


Encounters with Islam in German Literature and Culture

Edited by
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 CAMDEN HOUSE
Rochester, New York

2009

10: Dialogues with Islam in the Writing of (Turkish-)German Intellectuals: A Historical Turn?

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WITH THE TERRORIST BOMBINGS of Istanbul 2003, Madrid 2004, and London 2005, Islamist terrorism finally reached European cities in the aftermath of the US bombings of 11 September 2001. In 2006 bombings were averted in Germany, but it was clear that Germany was not safe from Al-Qaida aggression.¹ Discussions of a "tödliche Toleranz" toward Muslims in Germany followed.² Federal anti-terror measures even reached the universities. In early 2007 the Bavarian Office for the Protection of the Constitution (*Verfassungsschutz*) published a demand addressed to the academic staff of Bavarian universities for more intense surveillance of unconstitutional Islamist activities in and outside Bavaria. The demand asked staff to report any instances of remarks indicating radical Islamic tendencies, Islamist activities, or indeed anything hinting at sudden changes in lifestyle on the part of either students or teaching staff.³ With Muslims accounting for 4% of Germany's population,⁴ the German educational system is faced with a growing number of German and migrant-German students with a Muslim background. And yet Islam still is a subject dealt with only by the media and, sadly, has almost no place on the academic curriculum. This seems particularly strange when many intellectuals of the second immigrant generation, who have grown up and been educated in Germany, come from a cultural background combining the *Koran* and Goethe's *West-östlicher Divan*.⁵ This is true for authors such as the Turkish-German Zafer Şenocak (born 1961) or the Persian-German Navid Kermani (born 1967), who both grew up in Muslim families, went to German schools, and graduated from German universities. Is their personal history as migrants quite so linear, and is their occupation with Islam and the *Koran* suspicious, after all? And what about German converts? Are Muslim intellectuals in Germany to be considered a threat to the system or as partners in dialogue? Encountering Islam in contemporary German literature means looking more closely and in a more differentiated manner at how German-Muslim writers respond to the ongoing debate on Islam in Germany.

Among the many Muslim-German intellectuals Zafer Şenocak will receive most attention here, as he is one of the most prominent Turkish-German Muslim intellectuals working in contemporary German literature. In his new collection of essays, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben* (2006),⁶ he examines current Islamic positions both in and outside Germany. With a nod to the "other side," Christoph Peters's novel *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* (2006)⁷ will be discussed, as it is about a German convert who has turned into an Islamic terrorist. These examples provide interesting internal and external perspectives on Islam in Germany, as well as presenting their authors' views on the subject.

The debate on Islam in Germany changed radically after 9/11, when it became clear that the leading terrorists involved in the attack had previously lived unnoticed in Germany. The emergence of so-called Islamic undercover-agents or "sleepers" suddenly put all Muslims in Germany, and especially those of Arabic or Turkish background, under suspicion.⁸ In this light, Turkish migration to Germany was now considered not only a failure but also a danger, as Günther Lachman argues in *Tödliebe Toleranz*.⁹ With a generation of supposedly failed, non-integrated, underdog migrants turning into radicals, Europe faced what he calls the danger of the return of totalitarianism in the form of neo-Islamism. One of the effects of this ongoing debate was that many intellectuals with a Muslim background found themselves on the defensive because of their religious identities.

Being "Muslim" has in fact become a central marker of identity in the aftermath of the 2001 terror attacks, not least because Samuel Huntington's powerful if harsh thesis of the cultural clash between the Western and Islamic worlds seemed to have been proved right.¹⁰ In his critique of Huntington, Amartya Sen centers his argument on the idea of a diversity of identities and biographical outlines.¹¹ Accordingly, the notion of a singular identity is an illusion, for a person is subject to a wide range of influences that simultaneously help to constitute his or her identity, including nationality, geographical location, gender, race, class, or even private matters such as nutritional habits or taste in music. Sen warns that reducing this complexity to just one aspect of cultural identity, or defining a person merely through religion, leads to dangerous antagonisms between supposed singularities, fomenting potential conflicts worldwide.¹² To reduce Muslims to their Islamic identity is also to ignore the diversity of Islam: Turkish Muslims, for example, may be entirely different from Saudi Arabian Muslims. Moreover, as Sen points out, strong beliefs do not necessarily exclude liberal thinking. Western notions of the tolerance of Muslims are based on the misunderstanding that religious tolerance and political tolerance are one and the same. For Sen, "fundamental" belief does not stand in opposition to democratic thinking.¹³

Unaffected by Sen's differentiated ideas, today's public discourse in Germany positions writers who had previously been perceived as migrant-German writers in a new role as public Muslims, and it no longer asks about their fictional or poetic writing but rather about their Islamic upbringing and attitudes. More or less involuntarily representing their new (or rather: newly discovered) Muslim identity, many of these intellectuals, who (or whose parents or grandparents) come from oriental countries, draw on their inside knowledge.¹⁴ Iranian-German writers such as Navid Kermani or SAID, who both grew up with Islam, give account of their personal experience with Islamic culture. In a collection of essays and interviews, former president of the German PEN-club SAID (born 1947) reacted to the debate by defining his own position outside Islam. The title of his book, *ich und der islam* (2005)¹⁵ is thus possibly rather misleading, for SAID actually insists upon his intellectual distance from religion. His younger fellow-countryman Navid Kermani, a graduate in Oriental Studies, approaches Islam through his publications and studies on Islam and Muslim intellectuals.¹⁶ In a forthcoming publication he gives an account of (his) Muslim identity and explores Muslim life in Germany in particular.¹⁷ However, the rhetorical title *Wer ist wir?* indicates that Kermani, like many other Muslim intellectuals, feels uncomfortable at being crudely labeled a Muslim. In contrast, Turkish-German author Feridun Zaimoğlu makes a clear point of being a "German Muslim."¹⁸ In his literary and theatrical work he creates Muslim figures and repeatedly refers to Islam as part of Turkish migrant identity, as well as claiming ownership of a brand of "German Islam" as part of his own identity. One of his latest theatrical works puts Islamic figures and themes on stage, while his presence at the national "Islam Konferenz" drew attention to his views on Islam and Kemalism.¹⁹

Within this chorus of Muslim intellectual voices Zafer Şenocak represents a differentiated position of his own. Born in Turkey, he came to Germany at the age of nine, starting his literary career as a poet and translator of Turkish and Ottoman poetry in the early 1980s. Emerging as an essayist from the early 1990s onward, Şenocak has been the most important Turkish-German commentator on the relations between Turks and Germans, Turkey and the West, and matters that can be described broadly as oriental-occidental. While his literary prose and poetry attract less critical attention (although he will get an entry in the forthcoming edition of the *Kindler Lexikon der Weltliteratur*), his essayistic work has gained him the reputation of a public intellectual.²⁰ As Leslie A. Adelson rightly states, Şenocak's role as commentator started in a decade that "began not only with German unification but also with the Persian Gulf War."²¹ While the former historic event brought about a distinction between Germans and non-Germans, the latter created divisions between Muslims and

the West. German Turks, Adelson argues, were confined to the role of the Muslim "Other" in both cases.

Islam, though immanently present from the beginnings, had never been at the center of Şenocak's writing until September 2001. After 9/11 Şenocak began to comment on Islamic perspectives, responding to the new demand for supposed experts on Islam ("Islamexperten") in the media. During the 1990s Şenocak analyzed the complex modern situation of Turks in Germany in the light of the historical relationship between the German Reich and the Ottoman Empire, exploring an epoch of shared German-Turkish history. He also reminds German readers of the specific fate of Islam under Kemalism in Turkey: following the new state ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, religion was reduced (or rather, banned) to the private realm and therefore lost its formerly powerful political role.²²

This latter aspect is at the heart of his latest essays; the Turkish-Islamic cultural heritage seems to be what is hinted at by the title of *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, his fourth essay collection. The subtitle *Deutschland und der Islam im Umbruch* suggests major changes in both Germany and Islam. The forty-five essays date from September 2003 to August 2006 and are grouped into five chapters: while the eponymous first section (9–25) has three biographical essays, the main section, "Zwischen Koran und Sex Pistols" (27–111), explores Islam generally in twenty essays, which are followed by five essays on specific aspects of Islam in the third section, "Warnung vor heiligen Stätten" (113–36). The fourth section takes the focus back to Germany and its Muslim immigrants ("Deutschland: Standortübungsplatz," 139–53), whereas the last section places the focus on the self-reflexive aspect of his writing, entitled as it is "Dichter gibt Auskunft" (189–215). How then does Şenocak position himself as a (Muslim) writer in the current discourse on Islam?

In the very first essay, "Mein Vater, ein türkischer Lebenslauf" (LHB, 11–18), Şenocak tells his father's life story. This is a biography marked by the clash produced by the cultural revolution of 1923. Kemaliddin Şenocak, born in 1926, a typical child of the republic ("Republikkind"), grew up in the years of the cultural revolution, yet despite the general trend toward modernization he still stuck to "his Islam." His biography combines the influences of Turkish modernity on the one hand and Islamic fanaticism on the other. Şenocak senior remained skeptical of modernity and pleaded for a greater emphasis on religion in this new Turkish secular state. He started editing an Islamic journal in the 1950s and later went to Germany ("weil es ein freies Land war"), distancing himself from the people who were later to become the leading figures in Turkey's Islamic movement (such as Necmettin Erbakan, whom Şenocak senior openly criticized).

Zafer Şenocak discusses the pros and cons of the Turkish revolution as regards the effects on Islam and the Turkish Muslims. He describes how his

father's initial activism on behalf of Islam slowly developed into a sort of fanaticism. There is constant debate on this subject between father and son, the latter criticizing the former for his double standards. In fact, Şenocak senior's demands for greater freedom were meant only to serve his own narrow purpose, and his aims cannot be read as a manifesto for universal freedom of speech. Zafer Şenocak, however, draws a parallel with the broader Turkish context when he remarks that freedom is the freedom to think differently or independently ("die Freiheit des Andersdenkenden"; LHB, 16)—something that had to be learned the hard way in Turkey.

Şenocak also reflects on this in the context of the current situation in Germany. By telling his father's life story, he presents not only a personal story but also Turkish history and its complex implications for a heterogeneous Turkish society. In doing so he thus undermines the German monolithic, stereotypical notion of Turkey and the Turks. In accordance with Amartya Sen's ideas, Şenocak presents Turkey as a multifaceted culture, as a dialogue partner with manifold cultural aspects and historical backgrounds. Şenocak demands a dialogue with Turkey and its new Islamist government, insisting that this offers Germany a historical opportunity that should not be missed. He concludes with a note about his father and how he helped him to see things differently:

Die widersprüchliche Gestalt meines Vaters hat mir geholfen, vermeintliche Gegensätze nicht immer in schwarz-weiße Bilder zu gießen. Die Grautöne sind immer da und aussagekräftig für den, der sie wahrnehmen will. "Orient" und "Okzident" mögen nach wie vor die Denkschablonen von Kulturalisten und Nationalisten aufrechterhalten. Sie existieren in unserer kommunikativen Welt aber nur noch als irrationale Fiktionen. Sie sind falsche, gefährliche Zeugen. (LHB, 18)²³

This nod to Edward Said's critique of Orientalism is what Leslie A. Adelson calls the "poststructuralist mode of thought and orientation" in Şenocak's writing.²⁴ Never dutifully indebted to any school of thought, Şenocak has pleaded elsewhere for a "negative Hermeneutik," a method that allows him to think well-known patterns anew and question them thoroughly.²⁵ This negative hermeneutic produces a heterogeneous, hybrid picture of Islam, of Turkey, of Turks, and of Turkish culture. Writing, as Matthias Konzett puts it, "against the grain" of stereotypes, Şenocak does not remind only Germans to reflect; Turks must also consider their positions.

To a greater extent than in his previous work in the essay genre, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben* offers a topography of Zafer Şenocak's intellectual development from childhood onward. In a kind of continuation of his father's story, the third essay, "Das Geheimnis der Nachmittage" (LHB, 21–25), describes his Turkish childhood between Islam and Kemalism.

The first-person narrator's (and probably Şenocak's) Muslim father and his Kemalist, secularist mother lived together on the basis of a mutual contract that strictly regulated the coexistence of the worldly and the religious, as well as the education of their child: "Obwohl Gott zwischen ihnen stand . . . hielt ihre Ehe, weil sie einen Vertrag gemacht hatten, an den sie sich strengstens hielten" (24). Obviously this could be read simply as an autobiographical comment by the Turkish author. Yet on another level the story of the nuptial contract serves as a parable of the coexistence of Islam and laicism in a democracy. And it is a parable meant for Germany and Turkey alike, for both countries have ongoing debates on how Islam is to be integrated into society.

This story is also about how Şenocak, as a young boy, was left to wonder about what was going on in the locked room, where his father assembled every Friday with his Muslim friends, while his mother left to go shopping with her women friends. The locked room with its secret society sparks the little boy's imagination: he imagines that there might be aeroplanes in there, or perhaps men kissing one another in secret.²⁶ In this essay, the "Geheimnis der Nachmittage" stands for the alluring mystery of Islam and for the impact of the mysterious on Şenocak's own writing, as the narrator concludes from his contemporary point of view: "So blieb mir die Welt der Freitagnachmittage verschlossen. Ich sollte dankbar dafür sein, denn diese verborgene Welt hat lange Zeit meine Phantasie angeregt. Das verschlossene Zimmer wurde zu einem Hinterzimmer meiner Gedanken" (LHB, 23).

In an earlier essay Şenocak described how his writing myth (*Schreibmythos*) arose in an atmosphere of rationalism and of mysticism, a contradictory tension that characterized his parents' home.²⁷ In *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben* he dedicates the whole first chapter to the mystic side of Islam, a realm that stimulates the author's fantasy. Naming it the *Country Behind the Letters*, he once again looks beyond the alleged literal-mindedness of orthodox Islam and opens an entirely different horizon instead, the undefined, the contradictory, the unnamed realm of an in-between space that begins where orthodoxy ends: a realm "behind the letters." This coincides with Homi K. Bhabha's notion of the Third Space,²⁸ and with what Şenocak often depicts as a position neither here nor there, but *beyond* ("jenseits"), and as the center of his writing.²⁹ Şenocak's scepticism of binary oppositions is shared by other writers of Muslim origin.³⁰

The second chapter of Şenocak's essay collection, called "Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols," explores the clash between Muslim culture and modernity, traditionalist religion and Western culture. Twenty essays form the very heart of the reflections on this complex matter. The title essay, "Zwischen Koran und Sexpistols" (29–33), starts with the assertion of the necessity of a dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Yet Şenocak also demands dialogue within the Muslim community itself:

"Nicht der Dialog der Religionen, sondern ein Dialog unter den Muslimen ist erforderlich. Wo aber findet er statt? Von wem wird er geführt?" (29). Even though every terrorist attack nowadays produces the same ritualized reactions of media attention, the posing of questions as to "why" and "how," the call for dialogue between religions and so on, no real discussion seems to take place, for one fundamental question remains unasked: "Die Muslime nämlich müssten sich die Frage stellen, warum die Attentäter ausgerechnet aus ihren Kreisen kommen? Woher der Hass kommt, der so weit geht, nicht nur andere sondern auch sich selbst zu zerstören?" (29). By addressing the Muslims and referring this central question back to them, Şenocak makes his own critical position clear. He demands of today's Muslims self-exploration and a readiness for skepticism and self-critique.³¹

For Şenocak personally, literature became the crucial link between modernity and Islam. Mystical literature, particularly the poems of the Turkish medieval Sufi poet Yunus Emre, which Şenocak translated in the late 1980s,³² was of enormous help in his effort to bring together separate worlds, as he points out: "Ohne die Arbeit an Emres Werk hätte eine harte Grenze meine Innen- und Außenwelt getrennt, wäre ich zwischen Koran und Sexpistols ein Opfer unvereinbarer Gegensätze geworden" (LHB, 31–32). This breaking down of boundaries was clearly vital to his own creative work. He states also: "Für meine kreative Arbeit, letztlich für meine Existenz schlechthin wurde die Durchlässigkeit dieser Grenzziehung zur Voraussetzung" (32). It may well have been the skepticism and humility typical of Sufi poetry that shaped Şenocak's dialectical attitude. All questions are reflected back onto the self rather than projected onto the Other. This approach is skeptical rather than apodictic. Şenocak resumes his primary question of dialogue in the essay, pointing out the necessity for self-understanding. In the dialogue with Islam, the West therefore needs to be more thoughtful in terms of asking the questions: "Die Fragen, die wir an den Anderen stellen, auch an uns selbst zu richten. Einen Dialog im Inneren führen, bevor wir das Wort an den Anderen richten" (33). Reflection, he concludes, is a primary condition for any dialogue.

Şenocak opens a new field by bringing up the idea of Islamic renaissance. He does so out of the conviction that contemporary Islam desperately needs role models of tolerant figures from its own history in order to take the attention away from a Sharia-centered fanaticism. In so arguing, Şenocak adopts the role of a cultural mediator, a "Kulturvermittler." This comes naturally to the artist who believes in the power of art and philosophy: Islam, he argues, needs role models who can do better than merely repeat the rules of the Sharia. What are needed are artistic interpreters with a love for the arts and philosophy (LHB, 39).³³ An example of this would be the last Ottoman Kalif Abdülmeccid, who was a talented painter

of nudes—something unthinkable by contemporary Islamic standards.³⁴ Here Şenocak refers to his earlier criticism (in 1994) of the new fundamentalist movement, which was led only by engineers and technicians, and who had no understanding of diversity, contradiction, or skepticism, and who preferred black-and-white thinking to the more complicated hermeneutics of the in-between.³⁵ A decade later, and in the wake of the new Islamic terrorism, Şenocak deliberately enlarges on this matter, presenting many examples from an epoch of Islamic Renaissance, when critical thinking and creative belief were still highly valued. What he demands is an overcoming of “das mentale Ghetto,” as he calls it, and a critical attitude toward tradition (“Islam-übersetzen”; *LHB*, 54), but he also calls for a rewriting of Western curricula, which generally tend to ignore Muslim philosophers totally (53). And Şenocak enters a religious-philosophical argument when he justifies this demand for critical thinking: truth, he says, lies with God and not with the believer. The latter is just searching for the truth and is thus skeptical and humble (57) and certainly nothing like the apodictic, self-righteous fundamentalists, whom he constantly denounces.

In his strong criticism of Islamic fundamentalism Şenocak still exhibits a dialectical approach toward Islamic and non-Islamic views. Using the example of the Mohammed cartoons controversy, which had led to violent protests all over the Muslim world in 2006,³⁶ Şenocak first criticizes the Danish newspaper, the *Jyllands Posten*, and its editor, whose attitude, according to Şenocak, aimed at provoking the Muslim fanatics rather than discussing Islam and its theological principles. “Is this really what is left of European critical, progressive thinking?” he asks (*LHB*, 43), wondering if the distorted image of Islam current in so many editors’ minds still reflects the European Enlightenment. However, Şenocak also attacks Muslim fanatics sharply for their violent reactions and for not knowing better than to reproduce and live up to the European cliché of the Muslim radical. In this way, he argues, reality proved the cartoons right in the way that they depicted the Muslim as a terrorist, as a migrant who cannot be integrated, as a potential danger to an open Western society (44).

Şenocak explores the impact of the subsequent debate (“Karikaturenstreit”) upon European societies in terms of the rising disillusionment with multiculturalism. Quoting the chief editor of the *Jyllands-Posten*, who considered the integration of cultures an impossible project (as Şenocak quotes him: the “gulf between Western culture and the Muslim world” was “bigger than the Grand Canyon”), the Turkish-German author reminds his readers of the fact that metropolitan cities such as Berlin, London, or Paris are actually located precisely in that “Grand Canyon.” He warns against Europe’s clinging to “homogenisierende Kulturphantasien” (*LHB*, 44) and consequently resembling the Muslim world to a greater and greater extent; in doing so he questions the theory of a clash

of civilizations in general. Furthermore, the author refers to a contextual shift; Islamophobia is replacing anti-Semitism in right-wing propaganda, and a slogan like “Kauft euer Gemüse nicht bei Muslimen” (44) certainly rings a bell for him.

While the theoretical discourse inherent to the cartoon controversy was mainly focused on the binary oppositions of freedom of speech versus censorship, and of Muslim Aniconism (Bilderverbot) versus blasphemy, it also brought up the aspect of the counter-Enlightenment of Muslim society in general.³⁷ Şenocak, on the other hand (and many other Muslim intellectuals with him), is more interested in the tradition of Islamic Enlightenment, which he traces back to earlier centuries. Following his Iranian-German colleague SAID in this respect, Şenocak reminds his readers that there had been dialogue and interaction between Muslim, Christian, and Jewish cultures for hundreds of years, in places like Al-Andalus.³⁸ Seeing in this a model for an Islamic renaissance, Şenocak demands a new era of coexistence of different cultures. He therefore calls on his fellow Muslims to rediscover the rich tradition of Islamic philosophy, a tradition that, having been erased from European curricula, has also vanished from the Muslim collective memory, leaving the field open for fanaticism and fundamentalism. Trying to show examples of how that could work, Şenocak emphasizes the need for translations of existing Islamic literature and philosophy and the need for contemporary Muslim philosophers who could help transform Islam into a modern religion, as well as stressing the importance of a new form of language to enable controversial thinking.³⁹

Analyzing the structural problems of Islam, Şenocak suggests a need to decipher its inner logic, distinguishing between Samuel Huntington’s notion of a clash between different cultures and what he sees as a cultural clash within Islamic culture itself (*LHB*, 47). With the traditional feeling of the superiority of the Muslim world toward other cultures comes the tendency to ignore the challenges of the modern world—the “Denkfaulheit” for which his father had reproached his fellow Muslims (15). Consequently, Zafer Şenocak urgently demands an honest and thorough analysis of the real reasons behind the vicious circle of terror and violence, and therefore a discussion of the culturally immanent problems of Islam. Still far removed from such a discussion, contemporary radical Islam appears to Şenocak to be suffering from a “lebensbedrohliche Fieberattacke in der Modernisierungskrise.” However, any dialogue with Islam has to be based on differentiation and ambiguity, as Şenocak explains in two central essays that explore the structures of a possible dialogue with Islam. These essays, published under the programmatic title “Spielräume für Mehrdeutigkeit I” and “II” (45–52), address Western and Muslim readers alike. Şenocak reminds them of a fatal misunderstanding between Western and Muslim societies, which manifests itself in the former ignoring the constituent violence in the latter: Any dialogue with Islam is doomed

from the beginning if the West acts rationally and skeptically in a dialogue while Muslims act as representatives of a traditional religion with an absolute claim to truth (49). As long as this mismatch exists, the dialogue will not work—a view shared by scholars, too.⁴⁰

The dialogue between Islam and Christianity, as Şenocak repeatedly points out, was once facilitated by shared heritage. Authors as recent as Johann Wolfgang von Goethe or Alphonse de Lamartine could still fall back on knowledge about Islam and its principles. How can it be, Şenocak ponders, that this knowledge has vanished from collective European memory? The positive “scope of ambiguity,” as he calls it, thus emerges from an absence, from the void in European consciousness that has replaced the memory of cultural coexistence in former epochs. Likewise, the achievements of Islam have been obliterated from the Muslim heritage, turning, as Şenocak complains, Muslims into “Analphabeten ihres eigenen kulturellen Erbes” (*LHB*, 51). In order to take up the dialogue where it once was interrupted by so-called “holy wars,” both sides need to meet as equals and open themselves up to self-criticism. Şenocak argues that at the center of any debate that is meant to be constructive there has to be self-criticism, and that criticism of the other can only be launched from a self-reflective attitude. This is the foundation of a “Gespräch mit Spielräumen für Mehrdeutigkeit” (51), of a dialogue with scope for ambiguity. For the poet Şenocak this ambiguity is echoed in Islamic mysticism, and he affirms that it still can be traced in his recent poetic work.⁴¹

Being anything but an advocate of simple arguments, Şenocak deploys his principle of skepticism and dialectical thinking throughout his entire literary work. In his fictional prose he uses irony as a means to undermine fixed identities, and he often leads his figures into labyrinths in order to deprive them of any orientation. Indeterminacy becomes a major principle in narratives where “gender, text, nation and origin” often enough dissolve, as Moray McGowan has pointed out in an essay on Şenocak’s male prose figures.⁴² Though not obviously or avowedly Muslim, these protagonists (as, for example in his third prose book *Der Erottomane*, 1999) represent the Turkish-German man. But while they might be expecting a Muslim prototype, the German reading audience never get what they expect, for “Şenocak’s Turkish-German man,” explains McGowan, “is postmodern, polymorphous, sometimes indeed androgynous, affirming and exploring the dissolution of boundaries”⁴³—in short, a complete nightmare to any ordinary Muslim radical. In this respect Şenocak’s routine deployment of pornographic language and images, as seen in *Der Mann im Unterhemd* as well as in *Der Erottomane*,⁴⁴ goes against the rigid notion of cleanliness and purity of a Sharia-focused, radical Islam.

As a prose author, Şenocak deliberately writes against the grain of Muslim conformity, transferring the skepticism of earlier Muslim philosophy to his fiction. The topographies of his erotic narration stand for what

he calls “Die Vermessung des dunklen Kontinents” (as the essay is called; *LHB*, 59–62). Şenocak’s essays on Islam, as well as his literary prose, create a realm of ambiguity, a metaphorical topography behind the letters, and mark what Leslie A. Adelson calls the “Turkish Turn” in contemporary German literature.⁴⁵

Moving now toward German literature and its encounters with Islam: the dialogue between Islam and the West appears at the center of Christoph Peters’s *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges*, which was published in August 2006 to great acclaim. It featured at the 2006 Frankfurt Book Fair, alongside John Updike’s *Terrorist* and Kiran Nagarkar’s *Gottes kleiner Krieg*, two novels on similar themes that were published in German translation that same year.⁴⁶ At a time when suitcase bombings had been averted only by luck in Germany, the German reading audience was presented with three new novels, all featuring a Muslim terrorist as protagonist. Though not too unexpected in the global context of the September 2001 attacks and the wave of terror that has spread out over Europe since then, the figure of an Islamic radical is exceptional in contemporary German literature, since very few contemporary German (that is, German-born) writers have created Muslim protagonists.⁴⁷ The Muslim generally does not yet have a role or a voice of his own in contemporary German literature.

In this respect Christoph Peters (born 1966)⁴⁸ provides the readers of his novel *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* with a surprise, as the hero Abdullah is neither of Muslim nor of foreign origin. Abdullah’s real name is Jochen Sawatzky, and he is a German convert to Islam. Given that a growing number of Germans have converted to Islam over the past years, Peters’ hero reflects a historical development as well as offering the possibility for identification, since he is of the same cultural background as most of his German readers. The novel is set in Egypt in 1993 and is divided into two narratives. The first part (*ZHK*, 9–82) follows a group of Muslim terrorists on their way from a secret camp in the mountains of the Egyptian desert to the temple area of Luxor, which they plan to bomb. They are, however, ambushed and overwhelmed by the Egyptian military. Six of the nine terrorists are killed in action; three, among them the protagonist, are wounded and imprisoned. The narrative reports the events of one day (14 November 1993) in a highly dramatic way. Suspense is created as the first-person narrator, Jochen Sawatzky, alias Abdullah, slowly prepares himself for the forthcoming raid, only to face death some few hours later. The second part of the novel finds Sawatzky in solitary confinement in an Egyptian prison. The German ambassador to Egypt, Claus Cismar, who is introduced as the second protagonist, deploys all diplomatic means to save the German convict from the probable death penalty. Their three meetings in prison result in dialogues, in the course of which the diplomat tries to understand the terrorist’s motivation for his actions, but without any success. Alongside these scenes we are offered episodes

from Cismar's private life in Egypt—he is unhappily married to a German theatre critic and starts an affair with a colleague from the French embassy. In the end Cismar collapses with an acute stomach ulcer and symptoms of stress and has to leave Cairo in a hurry before the Sawatzky case is resolved. Apparently the German terrorist is sentenced to death and hanged. The second part of the narrative covers the period from 15 November to 14 March and the greater part of the novel.

This text is technically interesting, using various voices—first or third-person, inner monologue, administrative report, and scriptural quotation. The action can thus be viewed from a personal, political, theological, or administrative perspective. The various perspectives are maintained in order to thwart any simple understanding of events. The failed terrorist attack comes as a surprise to both terrorists and readers at the end of part 1, and the result of Cismar's unsuccessful efforts to get the convict out of prison is only revealed at the end of the novel. A second line of suspense is created through Sawatzky's and Cismar's confrontation during their meetings in prison; here the novel develops the idea that the protagonists are themselves conflicting personalities. Two very different men, who at the same time are very much alike, negotiate their points of view. Cismar had once favoured leftist radicalism and now enjoys a bourgeois life in a leading position as the representative of the German state. Sawatzky got deeply involved in a version of Islam, turned into a terrorist, was convicted, and now faces the death penalty, but he is not willing to compromise. Diplomacy meets real radicalism; existential ennui meets existential wrath. With the dialogue with Islam being staged literally, the novel centres around the key question of why somebody would become so fanatical as to kill for an ideology. In this way Peters echoes public discourse after the September 2001 attacks.

The protagonist's profile is established retrospectively. Jochen Sawatzky suffered from the typical unsettled childhood with an absent father, an American GI, and a mentally unstable, equally absent(-minded) mother.⁴⁹ Because of his interrupted schooling, drug experiences, and petty crimes, the youngster gradually became alienated from society, until he hit rock bottom. Redemption then came through Islam, specifically through a group of young Muslim radicals and through an Arab woman. Having fallen in love with the beautiful Arua, Jochen not only wanted to convert to Islam but at the same time developed an ambition to make amends and to give her proof of his courage. Thoroughly detesting the system that failed him, he now wants to fight it. Sawatzky's mission is a strange mixture of romanticism (he imagines how Arua will cry at the news of his heroic death; 25), determination, and despair: "Wer seine Wunschvorstellungen dem Kampf auf Gottes Weg vorzieht, endet als Kleinbürger" (25), he says, repeating a slogan common to any revolutionary commitment. His commitment is,

however, to God, as he constantly recites *suras* from the *Koran*, affirming the Holy Book's revelatory impact on him:

Man will flüchten, sich an einem geheimen Ort verstecken, für alle Zeit unauffindbar sein. Aber das Buch ist stärker. Es hält einen fest, bricht den Widerstand. . . . So ist es gewesen. . . . Ich habe auf meiner Unvoreingenommenheit beharrt, und doch ist passiert, wovon die Gläubigen rund um den Erdball berichten. . . . Ich redete mir ein: Es ist nur eine Übersetzung, sie kann keine Wirkung haben. Trotzdem: Zum ersten Mal, seit mein Gedächtnis etwas vermerkt, herrschte Ruhe. Und sie kehrte wieder, immer wenn ich las. (32–33)⁵⁰

The account of his personal revelation shows that the former outcast from German society has now become part of the *umma*, the worldwide community of believers who share his personal experience of being overwhelmed by a spiritual feeling. His complete submission to the authority of the divine brings him the spiritual peace for which he always wished. What he experiences is the well-known experience of personal salvation through spirituality, which can happen in any religion. But he also gives proof of what Şenocak criticizes as the unreflected claim to truth of an Islamism that is merely focused on the orthodox repetition of the *Koran* instead of its interpretation.⁵¹ In this way, the convert's new name, Abdulla, hints at his new role as a "servant of Allah" (its literal meaning).

Sawatzky comes to embrace terrorism via the political activity of his new peer group of Islamists in Germany, led by the Egyptian student Kairin, through whom the German convert gets involved in the political context of the radical Islamist movement in the Arab world.⁵² Peters depicts the political environment in Egypt with reference to the Middle East conflict, the 9/11 attacks, and the ensuing war in Afghanistan, and also evokes the issue of European tourism to Egypt. Islamist terrorism is pointedly aimed at Western tourists in order to damage the Egyptian government by restricting its most important source of foreign exchange. By bombing the classic tourist sites, such as the temple of Luxor, they hope to force the government into giving up its pro-Western policy and its rigid suppression of Islamist activities.⁵³

Peters elaborates on the different aspects of Islamist politics and their context by presenting the official reaction of the Egyptian government (mirrored in the diplomatic notes), as well as voices from the Egyptian general public (for example, Cismar's chauffeur, who supports Islamism). While the panic of the European tourists is anticipated by the terrorists, the German diplomatic community acts rather indifferently to the ongoing conflict. Cismar's own German wife is more frightened than his French lover, who displays a more critical attitude. The European community is heterogeneous in itself, yet distinct from the Egyptians.

In trying to liberate the German terrorist from prison, Claus Cismar thus represents an isolated position.

The reason behind this is explained in terms of his own political background. The son of an East-German baron who was a National Socialist official, Cismar grew up in a Catholic family in the East-German countryside. He was a law student in 1968 and was politically influenced by this epoch. Though different from the less privileged Sawatzky, the young Cismar, too, had tended toward radicalism and sympathized with the German radical Rote Armee Fraktion (RAF), partly because he was ashamed of his father's political heritage: "Er schämte sich" (155). But the more radical the RAF became, the more he distanced himself from the political escalation, believing in gradual change through institutions rather than through killings:

Man konnte Einzelpersonen töten, gegen Strukturen halfen auch Bomben nicht. Was blieb, war "der lange Marsch durch die Institutionen" . . . Die Entscheidung war ein Opfer. Sie bedeutete den Abschied von Helden und Taten, die mit ihrer Entschlossenheit und Kraft alles zum Guten wenden konnten. Statt dessen wurde er Teil des Systems. (155)

Like Sawatzky, Cismar, too, "converts," but his conversion is not a glorious one, as he is merely converted into a member of the bourgeoisie. This enables him, nevertheless to make his way through the system, taking on the representative role of ambassador; subsequently he consolidates his position through marriage to a bourgeois woman who is completely ignorant of his political past.⁵⁴ Cismar now uses his position to make contact with the young German radical. Even though he is confronted with difficulties during their meetings, he is determined to keep up the dialogue, in order to get to know as much as possible about the convict for the sake of freeing him (ZHK, 195). Their discussion touches on general evaluations of the two different political movements. To Cismar they are very much alike in their propagandistic aspect: the Islamists phrases do not differ much from those of the German terrorists of the 1970s, except for the fact that "Gott spielte damals keine Rolle" (132). Yet Sawatzky fiercely rebukes the post-1968 movement for its "materialism," for merely being concerned with power and property, without touching the "heart." When he starts reciting from the *Koran* instead, Cismar feels that the discussion gets out of control (138-43) and later admits that there is no time for "politische Grundsatzebatten" (195) within their short meetings. Peters indicates that the time limit is not the only reason for his aversion to a deeper discussion: in the history of the RAF, too, certain questions of principle (notably the "Gewaltfrage") remained unanswered (160). In this way, Cismar's discussions with Sawatzky seem to serve as a continuation of former RAF-related debates. The figure of Cismar is presented as an

alternative model; in contrast to the young Muslim activist he abandoned radical ideas for the sake of an alternative (the long march through institutions). Consequently, the dialogue fails, as do both characters; Cismar loses his position, and Sawatzky is eventually hanged. Still, there has been a subtle development in their relationship, especially in the way the elder ambassador succeeds in establishing a protective father role for the young prisoner (305), and despite the situation and their confrontation, personal affection develops.⁵⁵ At this point the dialogue takes place between two generations, with the elder one handing down advice to the younger. On the whole, the "dialogue between Islam and democracy," as it could be called, does not arrive at any concrete solution or any answer.

Critics who have compared Peters's novel to similar subjects in the novels of Nagarkar and Updike were disappointed with the German novel, as it did not satisfy their expectations.⁵⁶ Most critics would have liked to know more about the various reasons for Sawatzky's conversion, calling for a literary depiction of what Şenocak has called the "scope of ambiguity." This all the more astonishing in that the author himself describes the writing process, which took a full decade, as having been inspired by a German convert and Hizbullah activist who had been arrested in Israel in 1997. In September 2001, with the novel still underway, his intention of presenting the protagonist as plausibly as possible, up to the point that the Western reader begins to question himself, was thrown into question.⁵⁷ Nonetheless, Peters does succeed in doing this. In fact, the Westerner figure in his text has to struggle hard to prove the Muslim radical's arguments wrong, and starts to question himself, something that in turn has consequences for the reader, who gets the chance to reflect on the arguments made by both sides rather than just stick to one singular (Western) point of view.⁵⁸

In a time of intense debate on Islam, the two writers, Peters, the German Christian, and Şenocak, the German-Turkish Muslim, engage in dialogue with Islam from differing points of view. Christoph Peters staged the debate between the religious and the secular from the position of a Western novelist without personal insight into Islam. Still, describing himself as having been a Catholic fundamentalist first and later a sympathizer with left-wing extremism,⁵⁹ Peters claims personal insights into both political and spiritual fundamentalism, as well as claiming to introduce a historical dimension to the debate on radicalism. He therefore imagines what Islamic fundamentalism could be like and tries to explore this through his treatment of the theme of political fanaticism. The end of his novel shows that dialogue fails under restrictions of time and political pressure, and that it fails as soon as terrorism is involved.⁶⁰

Zafer Şenocak in his essays in *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben*, on the other hand, suggests a new interpretation of the *Koran* and a new skepticism toward the holy word as the basic principle of communication.

Coming from a family background that included the secular as well as the religious, he is well acquainted with having to negotiate between different positions. By his understanding, a "fatal speechlessness" characterizes the Muslim community today, resulting in massive frustration, which then again erupts in fanaticism and violence. Merely equipped with the *Koran*, Şenocak argues, today's Muslims are lost in the world, homeless in the present time, prisoners of their self-built mental ghetto and reductive ideology. Following his own negative hermeneutic, the author explores the unspoken, uncanny realms of religion and poetry, the "land behind the letters." This also links him to the culture of the Ottoman period, or to the epoch of Al-Andalus, when Islamic culture offered a wider range of theological and artistic freedom. With contemporary Islam facing huge transformations, it seems essential to create a link to this forgotten Islamic tradition, he argues. But there is no communication between the generations as yet.⁶¹

In Şenocak's case the "turn" to history means reconnection with the Islamic renaissance, emphasizing the role of translators who can transfer messages from the past into the complicated present. However, this task must be performed by both Muslims and the West. The West, too, should be aware of its own contradictory process of cultural transformation, in order to expect a similarly contradictory culture from Islam. He notes, "Wer heute das Gespräch mit Muslimen sucht, sollte sich an die Geschichte erinnern und nicht so tun, als sei das christliche Erbe Europas identisch mit den Werten der Aufklärung. Das christliche Abendland hat ähnlich wie das muslimische Morgenland eine in sich widersprüchliche Kultur hervorgebracht" (*LHB*, 100). Cismar, in Peters's novel, enters the debate with a Muslim radical, confronting him with newer German history. What if he had argued with the tradition of the Islamic Renaissance instead? Şenocak underlines the necessity for referring to the liberal tradition in Islamic heritage when entering a dialogue. "Wie töricht ist es heute, angesichts dieser Komplexität, den Islam jenen Kräften zu überlassen, deren kultureller Alphabetismus und arrogante Ignoranz Gewalt und Barbarei produzieren" (100). In this way both authors argue with respect to history, thus introducing a "historical turn" into the contemporary dialogue with Islam—however differently they depict it.

Notes

- 1 In July 2006 two suitcase-bombs were found in (and safely removed from) regional trains in Dortmund and Koblenz, both of them set by Islamist terrorists. In September 2007 police averted several bombings aimed at Frankfurt airport, a NATO-airbase in Ramstein, and several US facilities by arresting three suspects. They all belonged to a so-called Islamist "Dschihad-Union."

² See Alice Schwarzer, ed., *Die Gotteskrieger und die falsche Toleranz* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2002); Günther Lachmann, *Tödliche Toleranz: Die Muslime und unsere offene Gesellschaft* (Munich: Piper, 2005).

³ In German: "Besondere Verhaltensweisen wie z. B. einen Bruch im Lebenswandel, radikal-verbale Äußerungen oder Beschäftigung mit einschlägiger Literatur." See two articles in the German newspaper *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: Martin Thuruau, "Schläfer-Suche an der Universität," 14 Mar. 2007; and Steffen Heinzelmann, and Martin Thuruau, "Universitäten sollen Islamisten melden," 15 Mar. 2007. With the dread of Islamist terror attacks in Germany becoming more and more concrete, the Bavarian Minister of the Interior, Günther Beckstein (who became Bavarian Minister-President in 2007), saw a "highly abstract danger." Criticism came from most of the Bavarian universities' chancellors, who pointed out the fatal effect on the reputation of German universities abroad.

⁴ The standard publication on Muslims in Germany is Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, *Muslime in Deutschland: Positionen und Klärungen*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2002) (new edition forthcoming Sept. 2009). See also Faruk Şen and Hayrettin Aydin, *Islam in Deutschland* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002).

⁵ Recent studies on migrants of the second generation place the focus on religion: see Klaus Kreitmeir, *Allahs deutsche Kinder: Muslime zwischen Fundamentalismus und Integration* (Munich: Patloch, 2002); and Gabriele Swietlik, "Als ob man zwei verschiedene Köpfe in einem hätte . . ." — Religiöse Sozialisation zwischen Islam und Christentum," in *Alltag und Lebenswelten von Migrantenjüngendlichen*, ed. Iman Attia and Helga Marburger (Frankfurt am Main: IKO, 2000), 139–56. Until recently there has been little interest in the academic discussion of Islam in contemporary German literature. For earlier discussions, see Walter Dostal, Helmut A. Niederle, and Karl R. Wernhart, eds., *Wir und die Anderen: Islam, Literatur und Migration*, Wiener Beiträge zur Ethnologie 9 (Vienna: WUV Univ. Verlag, 1999).

⁶ Zafer Şenocak, *Das Land hinter den Buchstaben: Deutschland und der Islam im Umbruch* (Munich: Babel, 2006). Further references to this work are given in the text using the abbreviation *LHB* (where necessary for clarity) and the page number. All translations are my own unless indicated otherwise.

⁷ Christoph Peters, *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* (Berlin: btb, 2006). Further references to this work are given in the text using the abbreviation *ZHK* (where necessary for clarity) and the page number.

⁸ See Werner Schiffauer, *Die Gottesmänner: Türkische Islamisten in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 2000).

⁹ See Günther Lachmann, *Tödliche Toleranz*.

¹⁰ See Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

¹¹ Amartya Sen: *Identity and Violence. The Illusion of Destiny*. New York (Penguin) 2006. Quote from "Muslims and Intellectual Diversity," 14–16.

¹² See Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*, 7–9, and chapter 1, esp. 13.

¹³ See Amartya Sen, "Muslims and Cultural Diversity," in *Identity and Violence*, 14–16. This is echoed by a recent study on European Muslim elites, who apparently

tend to the political left wing while at the same time defining themselves as "very religious." See also Jytte Klausen, *Europas muslimische Eliten: Wer sie sind und was sie wollen* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2006), 37.

14 In this respect most of these authors differ from the many authors of books on Islam, who write in a pseudo-expert manner from an outside position. See Ursula Spuler-Stegemann's critical chapter on books on Islam in her *Muslimen in Deutschland*, 28–31.

15 SAID, *ich und der islam* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005). The following quotations refer to the essay of the same title, "ich und der islam," 7–27.

16 Alongside these studies and reports about Iran and the Middle East, such as *Der Schrecken Gottes: Atzar, Hiob und die metaphysische Revolte* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005); *Schöner neuer Orient: Berichte von Städten und Kriegen* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003); *Iran—Die Revolution der Kinder* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000); and *Gott ist schön: Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999), Kermani also writes literary fiction. See more on his Web site, <http://www.navidkermani.de>.

17 See Navid Kermani, *Wer ist wir? Deutschland und seine Muslime* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009).

18 See interviews with Zaimoğlu in the context of the first Islam Konferenz, particularly: Daniel-Dylan Böhrer, "Ja, es gibt einen deutschen Islam," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 1 Oct. 2006.

19 See the following interviews: "Die Polemik vergiftet das soziale Klima: Gespräch mit dem Regisseur Neco Çelik und dem Schriftsteller Feridun Zaimoğlu über ihr Stück *Schwarze Jungfrauen*," *Islamische Zeitung*, 6 Apr. 2006; and "Guten Morgen, Deutschland!" *Islamische Zeitung*, 28 Sept. 2006. For further discussion see my article on Feridun Zaimoğlu in *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (KLG), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2007), 86. Nlg. 08/07 (86th supplement, Aug. 2007), 1–20, A–M. See also Margaret Littler's contribution in this volume. For those who are not familiar with Turkish history, "Kemalism" is the (founding) state ideology of the new secular Turkish Republic founded by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in 1923.

20 See Matthias Konzett, "Writing against the Grain: Zafer Şenocak as Public Intellectual and Writer," in *Zafer Şenocak*, ed. Tom Cheesman and Karin E. Yeşilada (Cardiff: U of Wales P, 2003), 43–60. For a detailed discussion of Şenocak's writing, see also James Jordan in that volume, "Zafer Şenocak's Essays and Early Prose Fiction: From Collective Multiculturalism to Fragmented Cultural Identities," 91–105; see also my entry "Zafer Şenocak" in the *Kritisches Lexikon zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur* (KLG), ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: edition text + kritik, 2006), 84. Nlg. 10/06 (84th supplement, Oct. 2006), 1–15, A–G. Leslie A. Adelson provides an American translation of central essays in Şenocak's *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland*, as well as an analytical introduction to his essayistic work in her introductory article, "Coordinates of Orientation: An Introduction," in her book *Zafer Şenocak: Atlas of a Tropical Germany: Essays on Politics and Culture, 1990–1998* (Lincoln, NE and London: U of Nebraska P, 2000), xi–xxxvii. The title refers to Şenocak's essay collection *Atlas des tropischen Deutschland* (Berlin: Babel, 1992).

21 Adelson, "Coordinates of Orientation," xxii.

22 See Şenocak's novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (Munich: Babel, 1998) as well as the following novels, which appeared in Istanbul, Turkey: *Alman Terbiyesi* (Istanbul: Alef, 2007) and *Köyk* (Istanbul: Alef, 2008). See Leslie Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature: Toward a New Critical Grammar of Migration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); and Tom Cheesman, *Cosmopolite Fictions: Novels of Turkish German Settlement* (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2007) for a closer analysis of Şenocak's central novel, *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*. See Karin Yeşilada, "Die klassische Migration gibt es nicht mehr: Interview mit Zafer Şenocak," at http://www.migration-boell.de/web/integration/47_2005.asp (Mar. 2009) for discussion of his Turkish work.

23 Adelson identifies Said's postcolonialist critique of Orientalist discourses as a key motif in Şenocak's essayistic prose. Adelson, "Coordinates of Orientation," xxviii.

24 Adelson, "Coordinates of Orientation," xxvii–xxviii.

25 See Şenocak, "Der Dichter und die Deserteure," in *War Hitler Araber? Irrführungen an den Rändern Europas* (Berlin: Babel 1994), 21–28, esp. 28. For an English translation and a commentary, see Şenocak, *Atlas of a Tropical Germany*, 37–42, esp. 42; and Adelson, "Coordinates of Orientation," xxix–xxx.

26 For a discussion of spatial metaphors (such as the locked room mentioned here), see Leslie A. Adelson, "Against Between: A Manifesto" in Cheesman and Yeşilada, *Zafer Şenocak*, 130–43, esp. 138–41.

27 See Şenocak, *Atlas of a Tropical Germany*, 80.

28 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).

29 See Zafer Şenocak, "Jenseits der Landessprache," in his *Zwangsrenfernung: Bericht aus der Quarantänestation* (Munich: Babel, 2001).

30 German-Iranian author SAID, for example, also experienced an atmosphere of tolerance in his childhood. Born and raised in Tehran, capital of a Muslim country, he describes the "convivencia," the harmonious coexistence of his strictly religious grandmother, his Westernized cousin, and his religious, though non-practicing, Muslim father in a typical Persian family of that time. Although he later never practiced religion himself, he, like Şenocak, was deeply influenced by the intriguing atmosphere of Muslim culture. In his essay, "ich und der islam" (see note 15), he writes, "dennoch, soziologisch bin ich muslim, denn es ist nicht entscheidend, was der erwachsene später räsoniert, sondern was das Kind gesehen, gerochen und gehört hat" (9). SAID also alerts us to the great eras and topographies of Muslim, Jewish, and Christian "convivencia" in places like Andalusia, Baghdad, or Bosnia. The cultural peaks of those symbiotic epochs are echoed in the cultural mosaics of modern metropolitan centers like Berlin, Paris, London, or New York. In the aftermath of 9/11 SAID reminds us of the fragility of that harmony. See SAID: "Nachwort," in *Das Wunder von al-Andalus: Die schönsten Gedichte aus dem maurischen Spanien*, ed. and trans. from Arabic and Hebrew, with commentary by Georg Bossong (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005), 273–76.

31 SAID, who fled Iran twice and chose to remain in German exile and write using a pen name, is similarly critical of the totalitarian structures in Iran. Still, he refuses

to put the blame exclusively on the Islamist radicals, and he analyzes this growing radicalization of Islam in a dialectical manner instead, considering global as well as regional aspects. His personal remoteness from Islam saved him from being disappointed by the Islamic revolution and its ongoing terror. "Wieviel kraft müssen diese muslims aufbringen, um an ihrer religion festzuhalten—trotz der verheerenden auswüchse ihrer politik?" he asks in SAID, *ich und der islam*, 8–10.

32 Yunus Emre, *Das Kummernad / Dervili Dolap: Gedächtnis*, trans. and postscript by Zafer Şenocak (Frankfurt am Main: Dąyeli, 1986). Şenocak's translation (which preceded Annemarie Schimmel's later German version) was praised as "congenial" by critics.

33 The original says: "Der Islam braucht geistige Leitfiguren, die etwas anderes schaffen als die Regeln der Scharia nachzubeten. Er braucht musische, den Künsten und der Philosophie zugeneigte Interpreten" (39).

34 See the second essay in this chapter, "Ein Kalif, der Aktbilder malt," 35–40.

35 See his essay "Ingenieure des Glaubens" in *War Hitler Araber*, 9–20. "Der Islam der Ingenieure," he argues there, "ist eine mit mathematischer Präzision ausgeübte religiöse Engstirnigkeit" (17).

36 "Karikaturen des Glaubens—Europa wird der islamischen Welt immer ähnlicher" (*land*, 41–44). The article refers to the Mohammed cartoons controversy (in German referred to as "Karikaturenstreit"), which was triggered by twelve cartoons of the prophet Mohammed, first published on 30 Sept. 2005 in the Danish newspaper the *Jyllands-Posten* (under the title *Muhammads erstigt*—The Face of Mohammed). Meant to criticize (self-)censorship and radical Islam, the cartoons, some of which showed Mohammed as a terrorist with a bomb in a turban or as the guard of paradise ("Stop! We ran out of virgins!"), were republished on 17 Oct. 2005 by the Egyptian newspaper *El Fagr*. The violent protests against them did not start until Jan. 2006, then spread out over the Muslim world, leading to arson attacks on Scandinavian embassies, consumer boycotts in Middle East countries, lawsuits, and, above all, to the death of 140 people (mostly killed by the police during protests). For a survey of European press, cf. <http://signandsight.com/features/590.html> (Jun. 2009), as well as http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jyllands_Posten_Muhammad_cartoons_controversy (Jun. 2009) for an overview article. See also Silvia Naef, *Bilder und Bilderverbot im Islam vom Koran bis zum Karikaturenstreit* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2007); and Siegfried Jäger, *Der Karikaturenstreit im "Rechts-Mitte-Links"-Diskurs deutscher Printmedien, in Mediale Barrieren: Rassismus als Integrationshindernis*, ed. Siegfried Jäger and Dirk Halm (Münster: Unrast, 2007).

37 See the German-English publication by Bernhard Debatin, ed., *Der Karikaturenstreit und die Pressefreiheit: Wert- und Normenkonflikte in der globalen Medienkultur / The Cartoon Debate and the Freedom of the Press* (Berlin and Münster, Germany: Lit, 2007). See also Ursula Baatz, Hans Belting, and Navid Kermani, eds., *Bildersreit 2006: Pressefreiheit? Blasphemie? Globale Politik?* (Vienna: Picus, 2006).

38 The first collection of poetry from al-Andalus in the German language, *Das Wunder von al-Andalus*, was published as part of a series entitled "Neue Orientalische Bibliothek" at C. H. Beck publishers (see note 30 above). The series presents major

titles of classical and modern Persian and Arab literature in bibliophilic volumes. See <http://www.chbeck.de> (*Neue Orientalische Bibliothek Series*).

39 Şenocak, "eine Sprache, die zum kontroversen Denken anregt," in "Islam übersetzen" (*LHB*, 55).

40 Ursula Spuler-Stegemann constantly denounces the naive tolerance of Protestant church officials in particular towards radical Muslims, who do not necessarily consider themselves loyal to the constitution. See Ursula Spuler-Stegemann, ed., *Feindbild Christentum im Islam: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 2004). In Christoph Peters's fictional depiction of such a constellation, the dialogue indeed goes wrong.

41 Asked about the influence of Islamic poetry on his work in an interview, Şenocak replied, "Es gibt ja weiterhin noch oder immer wieder Spuren islamischer Mystik in meiner Poesie. Die kritische Beschäftigung mit der islamischen Religion spielt ja auch in meiner essayistischen Arbeit eine wichtige Rolle." See the whole interview as part of an online special on migrational literature on the Web site of the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung, "Die klassische Migration gibt es nicht mehr: Interview mit Zafer Şenocak" http://www.migration-boell.de/web/integration/47_2005.asp.

42 Moray McGowan, "Odysseus on the Ottoman, or 'The Man in Skirts': Exploratory Masculinities in the Prose Texts of Zafer Şenocak," in Cheesman and Yeşilada, *Zafer Şenocak*, 61–79.

43 See McGowan, "Odysseus," 64.

44 Zafer Şenocak, *Der Mann im Unterhemd* (Berlin: Babel, 1995); *Der Erotoman: Ein Fendelbuch* (Munich: Babel 1999).

45 See Adelson, *The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature* and "Against Between: A Manifesto" on this matter.

46 John Updike, *Terrorist*, trans. Angela Pracsent (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2006); Kiran Nagarkar, *Gottes kleiner Krieger*, trans. Giovanni and Ditte Bandini (Munich: Al., 2006).

47 Sten Nadolny's *Selim oder Die Gabe der Rede* (Munich: Piper, 1992), and Thorsten Becker's *Sieger nach Punkten* (Reinbek: Rowohlt, 2004), are some of the rare exceptions.

48 Christoph Peters studied painting before becoming a writer. He has won several prizes for his writing.

49 There is no further hint in the novel about Sawatzky's possible feelings of embarrassment or even shame at being the illegitimate child of an American GI, nor about the fact that his later wrath is directed against his own origins. Peters leaves this ironic aspect open to speculation.

50 Sawatzky repeats this experience in the conversation with Cismar, blaming Western society for his breakdown, which, he insists, would have never happened to him in an Islamic country (184–86).

51 Şenocak describes today's Muslims in an essay as "Gefangene des eigenen Hauses" (*LHB*, 69–72). Further: "Heute stehen die Muslime mit dem Koran in der Hand und verloren auf der Welt da" (71).

52 For detailed information on the Muslim Brotherhood, see Johannes Grundmann, *Islamische Internationalisten: Strukturen und Aktivitäten der Muslimbruderschaft und der islamischen Weltliga* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005).

53 The terrorist's strategy resembles that of the 9/11 attacks in hoping to achieve maximum media impact: "Diesen Krieg entscheiden Bilder, nicht die Zahl der Opfer" (ZHK, 47).

54 Ines is in fact only interested in 1970s fashion, not politics, and uses terms such as "radicalism" only to describe the arts (ZHK, 156 and 159).

55 See ZHK, 305–6. When Cismar tells Sawatzky about his sudden and involuntary return to Germany, Sawatzky is really sorry. Cismar in return rewards him with the present of an expensive fountain pen.

56 According to some, the author did little more than present commonplace arguments, failing to illuminate the young radical's motivation to become a terrorist; other critics were disturbed by an excess of clichés. In contrast to this, Kiran Nagarkar's novel about his protagonist Zia Khan gradually turning into a radical Muslim terrorist was received with more appreciation. It seems, then, that Peters's novel was seen in the light of the other two existing novels.

57 See Peters in the interview with Julia Encke: "Es ist der Versuch, die islamistische Position argumentativ so aufzurichten, daß wir als Westler unsere ganze Energie aufbringen müssen, um sie zu widerlegen," in "Ich war ein katholischer Fundamentalist": Interview mit Christoph Peters, *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 Feb. 2006, 46. (Still available at www.faznet.de.)

58 Staging this dialogue as a battle of positions in a debate, Peters goes further than, for example, Feridun Zaimoğlu, whose radical Islamists, the "Yücel" figure in *Kanak Sprak* (1995), or the "Gotteskrieger" in *Zwölf Gramm Glück* (2004), (full bibliography in note 60) address their phrase-mongering about Islam to an anonymous, unreplying readership. Whenever these phrases meet a critical interlocutor, though, they become more fragile and open to contradiction (as the Muslim girls' positions in the two intertwined "Gottesanrufung" stories show).

59 See Julia Encke's interview, note 57 above.

60 It would be interesting to compare the Sawatzky figure to similar figures in German literature. Feridun Zaimoğlu depicted the figure of the radical Islamist German Turk twice: The Islamist "Yücel" in his early prose *Kanak Sprak: 24 Mißtöne vom Rande der Gesellschaft* (Hamburg: Rotbuch, 1995), 137–41, and the figure of the "Gottes Krieger" in his short-story collection *Zwölf Gramm Glück: Erzählungen* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 2004), 122–56. While "Yücel" expresses his radical views only in words, that is through verbal expression, the "Gottes Krieger" has been called to action by the leader of his sect. The story relates the emancipation of the former sect member from his radical Islamist sect: he leaves the sect because, first, he disapproves of the sect leader's double moral standards, and, second, because he starts a sexual relationship with a woman twice his age. Particularly the figure of the "Herzprediger," that is sect leader, recalls the Islamist terrorists of Al-Qaida. The radical Islamists in the story "Gottes Krieger" clearly reflect characteristics of the Islamist terrorists of Al-Qaida.

61 Jewish-German literature and thinking are significant for the subtext of Senocak's essays, and consequently he draws some parallels between Judaism and Islam as regards the historical transformation process. He bases his argumentation on his reading of Elie Wiesel and Franz Kafka (see "Ungeschriebene Briefe an die Väter" [LHB, 79–83], and "Postscriptum" [LHB, 85–86]). At a time when Judaism lost touch with some fundamental values at the end of the nineteenth century, writers like Sigmund Freud and Franz Kafka expressed the huge process of transformation of assimilating Jews into the European bourgeoisie. With contemporary Islam in a similar situation at the outset of the twenty-first century, parallel writer-figures are missing, thus leaving Muslims without any contextualization of the huge cultural clash that is going to divide generations, Senocak argues. While Kafka could, for example, ask his father about Jewishness (or rather blame him for no longer upholding it), Muslim sons and fathers remain silent. In this respect the young radical Jochen Sawatzky in Christoph Peters's novel *Ein Zimmer im Haus des Krieges* represents the silence between the generations, between sons and fathers, as he grew up fatherless. Peters links his radicalism to an epoch of German radicalism in the 1970s, showing the parallels between the two movements.