**Call for papers**

*Journal of Aging Studies*

**A special issue on: “Theorizing Age – Postcolonial Perspectives in Aging Studies”**

Guest editors: Silke van Dyk, University of Kassel, Germany, and Thomas Küpper, Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf, Germany

Bringing together *Aging Studies* and *Postcolonial Studies* raises at first place questions referring to the intersections of age and ethnicity within their global context; the mutual enrichment of these Studies helps to prevent from universalizing Western patterns of old age and aging that are formative for highly industrialized countries, and thereby, of course, engrained in histories of colonization. Though of tremendous importance and constitutive for any analysis on social locations the focus of this special issue is a slightly different one: We suggest to discuss in how far concepts and theoretical perspectives from *Postcolonial Studies* might suit to theorize age and aging with regard to cultural representations, identity questions, ageism and subversion. Why that? We keep wondering, whether or not postcolonial concepts of marginality and strangeness, of “othering” and liminality at the brink of humanity, so far barely applied to the understanding of aging, might open up new perspectives on the “old person” as “the other”. We do not suggest to simply adopt postcolonial concepts, separating them from their context, but to re-think inspiring thoughts and to be aware of the performative character of conceptual “translations” on shaky grounds.

We currently witness a re-negotiation of old age in Western industrialized countries, which is driven by a revaluation of healthy “young-old” people in their Third Age, who are discovered as potentially productive citizens, while the oldest old remain in their status as “un-persons” close to death and nature. The idea to set people apart from the brinks of humanity by achievements and productivity is well known from colonial ideologies as well as from current politics on aging. There are diverse concepts rooted in *Postcolonial Studies* that might inspire the analysis of this re-negotiation of old age with its janus-faced character.

Edward Said’s analysis of how the concept of the essential other (“the savage”) has given way to a socially constructed other (“the oriental”) might be intriguing to theorize change and character of the Third Age that made its discoursive way from biomedical destiny to plasticity and social performance. The spatial focus on the hierarchical intersections of center and periphery could enrich, very figuratively indeed, investigating the spatial separation of the oldest old, in residential homes for elderly, their own flats or geriatric departments of hospitals. Additionally, the idea of “provincializing Europe” (Dipesh Chakrabarty) as the unmarked norm of a deeply violent hierarchy might be interesting to think of deconstructing mid-life and its character as supposed ageless norm. However, at the same time, it is rather doubtful and has to be discussed, whether or not the salient geographical dimension of this concept obstructs its translation.
Another interesting point of reference might be the postcolonial critics of multiculturalism and its affirmation of group-based differences: these critics might enrich a critical analysis of the nowadays popular appraisal of age virtues, which at the same time re-affirm the otherness of (even) the Third Age.

Last but not least Postcolonial Studies provide diverse concepts to analyze counter-history, including an intriguing focus on everyday practices that undermine and re-write hegemonial standards, which in general is constitutive for poststructuralist thinking. In times, when so-called "midlife-norms" of productivity and independence are extended to the Third Age, when the "young-old" are increasingly expected to prevent aging and to stay young or rather ageless, this might open up new perspectives: What about concepts like “mimicry” – “almost the same, but not quite” (Homi K. Bhabha) – and "translation" in order to highlight the politically requested adaption to "midlife norms" and the potentially deviating or drifting everyday performances of the addressed Third Agers? What about concepts like “strategic essentialism” (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak), in order to think of co-operative action in a highly polyphonic field that does not lead into the dead-end of either sameness or difference?

The special issue welcomes papers that deal with these or any related questions, discussing theoretical insights from Postcolonial Studies in the field of Aging Studies. The Journal of Aging Studies features papers offering new interpretations that challenge existing theory and empirical work.

**Deadlines:** Please submit an extended abstract of 800 to 1,000 words by December 15th, 2014. Selected authors will be invited to submit full manuscripts to the Journal by July 31st, 2015.

**Contact:** Please send the abstracts to both guest editors: silke.vandyk@uni-kassel.de and thomas.kuepper@phil.uni-duesseldorf.de