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The Habsburg dominions fell into the Austrian and Hungarian halves, which were united only in the person of the sovereign and their common institutions which included, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, War and Finance (the two last-named only for affairs of common interest) and the Austrian and Hungarian Delegations composed of representatives of both halves of the Empire, which were to debate on common Affairs in Vienna and Budapest alternately.¹⁴

Lakonisch stellt die Note allerdings auch fest: „The financial difficulties of the dual monarchy were notorious.“¹⁵ Im April 1946 schrieb der Abgeordnete Amery auch in diesem Sinne an Lord Pethick Lawrence, der die Aufgabe der Abwicklung der Machtübergabe hatte, und hob hervor: „This Ausgleich, or joint arrangement, had to come up for consideration every ten years,“ um dann bezüglich der drohenden Teilung Indiens zu fragen: „Might it not be possible to get agreement at this moment on the basis of such a dual arrangement?“¹⁶ Und noch im Mai 1947 (drei Monate vor der Unabhängigkeit) heißt es in einem Protokoll der Diskussion zwischen dem letzten Viceroy Lord Mountbatten und indischen Politikern über die heikle Frage der Teilung der indischen Armee: „His excellency the Viceroy said there could be a joint Defence Headquarters. He quoted the example of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before 1914-1918 War.“ Lakonisch steht dann im Protokoll: „With this Nehru agreed.“ Wahrscheinlich war er der Einzige, denn aus diesem Plan wurde nichts. Der große Urdu-Dichter Faiz Ahmed Faiz hat die Unabhängigkeit des indischen Subkontinents in einem bitteren Gedicht als Enttäuschung charakterisiert. Bekannt ist sein Vers:

Wo intizâr thâ jis kâ, ye wo sahar to nahif
(Dies ist nicht der Morgen, auf den wir gewartet hatten)¹⁷

Dass die Wunde immer noch nicht geheilt ist, zeigt die Anteilnahme auf beiden Seiten der unnatürlichen Grenze zwischen Indien und Pakistan während der Feierlichkeiten zum 100. Geburtstag von Saadat Hasan Manto. Er ragt ikonenhaft mit seinen unerbittlichen Texten über der Trümmerlandschaft des kollektiven Wahnsinns, der das Schicksal Indiens und Pakistans auf unabsehbare Zeit geprägt hat.

14 N. Mansergh (Hg.): *The Transfer of Power*. London 1970. Bd. 5. S. 535ff; Vgl. auch Anil Bhatti: „Kulturelle Vielfalt und Homogenisierung.“ In: Johannes Feichtinger, Ursula Prutsch, Moritz Csáky (Hgg.): *Habsburg postcolonial. Zentraleuropa – Orte Innerer Kolonisierung?* Innsbruck 2003. S. 55-68.

15 Ebd.

16 Ebd. Bd. 10. S. 736.

17 Faiz Ahmed Faiz: „SUB'H-E-ÂZÂDI. Agast 1947.“ In: *100 Poems by Faiz Ahmed Faiz*. Translated from the original Urdu by Sarvat Rahman. New Delhi 2009. S. 44. (Meine Übersetzung).

Margins of Modernity: Globalisation, Fundamentalism(s) and Terrorism in Kiran Nagarkar's *God's Little Soldier*

Christoph Reinfandt

Globalisation, sociological observers agree, is deeply enmeshed with modernisation, and, given the advanced state of both processes, there seems to be not much left outside of globalised modernity. One of the theoretically most ambitious descriptions of modern society, Niklas Luhmann's theory of social systems, suggests an irresistible push towards an all-encompassing 'world society', in which what lies outside cannot be properly imagined, made sense of and communicated.¹ And yet, the notion of margins of modernity asserts itself frequently in public discourse, and most prominently so in the imaginary map of the globalised world which pits the modern 'West' (which includes the North) against the 'East' (Middle East, Asia, India) and the 'South' (Africa, Latin America). While these co-ordinates are most clearly discernible in terms of economic development, they are also frequently addressed in terms of cultural difference in a process which creates (and demonizes) a seemingly external 'other'. It should be clear, however, that the legacy of colonialism has undermined the possibility of treating Eastern or Southern countries as 'external' margins of modernity. In the context of colonialism, non-Western traditions were seriously affected by processes of modernisation, while conversely these very processes relied on the wealth generated by colonial exploitation. And in the post-colonial world, economic inequality and migration persist, creating 'internal' margins that manifest themselves in terms of cultural and/or social inclusion and exclusion. Luhmann acknowledges this understanding of the margins of modernity in one of his late essays and indicates a reality within modernity that seems to preclude both assimilation into modernity (and its theoretical descriptions) as well as effective intervention, while being there for anyone to see:

To the surprise of the well-meaning it must be ascertained that exclusion still exists, and it exists on a massive scale and in such forms of misery that they are beyond description.

1 Cf. Niklas Luhmann: "Globalization or World Society: How to Conceive of Modern Society?". In: *International Review of Sociology* 7.1 (1997). S. 67-79. For a neat summary of Luhmann's thinking on globalisation in English which draws on as yet untranslated central texts cf. Hans-Georg Moeller: *Luhmann Explained: From Souls to Systems*. Chicago 2006. S. 52-63.

Anybody who dares a visit to the *favelas* of South American cities and escapes alive can talk about this. But even a visit to the settlements that were left behind after the closing of the coal mines in Wales can assure one of it. To this effect, no empirical research is needed. Who trusts one's eyes can see it, and can see it so impressively that all explanations at hand will fail.²

The margins of modernity, then, indicate the limits of modernisation. They are affectively powerful and posit existential questions, but they cannot be relegated to any geographical margin or outside – in fact, it may be more productive to consider them as integral to what German sociologists have called the 'ambivalox dialectics of modernisation.'³

In a similar fashion (and of course related to problems of economic, social and cultural exclusion), religious fundamentalism seems to mark another one of the margins of modernity that cannot be properly assimilated, represented or even understood. In recent fiction, for example, there is an uneasy tendency to represent the (mostly Islamistic) fundamentalist as a sexually frustrated young male, driven to extremes by the unpredictability of women, and this somewhat reductive explanation sometimes overshadows the much more complex layering of possible causes (the aftermath of colonialism in contemporary geopolitics, economic disadvantage, cultural hegemony, etc. – see, for example and most prominently, Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar the Clown*). Nevertheless, even a casual glance at the burgeoning academic literature on religious fundamentalism indicates that most scholars in the field tend to concur that in spite of their great variety (which is based on fundamental religious differences), fundamentalisms display family resemblances in that their reaction against modernisation unfolds in a symbiotic relationship with modernity itself.⁴ Supplementing the basic definition of fundamentalism as "a discernible pattern of religious militance by which self-styled 'true believers' attempt to arrest the erosion of religious identity, fortify the borders of religious community, and create viable alternatives to secular institutions and behaviors"⁵ with this historical dimension, this essay will focus on one of the rare novels which takes a multi-layered approach to fundamentalism seriously by not following the post-9/11 impulse of paying exclusive

2 Niklas Luhmann: "Beyond Barbarism." In: Moeller 2006. S. 261-272.

3 Cf. Nina Degele, Christian Dries: *Modernisierungstheorie: Eine Einführung*. München 2005. S. 23-41. Identifying ambivalence as the central structural feature of modernisation, frequently culminating in a paradoxical inconsistency of trajectories of modernisation (30).

4 For a concise overview including the concept of 'family resemblances' taken from Wittgenstein see Malise Ruthven: *Fundamentalism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford 2007. S. 1-23 and passim.

5 Gabriel A. Almond, R. Scott Appleby, Emmanuel Sivan: *Strong Religion: The Rise of Fundamentalism Around the World*. Chicago 2003. S. 17.

attention to Islamistic fundamentalism and terrorism: Kiran Nagarkar's *God's Little Soldier* (2006) introduces the reader to a protagonist who embodies Muslim, Christian and Hindu varieties of fundamentalism in the course of his life and moves from India to Great Britain and on to the USA before he finally inhabits the shadow modernity of the global arms trade.⁶ Like the novel itself, the essay will fall into three parts: I will begin by discussing Kiran Nagarkar's somewhat precarious position in the globalized field of international literature written in English and point out some striking aspects about the novel's distribution and reception. In the second part I will analyse the novel's take on fundamentalism as a truly global and modern phenomenon by focusing on its striking allocation of settings and its complex handling of perspective(s). Against this background, I will finally return to my opening discussion of margins of modernity in order to assess how a systematic charting of these margins can profit from my reading of *God's Little Soldier*.

1) Margins of Globalisation: Kiran Nagarkar

Kiran Nagarkar was born in Bombay in 1942. His first novel, *Saat Sakkam Trechalis* (1974), was written and published in Marathi and only subsequently translated into English as *Seven Sixes are Forty-Three*. It is generally considered a landmark work of both Marathi literature and post-Independence Indian literature in general. While at work on his second novel, however, Nagarkar switched from Marathi to English. *Ravan & Eddie*, a humorous take on the parallel lives of two boys, one Hindu, one Catholic, growing up in their barely intersecting life-worlds in 1950s Bombay (though they live in the same building), finally appeared in 1994 amidst controversy which was partly sparked by Nagarkar's decision to write in English and partly by the book's Hindu-Catholic setup of characters. Nagarkar continued to write and publish in English, establishing himself as one of the foremost Indian novelists in English with *Cuckold* (1997), a mock-epic re-imagination of an early 16th-century episode from Indian history. Against the background of the ongoing critical debate on modernity in India, Dirk Wiemann characterises *Cuckold* as "a 'dissident', highly self-conscious historical novel gravitating around the (im)possibilities of writing 'history.'" Wiemann insists that through its "rewriting of an allegedly pre-modern past as

6 The notion of the global arms trade as a 'shadow modernity' takes its cue from Andrew Feinstein: *The Shadow World: Inside the Global Arms Trade*. London 2011. Reviewing the book in the *Times Literary Supplement* (30th March 2012: 10), Alex de Waal points out in exasperation: "I initially suspected that the title *The Shadow World* was hyperbolic. It is not. What Feinstein describes is the underbelly of globalization."

inherently modern,” the novel nevertheless manages to uphold “the claim to an endemic, non-derivative regional genre of modernity that cannot be narrated in terms of progressivist matrices.”⁷ This critical stance on modernity, which nevertheless acknowledges the inevitability of some of its ingredients, makes Kiran Nagarkar a particularly interesting writer in the context of this essay.

While *Cuckold* won the 2001 Sahitya Akademi Award in English by India’s National Academy of Letters, the reception of its successor, *God’s Little Soldier* (2006), which turned its attention with equal ambition to the present, was somewhat mixed but generally acknowledged the novel’s boldness. The book was quickly translated into German, Spanish, French and Italian. Especially in Germany, it was hailed as a “most profound [...] novel about the spiritual roots of terror,”⁸ while another reviewer pointed out that “[f]or Nagarkar, terrorism is not a problem springing from the confrontation of orient and occident but rather a shared problem in a world in which religion succumbs to a disastrous process of radicalisation.”⁹ In spite of its international success, however, its compatibility with a whole school of international writing in English spearheaded by the success of Salman Rushdie, and in spite of being published with HarperCollins India, a subsidiary of an international publishing house, *God’s Little Soldier* somehow never made it into its publisher’s British and American lists, so that out-side India it is paradoxically easier to access the book in translation than in its original English – which opens the door for speculations as to whether it was somehow deemed unsuitable for English and American readers. Whatever the reasons, Nagarkar has since moved into less controversial territory by writing *The Extras* (2012), a sequel to *Ravan and Eddie* focussing on the protagonists’ fate in 1960s Bollywood.¹⁰

7 Dirk Wiemann: “Violent Separation – Violent Fusion: Kiran Nagarkar’s *Cuckold*”. In: Ders. (Hg.): *Genres of Modernity: Contemporary Indian Novels in English*. Amsterdam 2008. S. 131-156. Hier S. 131f.

8 Sigrid Löffler: “Es gibt nur eine Gottheit, und die heißt Leben”. In: *Literaturen* 09 (2006). S. 16-19. Hier S. 17. (My translation).

9 Hubert Spiegel: “Du danke Gott, wenn er dich preßt”. In: *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (4th Oct 2006). (My translation. Retrieved from <http://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/rezensionen/belletristik/du-danke-gott-wenn-er-dich-presst-1386310.html>, (24.05.2012)).

10 That Germany has established itself as a particularly fertile ground for Nagarkar’s fictions is indicated by the fact that three of the critical endorsements of *Ravan and Eddie* on the back of the Indian first edition of *The Extras*, published in January 2012, are drawn from German newspapers, while the German translation (*Die Statisten*) appeared only later in August 2012.

2) Global Fundamentalism(s)

a) Settings

God’s Little Soldier falls into three distinct parts, which take their titles from the protagonist’s names in the three phases of his live. Denoting ‘light’ in Arabic, Latin and Sanskrit, the names/titles ‘Zia’, ‘Lucens’ and ‘Tejas’ indicate a trajectory from Islam through Christianity to Hinduism, which takes Zia from Bombay to Cambridge and back again. The novel subsequently re-introduces him as Brother Lucens in the Trappist Monastery at Terraferra near Sweet Waters, California, and finally links him up with the guru Shakta Muni’s Ashram in Delhi where he becomes Tejas and begins to operate globally as an arms trader.

Zia: India – England – India

Growing up in an initially wealthy middle-class Bombay family of architects, Zia Khan is from the beginning torn between his loving and secular parents Zafar and Shagufta Khan (Abbajaan and Ammijaan) on the one hand and his deeply religious aunt Zubeida on the other. Especially after the harmonious family life is beginning to fall apart due to financial difficulties, the latter becomes the formative influence on Zia. However, the seeds of fundamentalism have already been sown earlier, as becomes clear in the opening paragraph of the novel, which describes “[o]ne of Zia’s earliest memories” in which Zubeida Khaala calls Zia’s father “Satan, that’s what he is” (9)¹¹ for allowing worldly music and indecent dancing into his house. The importance of this scene is clearly marked:

Zia knew then that he had lost his Abbajaan forever and ever. His aunt was right: Abbajaan was Satan, for only he could pretend to be so gentle, funny, loving and affectionate, toiling for the wellbeing of his family while all the time planning its downfall. But he, Zia Khan, would not shirk his duty. Wasn’t he the anointed one? Zubeida Khaala had told him so. (11)

With this self-confirmatory mode of thinking, Zubeida Khala’s influence turns Zia into “God’s little soldier”¹² in spite of (or perhaps rather because of) his basically secular background, in which the open-minded attitudes of his parents and

11 Page numbers in brackets refer to Kiran Nagarkar: *God’s Little Soldier*. New Delhi 2006.

12 The title of the novel turns out to be Zubeida Khaala’s turn of phrase: “‘You say your prayers, do as the holy book says and follow what your parents teach you,’ she corrected herself, ‘what your khaala teaches you, and you’ll always be God’s little soldier.’” (52)

the loving and harmonious family atmosphere are undermined by his brother Amanat's illness and by economic pressure due to financial and professional misdemeanour by his mother's brother which finally results in his parents' separation.

While this latter development indicates the instability of the modern world, Zia's early career as a fundamentalist is marked by literalism (he takes his aunt's comments about Hindu dogs literally, for example, and tries to kill a dog, cf. 34/36) and a radical inwardness with which he tries to live up to Zubeida Khaala's radical ideals in a hostile environment, taking to fasting and later to self-flagellation. At the same time he hides his lonely religious missions from his family and friends and embarks on a successful career at New Eden (!) school where he excels in mathematics. Supported by family friend Antonia Booth-Langston, a Doctor of Theology and influential academic at Cambridge, Zia then moves to England to study mathematics. Initially unable to cope with the complexities of university life, he turns in a memorable episode to single-mindedly sweeping the fallen (!) leaves from the October streets of Cambridge in order to restore purity and order (96-108). The futility of this effort and the futility of pure mathematics are finally overcome by Zia when he turns to statistical economics on the one hand, and, on the other, convinced that he has been set a task by Allah, begins to plan the assassination of the blasphemous author Essar (easily recognizable and later in the book explicitly identified as a fictional version of S.R., Salman Rushdie) on one of his visits to the university. When this attempt fails because his brother Amanat has removed the bullets from the gun, Zia has to flee back to Bombay, where he finally stabs his brother (who survives the attack) and vanishes.

Lucens: USA

At the beginning of part two, readers encounter Lucens tending to his gardening tasks in a monastery without any information as to who he is. His peaceful demeanor – “Lucens pruned the stunted shrubs and sang to them” is the opening sentence (207) – and his St Francis-like way with animals and plants do not suggest any possible continuity with Zia whatsoever, and yet there is: he is obliquely identified as “Lucens Khan” (210) slightly later, and his way into the heart of the monastery's affairs (and out again when his anti-abortionist, pro-life campaigning, which is financed, like the monastery's reconstruction after a severe storm, by his golden hand in playing the stock market, becomes increasingly fundamentalist) is marked by Zia's typical brashness and single-mindedness, even if Lucens keeps telling himself at a much later point that “Zia was dead” and that he “had shut the door on him, and on his past.” (359) So how did he get from being a devout and finally extremist Muslim to being a Catholic monk?

Surprisingly, it turns out that the option of Christianity had been there from the very beginning, as Zia learns to his dismay during his days at Cambridge: When, only days after his birth, he fell seriously ill, his Aunt Antonia had him baptized in a Roman-Catholic church with the secular connivance of his parents (““What's the point?” [...] ‘None, I guess. But what harm could it do to a baby who's been declared as good as dead?’” 163). Afterwards, Zia miraculously survives, earning him his second moniker, Aunt Antonia's ‘Little Miracle’ (which is later also warranted by his mathematics skills) as opposed to Aunt Zubeida's (or rather God's) ‘Little Soldier’.

Obviously, Zia rejects this option fundamentally, but on his flight from England after his failed assassination attempt on Essar, a Jesus figure (“His tunic was made of coarse, dirty brown burlap and he was carrying an unwieldy wooden contraption on his shoulder” 193) begins to haunt him. In spite of all of Zia's attempts to banish Jesus from his life (cf. 195, 203), his re-emergence as Lucens seems to suggest that ultimately Jesus has won out, and it takes some time for his radical tendencies to reassert themselves, leading to power struggles within the monastery and the Trappist order, increasing militancy, and, finally, the attempted (but again failed) assassination of Dr Cornelius Lester at Mothercare clinic by one of Lucens' confidants, which takes place while Lucens is drawn back to India and his Zia-identity by his father's death.

Tejas: USA – India – The World

After managing to cover any tracks of his involvement with the failed assassination attempt, Lucens is visited by Jesus again. Though fairly taciturn beyond the message “‘I've been wondering, Lucens, if you've been missing the wood for the trees’”, which Lucens takes “not [to] suggest a reprimand” even if “Jesus's words could be construed as a criticism of Lucens” (395), this visit inspires a much broader vision in Lucens that can only be pursued outside the confines of the monastery:

The crisis in Western civilization, especially America, Lucens saw with an exultant and absolute clarity, was that it had lost its moral centre. Christianity was under siege, and the siege had been laid by none other than godless Christians themselves. [...] What needed to be done was to turn the world upside down. The very nature of the value system in the country had to be changed. The US had to be taken back, by force if necessary, to a state of innocence and grace. [...] One thing was absolutely clear to Lucens: pro-life would have to remain the focus; but pro-life in a much wider ethical context. With the whole law-making machinery under the control of like-minded people, abortions, same-sex marriages, funding of family planning and other despicable institutions would disappear for good. America would find its soul again, and Jesus would triumph. (397f.)

With this vision in mind Lucens turns to organizing his 'Guardian Angels Scheme', which, focusing on the welfare of children with moralistic overtones in slogans and campaigns called 'Zero Orphans' and 'Pledge of Purity', turns out to be more of a spiritual and less of a revolutionary and thus potentially terrorist endeavour:

Revolutionary changes have short lives, whereas incremental ones last. We are building a coalition of the righteous, regardless of a person's political hue. Once we have the power, we'll bend the government to our wishes and programmes. Rest assured we'll change the complexion of this country. No abortion, no gays and lesbians, no same-sex marriages, no child sex, no sex shows, no dirty art. We are going to build fine, upright, God-fearing citizens from scratch. You will see a change at home, in school, in every aspect of life. But we won't stop there. We will move into South America. We will take Europe. We will remake the world in the image of our Lord. (485)

By the time he jots this down in his diary Lucens has become Tejas and is firmly in the grips of the tantric guru Shakta Muni whom he had met much earlier through his school friend Roy Cambray's father James. James Cabray has an oblique presence throughout the novel, turning up in unexpected places and phone calls and providing financial assistance when needed. In fact, it is this latter dimension which motivates Lucens's final turn to the guru when his feel for the financial markets inexplicably fails ("The sad truth was that the numbers no longer spoke to him" 451) and thus depletes his Guardian Angels scheme of its financial basis. Lucens is forced to accept a huge transfusion of money from James Cambray and finally accepts an invitation to "The Shakta School of Yoga" in Delhi (454), where he undergoes an arduous ritual of spiritual rebirth and acquires the new name "Tejas Nirantar" (466f.). Lucens tells himself and Jesus that the Muni wants nothing from him "except to call me Lucens in Sanskrit" (464), but with this assumption he fools himself: in spite of his silent protestations of autonomy and his conviction that the ends of the Guardian Angels scheme justify all means, Lucens ends up in complete dependency on the Muni who tells him that (once again) the "past is dead" (467). The Muni also subtly manipulates him into taking up his earlier suggestion of joining James Cambray's firm in order to "never have to worry about the Angels' future again" (464). Marking the practical side of Lucens's rebirth as Tejas with the gift of a diplomatic passport in his new name, the Muni finally succeeds in drawing Lucens/Tejas into the "'this and that' business" (467, 486), which turns out to be an unscrupulous mixture of the global arms trade and investment banking. And it is in his capacity as one of the leading global arms dealers that Tejas finally meets "his nemesis, his perfect pupil" (522), and has to face a period from his past which both he himself and the novel had managed to repress fairly successfully so far.

Zia > Lucens > Tejas: Afghanistan

Following up on various earlier hints, the third part of the novel combines Tejas's endgame with flashbacks shedding light on the enigmatic transformation of Zia into Lucens at the end of part 1, which actually involved an extended stay in Afghanistan, at the time of writing certainly one of the most prominent geographical margins of modernity in the self-descriptions of the 'West', obliquely addressed and evoked by many recent novels about fundamentalism and terrorism. Zia, it turns out, spent considerable time there as a Mujahideen fighter and ultimately leader after his stabbing of Amanat. Now Nawaaz Irfan, the son of Zia's closest ally in Afghanistan, Yunus Habib, contacts Tejas about the ultimate arms deal involving dirty bombs and weapons of mass destruction which are to be used in a strategy based on Zia's teachings as a Mujahideen. This instils a rather sudden sense of revulsion and responsibility in Tejas who feels that "the least he could try to do was to stop Nawaaz from following the dictates of a misguided and deluded teacher, a man who, as it happened, was long dead: himself." (529f.)

This change of outlook (one hesitates to speak of a change of heart in Zia/Lucens/Tejas's case) apparently came as a surprise to readers of the original edition of the novel, and Nagarkar tried to motivate it more convincingly by adding an extended passage to chapter 56 of the novel, which came too late for the original edition in English and the German translation but has since been incorporated into the Spanish, French and Italian editions as well as, most recently, the Indian paperback edition.¹³ The "passage comes on page 526 [...] after the passage where Tejas finds himself paralysed at the thought that Nawaaz Irfan wants him to supply nuclear bombs,"¹⁴ and it elaborates on one of the rare earlier instances which alluded to Zia's Afghanistan experience, a flashback in chapter 33 addressing "the exact moment of [Zia's] conversion." (318) For a long time, we learn, Zia held his own against Jesus, "that damned beggar, who never left his side" (319), and withstood even the most extreme of Zia's attempts to exorcise him. The moment of conversion comes, however, after a terroristic revenge campaign against five villages in Kashmir goes terribly wrong because it has been betrayed to the Indian army by Yunus. Yunus in turn is betrayed by the Indian army who lets the mujahideen slaughter their own before they turn on the mujahideen. Zia escapes from the assault only because a snow-slide interrupts

13 Personal communication by Kiran Nagarkar (e-mail 23rd April 2012).

14 This quote and the following observations and quotes from the added passage refer to a typescript (19 pages, no pagination) provided by Kiran Nagarkar for discussion in a seminar on 'Terrorism and Fundamentalism in Recent Fiction' as part of the 'Tübinger Poetik-Dozentur 2008'.

the external battle just at the moment when Jesus exhorts Zia in their ongoing internal battle: “How much more blood wouldst thou spill before thine heart seeks forgiveness?” and Zia retorts “You’d need to give me a second life for that, wouldn’t you?” (321).¹⁵ Much later, the reader learns more about this crucial episode when Nawaaz Irfan tells Tejas how Yunus’s betrayal destroyed his family and how all this hardened his own resolve to clear the family name by killing his father and joining the mujahideen in Afghanistan in order to lead them to final victory with the help of Zia, whom he idolizes, adores, and turns to for providing the necessary means (519f.). Hearing this, Tejas sees all his misgivings about his trip to Afghanistan confirmed: “It dawned on Tejas why he had been so loath to come to Afghanistan. He had not wanted to meet his twin.” (521)

In the added passage, the novel refocuses itself on the central question, posed in a flashback by Father Paul (who was responsible for admitting Zia into the Monastery at Terraferra) on his deathbed: “Why did Zia decide to become Lucens?” Father Paul then addresses the central enigma of the novel: the role of Jesus in his various guises: “It was not Christ who beckoned you, was it? It was your unrelenting remorse and your need for forgiveness which made you come over [...] And yet you were caught in a terrible trap. You could not forgive yourself for needing forgiveness.” The accuracy of this assessment is underlined by the fact that Lucens remains silent but concedes inwardly that “Paul [...] had always seen through Lucens.” Ultimately, Father Paul provokes him into an extended mental engagement with the crucial episode from his repressed past in Afghanistan, which revolves around the relationship between himself and Yunus Habib, Nawaaz Irfan’s father, who at the time was “his man Friday”. It turns out that both Yunus and Zia began to suffer from guilt in the face of the atrocities which they committed in the name of God. At first Zia denies his own feelings and tries to dismiss guilt in general as “a Christian invention” which should not afflict Yunus, but Yunus finds out that Zia has long been on “four-or-five-times a day panic-attack pills,” which leads to an uneasy complicity between them (“You can’t afford to eliminate me, Zia. You need me as proof that you are not the only one who feels such repugnance for his vocation [...] My presence reassures you that you are not a freak or a coward”) revolving around “the same inexplicable dilemma: why would one feel remorse when you were doing God’s work?” Several scenes representing the consequences of his violent acts come to haunt Zia (a boy waiting for his murdered father hours after the deed, a girl throwing stones at her own mother), followed by increasingly surreal dreams culminating in a vision of himself trying to sell organs eviscerated from his body

15 Ominously, the passage ends with one of Zia’s fellow fighters saying “You were lucky you crashed into the tree. *It broke your fall.*” (322, my emphasis) Both instances provide interesting insights into the ambiguities of fundamentalist literalism.

by his own hands and then having his stall closed down by the authorities on the grounds that “Your goods are contaminated”. All this leaves him at a loss: “All of Zia’s certainties had vanished and had been replaced by bewilderment. He no longer had answers and he could not understand why Allah was testing him in this inexplicable manner.” And then, “in search of the manna called forgiveness,” Yunus walks out on him, waiting, as we learn from Nawaaz’s narrative, for Zia’s absolution as much as Zia waits for his.

Forgiveness, then, is the key to the novel that makes Jesus such a central figure, and in the light of this added passage it becomes clear that Jesus stands not so much for a particular religion but rather for a psychological need which lies buried in every human being on an individual level. And in this respect, Christianity is more in tune with modernity than other religions, having been an integral part of its cultural evolution for such a long time, one of its core processes being individualisation. But then, there is neither much hope nor forgiveness in the novel, as both Yunus and Zia are finally murdered by Nawaaz, who as a member of the next generation has no time for his father’s or Tejas’s betrayal of his great cause, while Tejas in turn is betrayed by the nihilistic and purely materialistic machinations of Shakta Muni and James Cambray who alert Nawaaz to the fact that his order has not been processed by Tejas. In the end, it is them who are pulling the strings and let Nawaaz “take care of” (543, 550) Zia/Lucens/Tejas, who then vanishes for real. Thus, it seems that the shadow modernity of investment banking and the global arms trade has the last word in the novel, suggesting that this is modernity’s most advanced manifestation which indeed encompasses everything. Or has it? A closer look at the novel’s deft negotiation of perspectives indicates that not all has been lost in spite of this bleak ending.

b) Perspective(s)

The preceding survey of the novel’s plot creates the impression that *God’s Little Soldier* presents its take on the early-21st-century globalized world of rampant capitalism and fundamentalist terrorism exclusively through the eyes of its protagonist, and reviewers have been quick to point this out: “What is unusual [...] is the extent to which the narratorial perspective of *God’s Little Soldier* exists in faithful servitude to the worldview of its central character [...] Zia is a terrorist, and *God’s Little Soldier* itself enacts a kind of literary terrorism.”¹⁶ Most of the novel is indeed presented in authorial narration with a covert narrator, or, in

16 Chandrabhas Choudhury: “Battle Fatigue.” In: *The Indian Express*. 9th April 2006. Retrieved from <http://www.indianexpress.com/news/battle-fatigue/1981>, (24.05.2012).

Genette's terminology, heterodiegetic narration and zero focalization with Zia/Lucens/Tejas featuring as the main character-focalizer whose perspective is also presented in excerpts from his diaries and letters in first-person/ homodiegetic narration with internal focalization. The narrator-perspective, on the other hand, remains stubbornly neutral and invisible. However, there is an alternative point of view, and it is safe to assume that this perspective does have a certain affinity with the unmarked narrator-perspective and demarcates the dimension of the implied author to a certain extent: Zia's brother Amanat, his constant competitor for his parents' and other characters' affections, emerges as a persistent counterpoint both in his letters to Zia and, after he has become a writer, in excerpts from his literary works, especially his novel *The Arsonist* about Kabir, the Weaver (1440-1518), the son of a Brahmin widow, adopted by a Muslim couple, who later becomes a mystic poet and a Hindu (Bhakti) saint, marking the exact opposite and antidote to all ideals of purity held dear by Zia/Lucens/Tejas. In part 3, finally, Amanat emerges as an alternative character-focalizer within the heterodiegetic narration, thus assuming a structurally equal position to his brother. What is more, it is Amanat who has the last word in the novel, and not only once but twice: The final words of the main narration at the end of chapter 59 point to Tejas's imminent death, but at the same time they finally and against all odds establish a bond between Tejas and Amanat through Kabir: "It was odd, but the last thing [Tejas] recalled was something Kabir had said towards the end of his book: 'There's only one God and Her name is Life. She is the only one worthy of worship. All else is irrelevant.'" (550)¹⁷ And after this the novel is rounded off in chapter 60 with a letter Amanat addresses to his vanished brother, hinting in an unobtrusively metafictional manner at a variety of loose ends against the background of the opposition of life vs. literature,¹⁸ but asking Zia to come home (after all, Zia had vanished before) and ending the letter (and the book) with "Love, Amanat" (554).

Amanat is Zia's opposite in all respects: While Zia's health is basically robust, Amanat is sickly and suffering from severe asthma. While Zia roams the world engaged in his various missions, Amanat stays in Bombay and basically at home. He is mainly interested in philosophy and poetry and only reluctantly follows in his father's footsteps as an architect. Having embraced his father's liberal attitude,

17 This validation of life as a female goddess chimes in with the novel's reluctance to demonize its female characters in spite of Zia's uneasy relationship with sexuality. The female characters are, just like the male characters, all carefully embedded in their private and public environments.

18 "As an author I am expected to write closures to my stories or novels that really bring all the strands and themes to a satisfactory end. Unfortunately, that flesh-blood-and-chance romance, misadventure, tragedy or comic interlude called life rarely permits the luxury of QED endings." (553)

des, he reaches out to the world by means of literature. Beyond those involved in the game itself, such as the Shakta Muni and James Cambray, it is only Amanat who, observing his brother's activities from the distance (of literature?), realises that the Guardian Angels project is financed "with money made from the sale of arms" (524), which he refuses to believe at first. But when Zia does not reply to his e-mail asking for a refutation of the charge, Amanat acts decisively, setting Zia an ultimatum of three months to wind up his operations (527f.) before he exposes his machinations to the public. In his letter, he points out in detail the fundamental flaws of Zia's attitudes and schemes which he accuses of a narrow-mindedness that "can so easily be interpreted to reinforce the neoconservative programme" and as "being to the right of the extreme right" while preventing an adequate engagement with the world: "What depresses me even more about the Guardian Angels' agenda is the numbing aridity of its hopes and aims for a better future [...] What petty and negative ambitions you have for mankind." (527) When Amanat evokes Jesus at this point ("Look to the Son of God, Zia. There is no greater visionary than Christ."), he unwittingly addresses the central conflict in Zia's life and reinforces an oblique association between Jesus and himself which is introduced earlier in the novel when Lucens finds to his dismay that "The Christ in the deep relief [that his father had installed in the rebuilt monastery after the storm] was the very image of Amanat." (307) Like Zia's persistent visions of Jesus, Amanat functions as Zia's submerged conscience, and he characterizes Zia's personality unsparingly in this letter:

What good are your philanthropic activities if you are going to fund them by dealing in death? You claim to be pro-life, but all you do is leave behind a trail of destruction.

A leopard does not change its spots. You may have switched your religion or whatever 'ism' you subscribed to but you remain true to your nature. [...] [Y]ou remained faithful to your religion, the religion of extremism. (527)

But like Jesus, Amanat also holds out the 'manna called forgiveness', as the end of his rather harsh letter ("For better or worse you are my brother. I love you. Don't make me do this." 528) and the final words of the novel show ("Love, Amanat" 554). At the same time, it is important to note that while this basic constellation suggests that Amanat serves as a positive counterpart and potential corrective for Zia, the novel nevertheless furnishes enough detail to make it clear that he does have all too human flaws like envy and jealousy as well as a certain degree of egocentrism, so that both brothers come across as potentially normal human beings.

It turns out, then, that the religious extremist and the liberal poet are brothers in arms fighting for a better world with opposite means and that their fundamental difference lies in "their different ability to accept things and situations as they

are."¹⁹ Zia and Amanat stand for the religion of extremism on the one hand and literature on the other in a constellation very much like the one outlined by Salman Rushdie in one of his most famous essays.²⁰ And while the novel clearly favours the latter as a possible antidote to the former, it also acknowledges the limited chances literature has for making a difference in the course of the world. In this sense, the novel in the novel, i.e. Amanat's *The Arsonist*, a fictional (!) biography of Kabir, the mystic poet and saint who embodies and embraces difference and multiplicity and rejects all longing for purity in the name of life (cf. Zia's last thoughts before his death), captures the stance of the novel that frames it, Kiran Nagarkar's *God's Little Soldier*: Acknowledge the world as it is, including the existence of divergent views, and turn to communication instead of violence in order to sort out these differences or at least make them manageable (which may include fairly drastic but always non-violent measures such as Amanat's threat of exposing the financial basis of the Guardian Angels' scheme). In a complex world there are neither easy judgements nor easy solutions, as the novel's semi-open ending illustrates: Amanat is still waiting for Zia to return just as the son of the father, who was murdered by Zia in Afghanistan, kept waiting to be picked up by his father after school hours. And it is certainly no coincidence that Kabir emerges as a striking parallel figure to Jesus in the course of *God's Little Soldier*, thus putting the novel's striking Christian undertone into a global perspective and insisting, like its predecessor *Cuckold*, on a "non-derivative regional genre of modernity."²¹

3) Margins of Modernity

As the preceding survey has indicated, the form of *God's Little Soldier* itself oscillates between its longing for order – three basically chronological parts, two main protagonists/perspectives with a clearly discernible representative function – and its acknowledgement of contingency – its sprawling cast of characters in highly unlikely but always plausibly motivated constellations and situations, with Shakta Muni pulling the strings in the background as the non-Western (!) epitome of modernity in its current state and thus casting doubt on the novel's seemingly neat arrangement of three fundamentalisms: Can the Muni really be

19 Nora Anna Escherle: "Brothers in Arms – The Religious Extremist and the Liberal Poet." Talk draft for conference on 'Communication and Conflict'. Prague. Nov 3-5 2011. Accessible under www.inter-disciplinary.net/.../escherleccpaper.pdf, (24.05.2012). No pagination.

20 Cf. Salman Rushdie: "*Is Nothing Sacred?*" *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*. London 1992. S. 415-429.

21 Wiemann 2008. S. 131.

taken as a representative of Hinduist fundamentalism or is he not rather a pessimistic example for the evolution of the global genre of modernity towards a fundamentalist materialist and finally nihilistic bent, with which Hinduism might have a striking affinity?²² Tejas, at any rate, never considers himself to be a Hindu but remains Catholic to his final crisis,²³ so that the parallelism between Jesus and Kabir remains intact.

In the light of this arrangement, the notion of margins becomes more complex than initially envisioned: On the one hand, the distinction between artificially constructed 'external' margins and empirically observable 'internal' margins holds, with Afghanistan providing an example for the former and the insistence on the extremist unity of global varieties of fundamentalism being an example for the latter. On the other hand, the notion of 'margins' has to be taken seriously not only in its sense of being the 'outside edge' of something, but also in its second meaning of profit margin, i.e. 'the difference between buying and selling price', which in turn leads to a third meaning of being 'an amount above what is necessary, esp. for success'.²⁴ The economic overtones of the latter two meanings are unmistakable, and the capitalist excesses of modernity figure prominently in the novel in terms of Zia's ultimately unreliable feel for statistics, probabilities and investment banking, which can only be re-grounded in reality by linking it to the shadow modernity of the global arms trade²⁵ in a potentially (self-) destructive fashion. As such, the novel confirms and illustrates advanced modernity's propensity for highly improbable and thus incalculable events.²⁶ Seemingly rational and statistically calculable, modernity creates its own structural extremism of excess, the novel suggests, and this fundamentalism has the same

22 Nagarkar is not alone in insinuating this. See, for example, Vikram Chandra's huge novel *Sacred Games* (2006), in which a globally connected Mumbai gangster boss, Ganesh Gaitonde, threatens his hometown (and by implication the world) with nuclear apocalypse. For an instructive commentary on the affinities between Hinduism and materialism cf. Pavan K. Varma's deconstruction of "The Myth of [Indian/Hinduist] Other-Worldliness" in his *Being Indian: Inside the Real India* [2004]. London 2006. S. 56-95.

23 "He had told Roy some years ago when he had lost all the Guardian Angels' money that Catholics do not commit suicide. So what was he planning to do? Become a Hindu or a Jew now?" (525) And of course he does not.

24 The definitions have been taken (rather randomly) from the *Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Langenscheidt/Longman, 1981).

25 Cf. note 6.

26 In an entertaining if slightly repetitive study, Nassim Nicholas Taleb, former investment banker and currently Distinguished Professor of Risk Engineering at New York University's Polytechnic Institute, calls such events 'Black Swans' and discusses their increasing frequency as modernity unfolds. Cf. Nassim Nicholas Taleb: *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*. London 2010. Luckily, the Armageddon envisioned by the novel is only one possible scenario here, but the financial crisis in the real world of 2008 clearly belongs to the same category.

destructive tendencies as the seemingly older religious ones, which are sucked and assimilated into the new dispensation anyway. Human beings have to position themselves vis-à-vis the opportunities and limitations afforded by this structure, and these sit uncomfortably with the perceived tension between human longings for wholeness, totality, purity, sameness, perfection and control on the one hand, and fragmentation, particularity, hybridity, difference, contingency and lack of control as signatures of modernity on the other. Call it humanity vs. modernity or idealism vs. life or principle vs. people, the 'internal' margins of modernity seem to be largely demarcated by human beings' uneasy relationship with modernity's complexity. Sounding modernity's current globalised state with the help of a man without qualities (except for his personal propensity for extremist stances) while self-reflexively (and strictly immanently) assessing the cultural means for dealing with it (in terms of literature and its creative appropriation of both reality and historical/mythical figures like Jesus and Kabir), Kiran Nagarkar has written a timely and disturbing novel which acknowledges modernity's global inevitability just as much as it insist on its regional varieties which result from the interplay of different traditions. And in spite of its unflinching engagement with the current state of the world, *God's Little Soldier* is first and foremost a plea for critical open-mindedness, love and mutual understanding. In this sense, the final words of the author's acknowledgements at the end of the book can also be taken as yet another set of final words for the novel at large: "Peace be with you, Zia, Amanat, all my friends, readers and non-readers." (556)

Afrikadiskurse – global, lokal

Carlotta von Maltzan

Dieser Beitrag widmet sich zwei Fragestellungen, nämlich wie und unter welchen Voraussetzungen sich Afrikadiskurse in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur manifestieren und welche Schlussfolgerungen sich daraus für das Beziehungsgeflecht zwischen einer so genannten westlichen und einer so genannten afrikanischen Perspektive auf den Kontinent ziehen lassen. Zweitens und ausführlicher soll untersucht werden, welche Diskurse über Afrika zurzeit in Südafrika Konjunktur haben und warum. Abschließend ist zu fragen, wie sich diese Diskurse zu Afrikadiskursen in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur verhalten.

Afrikadiskurse in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur

In seiner umfassenden und bis dato richtungweisenden Übersicht über den „Afrika-Diskurs in der deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur“ von 2003 stellt Dirk Göttsche fest, dass nach dem Ende des Ost-West-Konfliktes und im derzeitigen Zeitalter der Globalisierung Afrikaner in Deutschland zwar weiterhin unter einem fortdauernden Rassismus im Rahmen der sogenannten Ausländerfeindlichkeit zu leiden haben, der Kontinent selbst dagegen, zumindest in der deutschsprachigen Literatur, sich jedoch seit geraumer Zeit einer Konjunktur erfreue. Abgesehen von einer umfangreichen Reise- und Reportagenliteratur entstehe eine wachsende Zahl von Romanen, zum Teil mit hohen Auflagen, die oft auf autobiografischer Basis Afrika, deutsche Erfahrungen mit Afrikanern oder aber auch das geschichtliche Verhältnis von Europa und Afrika thematisieren. Einerseits blieben zwar viele dieser Afrika-Romane in den „hartnäckigen Stereotypen und Projektionen des europäischen Afrikabildes befangen“ (Göttsche 2003: 162), insbesondere wenn sie sich auf die Begegnung mit Afrika und Afrikanern einließen, wobei insbesondere die Unterhaltungsliteratur „die exotistischen Sehnsüchte zivilisationsmüder Europäer“ (Göttsche 2003: 163) bedienten, die hier zumindest imaginär dem „durchrationalisierten Alltag der westlichen Welt“ (ebd.) entkommen möchten. Doch sei auf der anderen Seite, so Göttsche, durchaus das Bemühen vieler Autoren zu erkennen,