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Ulrike Lindner, Maren Möhring, Mark Stein, Silke Stroh. *Hybrid Cultures. Nervous States: Britain and Germany in a (Post)Colonial World.* Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010. LXXIII + 346 S. ISBN 978-90-420-3229-3.

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U. Lindner u.a. (Hrsg.): Hybrid Cultures. Nervous States

(Post-)Colonial and ânew imperialâ histories have proliferated in recent years, both in the well-studied realm of the British Empire and its less well studied German counterpart. Based on the premise that colonialism constituted the societies of the colonizers as much as it upended and reconstituted those of the colonized, these histories suggest that the nation-state can no longer serve as the main frame of reference for writing European histories and that the âtensions of empireâ (Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler) must also be accounted for. As a consequence, more and more historians - in Europe and elsewhere - have adopted a âtransnationalâ perspective (or at least its rhetoric), even if it often remains unclear whether the transnational is indeed new or merely a new name for something that used to be called comparative history.

Hybrid Cultures - Nervous States also situates itself in this context. It seeks to compare British and German colonial experiences and their manifold political, social, and cultural legacies, as seen through - jargon alert! - âpostcolonial,â âtransnational,â âtransimperial,â and âinterdisciplinaryâ lenses. The goal is to unearth the trajectory from âthe complex relationship between the colonial, the postcolonial, and the neocolonialâ to âthe present and future predicament of the nation-state,â which is said to be âcharacterized by a complicated system of ruptures and continuitiesâ (xvii), for example, the âhybridityâ of immigrant societies shaped by âmulticulture.â The articles therefore draw on a wide array of themes. Ulrike Lindner and Michael Pesek outline British-German relations in Africa during the heyday of imperialism and in World War I. In a fascinating article, Eva Bischoff analyzes the fascination with serial killers Jack the Ripper and Peter KÃ¼rten from a postcolonial perspective. Joachim Zeller and Elizabeth Buettner discuss the memory of colonialism in Germany and Great Britain, respectively. Laura Julia Rischbieter, Christine Vogt-William, Maren MÃ¶hring, and Peter Jackson all examine (post)colonial consumer culture through food and drink, focusing on the cultural history of, respectively, coffee, tea, dÃ¶ner kebab, and curry dishes and chicken tikka masala. Maureen Maisha Eggers, Deirdre Osborne, Silke Stroh, and Markus Schmitz focus on contemporary themes, including feminism, theater, film, and the integration (or lack thereof) of immigrants.

Most of the contributions were originally presented at a conference at the University of MÃ¼nster in May 2007. See the conference report by Kirsten Prinz, âHybrid Cultures - Nervous States: Insecurity & Anxiety in Britain and Germany in a (Post)Colonial World,â H-Soz-u-Kult, July 13, 2007. Last accessed May 15, 2014. It is therefore perhaps only to be expected that the articles in the volume do not necessarily add up to form a coherent whole, despite the editorsâ attempt, in their introduction, to impose a certain order and coherence. Some argue from a genuinely comparative and often indeed transnational perspective, while others focus only on one of the two countries/empires in question. Not surprisingly, the latter group, in particular, occasionally establishes connections and relationships that are at best tenu-

ous - to juxtapose, for example, Black British drama with Black German feminism or the representation of Muslims in British film with political and cultural debates about multiculturalism and immigration in Germany is perhaps closer to comparing apples and oranges than âcultural differences and the debates on national belonging,â as the relevant section of the book is entitled. By far the most puzzling editorial decision, however, is the omission of a British counterpart to Sara Lennoxâ self-congratulatory essay on the transition âfrom postcolonial to transnational approaches to German studies,â as if a transnational or comparative perspective on the development of (post)colonial historiographies in both contexts were misplaced in a volume on, well, transnational and comparative perspectives on (post)colonial histories.

That said, *Hybrid Cultures - Nervous States* is overall a worthwhile collection, which thrives on the strength of the editorsâ focused introduction and of several (though not all) of the individually authored articles, particularly the ones that offer a genuinely comparative perspective. Since this review cannot do justice to them all, some examples may suffice: Michael Pesekâs article compares the experiences of British and German missionaries, settlers, colonial administrators, and soldiers in East Africa taken prisoner by the respective other side during World War I. Drawing on letters, reports, and memoirs, Pesek shows how both British and German colonizers found themselves apparently belittled, disrespected, and made a spectacle in front of the colonized by people who were supposed to be allies in the colonial order of white over black. (It is unfortunate, however, that Pesek dedicates only a brief section to the German experience.) He zeroes in on the concerns shared by Britons and Germans that this treatment might undermine colonial rule as a whole, even while they were each working on undermining or at least besting each other as well. He thus highlights the complex interplay of race and national identities in the European colonial projects, carefully delineating where this interplay differed from one country to another and where it followed rather similar patterns.

Charting a different course, Eva Bischoff uses the cases of serial killers Jack the Ripper and Peter KÃ¼rten as a lens onto the construction of (white) masculinity in the context of imperial societies. She delineates how knowledgeabout human sexuality, sexual deviance, and criminology around the turn of the century wasâ sometimes directly, sometimes more indirectly, though metaphors and figures of speechâinformed by the colonial situation and European fantasies of cannibalism, as well as the social constructions of gender, race, class, and culture they entailed.

Yet differently, Maren MÃ¶hring uses the idea of DÃ¶ner Kebab as a dish representative of multicultural Germany to trace the invention of postcolonial, multicultural traditions. (Peter Jacksonâs companion piece on the British-Indian invention of curry and particularly Chicken Tikka Masala complements MÃ¶hringâs article well.) She shows how DÃ¶ner was from the beginning a German-Turkish co-production that thrived on both its immigrant and its native customer bases and sought to appeal to both groupsâ tastes. She also shows how its growing popularity allowed it to become a symbol for the culture wars fought between nativists and multiculturalists (to make a simple, albeit flawed distinction)about what and who can rightfully be considered German.

These varied perspectives are by and large interesting, stimulating, and innovative. In that sense, the book succeeds in pulling together an interdisciplinary and at least partially, yes, comparative and transnational potpourri of research. Yet it also shows quite clearly that much more research is needed before its premise and promise can be considered fulfilled: Writing the transnational history of imperialism and post-imperialismis a worthy endeavor, as this collection shows quite aptly. But the book shows equally well that much work is still left.

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