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Birthe Kundrus. *Phantasiereiche: Zur Kulturgeschichte des deutschen Kolonialismus.* Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003. 327 S. EUR 34.90 (leinen), ISBN 978-3-593-37232-7.

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Germans and Their Colonies

The cover of Birthe Kundrus' edited collection *Phantasiereiche* (*Empires of Fantasy*) is adorned with a satirical cartoon. It depicts Europe as an idealized woman whose sleep is troubled by the somewhat demonic African perched upon her chest. In the background are images of nightmares complicating European colonial efforts: John Bull burns his hand on the smoldering coals of the Transvaal, a spear-wielding Ethiopian menaces an Italian officer, a German man frowns at the bill for the colonies presented to him by his black maid, a thin King Leopold strains under the burden of the Belgian Congo, and a French soldier looks longingly at the pyramids of British Egypt.

More than just a catchy cover illustration for the book, this cartoon points to the central theme of the collection. For Germans, the colonial empire was not just a distant site for economic, political, or military affairs. Rather, it influenced metropolitan Germans' everyday lives in a variety of surprising ways. The empire also was not only a site for projecting fantasies of national renewal and social opportunity; the empire also struck back, imposing itself on the metropole in the form of colonial migrants and nightmares of miscegenation. But the traces of German colonialism can also be found in more mundane realms: in films, literature, advertising, and politics. In teasing out the diverse, widespread traces of empire in Germany, the fifteen contributions to this volume–drawn from an international and interdisciplinary workshop held at the University of Oldenburg in November 2001–illustrate the complexity and ambivalence that defined Germany's relationship with its colonial possessions and subjects. In the process, *Phantasiereiche* introduces an interdisciplinary, cultural studies approach to German colonialism and collects innovative works in German colonial studies, for the first time, for a German-language audience.

Germany's colonial empire lasted a mere three decades and never fulfilled the economic and demographic hopes of its most avid proponents. Nevertheless, the contributors find its recognizable traces throughout metropolitan politics, popular culture, physical space, personal experiences, and even in German ways of seeing the world around them.

The first group of five essays focuses on certain dreams of empire and their influence on the structures of German politics during the Wilhelmine Reich (1871-1918), the Weimar era (1918-1933), and the Third Reich (1933-1945). Not surprisingly, the nationalist ideology of colonial hero Carl Peters was founded on colonial aspirations, but Christian Geulen illustrates how colonialism was the basis for a radical, new form of nationalism in the Wilhelmine era, a future-oriented, social Darwinist nationalism that resembles Adolf Hitler's. Among radical nationalists more broadly during the Wilhelmine and early Weimar eras, as Helmut Bley argues, colonial claims were a necessary part of world power status. For those who had been involved with the economic "development" of the colonies, the loss of the overseas empire after the Great War did not mean an end to overseas involvement. On the contrary, as Dirk van Laak's essay contends, German economic planners in the Weimar and National Socialist eras tried to make the lack of colonial possessions into a virtue, advocating informal economic influence and claiming more legitimacy in dealing with colonized peoples. Throughout, though, their policies were based on renewed dreams of informal or future colonies as laboratories of modernity and as schools for training a pioneering nation.

These lingering colonial fantasies affected more than just nationalists, bureaucrats, and economists. As Pascal Grosse suggests, colonial issues influenced the very structures governing Germans' everyday lives. He examines debates over regulating the migra-

tion of colonial subjects into Germany between 1900 and 1940 and illustrates how the concept of "race" changed understandings of public and private in German society. In particular, the state used race to legitimize increasing involvement in the private sphere by claiming the need to protect public interests. More broadly, Grosse suggests that the category of race–understood through the lens of German colonialism–called the classical foundations of the bourgeois national state into question by subordinating a more integrative, universalist notion of citizenship to one defined eugenically.

All of the works in this first section implicitly, if not explicitly, draw connections between the colonial empire and the National Socialist regime. In her essay, though, Birthe Kundrus cautions against drawing too direct a line of continuity. In particular, she rejects the easy connection often drawn between colonial bans on miscegenation before the Great War and the Nuremberg race laws of 1935. Kundrus points to fundamental differences in both the nature of the envisioned colonial orders as well as the means to achieve them. To further illustrate that the Nazi regime was a fundamentally different regime, she compares the Nazis' treatment of Jews and blacks. Kundrus argues that the Nazis drew on colonialist ideas and means to develop their racial state but made significant distinctions between "Negroes" and "Jews" in theory and practice. The harshness of the measures derived from relative perceptions of danger from each group, and Kundrus uses these differing perceptions to distinguish between the legacies of anthropological racism and anti-Semitism in National Socialist policies.

This first section of essays explores the political dimensions of imperial fantasies, how colonial concerns and legacies shaped the political structures that shaped individuals' lives. The second set of essays explores how colonialism and colonial imagery were put into practice in German society. In this way, these contributions illustrate how colonialism–and the discourses and images associated with it–became a tool that Germans could use for a variety of purposes: to sell products and to challenge gender roles, for example. These works illustrate that it is important not only to consider how colonial imagery and societal structures affected individuals, but also how individuals actively worked within and shaped them.

The four contributions in the second section demonstrate the value of interdisciplinarity and are best read in pairs. The first two works by David Ciarlo and Sybille Benninghoff-Lühl consider the roles of images of the "other" but through dramatically different subjects. Ciarlo charts the use of colonial images in the developing field of professional advertising during the Wilhelmine era. He argues that the development of colonial and racial imagery in consumer culture was a complex process involving colonial dominance, racial discourses, mass culture, and the professionalization of advertising. Beginning around 1890, German advertisers brought in racialized images popular in American advertising, a field that defined itself as the epitome of modernity, to gain professional recognition. Around the turn of the century, particularly in the context of the Boer War, the focus turned from the merely exotic to depictions of "natives" that referenced actual relations in the German colonies. But by the 1910s, in the aftermath of the Herero/Nama war in Southwest Africa (1904-1908) and the so-called "Hottentot elections" (1907), Ciarlo notes the development of distinctly racialized images. He argues that advertisers turned to evocative stereotypes in a "scientific" effort to achieve the most efficient transmission of meaning to consumers. By contrast, Benninghoff-Lühl analyzes how various German commentators "read" the faces of apes in order to understand their own characters. Although seemingly unconnected to Ciarlo's theme, Benninghoff-Lühl's theoretical analysis, particularly of how subjects can have their characteristics "read" into them, offers interpretive questions for understanding how consumers may have related to Ciarlo's advertising images or products.

Lora Wildenthal's and John Noyes's contributions also complement each other. Both examine the complex interaction of gender with empire, but through different approaches. Through an examination of colonial women's organizations' efforts to influence colonial policy after 1900, Wildenthal focuses on the variable interactions of gender, race, and notions of civilization in German colonial affairs. She illustrates that men were not the only ones interested in colonial affairs by charting the efforts of middle class women's colonial organizations to exert influence over colonial policy. They tried to legitimate their activities by calling above all on the essential place of German women in ensuring a racially pure reproduction of German society (culturally and biologically) in the colonies. Only gradually after 1900 were they able to win over male opponents. John Noyes's textual analysis of Lene Haase's novel *Raggys Fahrt nach*

Südwest (*Raggy's Journey to Southwest Africa*) further complicates the use of gender in colonial affairs. As some of Wildenthal's subjects tried to use the colonies to expand the "legitimate" space for women's activities, Haase seeks to work through the contradictions of colonial settler society from the perspective of a woman interested in social and political equality. Noyes examines the narrative techniques Haase used to try to reconcile colonial and racial theories with progressive feminism and, in the process, illustrates how Haase both challenged and reinforced the various power structures at the heart of colonial relations.

These four interdisciplinary works emphasize how individuals and groups tried to manipulate colonialism for their own ends in the Wilhelmine era. The next section of three interdisciplinary essays takes this same approach into the Weimar era. Each contribution deals with a different aspect of colonial revisionism. Christian Rogowski begins with an analysis of the colonial revisionist movement immediately after the Great War. He points to the divisions among various colonialist interest groups–members of colonial societies, government officials, businesses with overseas concerns–as one reason for the public apathy toward their 1926 Colonial Week celebrations in Hamburg. Perceived as antiquated, overly chauvinistic, and amateurish, the celebrations failed to stimulate widespread public enthusiasm. Wolfgang Struck contextualizes this failure through his analysis of adventure films and changing depictions of "exotic" settings in the first years of Weimar. During the Wilhelmine era, officials would only allow colonized cultures to be depicted as absolutely subordinate objects of desire or conquest. They feared that if audiences identified with the colonial subject it might undermine the hierarchies on which colonial rule was based. But the loss of the empire freed adventure films from these strictures. Weimar adventure films turned to a fantasy of "unmediated contact" with the foreign world that was less interested in an absolute subordination or homogenization of the foreign subjects or landscapes, and this unfettered fantasy offered the opportunity for self- alienation (p. 278). While Struck cautions that these films should not be seen as critical reflections on colonial violence or racial hierarchies, he notes that they did introduce a new form of contact that partially and perhaps unintentionally undermined the official colonial narrative. In this context, charges of antiquated tactics leveled against the organizers of the 1926 celebrations suggest that colonial revisionists had not recognized that the interests of the public had changed in favor of new forms of cultural "contact" with the foreign.

Unfortunately, Eve Rosenhaft's excellent essay is the only one that deals with the experiences and activities of colonial subjects in the German metropole, a subject that has recently gathered an impressive literature around it.[1] Where Rogowski considers colonial revisionists and Struck considers exotic imagery that could undermine colonial hierarchies, Rosenhaft explores the overtly anti-colonial activities of Africans and Afro-Germans in the anti-racist movement during the Weimar era. She examines the dynamics that both facilitated and limited black political activity. The German public gave extra credibility to anti-racists when their skin was black, but not when they criticized Germans' own racism in their former colonies. Even in the Comintern, black activists could use their status to bring up race issues, while at the same time they were forced to deal with racism among their comrades.

All of the essays discussed above illustrate how Germany's colonial empire was a constant presence in the metropole, even when the empire itself ceased to exist. Alexander Honold's concluding essay demonstrates this most explicitly. He examines Berlin-Wedding's "African Quarter" and the different meanings its street names have taken in different eras. But as the other contributions show, the traces of German colonialism are not always so easy to see. Nevertheless, *Phantasiereiche* illustrates that understanding these traces is necessary for an understanding of the structures governing German society, for an understanding of the subjective categories that shaped Germans' everyday interactions, and for an understanding of Germans' efforts to manipulate both. Such an effort foregrounds the complexities and ambivalences of Germans' relationship with their (former) colonial empire.

Such is the project set forth by Kundrus and followed by the contributors to the volume. But where should German colonial studies go from here? Russell A. Berman's important introductory essay offers observations on the state of the field and innovative suggestions for future research. First, Berman emphasizes the need to connect unstable discourses with the everyday realities that construct them, a task for which cultural studies is well suited. Second, he cautions against the tendency to over-generalize or over-simplify and against an uncritical reading of the past through the lens of current debates–both of

these contribute to simplified colonial dichotomies. To foreground the significant gray areas in colonial relations–for example between collaboration and resistance, attraction and revulsion–Berman argues for an approach that acknowledges the ability of individuals to break out of discursive structures. Such an approach points to the ambivalence of colonial relations in general and allows for the common origins and contexts of contradictory aspects of colonialism: undeniable brutality and violence were intricately intertwined with anti-colonial discourses and concepts of a global humanity. To better understand this complexity he points to the value of considering German colonialism in the context of contested global processes of integration. He argues it is worthwhile to consider "the colonialism of the past as a complex prehistory for the globalization of the future" (p. 31). By locating German colonialism within a global context and by emphasizing individual action, Berman and other contributors complicate the volume's intention to find colonial traces in Germany. They remind us that German colonialism was not simply a matter of administrative control over distant lands and peoples. The empire was a real presence in the German metropole. It inspired both nightmares and fantasies that directly affected individuals' lives in contradictory ways.

For its illustration of colonialism's presence in Germany, for its interdisciplinary approach, and for its innovative suggestions for future research, *Phantasiereiche* is an important work for German colonial history and for German history in general. It combines the work of established scholars in the field with the important work of younger scholars from both sides of the Atlantic and collects it for the first time for a German-language audience. As such, it presents German scholars with many admirable examples of how cultural history–as practiced in the Anglo-American academy–can be usefully applied to German historiography. It also offers a helpful overview of current trends and recent works in German colonial history for those unfamiliar with the growing literature in the field. For these reasons *Phantasiereiche* deserves to stand with other seminal works in the cultural history of German colonialism as a must-read.[2] If it inspires new perspectives on an important and still understudied field of German history, then it will have achieved its purpose.

Notes

[1]. For an introduction into this literature, see Marianne Bechhaus-Gerst and Reinhard Klein-Arendt, eds., *Die (koloniale) Begegnung. AfrikanerInnen in Deutschland 1880/1945, Deutsche in Afrika 1880-1918* (Frankfurt/Main: Lang, 2003); Paulette Reed-Anderson, *Rewriting the Footnotes: Berlin und die afrikanische Diaspora* (Berlin: Die Ausländerbeauftragte des Senats, 2000); Katharina Oguntoye, *Eine afro-deutsche Geschichte. Zur Lebenssituation von Afrikanern und Afro-Deutschen in Deutschland von 1884 bis 1950* (Berlin: Hoho-Verlag Hoffmann, 1997); and Gerhard Höpp, ed., *Fremde Erfahrungen. Asiaten und Afrikaner in Deutschland, Österreich und der Schweiz bis 1945* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 1996).

[2]. John Noyes, *Colonial Space: Spatiality in the Discourse of German South West Africa, 1884-1915* (Philadelphia: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1992); Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997); Russell A. Berman, *Enlightenment or Empire: Colonial Discourse in German Culture* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop, *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2001).

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