Persistence of Eurocentric orders and divisions

Reflections on »postcolonial scholarship« and the disentanglement of »race« and »religion«

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Introduction

Since its appearance as a discipline, the field of postcolonial studies has been contested, elusive, and open in terms of its boundaries, analytical lenses, and interrogations. Its formation and history do not resemble the emergence of »a new [and neat] discipline, nor [that of] a clearly identifiable field of research« (Seth, Gandhi, and Dutton 1998, 8). Rather, its critical terrain has been imagined and conceptualized as »a gesture […] towards an examination and critique of knowledges« (Seth, Gandhi, and Dutton 1998, 8). Equally, its multiple statuses as »a chronological moment, a political movement, and an intellectual activity« have rendered an »exact definition difficult« (Moore-Gilbert 1997, 1), while challenging a single answer to the questions of »what is« and »when was« the post-colonial (Hall 1996, 242). However, as postcolonial scholars themselves have noted, the moment of »institutional validity« (Seth, Gandhi, and Dutton 1998, 9)—the moment of being exposed to the epistemological seductions of canonicity and disciplinarity in Western universities—did not simply vanish without a trace. Quite the contrary, this moment informed which foci were to be set, which research questions were to be asked, and which modes of interpretations were to be evoked and applied in order to understand the inclusion and exclusion of (post-)colonial societies.[1] As a result, these epistemological movements became rooted

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1   In doing so, the very term *postcolonial* has not gone uncontested (cf. McClintock 1995; Shohat 1992; West-Pavlov 2013, 158–74; Stoler 2016).

in »selective directions« (Stoler 2016, 40) and in particular analytical pathways of postcolonial scholarship and analysis. One major and important debate addressing issues and consequences of selective directions has divided postcolonial scholars along Marxist and poststructural lines of inquiry (cf. Parry 2004, 2012; Young 2012). As this debate illustrates, it is not only the exclusion but also the reiteration of definitions, research questions, and frameworks as well as modes of inquiry and critique which institutionalize and strengthen selective directions (cf. Lazarus and Varma 2008). We are convinced that this also holds true for the isolated interrogations of race and religion in strands of postcolonial scholarship.

The selective directions chosen by—or forced upon—strands of postcolonial analysis have from the very outset focused on the one while isolating the other: focusing on race at the expense of religion. While postcolonial scholars have problematized the emphasis on race and ethnicity for some time now,[2] it is only recently that others have suggested bringing religion back into the focus of postcolonial analysis.[3] To say this is, at the

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In the following, we differentiate between postcolonial and post-colonial, the former delineating critical conversations and interrogations aligned with the toolbox of postcolonialism and the latter designating a temporal and unfinished trajectory.

2   In one of the first issues of the *Journal for Postcolonial Studies*, Michael Dutton, Michele Grossman, Leela Gandhi, and Sanjay Seth briefly mention the problem of taking race as the master signifier of postcolonial analysis while sidelining other analytical categories: »As the categories of nation and class have been relegated to the sidelines, ethnicity and race have become the central organising principles of postcolonialism. The unfortunate result has been that problems and inequalities that do not have their origins in ethnicity or race become neglected or else misunderstood, while these categories become inflated in their reach, sometimes even reinforcing the ethnic essentialisms that postcolonial critics in fact intend to deconstruct« (Dutton et al. 2001, 12–13).

3   In particular, this has happened by bringing Islam into the focus. Robert Young (2012, 28), for example, argues that while »the question of representing or covering (up) Islam was always central to the work of Edward W. Said, it was not a major preoccupation of postcolonial studies as a whole in its first twenty or so years of existence. If, since its inception in academic form with Said's *Orientalism* in 1978, postcolonial thinking

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very least, to suggest that race has remained a master signifier of analysis, or that religion has remained sidelined and absent from postcolonial thinking in general. Just as race has been developed into an entangled category—for example with that of gender or/and sexuality (Zantop 1999; Stoler 1995)—religion, too, has been examined in order to trace the violence related to the colonial (cf. Asad 1993; Chidester 1999; Fitzgerald 2007; King 1999; Masuzawa 2005; Comaroff and Comaroff 2008). This is not to suggest that the entanglement of race and religion has yet to be voiced, interrogated, or conceptualized as such (cf. Anidjar 2003, 2008; Kalmar 2009; Meer 2013a, 2013b; Meer and Moodod 2010; Said 1978, 1985). Nevertheless, we believe that strands and gestures of postcolonial thinking have been isolating the inquiry of race and religion, underscoring the history and violence of one at the expense of the other. By not taking the above-mentioned work into consideration sufficiently, these strands have reproduced not only Eurocentric orders and divisions in their analytical proceedings but have omitted a better understanding of the entanglement of race and religion.[4]

However, a lack of simultaneous engagement with the categories of race and religion, taken as discursive effects, is not unique to postcolonial studies. Les Back and John Solomos, for instance, pointed out that the

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broadly defined has become integrated within dominant cultural and institutional practices, then one reason why it found relatively easy acceptance was because it tended to sideline not only the Israel-Palestine conflict, but also the question of Islam and the role of religion in anticolonial struggle more generally—this despite the fact that *Orientalism* was published just a year before the Iranian revolution of 1979.«

4   It is important to acknowledge that we neither see nor approach postcolonial studies as a single, coherent, and sealed-off field of inquiry or critical project. However, following Ann L. Stoler (2016, 37), it is important to engage and re-think the »production of occlusions« and »histories of colonial recursions« within and from postcolonial studies. Stoler's (2016, 67) argument centers on postcolonial studies' occlusion regarding Palestine, as one »horizon of work to be done.« In the same vein, our aim is to posit the reexamination of race and religion, their conjoined and detached histories, as another horizon of further inquiry and critical engagement within the open field of postcolonial studies.

study of race and racism has been left out of the question of anti-Semitism almost entirely, »treating it almost as a separate issue« (2000, 191). In a different but related discussion, Nasar Meer (2013a) has critically documented how current debates and approaches to Islamophobia have not sufficiently engaged with established concepts and tools of scholarship on race and racism. For instance, the immediate academic responses around the concept of Islamophobia, prompted by the publication of the Runnymede Trust (1997) report *Islamophobia: A Challenge for Us All: Report of the Runnymede Trust Commission on British Muslims and Islamophobia* showed how violence against Muslims and Islam was attributed to a different register than that of racism (cf. Halliday 1999). And even historical comparisons between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia characterized these phenomena as different from racism and instead aligned them with religious discrimination and bigotry (Bravo Lopez 2012). In contrast, more recent scholarship on the issue of Islamophobia has tended to see it as a form of racism (Klug 2012) or cultural racism (Balibar 1991; Werbner 2013; Attia 2009; Shooman 2014; Meer 2013a, 2013b; Meer and Moodod 2010).

In brief, religion has troubled the examination of race and racism, mostly in relation to a common tendency to think of race and racism as a historiography »explicitly secular and ›modern‹ […] one that has its genesis in Atlantic slavery and Enlightenment-informed colonial encounters« (Meer 2013a, 386). In other words, more often than not, race and racism have been approached as a singular phenomenon, with a singular and rather recent history (that of color) and trajectory (transiting from biology toward culture) in which the different forms of how religion served to craft races and racism served to delineate religion have been occluded.

However, there have also been voices challenging the neat division between race and religion. Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and more specifically in *Orientalism reconsidered* (1985) already hinted at the relation between anti-Semitism and Islamophobia through the figure of the Semite. Following Said, Ivan Kalmar (2009) has also investigated the complex and »long history of the joint construction of Jew and Muslim« in Europe, that is to say, the history of Semitism and anti-Semitism (see also Massad 2015; Anidjar 2003, 2008). Building upon these critiques, our aim is to

investigate the many cases where the historiography has obliterated the moments where the categories of race and religion, as well as their effects, have operated conjointly.

The present contribution is divided into two sections covering how strands of postcolonial scholarship have addressed race and religion in a disentangled manner. Firstly, we map some of conversations related to race and racism and subsequently explore the difficulty of tackling the question of religion. Secondly, we highlight moments of postcolonial scholarship addressing religion, which from its onset disentangled religion from questions of race and racism. While it is true that religion has not necessarily been regarded as a »standalone category« (Masuzawa 2008), the emphasis has been on the operations of secularism rather than on the ones effected by race. Finally, we turn our attention toward Europe and its governing of race and religion.

Thinking »race« (without religion)

The academic debate concerning race and racism embraces a wide range of approaches, diverse theoretical points of departure, and conceptualizations emerging from several disciplines. The academic study of racism (and not of race) in the US can be traced back to the pioneering work of W.E.B. Du Bois ([1903] 2005) in the early twentieth century, the Chicago school led by Robert E. Park (1939) during the 1920s and 1930s, followed by Aimé Césaire's ([1955] 2000) *Discourse on Colonialism* and Frantz Fanon's ([1952] 2008, [1959] 1965, [1961] 2004) critique in the midst of the decolonization processes in the aftermath of the Second World War. However, it was not until the 1960s and 1970s that racism as an academic field of inquiry was established and developed in many areas of the social sciences and the humanities. Particularly important in this regard was the work of Stuart Hall (1971), Michael Banton (1967), John Rex (1983), and Robert Miles (1989) as well as the contributions of black feminists, which expanded the conceptualization and scope of race and racism by

emphasizing its entangled operations with the category of gender (Davis 1983; hooks 2000; Hill Collins 1990).[5]

Particularly in Europe during the 1980s, important changes occurred pertaining to understandings of how racism operated and was expressed. Specifically, this can be found in the sociopolitical context of the rise and success of right-wing parties as analyzed by Pierre-André Taguieff (1991) and Etienne Balibar (1991) in France, and Martin Baker (1981) and the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (1982) in Britain, which produced theoretical concepts such as culturalist/differentialist racism, neo-racism, and new racism, respectively.[6] A common denominator in these accounts posited the translation of racial hierarchies and relations based on biology and color into cultural ones; thus, racism was treated as an evolving, yet singular, phenomenon. And even though some of these elaborations such as Balibar's neo-racism put forward a »religious group,« i.e., Muslims, as the main target of this form of racism, the core argument postulated a linear reconfiguration of color into culture; therefore, religion was again separated from the operations of race and treated as a cultural register.

According to Robert Miles (1993), one common problem with the postulations about new racism surrounds the conceptualization of the

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5   This survey is merely analytical and certainly not exhaustive. For a wider and more comprehensive account of the theories and history of the study of racism, see Back and Solomos (2000); Solomos and Bulmer (2007); Hall (1971); Essed and Goldberg (2002); Miles and Brown (2003); Wieviorka (1995).

6   Stoler (1995, 24) raises an interesting argument concerning the debate about new racism in Europe: Europe was marked by an absence of race politics during the 1970s, which led to the conceptualization of racism as »bracketed in specific stories.« This context created a void in academic debates situating racism at the core of European societies. In comparison, the civil rights movement strongly influenced the political and academic sphere in the US. Thus, it was not until the 1980s that the topic began to be considered through the notion of new racism »as inherent in the deep structure of Europe's contemporary social order« (Stoler 1995, 24), emerging as an issue in the context of the so-called immigration problem.

previous form, which confers substance to the idea of novelty. This is because the core arguments sustaining the transition and novelty—right-wing postulations about culture, the European character, and the role of the state—can all be traced back to historical formulations of colonialism, imperialism, the slavery system, or in reference to National Socialism. Miles (1993, 40) further implies that the idea of new racism has undergone a uni-linear development, thus giving rise to successive stages in accordance with hermetic time periods. However, even Miles' sharp critique lacked critical engagement with the category of religion and its entanglements with race.

Within the trajectory of examining race and racism, the appearance of postcolonial studies can be seen as the attempt to unravel the connections between »scientific racism and imperialism and colonialism« as well as the inquiry into »the role race played in structuring social relations in colonial societies« (Back and Solomos 2000, 253). In this sense and contrary to the figurations of religion within postcolonial studies, the examination of race and racism has, as we argue below, occupied a central place within the field. However, due to its elusive configuration as a field, as a discipline, or as a theoretical framework, it is difficult to outline a clear-cut line of inquiry pertaining to a postcolonial examination of race and racism. Nevertheless, there seems to be a consensus that the works of Edward W. Said (1978, 1994), Gayatri C. Spivak (1994, 1999), and Homi K. Bhabha (1994) should be considered as the cornerstones of postcolonial studies (Castro Varela, do Mar, and Dhawan 2005).

For instance, in one of the first compendiums of postcolonial studies and its operative concepts, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffith, and Helen Tiffin (2000) trace the genealogy of race back to the first occurrence of the word in the English language in 1508, arguing that at that time race »remained essentially a literary word denoting a class of persons or things« (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2000, 218). Afterward, the authors posit »[i]t was only in the late eighteenth century that the term came to mean a distinct category of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent« (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2013, 219). Moreover, as Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin unpack race, genetics, physical appearance,

and biology, appear to be key categories, whereby race operates, ranks, and classifies humans; thus, this entry in a key compendium of postcolonial studies seems to circumscribe the operations of race to what is often labeled as the color line in general and the appearance of what is deemed scientific racism in particular. Since the effects and affects of race have not been deployed and operated exclusively through the English language, this genealogy obliterates the variegated historiographies of race in other contexts and languages.[7] Equally troubling, but more important for our argument here, Ashcroft's genealogy makes the complex entanglement of race and religion unreadable. Moreover, circumscribing race to categorizations based on color disregards how even racial hierarchies predicated on color were deeply intertwined with supposed cultural characteristics, behaviors, and conceptualizations of historical progress.

Thinking »religion« (without race)

In the last two decades in particular, scholars of religion have repeatedly turned to the question of religion from the perspective of postcolonial thinking. Acknowledging its Eurocentric historicity in terms of conceptualization, these valuable interventions have traced the concept's violent

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[7]   Maria Elena Martínez, for instance, explored the convoluted rise and development of the concept of purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre)* in the Iberian Peninsula prior to 1492 and its ensuing reconfiguration in colonial Spain, whereby race (*raza*) was »[l]inked to sin and heresy« and »tended to be applied to communities—namely, Jews, Muslims, and sometimes Protestants—deemed to be stained or defective because of their religions histories« (Martínez 2008, 54; see also Anidjar 2014). Furthermore, Martínez's study fleshed out how the statutes of purity of blood, while originally designed to exclude Jewish converts to Christianity—and later Muslims too—from public offices, changed its meanings and operations when it traveled from the Iberian peninsula and was deployed in the colonial setting, thereby setting the basis for a highly calculated racial hierarchy in »New Spain« and giving rise to the race/caste system categories which still resonate today. That is, according to Martínez, conceptualizations of blood and religion were fundamental not only for the imaginaries and policies of the colonial Spanish project in America and the Iberian Peninsula, but also key in the prefiguring and the appearance of a notion of race.

translatability and dissemination outside Europe and its various colonial effects (Balagangadhara 1994; Chidester 1999, 2001; Fitzgerald 2000; King 1999; Masuzawa 2005; Nehring 2012). In doing so, they have fundamentally offered thoughtful suggestions for new ways to think of and conceptualize religion.

Perhaps no one has been more emblematic than Talal Asad for making us understand the emergence as well as the deployments of the modern idea and concept of religion as being a distinguishable and distinct category. It is due to his oeuvre that the category of religion can be thought of not only as a modern construction but also as a historically evolved category embedded within larger structures of power and knowledge,[8] or as he puts it, as »the historical product of discursive processes« (Asad 1993, 29). For Asad (1993, 40), the seventeenth century offered the first systematized attempts to begin producing a universal definition of religion. Emphasizing belief »as a set of propositions« while excluding practice, the modern category of religion became something to which believers »gave assent« and which could be »judged and compared« with other propositions as well as situated within an epistemic order (Asad 1993, 40–41). It is due to this process, according to Asad, that religion could be conceptualized and defined as being »everywhere and at all times *essentially* the same«; that it could become »the object of a single comprehensive theory« (Asad 1992, 4; emphasis in original). It is precisely this »great creative fiction of the modern world« (Asad 1992, 4; emphasis in original), the fiction of religion being of transhistorical

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8   It is important to note that while for some religion has been »solely the creation of the scholar's study« and has »no independent existence apart from the academy« (Smith 1982: xi), for Asad, the making-of-the-definition of religion, constituting what it signifies and how it operates »is not merely an abstract intellectual exercise; […] not just what modern scholars do.« Asad rightly insists, »[t]he act of defining religion is connected with anxieties and comforts, it responds to different problems and interests, connects with institutional disciplines and emotional attachments. […] [We have] open[ed] up questions about *where*, *by whom*, and *in what manner*—i.e. in what social context and in what spirit—the *definitions are produced and put into circulation*« (Asad 2009, 398; author's emphasis).

character, which makes it a Eurocentric concept. The problem with this, as scholars of religion have been elaborating for some time,

> […] is not simply that differences are underplayed in order to identify the essential sameness of religion in all times and places. The deeper problem is that transhistorical accounts of religion are themselves implicated in shifts in the way authority and power are distributed, while claiming to be purely descriptive (Cavanaugh 2009, 82).

In operating as such, then, Eurocentrism has been effective in concealing the conditions of power under which a transhistorical understanding of religion could emerge and conceptually divide itself from politics, economy, and, for our purpose, race.

Since Asad's intervention we can now better reflect upon the epistemological and sociopolitical conditions for the emergence of religion *as* a modern concept and the related shifts accompanying this emergence: »a new kind of state, a new kind of science, a new kind of legal and moral subject« (Asad 1993, 43; see also Asad 1983, 2003, 2006; Cavanaugh 1995). By now, work within and outside postcolonial studies has brought closer the formerly divided geographies, histories, and experiences of the colony and the European metropole in order to suggest that the emergence of religion as a modern concept did not only take place »in a Europe undergoing political, economic, and cultural transition,« but »took shape during a period of colonial expansion.« Hence, religion did not only »develop in Europe« but was equally »[a product] of, functioned within and served the expanding colonial projects of European power in places such as Africa« (Davaney 2009, 1329).

However, strands of postcolonial conversations seem to have overlooked these crucial insights. Instead of approaching religion as a modern and historically evolved concept, as a discursive effect closely tied to colonialism's violent histories—as is rightly done in relation to the category of race—religion either remains absent or appears as an almost natural kind of category: a category without any historical formation and in isolation from race as such. It seems as if Susan Harding's words (1991, 375) »that antiorientalizing tools of cultural criticism are better

suited for some »others« and not other »others«—specifically, for cultural »others« constituted by discourses of race/sex/class/ethnicity /colonialism but not religion« still have currency within strands of postcolonial conversations.

This play of absence and presence looms large and is traceable within the discipline's aforementioned key compendium *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts.*[9] While the first edition (2001) offers no entry on religion, the second edition (2007, 188) maintains that the entry on religion is relevant due to a »dramatic shift in recent times in post-colonial studies« and »the growing awareness of the role religion has played in both the practices of colonization and the developments which have occurred since political independence in the post-colonial world.« The very phrasing points to the absence of debates on the topic within what the authors see as »post-colonial studies.« In effect, the entry evaluates two approaches in order to address the lacuna: First, the authors suggest there has been a »growing awareness« of the complexities of religion in colonial times, making it possible to conceptualize religion as a shaping force for »colonizers and colonized« and to conceptualize and analyze it as »a means of hegemonic control« or »resistance« (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007, 188). Second, we are told that although the »acknowledgement of the neglect of religion« in the colony has grown, postcolonial explorations and analytics have likewise turned to examining the contemporary role of religion »in the modern post-colony« (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007, 189). This, the authors suggest, has been done by situating »religious and other social and cultural practices within the framework of globalization.« In doing so, religion has either been interrogated in relation to »the resurgence of fundamentalist forces« or, more »positively,«

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9   The point we are raising in the following, however, is not just about this one particular compendium, but how this compendium, in a compressed way, represents epistemological structures available and operative within strands of postcolonial conversation. In setting foci, posing research questions, and offering frames of interpretation (while excluding others), such compendia precisely contribute and consolidate the »selective directions« (Stoler 2016, 40) through which religion has been conceptualized and thought of.

has been identified as being »part of a broader humanist critique« (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin 2007, 189).[10]

In mapping the growing interest in the concept, religion is, for some reason, neither addressed nor treated as a historically evolved concept, but rather as an already constituted phenomenon applicable to various operations in the colony and post-colony. Unlike race, which is addressed as a historically evolving signifier one entry of the compendium—religion, as an idea, as a concept, as a practice—is never granted the same status, which is to say, the privilege of historicity, of having a history. In a strange way, this gesture of recognizing one (race) as having a history and characterizing the other (religion) as ahistoric, the discipline's compendium echoes, certainly unintentionally, a quite colonial gesture: reiterating that it is Europe (and its histories of race and racial dynamics with the world at large) that have *made* history, which have mentionable histories, while the colony and the colonial are religious and therefore without any (relevant) history.

Thus, the entry on religion, unlike the one on race, does not cover the signifier »religion« in its historical formation *as* a discursive effect, nor does it analyze the epistemological status of religion, and, hence, does not interrogate religion as a power/knowledge effect of the very Eurocentric orders which postcolonial scholarship as such aims to problematize, decolonize, or intends to provincialize. Rather, as the entry implicitly suggests, religion remains an almost natural object, a phenomenon out there, which can be found, addressed, approached, and its different colonial and post-colonial histories and operations traced uniformly. This gesture of naturalizing the concept of religion, occluding its Eurocentric formation and status as a transhistorical concept, concealing

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10   Despite its Eurocentric genealogy and pedigree, »religion« as a »traveling theory/concept« (Said 1984) has been lived, used, and transformed in variegated ways in postcolonial worlds. Given the scope of our argument, we cannot detail these multiple operations and the way they have also shaped and influenced discussions about »religion« in the »West«; for an account see, among others, Mahmood (2011); Massad (2008).

its epistemological emergence, as already elaborated along Asadian lines, is kept in place even in the third edition (2013).

This state of affairs is, however, not restricted to this key compendium. Such traces can be found in other conversations too, indicating, we believe, a reluctance among strands of postcolonial scholarship to come to terms with the historicity and the evolving character of (the concept of) religion. In a debate among postcolonial scholars in 2012, which has been described as maybe »the last significant engagement with the field's status as a whole« (McLaughlan and Srivastava 2014, 251), Robert Young (2012) unintentionally reiterated this difficulty while addressing the question of Islam.

In thinking about the unreadability of Islam within postcolonial studies, Young argues that the field not only sidelined »the question of Islam,« but also the »the role of religion in anticolonial struggle more generally« (Young 2012, 28). Young, however, attempts to make Islam visible and readable in regard to two different accounts: first, in relation to its history of »political Islam« (Young 2012, 22), indicating a religiously informed struggle against European colonialism, a »political story [going] far back into the colonial era« (Young 2012, 27), and second, by focusing upon the idea of tolerance practiced during the Islamic Empire in Al-Andalus. By reminding readers of Al-Andalus, this »often-forgotten history […] of equitable relations between different communities, different people living in the same place, tolerating each other's differences« (Young 2012, 32), Young offers a possibility to address the question of the »other«: a question which has been a major preoccupation of postcolonial scholars. For Young, both investigations into history offer possibilities to rethink the terrain of postcolonial analysis anew, to show how its modes of investigation remain significant in order to identify colonialism's »unfinished business,« and to address »the continuing projection of past conflicts into the experience of the present« (Young 2012, 21). In doing so, Young alternates casually between the different temporalities mentioned, the various European imaginations, realities, and anxieties tied to signifiers such as »9/11,« »Al-Qaeda,« »the Iranian Revolution,« the controversies around *The Satanic Verses* (Rushdie 1988), or trajectories going far back in

history (the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate by Atatürk's new assembly in 1924 or the issue of tolerance during Al-Andalus). These movements are possible in the first place because Young can forcefully bring these vast geographies, histories, and sociopolitical issues under one heading: namely that of Islam, further subsumed in a wider transhistorical understanding of religion. In attempting to counter aspects of the unintelligibility of Islam within postcolonial studies, Young himself displays »Islam« as a transhistorical category: »While an intense interest in postcolonial theory has developed in Islamic countries, in 2001 Islam was just as unreadable for most postcolonial theorists in the West as for everyone else« (Young 2012, 30).

The problem is not necessarily one of representation, but rather that Young has nothing to say about the very concept of Islam he uses to trace, order, and make sense of various colonial and post-colonial events and their contemporary relevance. Hence, neither Islam nor its attribution as a religion are addressed in this work as modern categories closely tied to the project of Eurocentric knowledge production and colonial expansion, but are instead treated as transhistorical phenomena. As a postcolonial scholar, Young seems unable to undo or even think through and address the theoretical and epistemological presumptions and preoccupations informing his understanding of Islam. By assuming a transhistorical understanding of religion, attributing the concept of religion with no historicity which involves interrogating the Eurocentric orders and divisions of inclusion and exclusion, Young can thus easily move through time and space, offering references ranging from 1492 and Spain to Hobbes and Locke, while finally arriving at the more recent return of religion and political Islam. In doing so, Young reproduces not only the very registers of power he intends to take a stand against, but also the epistemic categorizations without interrogating his own use of the concepts of »Islam« and »religion« as well as the epistemic status and power they hold due to universalizations tied to European colonialism. In additional, race does not appear even once in these interrogations. Here as well, Islam is mapped only in relation to religion and neatly disentangled from race. In effect, these strands of postcolonial conversations

while attempting to unravel Eurocentrism have instead reproduced religion as a Eurocentric category; thus, as a transhistorical and transcultural essence distinct from politics, the economy, and—most importantly for our context—race. In doing so, these moments of postcolonial interrogations have made it impossible to trace the transmutation of religion as a historically evolving category and its proximity with race.

While these engagements have completely ignored the Asadian turn and have in effect reproduced Eurocentric orders and ways to conceptualize religion, another strand of conversations, broadly following the work of Talal Asad, has systematically disentangled race from religion, interrogating one at the expense of the other.

Talal Asad's work is best known for directing our attention to the relational character of politics and religion, and of the secular and the religious within the nation-state:

> The concept of the secular cannot do without the idea of religion. True, the »proper domain of religion« is distinguished from and separated by the state in modern secular constitutions. But formal constitutions never give the whole story. On the one hand objects, sites, practices, words, representations—even the minds and bodies of worshipers—cannot be confined within the exclusive space of what secularists *name* »religion.« They have their own ways of being. The historical elements of what come to be conceptualized as religion have disparate trajectories. On the other hand the nation-state requires clearly demarcated spaces that it can classify and regulate: religion, education, health, leisure, work, income, justice, and war. The space that religion may properly occupy in society has to be continually redefined by the law because the reproduction of secular life within and beyond the nation-state continually affects the discursive clarity of that space. The unceasing pursuit of the new in productive effort, aesthetic experience, and claims to knowledge, as well as the unending struggle to extend individual self-creation, undermines the stability of established boundaries. (2003, 200–201)

Secularism, according to Asad, has been religion's »Siamese twin« (2001, 221). While religion has been part of a »restructuration of practical times and spaces, a rearticulation of practical knowledges and powers, of subjective behaviours, sensibilities, needs, and expectations in modernity,« secularism has been trying to »guide that rearticulation and to define »religions« in the plural as a species of (nonrational) belief« (ibid., 221). According to Asad, secularism has been an important condition of possibility through and upon which religion has taken its epistemic shape in the post-Enlightenment West.

Other postcolonial scholars have also argued in favor of bringing together the modern idea of religion with the concept of the secular. Postcolonial scholar and critic David Scott in his *Refashioning Futures* (1999, 67–68) argued that the process of secularization is not only one of institutional differentiation »in which the ecclesiastical establishment comes to be assigned a new position in social and political life,« but equally »*an epistemic shift in which a field of discourse and practice comes to be constituted as »religion« as such.* This involves […] a cognitive alteration in which »religion« ceases to be the background of thought.« (Scott 1999, 68; emphasis added) In a similar vein, Timothy Fitzgerald (2008) has insisted on entangling religion with the operations of the secular by suggesting that religion »is not a stand-alone category with its own distinctive referent but is unintelligible without simultaneous cognizance of those practices which in any strategic context get put in the category »non-religion,« which is the bottom-line meaning of »secular« in modern rhetoric.« Tomoko Masuzawa (2008) has even characterized »the story of secularization« and the »discursive apparatus« sustaining our understanding of religion as »two essential body-parts of a single beast.«

However, ever since these contributions to the examination of religion as a historically evolving concept crafted by and crafting secular rule, different scholars have fleshed out the intertwined operations of religion and the secular as patterns of political governance. In doing so, religion in particular has been interrogated while isolating its entanglement and co-operations with race. In this line of inquiry, Schirin Amir-Moazami (2011, 2013) has analyzed the working of secular rule as a means to

govern and regulate Muslims in contemporary Germany, particularly along questions regarding gender and sexuality, but not considering the possible links between the workings of the categories religion, secular, and race. Similarly, but examining the case of France, Mayanthi L. Fernando (2014) has exposed the way in which French secularism seeks to transform and regulate the meanings and practices associated with being a Muslim. Likewise, Fernando (2014, 16) stresses that analyses focusing on the discrimination of Muslims in France have tended to either »collapse religion into culture« or to underscore the centrality of race and class, thus disregarding discrimination based on religious grounds and therefore »misunderstand[ing] the nature of secular rule« (2014, 17). Thus, without discarding the operations of race and class, Fernando opts to approach the situation of Muslims and Islam in France through the lens of the entangled operations of »religion and secularity« (2014, 17). Nadia Fadil (2016; see also 2009, 2013, 2015) has recently argued for entangling state sovereignty, race, and religion in order to address particularly the governmentalization of the Muslim subject in post-racial times. This important and valuable line of inquiry, its force and fore-grounding of entangling religion with secularism in order to pursue political patterns of governmentalization and regulation, we believe, has reiterated what scholarship on race has done to religion and has tended to opt for religion when isolating possible entanglements with race.

By way of concluding: On Europe

What, then, to do with race and religion, with their separated interrogations within and outside of strands of postcolonial conversations and interrogations?

One way of concluding this contribution would be to list the wealth of scholarship attempting to bring together race and religion in their operations (cf. Anidjar 2008; Kalmar 2009; Meer 2013a, 2013b; Meer and Moodod 2010). This list, then, would precisely indicate in which ways, at which historical junctures, and toward what ends these categories have been entangled, and in relation to what particular figurations race and religion have emerged and operated in tandem. However, we believe that

not just the entangled operations of race and religion or the disentanglement of these categories in scholarly interrogations are at stake, but more importantly, the very question of Europe itself.

What about Europe? Should we not interrogate it too, or maybe interrogate it in the first place? What about »this little thing that is Europe« (Gasché 2007, 3), irrespective of whether it is thought of as a »cognitive truth,« deemed a »feeling« (Gasché 2000), constructed as an idea (Pagden 2002), characterized as an »unfinished adventure« (Bauman 2004), or identified as a »community of memory« (Assmann 2007)? Among the various moments of questioning, problematizing, and disman-tling Europe (Almond 2014), Dipesh Chakrabarty's call to »provincialize Europe« has been quite influential and has gone far beyond the scope of postcolonial scholarship. Ironically, while deconstructing Europe's presence as a »silent referent« (Chakrabarty 2000, 28) and »subject of all histories« (Chakrabarty 2000, 29), there has also been, as postcolonial scholars have been arguing more recently, an »absence of Europe within postcolonial studies« (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard 2011, 4). This lack of Europe as a site of (postcolonial) inquiry has kept it »a hollow signifier in the postcolonial debate, but also a blind spot« (Ponzanesi and Blaagaard 2011, 4). In other words, the question of Europe, or Europe as a set of questions, seems in some sense to be kept out of interrogation.

What we would like to suggest by way of concluding is that the reciprocities of race and religion, their coming together and separation in colonial and post-colonial histories, should be entangled with the »*conceptual* level assigned to ›Europe‹ understood not merely as a geographical space but as an apparatus of dominant power-effects« (Scott 2005, 24); Europe as precisely the signifier not only introducing but also (dis-)entangling and governing through these categories. Rather than a polemical dismissal of Europe, a »Fanonian rhetoric of forgetting Europe« (Scott 2005, 24), we employ race and religion as pertinent categories in order to interrogate Europe and the epistemic, economic, and political structures it has offered in its globalizing gestures—violently and otherwise. In effect, then, »not less Europe, […] but a problematized one,« as David Scott (2005, 29) has suggested. The task would less be to ask about the meaning of race

and religion, entangled or disentangled, but rather about the points of their emergence, (isolated or entangled) discursive operations, and their political effects in relation to a Europe governing, debating, and putting into practice these categories.

While analyzing the figure of the Semite, Gil Anidjar (2008) has lamented the isolated histories of race and religion. According to him, for much too long, the histories of the Jew (of race) and the Arab (of religion) have been written in isolated ways, distinct from each other, and have been attributed either to historical accounts of anti-Semitism or to that of Orientalism. In doing so, these accounts have not only ignored »the possibility of hidden links and explicit associations between these pairings« but have »fail[ed] to engage the three ›elements‹ at once (Europe, the Jew, the Arab), [have failed] to engage both religion and race« (2008, 35) in order to address Europe. What, then, about not only race and religion, but also Europe? What about their isolation and their coming together; whether in terms of anti-Semitism or Orientalism; whether in form of the Semite—the Jew and the Arab; or the recent analyses positing the existence of a »new anti-Semitism« in Europe (Bunzl 2007) and the role of the Muslim figure in this supposedly new anti-Semitism, particularly in Germany (Özyürek 2016)?

Should we not also remember the debate around Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (*Germany Undoing/Abolishing Itself*)?[11] when reflecting on race and religion in relation to Europe? Or remember the bringing together of the Muslim and of the Jew? Should we not ponder Sarrazin's

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11   The Sarrazin debate refers to the public reaction to the book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* in 2010, roughly translated as »Germany undoing/abolishing itself,« by former Berlin Senator for Finance Thilo Sarrazin. He calls for stricter immigration policies and the reduction of welfare benefits. The arguments supporting these proposals are based on Sarrazin's racially informed ideas that Muslims and immigrants are for the most part taking advantage of the German welfare system. Sarrazin also posited the inherent violence of Islam and Muslims, linking them with crime, terrorism, and high birthrates. Sarrazin's book related statistics to eugenics and became Germany's best-selling book in 2011. For a critical and detailed account of Sarrazin's discourse, see Foroutan (2010); Shooman (2014).

argument about the possible disintegration of Germany due to the »growing« Muslim population while also writing about the »average higher intelligence of the Jews passed through a Jewish gene« (quoted in Gilman 2012)? In doing so, Sarrazin once again conjured up the Semites, race, and religion in order to advance his apocalyptic scenario where the Germany of the »Germans« would vanish in the future. Was it not the publication of this very book which implicitly reiterated Renan's teachings that religion is equivalent to race and that race can be mapped onto religion? Did Sarrazin not »explain« that »all Jews share a certain gene, all Basques have certain genes that make them different from other people« while relegating the other Semite, the underachiever Muslim, to the position of the one to blame for making Germany »on average, becoming dumber in a natural way«?[12] To this extent, Sarrazin's discourse and the reactions toward it show that race and religion can be strategically joined and detached in nationalistic and racial fervor, and used once again to generate processes of inclusion and exclusion.

Just as David T. Goldberg (2015) has argued that we must ask »Are we all Postracial yet?« as a means to unravel the persistence of race and how discourses of post-raciality mask the very operations of race, we suggest that the persistence of Eurocentrism has been not only producing and separating race and religion on a conceptual basis, but has also been continuing to conjoin the two in supposedly post-Eurocentric political times.

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12   »Injurious, Defamatory and Polemical: New Book Plunges Germany into Immigration Debate,« *Der Spiegel Online*, August 25, 2010, http://www .spiegel.de/international/germany/injurious-defamatory-and-polemical -new-book-plunges-germany-into-immigration-debate-a-713796.html.

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