In the recently published volume *Memory and Political Change* (2012), Aleida Assmann states that “during the 1990s, the innovative term ‘culture of remembrance’ was coined, providing a cultural framework” (Assmann and Shortt 53) for the various debates about German national identity which emerged after Germany’s reunification. For the Turkish-German writer Zafer Şenocak, national history indeed plays “a key role” in one of these debates, specifically “the question of whether a country is open for immigrants,” as he stated in 1995 in an interview with the Berlin newspaper *Tagesspiegel* (“Darf man Türken und Juden vergleichen, Herr Şenocak?”). As Deniz Göktürk has observed more recently, the “nexus” between the “need to expand the [West German] workforce” after East Germany’s enclosure in 1961 and the beginning of labor migration in the form of a recruitment treaty with Turkey in the same year, for instance, “does not figure prominently in public memorialization of Germany as a divided and reunified nation” (86). Instead, the process of reunification with its renationalization marginalized Germany’s immigrants by revitalizing notions of the ‘nation-state,’ a ‘homogenous’ culture and ethnic categorization. While it is not possible “to immigrate into a country’s past” (“Darf man Türken und Juden vergleichen”), Şenocak questions the notion of a shared ethnic memory which he sees closely tied to the question of collective guilt after the Jewish genocide of the Nazi era. Having access to a shared history with the native population instead, he argues, would be important for the immigrants’ participation in shaping the German future, especially with regard to the third generation as well as for the peaceful development of the German nation-state.

In her 2007 essay “Taking on German and Turkish History: Emine Sevgi Özdamar’s *Seltsame Sterne*,” Kader Konuk takes up the notion of the country’s past as a “closed door” (232) in the context of Germany’s memory culture and the Holocaust by explicitly referring to Şenocak but also to Andreas Huyssen who engages critically with the issue in his 2003 article on “Diaspora and Nation: Migration into Other Past.” In his discussion of migrating into another nation’s past, Huyssen poses the question whether it is “possible or even desirable for a diasporic community to migrate into the history of the
host nation» (154) and «even assume responsibility» for Germany’s «burden of Auschwitz and the Third Reich» (155). While Konuk acknowledges that «in recent years Turkish-German literature has taken up this challenge of developing the notion of a shared history» («History» 232), her own approach to an engagement of the Turkish diaspora with German history, however, differs considerably from Şenocak’s position to both history and the commemoration of the Holocaust. Whereas Konuk’s essay on Özdamar and German and Turkish history focuses on the question of how the Turkish diaspora «negotiates its role in Germany by engaging with the Holocaust as the most crucial moment of the German past» («History» 232), Şenocak pleads in his public statements and essays for overcoming this fixation on Germany’s traumatic past which he associates with the country’s ethnically defined «negation of the nation’s history» («Darf man Türken und Juden vergleichen»). In 1995, the year of commemorative events and of the beginning of the debate on the Holocaust Memorial, the author contends that in Germany, history is read as the diary of a Schicksalsgemeinschaft, the nation’s personal experience to which others have no access: packaging history in commemorative speeches and rituals has taken the place of Erinnerungsarbeit («Darf man Türken und Juden vergleichen»). Germany’s ritualized process of coming to terms with the past should therefore be replaced with a historiography «which speaks many languages» (Das Land 145).

Thus for Şenocak to become a German means to «become implicated in German history,» although it seems «that the relationship of diasporic memory to the traditional memorial culture of the ‹host nation› is an important but understudied question,» as Huyssen acknowledges in his essay (153). Although German memory culture is in flux, the public debates still remain «rigorously focused on things German» without asking what they «actually might mean for the Turkish-German community» (156). What it means to share a present with the Germans, but not their history, has become a focal point in Şenocak’s fictional and non-fictional texts after reunification which demonstrate that narratives can play an important role in rethinking cultural orientation and imagining a «new representation of the past» (Assmann and Shortt 9), thereby contesting the public political discourse.

This essay on Turkish-German entanglements will examine the ways in which Şenocak attempts to overcome ethnicised notions of nationhood, history, and memory culture in his recent writings by expanding the scholarly exploration of memory discourse to pre-1945 political and cultural Turkish contexts as reflected in his latest historiographical novel Deutsche Schule (2012), first published in Turkey under the title Alman Terbiyesi in 2007. I will relate this text to the author’s previous historiographical narra-
tive *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* (1995) and juxtapose it with both Rachel Mag Shamhráin’s research on the Turkish-German alliance before and during World War I and Konuk’s scholarship on Turkey’s policy toward its minorities and Jewish-German émigrés, arguing that Şenocak’s linking of Turkish and German pasts transnationalizes Germany’s ethnically defined memory culture and Holocaust remembrance.

In the absence of an explicit colonial relationship between Germany and Turkey, Şenocak in his recent essay collection, *Deutschsein. Eine Aufklärungsschrift* (2011), reminds his readers of the mostly forgotten links between German and Turkish history with regard to the shared experiences of World War I, genocide, expulsion, exile, and nationalist excesses in the twentieth century. Thus, the collective remembering of these experiences and their public discussion should, from his perspective, not only lead to the perception of the ‘other’ but ultimately to the perception of the ‘self’ in order to gain a critical insight into one’s own national history and multiple identity changes. In his collection of political essays on *Deutschsein*, Şenocak identifies Germany’s deviation from the Western paradigm of civilization as the main reason for the fact that in Germany migration and integration debates with their strong social components tend to turn inevitably into identity debates with ethnic, national, or religious connotations (*Deutschsein* 26). Constructions of identity become based not on universal values and civil rights but rather on exclusionary concepts that define German belonging in ethnic terms, thereby stressing national and cultural differences.

The post-reunification debate on immigration, integration, and Islam was reignited by the controversial publication *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (2010) of the (SPD) politician Thilo Sarrazin and demonstrates the ongoing challenge to the German nation-state with regard to its immigrants, in particular its four million Muslims, whom the author deems difficult to integrate. With his sweeping claims about race, the unwillingness and inability of Turks and Arabs to integrate, their intellectual inferiority, higher birth rates, exploitation of the welfare state, and the overall negative impact of Muslim immigration on a presumably stable German identity, Sarrazin sparked a national controversy as politicians, the media, and the general public offered widely differing opinions on the subject. The interior minister, Hans-Peter Friedrich, saw Islam neither as essential for Germany’s changing society nor as part of its history (Biermann, «Für Friedrich»), thereby ignoring both the political and scholarly forms that German Orientalism took in the nineteenth and twentieth century. According to Friedrich, Western Judeo-Christian values remain the nation’s exclusive *Leitkultur*. But Suzanne Marchand reminds us in her intellectual history on *German Orientalism in the Age of Empire*
(2009) that German scholars were the pacesetters in oriental studies between 1830 and 1930, despite entering the colonial race late and exiting it early. Constructing a normative German ‘national identity,’ therefore, can not only be instrumentalized «as a tool of distinction and exclusion,» but also ignores «divergent understandings of ‘Germanness’» as manifested, for example, in the numerous debates over East Germany’s legacy and memorials in a reunited Germany where «different cultures of collective memory» clash (Arnold-de-Simine, Memory Traces 18, 19, 23). From Şenocak’s perspective, for Muslim integration to succeed, the legacy of German culture needs to be expanded from a Gedächtniskultur to a new Erfahrungshorizont whereby Islam in Germany would no longer be perceived as the ultimate essentialized «other» (Deutschsein 114, 122).

Instead of focusing on the Muslim «other» in Germany’s ideologically driven identity politics with their clear-cut national «imaginaries of belonging» (Huyssen 150), Şenocak suggests a public memory discourse in the form of a dialogue with the immigrant population which focuses on the question of how the past shapes the present and a common future by recalling that twentieth-century German and Turkish history «had been entwined more than once,» a linking of past and present that may finally lead to the inclusion of Turkish immigrants and their German descendants in Germany’s memory culture («The Capital» 145, 146) and thereby also to a changed perception of German migration history as a part of national history. As the Turkish-German writer had previously reminded his readers in his novel Gefährliche Verwandtschaft in the form of the narrator-protagonist’s counter-memory, among the mostly forgotten events of a shared history in the twentieth century is «the so-called brotherhood of arms in the First World War» in conjunction with the role of Goltz Pasha (the Prussian Field Marshal Wilhelm Leopold Colmar Freiherr von der Goltz) who helped modernizing the Turkish Army, served as commander-in-chief of Turkish forces in World War I, and «led the Ottoman Empire to defeat and dissolution side by side with the Wilhelmine Empire» («The Capital» 146). Another reminder of a shared history in the novel concerns the leader of the Young Turks, Talat Pascha, who (as interior minister) was responsible for the deportation of the Armenians in 1915 and fled to Germany after the armistice in Europe in 1918 where he was killed three years later by a young Armenian in Berlin.

The issue of a German-Turkish alliance has been recently taken up in an article on «Displacing Orientalism: Ottoman Jihad, German Imperialism, and the Armenian Genocide» (2009) by Rachel MagShamhráin who draws particular attention to the long-standing relationship between Wilhelmine Germany and the Ottoman Empire preceding World War I – for her also an
attempt to address the «historical amnesia» surrounding the topic, «especially in the context of Turkey’s wish to accede to the EU» and the ensuing controversy (146). With the completed project of the Oriental Railway in 1888, linking Berlin directly to Istanbul and eventually to Baghdad, Germany «became aware of the potential that the Ottoman Empire held as an extraterritorial economic sphere of influence» (152) which would also have an impact on German foreign policy and its interest in keeping the Ottoman Empire intact. As MagShamhráin points out, Germany’s increasing imperialist agenda toward the East manifested itself in the plan to turn Islam against the British trade rival by instigating «the Ottoman Empire’s declaration of jihad on the Entente powers» (147) in 1914, thereby cutting «across traditional East–West cultural cleavages in the service of political and economic interests on both sides» (144). Turkey’s own hegemonic intentions at that time were «inwardly directed» (150) and consisted of a national project that was striving for an ethnically homogeneous, monocultural society. A new nationalistic political course of action had begun in 1908 under the leadership of the Young Turks who took over the government of the Ottoman Empire from Sultan Abdülhamid II. Rejecting the idea of a multiethnic state by emphasizing Turkish identity on the basis of a common history, religion, and language eventually led to the founding of the nation-state through Mustapha Kemal Atatürk in 1923 which from then on excluded the minorities of the Greeks, Jews, and Armenians as «foreigners» and «others.» For MagShamhráin, the systematic eradication of Turkey’s Christian Armenian population and their essentialized «othering» as a homogenous fanatic group with a «religious-cum-racial loyalty that transcend[ed] their loyalty to the state» (157) provides «evidence of a more multidirectional Orientalism than is suggested by Edward Said’s idea of a hegemonic West representing and therefore controlling an essentialized East» (145). In accordance with its own political and economic interests during the time of Turkish persecution and in fear of an increasing Russian influence in the Balkans, Wilhelmine Germany «took an Anti-Armenian stance» against their pro-Russian fellow Christians in «what was cast as Armenian sedition and secessionism» (151). By having «an ally as powerful as Germany,» MagShamhráin contends, the Young Turks in the Ottoman Empire under the leadership of Talat Pascha felt that they could manipulate the Germans and thus «get away with this large-scale ethnic cleansing» (156) which also raises the question of Germany’s share of responsibility while at the same time foreshadowing its own Jewish genocide.

As a response to constructions of collective national identities in public discourse, Şenocak wants to convey history as family history in the form of a discontinuous narrative with fragmentary individual biographies which are
composed of contradictory parts and open up new perspectives of the past from the point of view of later generations. In his novel *Gefährliche Verwandtschaft*, history and memory with reference to the time of the two World Wars are dealt with in generational terms in the form of two different family histories, a maternal Jewish-German and a paternal Turkish one. As a persona of mixed Jewish-German-Turkish heritage, the novel’s narrator and protagonist is of a hybrid identity which should not be interpreted as a «notion of an ethnically defined historical responsibility» toward collective traumatic pasts, as Konuk implies in her essay («History» 245), but rather as a literary construct whereby the author ironically questions the German debate over a national and cultural identity that operates with misleading concepts such as «in-between cultures» as if some constructed homogenous groups would face one another «wie Fussballmannschaften,» as Şenocak explains in a conversation in 2003 with Tom Cheesman (Cheesman and Yeşilada 22).

After inheriting his grandfather’s notebooks in Arabic and Cyrillic script which he can only decipher with the help of a translator, the narrator starts to search for his roots in the family history of his ancestors, realizing with regard to the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide that he is the grandchild of both victims and perpetrators. Jews and Turks are thus connected in an imagined context which transcends ideological and social differences of alleged ‘otherness’ as the author points to the historical tradition of transferring the image of the Oriental from the Jews to the Turks. In the novel, a journalist of the Pan-European Organization writes an essay entitled «Die Türkengefahr in Europa» in which he warns about the «asiatisch-orientalischen Züge» of a people who, in contrast to the Jews, do not waste time on arts and sciences but instead pose the question of naked power (*Gefährliche Verwandtschaft* 86). With reference to Germany’s dominant memorial culture with its ritualized practices regarding the Holocaust and its focus on «deutsch-jüdische Dichotomie,» Şenocak suggests in his family narrative that the undoing of this dichotomy by admitting the Turkish community into the nation’s memory discourse might release both parties «von ihren traumatischen Erfahrungen.» For their part, the Turks in Germany would have to discover the Jews not just as a part of the German past which they cannot share, but also «als Teil der Gegenwart, in der sie leben» (89). As a Turkish hero of the East, the narrator’s grandfather was involved in the Armenian deportations and fought the Greeks on the Western front in Anatolia in 1921. Thus, the paternal family history is directly connected to the militant nationalism of Turkey’s twentieth-century history, reflecting the policy of exclusion so often characteristic of the construction of a national state identity. During the time of classical German nation-building, Prussian historians like Heinrich von Treitschke...
Elke Segelcke

concentrated on the others within and stressed the non-compatibility of Jews with the German nation (Şenocak, Auf ewig anders). In light of the fear of Überfremdung and at times violent linguistic and cultural assimilation practices toward its Polish minority, Werner Sollers states in his 2005 essay Goodbye, Germany that Germany has yet to build up a historical consciousness of its polyethnic past. [...] In the debates about ethnic diversity in Wilhelminian Germany can be found some building blocks with which some contemporary scholars could develop an outline of a polyethnic and cosmopolitan tradition (Sollers).

In his 2012 novel Deutsche Schule, Şenocak continues his explicit engagement with German and Turkish history by again reminding his readers in Turkey and in Germany of their countries’ multiple shared experiences in the twentieth century. This well-researched historiographical and political novel about issues of patriotism, identity, and political blindness expands the historical scope of Şenocak’s Gefährliche Verwandtschaft and ranges from pre-1914 Berlin to Istanbul in the early 1940s. The extended Turkish-German entanglements during this period shed a particularly critical light on Germany’s exertion of influence on both the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic as well as on Turkey’s contradictory agenda toward the Nazi government and the links between German and Turkish forms of anti-Semitism. Whereas MagShamhráin’s essay raised the question of Germany’s share of responsibility regarding the Armenian genocide, Şenocak’s novel seems to raise the question of Turkey’s share of accountability for both the fate of Turkish Jews and Jewish refugees from Europe, thereby acknowledging repressed events in Turkey’s history while at the same time transnationalizing Germany’s ethnically defined Holocaust remembrance and memory culture.

In Deutsche Schule, the author narrates the life of a young officer of the Ottoman Empire (Salih Bey, born in 1881, the same year as Mustapha Kemal) who undergoes his military training in Berlin and participates as a German officer in World War I. As both a Turkish patriot and admirer of everything German, infatuated with the Wilhelmine Empire, the imperial Prussian army and its core values of discipline and honor, Salih believes in the German modernization of the Turkish military under Wilhelm II and idealizes the Waffenbrüderschaft between the two allies as a symbol of their Schicksalsgemeinschaft (30). The young officer’s politically shortsighted views correspond to the concurrent German propaganda campaign that glorified the present military alliance, as Florian Krobb observes in his article on Turkey as Colonial Space in German World War I Writings. At the same time, orientalist fantasies imagine a future development in which Ottoman space would be transformed, modernized, and Europeanized in Germany’s image (3). In
Krobb’s assessment, the self-image of Germans «allowed them to cast themselves as both civilizers (Volk der Schule) and modernizers (Volk der Organisation)» (9).

After the collapse of the Wilhelmine Empire and the dissolution of its army, Salih remains in Berlin as a successful businessman and German citizen, adopting German nationalist ideas while also remaining a Turkish patriot. His belief in common Turkish-German interests and sense of belonging to both nations persists, causing him to continue working for the Third Reich even after his return to Istanbul in 1939 at the outbreak of World War II. Through the protagonist’s conspirational activities (such as exchanging reports about the disposition of the Turkish government toward Germany and England for information from Nazi agents about the situation at the Eastern Front), Şenocak’s readers gain insight into the extent of Nazi infiltration of neutral Turkey in the early 1940s. Istanbul became a transfer site for spies of different ideological schemes and «the city was alive with the competing intellectual and political agendas of Turkish nationalists on the one hand and German fascists on the other» (103), as Konuk states in her study East West Mimesis. Auerbach in Turkey (2010). As portrayed in the novel, Nazi informants were present everywhere by taking advantage of well-established cultural organizations and institutions such as the German School Istanbul, established in 1868, and Teutonia, the first German Club in Turkey, founded in 1847. The latter became the most important headquarters for Nazi propaganda where party officials from Berlin lectured about German Lebensraum (Deutsche Schule 52), leading Salih to wonder, in light of his own interest in a future Eurasia under Turkish-German authority, if this was to include Turkey.

As a witness of key historical events of the twentieth century who had made the personal acquaintance of renowned contemporaries such as Talat Pascha and Enver Pascha (an organizer of the Young Turk Revolution with a key role in the Ottoman entry into World War I on the side of Germany who had previously also served as an Ottoman officer in the imperial Prussian army), the protagonist is writing his memoirs during 1941 and 1943, the time of the German campaign in Russia. In 1941, the year of Germany’s signing of a friendship treaty with Turkey and of its Russian invasion, Salih sees the two countries again closely connected by a common destiny, wanting to serve both nations by pursuing the Pan-Turkic idea of Turanism, hoping that the German invasion would lead to a liberation of the Turkic peoples of Russian Central Asia, suppressed by Stalin, who in return would strengthen the German position in the Russian campaign. Turanism as the idea of the unification of all Turkic people, however, promoted by Turkish national journals and writers during the 1930s, was a «racialist movement» that also disseminated...
«anti-Semitic propaganda,» as Konuk ascertains (East West Mimesis 84). In her study, she comments on Turkey’s contradictory political agenda toward Jewish minorities and the Nazi government until 1944 when Germany’s defeat became obvious. Whereas Jewish-German émigré scholars «were greeted in Turkey not as Jews» but as «exemplary Europeans,» facilitating Western reforms and «overcoming the opposition between Orient and Occident» (88, 89), the «loyalty of Jewish Turks to the new nation» (82) was publicly scrutinized; a contradiction that Konuk explains with Mustapha Kemal’s «dual assimilatory policy,» requiring both conformity with the new nationally unified Turkish culture and the Turkish concept of westernization in order to achieve legitimation from the main European powers (83).

The novel also touches on another historical event and contradictory Turkish policy that was applied toward Jews who attempted to flee the increasing anti-Semitism in Europe: the incident of the Struma in February 1942. The ship with 700 Jewish refugees on board was denied access to the Mediterranean by the British on its way to Palestine and sank in the Black Sea after having been attacked by the Soviets during its forced return to Romania. The lack of Turkish commitment to save European Jews became also apparent in the government’s decision to allow only a few refugees to disembark in Istanbul and its general policy to refuse Jewish refugees transit to Palestine. In the novel, this incident raises Salih’s concern about the fate of his Jewish friend Karla from Berlin, about whom he had no news after having sheltered her as a refugee during her illegal journey through Turkey on her way to Palestine (Deutsche Schule 123). Karla opens his eyes to the ongoing Jewish deportations in Germany in the early 1940s and to the racial politics toward minorities in both countries. She criticizes both Salih’s and Turkey’s infatuation with Western Europe, expressing her doubts that Turks would ever be effectively transformed into Europeans. In light of the failed assimilation of European Jewry, Turks, like Jews, would always continue to be «die Orientalen» (105). Karla’s conclusions regarding the failed assimilation of Jews in Germany and the historical tradition of constructing Jews as Orientals correspond to Turkey’s lack of a «clear stance against the Nazi pronouncements about Jews,» as Konuk asserts in her study, since a more explicit attitude might have questioned Turkey’s own assimilation practices and self-imposed transformation into Europeans by asking «whether Turks, like Jews, were bound to remain Orientals in the eyes of Western European Christians» (East West Mimesis 90). After Karla’s departure, Salih’s former world view begins to falter while his increasing skepticism toward Hitler’s military strategy and his sheltering of a German Jew arouse suspicion. He eventually falls out of favor with the German as well as Turk-
ish authorities in Istanbul, ending up as stateless after losing his German citizenship.

By linking both Turkey’s and Germany’s troubled historical legacies, Şenocak transnationalizes the remembrance of the Holocaust while also critically targeting the two countries’ assimilation practices, past and present. The novel goes beyond pointing out a shared Turkish-German history by calling particular attention to the question of how such histories can be remembered at a time of a changing memory politics and a changed perception of the nation’s identity. The author’s concern that past experiences should shape the present and, ideally, a common future in Germany’s memory discourse is reflected in the protagonist’s comment that memoirs should always be written for the future to increase the young generation’s awareness—not of the irrevocable past, but of the possibilities for the future (Deutsche Schule 33). His previous novel Gefährliche Verwandtschaft ended with the narrator’s decision not to reconstruct but to invent the events surrounding his grandfather’s life in the form of a story according to the author’s belief «that the search for the truth cannot easily be documented,» so that «history/story as document and invention becomes the book’s real protagonist» («The Capital» 146). Similarly, in his latest novel Deutsche Schule, the protagonist deems historical documents in memoir-writing only valuable in conjunction with individually recalled experiences since remembered persons and events are ultimately always «ein Produkt der Vorstellungskraft» (28).

With regard to Salih’s non-contradictory sense of self as both a Prussian officer and Turkish patriot, the novel can be read as an ironic comment on Germany’s identity debates and a critique of the current migration politics with its cultural and linguistic assimilation practices which do not take into account dual cultural identities and loyalties or multilingualism. Regarding German and Turkish concepts of national identity, the author questions notions of continuity, coherence, and a fixed «national character» by reminding the reader of the constructed nature of collective identities in light of the countries’ multiple historical caesuras and identity changes. As previously mentioned in the context of Turkey’s contradictory political agenda toward Jewish minorities and the Nazi government, Turkish Jews were ostracized while Jewish-German émigré scholars were welcomed in the 1930s not as Jews but as Europeans to help westernize the young Turkish Republic. In her study, Konuk attests to the manifold historical and cultural relationships between East and West by linking Turkey’s new concept of a secular modernity and «humanist movement» with its introduction of classical Western education and the intellectual heritage of ancient Greece and Rome to the German influence on the Turkish educational reforms and thus on the country’s national renewal.
Among the more famous German émigrés were intellectuals such as Ernst Reuter (who should become Berlin’s first postwar mayor) and the philologist Erich Auerbach who established the philological disciplines in Turkey and taught Western European literatures from the classical to the modern age at Istanbul University (*East West Mimesis* 61, 65). German professionals and academics played a significant and enduring role «in mapping a new cultural heritage onto Turkey’s national territory» and in creating «a common frame of reference for Turkey and the West» (54). However, as Konuk states, «re-creating Turkey in the image of Europe came with its contradictions» (67) and at the expense of the country’s ethnic and religious diversity, including its disavowal of the Ottoman historical and cultural legacy. With regard to its philhellenic «humanist movement» (67) and aim to root the new Turkish culture in that of ancient Greece and in the Europe of the 1930s, it seems paradoxical that Orthodox Greeks were compelled to leave Turkey in the wake of the forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1924.

In light of the ethnicised notions of nationhood, a transnational approach to history should, from Şenocak’s perspective, not only lead to the perception of the ‘other’ but ultimately to a stronger perception of the ‘self’ and thus affect both the national and the diasporic memory. In this regard, narratives can change our perception and memory constructs of past events. With their biographical connotations and differing multiple generational perceptions of the past they play an important role in complementing historiography and, as Azade Seyhan argues in *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001), in shaping «national consciousness» (8) both by instituting and supporting national myths and by recording and questioning what our contemporary society, history, and public memory often repress and forget.

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