situation that the current intellectual paradigm of *interkultureller Germanistik*, the canonical use of the label ‘Turkish-German’, and the Chamisso-Preis contribute towards by separating so-called ‘minority’ authors from wider

680 Pornschlegel, p. 13.
German culture. I therefore reiterate that these authors are not to be labelled as ‘intercultural’ or even ‘transcultural’ in contrast to other supposedly ‘monocultural’ writers, but rather cosmopolitan, because the challenge their work presents to culturalist thinking deserves to be discussed in connection with wider contemporary cosmopolitan debates.

By ignoring or marginalising these writers because of their ethnicity or religion, essentialist gatekeepers of German culture exclude some of the most thought-provoking and intellectually challenging contemporary literature. As SAID rightly asserts: ‘als ich 17 war, wünschte ich mir, daß das deutsche ein teil von mir würde. heute bin ich 56 und weiß, daß ich ein teil dieser sprache bin.’ These authors must be understood as part of German culture, albeit a German culture with no rigid preconceived ideas of Germanness, and rather than merely celebrating these writers as evidence of Germany’s supposed multiculturalism, their texts must be brought into dialogue with contemporary philosophy and theory in order to illuminate their meaning, as we would treat other cultural objects. Collectively, the writers discussed in this thesis confront both those who emphasise a secular/Christian German identity in order to exclude Muslims and those who attempt to spread their fundamentalist view of Islam through terror, constituting an important cosmopolitan response to the dichotomisation of the Federal Republic along the lines of Germans and Muslims that has wider implications for a post-9/11 world that continues to struggle with its heterogeneity. These texts, I have argued, undermine the so-called clash of civilisations not by advocating a universalist cosmopolitan ideology, but by destabilising the foundations of identity, not least of all Islamic identities, through an understanding of culture as an ever-changing mêlée and through the deconstruction of monotheism, that is to say, through an immanental and non-identitarian idea of the divine as the other in the world, and not an other world. In this respect, these writers are not only transforming German culture, but equally contributing

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681 SAID, In Deutschland Leben, p. 28.
towards the renewal of Islam and Islamic culture.

Reimagining Islam for the Postmodern Era

Even in the ‘90s, the authors under discussion here highlighted the connections between conflict and organised forms of Islam that, to use Nancy’s terminology, are governed by the monotheistic paradigm since they legitimise themselves through an otherworldly God. However, the imperative to address the issue of Islam and violence becomes more pressing in the post-9/11 period as Islam is increasingly linked to hostility and aggression in the wider German public’s imagination, and the beginnings of the serious engagement undertaken by these authors in this regard is marked by a series of publications between 2002-06. Although they write about religion and religious fundamentalism in their earlier work too, SAID’s Ich und der Islam, Şenocak’s Das Land hinter den Buchstaben and, as Cheesman indicates, Zaimoglu’s Zwölf Gramm Glück are evidence of a more profound and sustained engagement with the topics surrounding contemporary Islam, particularly fundamentalism, emerging in their thought. Similarly, although changes in Kermani’s published fiction in relation to 9/11 cannot be traced, his essay Dynamit des Geistes and essay collection Strategie der Eskalation also discuss a range of topics surrounding Islam and fundamentalism.

This dramatic change after 9/11 in the perception of Islam led to terrorism becoming a more prominent theme in both the German literary landscape, such as in Chistoph Peter’s novel Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges (2006) and Fatah’s Das dunkle Schiff, and further afield with popular thrillers like John Updike’s novel Terrorist (2006). Şenocak’s short story ‘Der Saxophonspieler’ (2006), in which a musician thinks he overhears a conversation about a terrorist plot, equally forms part of this trend, as do Zaimoglu’s post-9/11 texts ‘Gottes Krieger’ and Schwarze Jungfrauen, both of which contain terrorists and terrorist sympathisers who are undermined by their hypocrisy or isolated existence. The Iranian-German protagonist
of Kermani’s *Kurzmitteilung* too is affected by the post-9/11 situation, as the story unfolds against the backdrop of the 7/7 bombings in London. Although such texts must also be regarded as part of the Muslim turn, and as responses to post-9/11 Islamophobia, I have chosen not to focus on such texts that, despite constituting a complex engagement with the issue of Islamic fundamentalism, feature more easily identifiable Islamist figures. Instead, I have concentrated on fiction that deals with fundamentalism and orthodoxy in a more indirect manner, and that also harnesses the radical potential of Islamic mysticism. This is because the former tend to attract more scholarly attention than the latter,\(^{682}\) perhaps because their overt focus on terrorism reflects the current media and political emphasis on extremism, but also because I want to emphasise the other dimensions of Islam found in Sufism and heterodoxy that are perhaps more likely to go unnoticed.

Although fundamentalism and orthodoxy feature in all of the texts analysed here, their presentation is always ambiguous and complex. *Übergang* has a particular focus on the treatment of women, for example, and hints of Islamic orthodoxy circulate with allusions to both Kemalism and Nazism in a wider critique of foundational ideologies and fusional communities. *Psalmen* too refers to supposedly pious people ‘die uns im wege stehen / denn sie betonen nur das trennende’ (*P*, p. 46), and to those who rule by the sword (*P*, p. 23).

Equally, there are no direct portrayals of terrorists in *Nathan Messias*, *Liebesbrand* and *Du sollst*, but their scenes of violence can be interpreted as alluding to fundamentalist zeal and the wrathful depictions of God found in the Old Testament and the Qur’an. Like *Übergang*, *Nathan Messias* and *Liebesbrand* also draw parallels between orthodox religion and other unifying ideologies, in this case Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. Nonetheless, although these writers do acknowledge orthodox and fundamentalist interpretations of Islam, they equally

highlight Islam’s post-monotheistic potential in order to defend religiosity at a time when the compatibility of Islam and the (supposedly secular) West is frequently and heatedly debated. These authors neither attempt to essentialise Muslim identity, nor to adopt what they perceive as founding European traits in response. Instead, their non-foundationalism challenges the identitarian basis of both. The cosmopolitan character of this fiction demonstrates that Islam is multifaceted and cannot be simplistically equated with fundamentalism, orthodoxy and violence, just as Europe and the Enlightenment are not synonymous with peace, tolerance and understanding. The texts discussed in this thesis, taken from poetry, prose and the stage, remain literature in Nancy’s sense, undermining clear-cut notions of identity altogether, drawing upon Sufism in order to intimate a religiosity beyond ideology and identity that is based in affective experiences of the divine, rather than any orthodox sense of Islam that would foster a closed identity.

Just as readers often expect mythical work from minority writers that provides access to the foundation of their supposed community, Deppman is critical of how some critics do damage to difficult literature, returning readers and/or writers to their ‘immanent participation in a community of shared essence’. 683 I have argued that the mystical religiosity of these authors cannot be appropriated by any one religious group to form an ideological or identitarian basis, and that the post-monotheistic gestures in their writing are not to be regarded as a supplanting movement, but rather as something with a destabilising effect that (often ambiguously) occurs alongside monotheism. It is this literary quality that makes their work such a significant alternative to contemporary cosmopolitan theories (such as those of Beck) that are just as identity-driven and ideologically orientated as the religions and nation states that such theories seek to transcend. Littler argues:

If cosmopolitanism is not seen as only a legal category, a matter of pluralism, minority rights, and citizenship legislation, but as a more

683 Deppman, pp. 16-7.
fundamental transformation of people’s values and sensibilities, then it is writing like Özdamar’s and Şenocak’s that promises to effect a cosmopolitanization of German culture.684

Although Özdamar does not feature in this thesis due to my focus on religiosity in post-9/11 fiction, I agree with Littler’s statement and would further add the names of SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani.

I have sought to illuminate the non-identitarian, cosmopolitan religiosity of these texts through Nancy’s concept of the deconstruction of monotheism, that is to say, by highlighting how these authors draw out aspects inherent within the monotheisms that challenge the strict separation of God and the world. Rather than viewing God as a superhuman being exterior to the world that acts as an organising principle from which religious identities can be derived, these authors, like Nancy, the Romantics and the medieval Sufis, convey an immanentist notion of the divine as the alterity in our world, as empty sacred space that opens in the world but seems to paradoxically point beyond it. Like Şenocak’s call for a negative hermeneutics and Zaimoglu’s Romantic turn, this approach focuses on the ungraspable and the mysterious within the world, such as the power of love and music, rather than presenting the world as clear-cut and entirely known from a rationalist subject position. The texts discussed here imply an understanding of the world as no longer having a subject that could represent it or confer a foundational meaning upon it. Instead, these writers suggest that our singular-plural being-in-the-world is the world’s sense. This is, then, a religiosity free of dogma and doctrine that is instead contingent and open, and therefore does not close down meaning and place restrictions upon our ability to imagine new worlds. By functioning outside of the monotheistic paradigm, the religiosity of these writers is unconducive to identity conflict as there is no identity-founding ideology and no immanent sense of self that must be defended and maintained in opposition to a symbolic Other. Like the Muslim intellectual Majid’s ‘call

for a radical openness in the Islamic imagination’, 685 the writing of these authors must be acknowledged for its transformative contribution to the Islamic canon.

Although all four writers hint at this singularised sense of religiosity in their work by drawing our attention to the deconstructive elements of Islam and, to a certain extent, the other monotheisms, they do this in different ways, underlining the heterodox nature of Islam. Şenocak, for instance, draws upon medieval Sufi poetry in Übergang, creating erotic and technological images that challenge any strict division between the sacred and the profane, and between science and religion. In this regard, he recalls a period of Islamic history when ambiguity and scepticism were more tolerated and Muslims were less likely to define themselves in strict opposition to an Other, be that other world religions or an exterior God. SAID’s amen too echoes erotic Sufi aesthetics, but also harnesses the deconstructive potential of prayer and the Biblical psalms, in that he stresses God’s absence, locating the potential for change and meaning-making within the world, whilst at the same time conveying an openness towards the unknown. Zaimoglu’s Romantic turn in Nathan Messias and Liebesbrand is, on the one hand, accompanied by a forceful critique of orthodoxy and of the emphasis placed on individual will and autonomy by the Enlightenment, positing a relationship between the two that he associates with conflict. On the other hand, in Liebesbrand, he also evokes a Romantic religiosity based on love rather than ideological dogma through an engagement with Sufi and Novalisian notions of religion that locate the divine in the world. Furthermore, alongside his focus on God’s love and terror in Du sollst and Große Liebe that, in a similar way to Zaimoglu, underlines the immanentist (and therefore deconstructive) aspects of Islam, Kermani also uses music in Das Buch der von Neil Young Getöteten to suggest a worldly religiosity that stresses affective experiences, rather than the understanding of any ideological message. Thus, the protagonists and poetic voices

685 Majid, p. 13.
of these texts can be likened to Nancy’s reading of Nietzsche’s redeemer, ‘whose faith is
behaviour, not the adherence to a message. He is in the act and not in the significance, or
again, his significance, his sense is wholly in his act’.

The religiosity of these texts can therefore be regarded as outside representation, since it rejects traditional means of
representing religious communities (symbols, the notion of a people, etc.), and further
because it opens within the ontological interrelatedness of an immanent world, avoiding
clearly defined subject positions.

It is then, broadly speaking, the immanentist strain of Sufism that emerges as the most
dominant theme for all four authors. Yet this is not, I have argued, due to an overly simplistic
view of Sufism as tolerant and wholly about love. Rather, it is the Sufi tendency to focus on
deconstructive elements of religion that locate the divine in the world and remove its
ideological dimension, most often in terms of the embodied experience of profane love. The
scepticism and doubt of the Sufi tradition is also key, since this questions the role of God
within the monotheistic paradigm and undermines the authority of foundational religious
texts. Love and sex in particular is a theme that links all the fiction discussed in this study,
and thus this cosmopolitan religiosity is, similar to what Littler asserts, also coupled with a
change in sensibility through its emphasis on our relational existence. Love is, in Nancy’s
words, a ‘beyond the self’, just as medieval Sufis saw the potential for the annihilation of
the self in love. Love (in Nancean, Sufi and also Romantic terms) thus demonstrates our
openness towards others, conveying a religiosity that, in contrast to the divisiveness of
organised religion, highlights our interconnectedness.

Nevertheless, these texts also frequently emphasise God’s wrath, seemingly
reinforcing contemporary stereotypes. Yet, this can equally be viewed as a deconstructive
gesture, as criticising God’s injustices shifts meaning towards the world and away from a

687 Nancy, *Inoperative Community*, p. 84.
divine Other. Moreover, by creating tension and ambiguity between love and terror, these writers evoke an unstable sense of the divine, and they avoid accusations of ‘whitewashing’ the Islamic tradition. The authors under analysis here demonstrate, as Beck’s subtitle puts it, both ‘religion’s capacity for peace and potential for violence’ without positioning any particular one as the ‘true’ religion. As stated earlier, post-monotheistic intimations of the divine emerge from within and exist alongside the established monotheisms. Thus these authors merely highlight how deconstructive elements of religion can still play a role in the postmodern age, taking readers and audiences on spiritual journeys with a creative potential that results from open-endedness, and not union with the divine.

As briefly stated in the introduction, this emphasis of the deconstruction of monotheism is not the only Muslim response to the (often aggressive) Islamophobia and atheism of post-9/11 Germany. Yet, whereas more pious responses (Hübsch and Trojanow) and the misery memoirs that condemn Islam and extol Enlightenment values (Necla Kelek) can be regarded as two sides of the same mythic coin in that they affirm a foundational notion of identity, the works of Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani do just the opposite.

Although, for pragmatic reasons, I refer to these writers as Muslim, their work in fact destabilises any traditional sense of Islamic identity by foregrounding the deconstructive and world-affirming aspects of Islam, removing the ceremonial and institutional trappings of religion to reveal, in Zaimoglu’s words, its ‘Glutkern’. Moreover, outside Germany, other Muslim writers are responding in similar ways. I have already mentioned the Tunisian poet Meddeb, and other examples include the US author Michael Muhammad Knight, whose novel The Taqwacores (2004) blends ‘American punk culture and Islamic heterodoxy’, emphasising the Sufi tolerance of ambiguity in particular, and the Pakistani-British writer

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Kamila Shamsie, whose *Broken Verses* (2005) too conflates the sacred and the profane. It remains to be seen, however, if the concept of the deconstruction of monotheism can be similarly applied to these and other texts by non-Muslim writers of the religious turn, such as Henisch, Roth, and Stadler.

Through their irreverence towards institutionalised Islam, these German authors not only ally themselves with the medieval Sufis who sought spiritual inspiration outside of established holy texts, but also with the contemporary new Muslim intellectuals of the Postra Movement, who seek to expand the Islamic canon to include dissidents and mystics. This is not only a matter of exploding German stereotypes of strict, sexually conservative and aggressive Muslims, but equally of contradicting the recent taboos of orthodox Islam that seem to confirm such clichés. Controversies such as Rushdie’s fatwa and the murder of his Japanese translator, the so-called ‘Muhammad cartoon crisis’, the recent attack on the offices of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris and the subsequent arson attack on the *Hamburger Morgenpost* after they reprinted their cartoons have all been seized upon by xenophobic areas of politics and the media in order to ‘prove’ Islam’s disdain for the freedom of expression, usually without taking into account any other possible motives. However, similar to the self-critical nature of much German literature noted by Kermani, these German texts constitute in every respect the ‘irreverent, sceptical, argumentative, playful and *unafraid*’ Islam that Rushdie has been arguing for, and furthermore, they do so by focusing their critique firmly on orthodoxy and fundamentalism, and not with a confrontational liberalism that seeks to provoke the entire minority Muslim population. Thus, whereas Matthes concludes that contemporary German Muslim writers tend to understand Islam ‘in primarily cultural terms’, suggesting that their work reflects Enlightenment secularisation,

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690 Rushdie, p. 437.
691 Matthes, *Writing and Muslim Identity*, p. 215.
I have argued that the texts of this study can still be regarded as religious, albeit in terms of a post-monotheistic understanding of the religious. These authors re-imagine Islam, and religiosity in general, for a postmodern era in which foundations and subjectivity are called into question, and this equally feeds into the cosmopolitan stance their writing adopts.

Reconceptualising Cosmopolitanism for the Postmodern Era

As is also characteristic of the new Muslim intellectuals, these texts engage with contemporary philosophical developments, many of which, as I have argued, can be illuminated by Nancy’s non-foundational notion of the deconstruction of monotheism. However, the deconstruction of monotheism is not just limited to religious matters alone, for atheist ideologies merely replace a transcendent God with another core assumption and consequently they continue to operate via an exterior organising principle within the monotheistic paradigm. Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani unsettle this paradigm, however, as their cosmopolitanism can be understood as non-foundational in its contingent openness towards this void at the centre of being, inviting comparisons with Nancy’s notion of the inoperative community. Today’s cosmopolitan theorists are faced with a choice between homogeneity and heterogeneity when dealing with ‘the inclusion of the other’, as the title of Habermas’s book puts it. Thus, rather than a homogenising focus on cosmopolitanism as a universalist legal doctrine that everyone should be able to agree upon (the Enlightenment view that is most prevalent amongst German liberals), these authors seek to foster cosmopolitan solidarities by bringing our interconnectedness and singularity to the fore. For them, as it is for Nancy, it is a matter of weakening subjectivity, highlighting our relational existence, and undermining fusional notions of community in order to hint at a non-foundational and heterogeneous sense of community, rather than conducting a supposedly enlightened dialogue in the attempt to reach agreement, homogenisation and fusion.
This is, then, a cosmopolitanism without an -ism, fostered by undermining closed notions of subjectivity (for which the Sufi understanding of ecstasy also plays a role) and community, which goes beyond the notion of tolerance and its dichotomy of Same/Other. Indeed, the ambiguity of Übergang destabilises the foundations of both German and Turkish culture, and just as Şenocak advocates an Islam that is not defined by a symbolic Other, his fragmentary understanding of the self is equally based on openness and transformation, and not stability that would come from a dialectical synthesis of the identities of Self and Other. Likewise, if prayer is demythified and viewed, as Nancy understands it, as an openness towards the unknown, SAID’s Psalmen too undermines the closed nature of the absolute individual:

Prayer does not rise toward a height, an altitude, or toward a summit (sovereign, ens summum), but is transcendence, or (and this is less noted) the very act of transcending. It is passing-to-the-outside, and passing to the other.\

Through an engagement with the Romantic cosmopolitanism of Novalis’s Europa speech, Zaimoglu’s Liebesbrand also hints at a non-foundational and heterogeneous alternative to universalising approaches to statehood, be they national or cosmopolitan. Moreover, through the character Jarmila, a sense of the body as porous and of love as openness and fleeting contact is conveyed, as opposed to the fusion of absolute individuals, which is implied in Tyra’s destructive and appropriative desire. Lastly, in Große Liebe, and to a lesser extent in Neil Young and Du sollst, Kermani evokes an ontological openness in connection with the Sufi understanding of ecstasy, establishing parallels between contemporary philosophical critiques of subjectivity and medieval Sufi philosophy. Thus, together with their criticisms of monotheistic religion, these writers also undermine a monotheistic sense of cosmopolitanism based on crystallisation around a shared identity or ideology. Instead, I have argued that their

\[^{692}\] Nancy, Dis-Enclosure, p. 138.
writing expresses a contingent and open alternative to traditional Enlightenment cosmopolitanisms.

Since the Enlightenment is increasingly invoked as a central part of German and indeed Western identity (often with the aim of excluding Muslims), these writers’ stance towards the movement and its legacy is important for understanding their take on cosmopolitanism. The argument is frequently made in Germany that it is the Islamic world’s failure to undergo a similar process of Enlightenment that causes it to be irreconcilable with democratic and secular Western civilisation, and the response is often that this line of thought is both unsubstantiated, because Islamic thought (particularly in Al-Andalus) helped lay the philosophical foundations of the Enlightenment, and also irrelevant, because the Enlightenment ultimately could not prevent the brutality of colonialism and the Holocaust – as Horkheimer and Adorno put it: ‘Aber die vollends aufgeklärte Erde strahlt im Zeichen triumphalen Unheils.’ Indeed, Nancy contends that this is because the Enlightenment continues to function via the monotheistic paradigm, putting Reason in God’s place, and it could therefore be argued that this is why the Enlightenment, when it is viewed as a doctrine in a similar way to organised religions, is bound to create conflict and foster violent and evangelical civilising missions. This does not necessarily mean that all the central tenets of the Enlightenment (such as its initial suspicion of dogmatism and its assertion of the worth of humanity) should be jettisoned, but just that they must be arrived at through a ‘politics without a [...] self that reaps, in the end, the benefits of its action’, rather than a shared foundational ideology.

695 In Nancy’s recent writing he has called for the deconstruction of reason as well as monotheism: Nancy, Adoration, p. 57.
This leads to a precarious situation in which these authors must defend themselves against Orientalist charges of backwardness either by demonstrating how Muslim thinkers participated in the Enlightenment, or by criticising the Enlightenment for its Western arrogance and ideological nature – or by doing both of these things simultaneously. As I have discussed, Şenocak makes similar arguments to those of the Frankfurt School, and SAID too states: ‘deutschland hat sehr früh die aufklärung für sich entdeckt – nicht zuletzt durch die schriften von immanuel kant. trotzdem hat deutschland sechs millionen juden ermordet.’ However, just as Kermani praises Lessing’s ‘Neigung, sich gegen das aufzulehnen, was als gängige Meinung daherkam’, Şenocak and SAID too only lament that the Enlightenment has itself become dogma, and praise the critical and questioning spirit of its beginnings. Whereas his impassioned speech Nach Europa declares the Enlightenment’s cosmopolitan and humanitarian ideals to be Europe’s primary aim, Kermani’s literary writing probes exactly what it means to be human, as do the other texts under analysis here. By problematising notions of subjectivity, universalism and religion, these writers therefore put the Enlightenment’s central tenets, which have themselves become reified, through a process of Enlightenment. In Şenocak’s words: ‘Doch der Prozeß der Aufklärung kann auch in Europa nicht abgeschlossen sein’. Zaimoglu is, however, an altogether more forceful critic of the Enlightenment. In Manifest der Vielen, for example, Zaimoglu disparages so-called Aufklärer for hysterical opposition to outward manifestations of religiosity:

Die Vorstellung, es könnte eines Tages ein Gebetsaufruf vom Minarett aus zum Gottesdienst einladen, versetzt die Volksdemokraten in große Unruhe. Also plärren sie drauflos, [...] sie schreiben Hasspamphlete, sie

697 SAID, Ich und der Islam, p. 23.
700 Şenocak, War Hitler Araber?, p. 69.
Yet, although he directs much of his criticism at how the eighteenth century movement is instrumentalised in contemporary German debates for divisive purposes, he equally critiques its philosophical foundations. Whereas the non-foundational notions of the self and of the divine in the writing of Şenocak, SAID and Kermani is, at times, at odds with their apparent support of the Enlightenment, or at least can be viewed as a continuation of the Enlightenment’s critical attitude, Zaimoglu, by allying himself with the counter-Enlightenment arguments of the early German Romantics, also focuses on the Enlightenment’s homogenising core. His Romantic cosmopolitanism based on love contrasts with the more legal and economic understanding of cosmopolitanism within the Enlightenment tradition, which Şenocak, SAID and Kermani also do, but without such an outwardly counter-Enlightenment stance and Romantic overtones. Be that as it may, rather than a cosmopolitanism based on social contracts that foreground self-interest, all the four writers analysed here undermine our very sense of self in order to create a cosmopolitan sense of community in which the very concept of self-interest and autonomous subjectivity proclaimed by the Enlightenment is challenged.

Consequently, all the authors studied here effect a change in the Enlightenment/religion dynamic. Whereas the Enlightenment was once a necessary challenge to the dogma of religion, it is the mystical religiosity and affective spirituality of these works that critique a dogmatic view of Enlightenment philosophy (what Kermani refers to as ‘die westliche Spielart des Fundamentalismus’), opening up new avenues of thought. Although this return to medieval Sufi thought and the philosophy of Jena Romanticism arguably disrupts the Enlightenment narrative of history as teleological progression, it is, nevertheless,
not to be regarded as a pessimistic resignation at our inadequacy to create a better present on the part of these authors, but rather, as Şenocak puts it, as ‘dort von Neuem zu beginnen / mit der Hoffnung anderswo zu enden’ (Ü, p. 33). As Nancy states:

And thus, we must ask ourselves anew what it is that, without denying Christianity but without returning to it, could lead us toward a point – toward a resource – hidden beneath Christianity, beneath monotheism, beneath the West, which we must henceforth bring to light, for this point would open up a future for the world that would no longer be either Christian or anti-Christian, either monotheist or atheist or even polytheist, but that would advance precisely beyond all these categories (after having made all of them possible).  

Although Nancy attempts to deconstruct Christianity and the authors of this study focus primarily on Islam, their goals of overcoming the divisive categories of the present are the same.

Thus, Şenocak, SAID and Kermani, although at times seeming to support Enlightenment rationalism in their essayistic writing, undermine its central tenet of the rational individual and present an alternative to its universalist and ideological notions of cosmopolitanism in their fiction, as Zaimoglu does. This can, nevertheless, be regarded as the continuation of the Enlightenment’s original questioning spirit. Furthermore, as I will outline in the following section, a non-foundational approach must equally be extended to how we as readers view literature. Given the challenge these works pose to the received understanding of subjectivity and personhood, it is equally important to stress that the philosophical and literary texts, although cited in this study under the proper names ‘Zafer Şenocak’, ‘SAID’, etc., are, just like any other text (and I include my own thesis), arguably not the products of coherent and immanent subjects. Rather, as James stipulates in his introduction to Nancy, they emerge ‘only in, or as an exposure to, a shared community of thought’.  

I would therefore contend that to read fiction in order to gain access to the foundations of the author’s

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703 Nancy, Dis-Enclosure, p. 34.
704 James, p. 6.
identity (a view often held with regard to ‘minority’ literature) serves only to reinforce divisions within society.

*Cosmopolitanism, Religiosity and the Role of Literature*

Fuelled by both xenophobic politicians and journalists, and by new Islamist groups such as Boko Haram and Islamic State, the German/Muslim dichotomy shows little sign of receding over a decade after the events of 9/11, and the emergence of the so-called Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes (Pegida) towards the end of 2014 constitutes a significant political development in this regard. There have, nevertheless, been early reasons for optimism in 2015. Chancellor Merkel, for example, took it upon herself to confront this group in her New Year’s speech:

Kürzlich erzählte mir jemand von einem Kurden, der heute Deutscher ist. Vor vielen Jahren sei er aus dem Irak geflohen – unter sehr schwierigen Bedingungen. Unter Lebensgefahr. Er habe gesagt, das Wichtigste sei für ihn in Deutschland, dass seine Kinder hier ohne Furcht aufwachsen könnten.

[...]

Und das war auch ein Motiv der vielen Menschen, die vor 25 Jahren in der DDR jeden Montag auf die Straße gingen. Hunderttausende demonstrierten 1989 für Demokratie und Freiheit und gegen eine Diktatur, die Kinder in Furcht aufwachsen ließ.

Heute rufen manche montags wieder “Wir sind das Volk”. Aber tatsächlich meinen Sie: Ihr gehört nicht dazu – wegen Eurer Hautfarbe oder Eurer Religion.

Deshalb sage ich allen, die auf solche Demonstrationen gehen: Folgen Sie denen nicht, die dazu aufrufen! Denn zu oft sind Vorurteile, ist Kälte, ja, sogar Hass in deren Herzen!705

Furthermore, counter-demonstrations that criticise xenophobia and nationalism have often outnumbered Pegida’s own, and potent symbolic messages were sent out in Cologne and

Berlin, when the Cathedral and Brandenburg Gate respectively were plunged into darkness during Pegida protest marches.

Nevertheless, comments and actions such as these against Islamophobic groups and individuals, together with the work of the DIK, seem to be yielding minimal results.

Although statistics such as these must only be used as an approximate guide, a recent study from the Bertelsmann Stiftung (2015) states that, even though the ‘attitudes and lifestyles of Muslims living in Germany very much reflect the social values prevalent in the Federal Republic’, ‘57 percent of Germany’s non-Muslims perceive Islam as a threat’ (up from 53 percent in 2012), and this jumps to 70 percent in Thuringia and Saxony,706 where the Pegida movement originated. In reality, there are, however, very few Muslims in Thuringia and Saxony, and thus these are the people who arguably have the least to fear from Islamisation. I agree with Şenocak’s and Kermani’s recent responses to these events that locate Pegida’s fear of Islam not in any concrete threat, but rather in the protesters’ own identitarian insecurities surrounding what it means to be German.707 It is, then, not only a strong sense of identity that can cause conflict, as Nancy argues, but equally a weak one too carries this potential, when it is viewed as a lack rather than as inherently fragmented. This is why Übergang’s ‘befremdeter Blick auf das Eigene’708 that highlights how identity is always incomplete and unstable, and why Zaimoglu’s Romantic critique of the Enlightenment orthodoxy at the centre of a divisive German/European identity are so important. It is equally why SAID’s defence of a sceptical religiosity after facing exile at the hands of Iran’s theocratic

708 Şenocak, Das Land hinter den Buchstaben, pp. 30-1.
government, and why Kermani’s comments on German culture’s self-critique must be heard. As Kermani argues in his response:

Wenn man sich einigermaßen mit der Geschichte und gerade auch mit der eigenen Geschichte auskennt, wenn man seinen Goethe kennt, wenn man seinen Novalis kennt und wenn man seinen Lessing kennt, dann wird man schon einigermaßen immun sein gegen diese Art von Fremdenfeindlichkeit [...].

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Thus, whereas, for Pegida, an insecure, unstable sense of identity leads to the demand to stabilise and expel that which is perceived as foreign, for these authors it has the potential for creative and cosmopolitan transformations precisely because they acknowledge that identity has never been, nor ever can be complete and foundational. As previously argued, it is through a wider understanding of the German and/or Islamic canon and a more contingent view of Germanness and Muslimness that identities are unsettled, creative touching tales can come to the fore, and heterogeneity becomes less intimidating.

If this growing sense of Islamophobia in the West and the conflicts that arise from it across the globe are going to be challenged, then authors like Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani, whose writing contradicts negative and Orientalising stereotypes and evokes non-identitarian conceptualisations of religion and community, will be of central importance. However, equally significant, we as readers must resist the tendency to treat these texts as the mere reflection of their author’s identity, that is to say, as myth in Nancy’s sense, and regard them instead as Nancy does literature, in other words, as the ambiguous interruption of myth through which the new can be affirmed. In this regard, my research has been pulled towards the post-representational approaches of Adelson and Littler. This is not only because the complex concepts of community, identity and religion with which I work cannot be reduced to identities and symbols and thus resist traditional representation, but also because I reject any mythic understanding of these authors that holds their texts to be a representation of their

709 Schossig and Kermani, p. 2.
identity. Similarly, Adelson contends that all literature must not be ‘subject to factual verification’, but rather be regarded as a ‘labor of imagination’ with ‘material effects’,\(^{710}\) and Littler too views literature ‘not as representation of an existing social reality, but as experimentation’.\(^{711}\) In this regard, dualistic mythic readings also function via the monotheistic paradigm, in that they view the text as providing access to an exterior foundation of its author’s identity. Yet, just as the inoperative community and a post-monotheistic religiosity have no subject of their representation because they have no exterior as such, I, following Adelson and Littler, view these texts as creative and innovative interventions within the world that effect change by challenging mythic foundations and the mythic interpretation of texts. Like Littler’s Deleuzian methodology, I too, through Nancy’s non-foundationalism, have sought to treat these texts ‘as a creative and critical engagement with [...] the social forces that produce stable, territorial notions of identity’.\(^{712}\) Much like Şenocak’s concept of a negative hermeneutics, this fiction should not be valued as a pedagogical tool for understanding the Muslim community, but rather for its unexpected affective religiosity beyond identity, and indeed subjectivity, that exceeds appropriation.

It could be argued that this contingent focus on the here and now of the world in all its interrelatedness lacks political vision,\(^{713}\) but I would contend, with Nancy, that it is only by thinking beyond the monotheistic paradigm that tries to shape and confine our trajectories that the imagining of new possible worlds can take place. This is especially significant at the moment, as Nancy makes clear, because the unequal Western system of capitalism has proliferated itself across the globe to such an extent that any thought from outside its paradigms is stifled. Further to this, I would add that is also important in the post-9/11

\(^{710}\) Adelson, *The Turkish Turn*, p. 14.

\(^{711}\) Littler, ‘Cramped Creativity’, p. 222.

\(^{712}\) *Ibid*.

\(^{713}\) Nancy has, for example, been criticised for avoiding any direct engagements in politics: Nancy Fraser, ‘The French Derrideans: Politicizing Deconstruction or Deconstructing the Political?’, *New German Critique*, 33 (1984), 127-54.
context, since organised and fundamentalist religious ideologies too increasingly seek to combat this spread of Western universalism by evangelically spreading their own universalist sense of the world. Yet, by undermining exterior guiding principles and ready-made identities, these authors compel us to focus on and fundamentally reassess this world in all its heterogeneity, rather than put our faith in homogenising forces. The religiosity of these texts arguably reinforces this imperative, since the world is acknowledged as mysterious and unknowable, but also as immanent and not an object upon which one can confer a universal meaning from outside. This is, in Smerick’s words, ‘a salvation that saves nothing, except that it saves us from believing in other worlds’.\(^\text{714}\)

As Bhabha argues, the ability of writing to intervene and effect political change must be taken seriously:

“What is to be done?’ must acknowledge the force of writing, its metaphoricity and its rhetorical discourse, as a productive matrix which defines the “social” and makes it available as an objective of and for, action. Textuality is not simply a second-order ideological expression or verbal symptom of a pre-given political subject.”\(^\text{715}\)

We have perhaps arrived at a time when many foresee an ‘end of history’, when Western universalism’s central principles of the capitalist market and the secular liberal individual are here to stay, at least once its solitary opponent, Islamic fundamentalism, has been vanquished in the ‘War on Terror’. Yet these texts by Şenocak, SAID, Zaimoglu and Kermani unsettle from within such a polarised understanding of the world, allowing us to glimpse the world’s heterogeneity and the mystical dimensions of its alterity that affect us but cannot be appropriated. Rather than the enforced homogenisation of any supposed universalism, these texts demonstrate another conceptualisation of cosmopolitanism based on singularity and contingency, much like Nancy demands. In the face of both Islamophobic hostility and the threat of global Islamic terror, they radically re-imagine and renew the predetermined

\(^\text{714}\) Smerick, p. 36.
identities of ‘Muslim’, ‘German’ and ‘cosmopolitan’, going ‘beneath monotheism’ via Islam’s ambiguous mystical heritage in an attempt to think outside of contemporary ideologies and binary assumptions in order to emphasise the open and interrelated nature of the self. This heterogeneous sense of self that, rather than attempting to assimilate into an apparently coherent immanent community, simply allows itself to change and be changed by others is, I contend, of the utmost contemporary relevance at a time when immanent subjectivities and communities are becoming increasingly at odds with one another.

Furthermore, it must also inform our own approach to reading, emphasising literature’s ability to challenge and unsettle, rather than confirm preconceived ideas and stabilise, and shifting us away from interpretations that reinforce immanent identities and turn literature into myth.

The cosmopolitanism and religiosity, indeed, the cosmopolitan religiosity of these texts can be regarded as a radical departure from the emphasis placed on dialogue by much of the scholarly writing within Intercultural German Studies, by contemporary cosmopolitan theory, and also by the German state. This rejection of dialogue is also present in these authors’ essayistic writing. Kermani, for example, despite taking part in the DIK, states:


What is more, Kermani remarks that such encounters can often descend into a futile match of ‘Surenpingpong’, in which Qur’anic verses that speak for and against violence are endlessly exchanged. For Şenocak too, in ‘Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols’, the religious leaders that must come out before the media’s cameras and condemn violence, stress

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716 Nancy, *Dis-Enclosure*, p. 34.  
religion’s peaceful nature and engage in dialogue can only provide vacuous statements.\(^{719}\) Alternatively, these writers destabilise the subject position from which any dialogue can take place, implying a complex, heterogeneous and interconnected sense of self that shows any perceived sense of inter-cultural or -religious understanding to be overly simplistic. As Şenocak argues:

> Was Menschen heute prägt […] ist ein Gemisch, eine Legierung aus den vielen versprengten Teilchen kultureller Entitäten, die nicht einmal geographisch eindeutig lokalisierbar sind.\(^{720}\)

What is needed, then, is ‘[e]inen Dialog im Inneren’,\(^{721}\) which brings the fragmentary and open nature of the self to the fore. Rather than creating a homogenous foundation through dialogue and *Horizontverschmelzung*, the non-foundational conceptualisations of the self, community and religiosity found in the writing of these authors both undermine the closed identities that are clashing violently across the globe at the start of the twenty-first century and also open up the space for us to imagine new ways of coexisting. As Kermani said in Cologne after the Charlie Hebdo attack: ‘Und doch werden wir den Terror nur besiegen, wenn wir ihm den Boden entziehen.’\(^{722}\) What he did not inform the crowd of, however, despite demonstrating it in his fiction, is that this is unthinkable without the loss of our own stable sense of self.

\(^{719}\) Şenocak, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, p. 29.  
\(^{721}\) *Ibid.*  
\(^{722}\) Kermani, ‘Wir wehren uns!’.
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275
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282