Writing Across Margins:
Contemporary Afro-German Literature

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Abstract

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My dissertation argues that Afro-German literature—a new strand in contemporary German literature since the late 1980s—functions as aesthetic activism by creating collective identity through textual practices. Joining the larger conversation in Black German Studies on Afro-German poetry and autobiography, this project focuses on writing practices in Afro-German feminist poetry by Helga Emde, Katharina Oguntoye, and May Ayim; Afro-German spoken word poetry by Chantal-Fleur Sandjon, Philipp Khabo Köpsell and Samy Deluxe; Afro-German celebrity autobiographies by Abini Zöllner and Detlef Soost; as well as Afro-German memoirs by Theodor Michael and Gert Schramm. Black German textual practices develop parameters of collective identity that range from the emergence of Afro-German voices to a new understanding of Afro-German blackness; from a new recognition of Afro-German identities, to the rise of an Afro-German memory. The writing practices that shape parameters of collective identity—métissage, imagery, autofiction, multilayering—organize my dissertation and provide the categories for textual analysis. By combining close readings with aesthetic (e.g. Lionnet, Bürger, Gates, Wagner-Egelhaaf) and cultural theory (e. g. Du Bois, Gilroy, Hall, Silverman), my project

demonstrates that Afro-German writing practices help to bend and transgress literary and social categories. The opening chapter reflects on how the aesthetic development in Afro-German feminist poetry breaks the history of Afro-German silence and establishes critical Afro-German voices by employing a form of textual interweaving, a practice I refer to as poetic métissage. Chapter two illustrates how a contemporary double-imagery in Afro-German spoken word poetry—what I describe as the twoness of textual elements that ignite the senses—defines new conceptions of German blackness that escape single-stranded representations. Chapter three explores how celebrity autobiographies by East German authors deploy autofiction in life writing to bring forth new ways of conceptualizing Black German recognition. The final chapter focuses on the ways in which palimpsestic multilayering—a form of textual layering—extends German cultural memories, while their development within the structure of the memoirs drives the formation of an Afro-German collective memory.

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Introduction

Afro-German: Literature, History, and Diasporic Community

Not just - Black in Germany
individually, diverse, defined
(cut and paste, contextualize)

—Philipp Khabo Köpsell, *To be filed under… /Thoughts on Gilroy*

Afro-German literature has an impact on contemporary society. Though this strand of German literature remains unfamiliar to many, its approach to ideas of race and collective identity has captured the interest of readers and scholars alike. Afro-German literature—in particular, poetry and autobiography—examines the experiences of Black Germans and challenges German narratives of racelessness by focusing on a historically overlooked population.[1] It was in response to a shared sense of invisibility and marginalization that Afro-German literary and cultural initiatives took root in the 1980s.[2] The lack of recognition of Afro-German identities within a Eurocentric culture is indicative of the struggle of a white majority to bring together the notions of *Black* and *German* in a meaningful way. Afro-German feminists such as May Opitz (later Ayim), Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schulz assert: "Our essential commonality is that we are black and have experienced a major part of our socialization and life in confrontation with West German society—a society that is not ninety-nine percent white but

[1] I use the terms "Black German" and "Afro-German" interchangeably throughout the dissertation with a few notable exceptions. For many, these were equivalent designations that recognized black as a cultural and political designation and acknowledged that not all Black Germans were of African descent. I do not mean to suggest that their black cultural and political identities were mutually exclusive. Today Black German is in frequent use and considered more inclusive. See Tina Campt, "Reading the Black German Experience: An Introduction," in "Reading the Black German Experience."

[2] See Aija Poikāne-Daumke, *African Diasporas.*

that always has behaved as though it were, or should be" (Ayim, "Showing Our Colors" xxii). As a result, Afro-German movements have been guided by the principle of writing themselves into being, an act of claiming a cultural identity as part of German and global diasporic identities. Familiarity with Afro-German literature increases awareness about the extent and diversity of the African diaspora. Germany can no longer be perceived as a white homogenous society but rather must be understood as an ethnically diverse country that produces a diverse literary canon.

Writing Across Margins explores the writing practices of contemporary Afro-German literature as creative devices for an Afro-German consciousness. As the title of my project defines them, these practices of "writing across margins" introduce components of Afro-German collective identity. These components exist in intersections with other identity categories, such as gender, class, and nationality; they take up diverse forms and meaning, and when put into words, yield interesting new configurations of Afro-German literature. Writing as a minority within a dominant white culture means writing from the margins. Literature, or more specifically the act of writing, provides the opportunity for a series of transgressions, such as the crossing of cultural, national, and racial margins. To write across margins is to unite transnational, translocal, and diasporic perspectives; it reworks the foundations of Black German writing and redefines Black German identities away from marginality.[3] In my discussion, the act of writing across margins emphasizes moments in which aesthetic practices shift parameters of collective identity. The term *writing across* describes a process rather than an effect; the word *across* is usually associated with "over" or "through" ("across" MW). Though these meanings account for a spatial crossing and are often used when referencing location, my understanding of writing "across" signifies a more complex concept, one which encompasses the ideas of "to intersect at

[3] See Carol Boyce Davies' "Introduction: Migratory Subjectivities."

an angle" and "to find and meet" ("across" MW). The two phrases indicate, respectively, moments of intersection and moments of coming across something new. In the works discussed here, writing across margins captures instances of intersection of diasporic and canonical literature, and the discovery of an Afro-German consciousness.

Scholarship

An increasing number of scholars are turning their attention to the history and culture of the Black Diaspora in German-speaking countries. This scholarship operates at the intersection of Postcolonial and Black Studies and can be divided into two categories: historical and literary scholarship. I will discuss both avenues of research here and will begin by focusing on historical research. Prior to Fatima El-Tayeb's 2001 monograph *Schwarze Deutsche: Der Diskurs um "Rasse" und nationale Identität, 1890-1933*, only three historical studies had acknowledged the existence of a black population in Germany.[4] El-Tayeb's scholarship has revised the understanding of the long history of racialized thinking in German scientific and popular discourse. Her study analyzes the construction of race in both the colonies and Germany. The research refutes the notion that there was no tradition of racialization, in the sense of black-white antagonism in Germany before the Third Reich.

A decade and a half later, the number of German and Anglophone monographs, essay collections, and articles being published continues to grow. The most recognized by scholars are the collaborative essay "Blacks, Germans, and the Politics of Imperial Imagination, 1920-1960" by Tina Campt, Pascal Grosse, and Yara-Colette Lemke Muñiz de Faria, and Campt's

[4] See Fatima El-Tayeb, *Schwarze Deutsche: Der Diskurs um "Rasse" und nationale Identität 1890–1933.*

monograph *Other Germans* (2004). The essay is important for its discussion of the fate of Afro-Germans during the Nazi years. The authors discuss not only the forced sterilization but also the German Africa Shows in which the Nazis used Afro-Germans as "native performers" of African tribal dances. Campt's *Other Germans* builds on this research and utilizes oral history as well as archival materials. Her combination of historical analysis, feminist and literary theory, as well as Black German memory narratives helps to understand the effects of Nazi racial policy on Germany's minority population. Her monograph makes an important contribution to the study of black experiences within the German and European context. Much of this research has been summarized by Clarence Lusane in his study *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experience of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era* (2003). Lusane's monograph serves as an introduction to the topic to readers who have no access to current German language research.

Not much was known about experiences of the so-called *Besatzungskinder* (children of French and American occupation) until a publication by Lemke Muñiz de Faria. Her monograph, *Zwischen Fürsorge und Ausgrenzung* (2002), analyzes official correspondence and newspaper articles to tell the story of West Germany's governmental response to the fate of fifteen hundred biracial children in 1946. Fearing the children would face racial discrimination upon their entry into the public-school system, child welfare agents encouraged mothers to place their children into orphanages. Heike Fehrenbach's *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (2005) builds on this research and explores the topic of Afro-German children in broader cultural contexts of sexuality and national identity. An asset of her work is at the examination of both German and American responses to the *Besatzungskinder;* she embeds the question of biracial heritage children in larger cultural discussions on both sides of the

Atlantic. Patricia Mazón and Reinhild Steingröver's *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890-2000* (2005) also takes a broader approach. Their essay collection focuses on the fate of Africans and Black Germans in the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich, the *Besatzungskinder,* and the intersections between racism, imperialism, and anti-Semitism.

The history and experiences of Afro-German children in East Germany are areas that require further research. Peggy Piesche's 2002 article "Black and German? East German Adolescents before 1989 – A Retrospective View of a 'Non-Existent Issue' in the GDR" is noteworthy because it analyzes the systematic exclusion of black guest workers and students from mainstream GDR society, as well as the social isolation experienced by Afro-German children in rural areas of East Germany. The anthology *Blackening Europe: The African American Presence* (2004), edited by Heike Raphael-Hernandez, is representative of the increasing interest in the study of the Black Diaspora outside of West Germany and across Europe. It contains work that focuses on Afro-Europeans as well as African Americans, including a well-researched piece by Cathy Covell Waegner on German hip-hop. Fatima El-Tayeb's monograph *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Post-national Europe* (2011) builds on such research and focuses on the Black European diaspora, activism, intersectionality, and vernacular discourse. El-Tayeb takes a horizontal (i.e. across nations and ethnic groups), post-national approach to examine how urban minority activists across continental Europe resist the dominant construction that suggests Europe is raceless and colorblind and yet also, white and Christian. Her research illustrates how the concept of race still haunts European discourses.

The exploration of Black German history complements literary criticism. Even more so, in *Remembering Africa – The Rediscovery of Colonialism in Contemporary German Literature*

(2013), literary scholar Dirk Göttsche points to the fact that contemporary German literary discourse of "African diasporic history in the Germanophone countries of Europe builds on the memory work of the Black German minority" (10). Black German writing not only brings forth personal and political self-assertion, it also helps rediscover the history of the forgotten African diaspora and promotes critical memory of Germany's neglected history. White German authors also contribute to the rediscovery of diasporic history; Göttsche notes that their work "extends from fiction, through biographical novels to academic biographies" (240). According to Göttsche, these literary productions cover African and Black German lives from the Baroque period through the aftermath of WWII. Although very different in form and outlook and not always immune to relapses into exoticist othering, when viewed together, they make a significant contribution to the memory of the African diaspora in German speaking countries.[5] They once more prove that literary texts and other cultural productions are sites where the role of the media of memory—verbal and non-verbal forms of memory like images, and geographical or bodily 'sites'—can come to the fore.[6] In literary productions, the powerful linkage between memory and identity that is instrumental for public and communicative memory discourses can be loosened, questioned, or even decoupled. This decoupling throws the mechanisms of the memory/identity nexus into relief and, simultaneously, foregrounds those aspects that tend to be excluded or ignored in collective forms of memory.

Göttsche's main contribution to the field of Black German Studies is the clear distinction between African migrants' writing and Black German writing. Both emerged as new strands in

[5] See for example Dieter Kühn's *Beethoven und der schwarze Geiger* (1990), Johannes Glötzner's *Anton Wilhelm Amo* (2002) and *Der Mohr* (2003).
[6] See Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, "Das Gestern im Heute. Medien des sozialen Gedächtnisses," and Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*.

contemporary German literature in the 1980s, each equally concerned with the critical memory of colonial history and its aftermath in the present. African migrants' writing and Black German writing are, however, two distinct forms of African diasporic writing.[7] African migrants' writing is mostly autobiographical in a postcolonial context, presenting personalized histories of global migration and diasporic identities. What sets Black German writing apart from that by African migrants' is not only the absence of migration experiences as a theme, but also its established tradition. Black German writing displays recurring themes and textual references to pioneering early works. This established sense of tradition and diasporic community differentiates Black German writing from African migrants' writing that "has not (yet) developed such a self-canonization" (Göttsche, "Deutsche Literatur" 356). Despite their distinction, both strands of contemporary German literature represent the diversification of the German literary canon.

Scholarship on notions of blackness in German literature and culture also continue to emerge. The collection of essays *Imagining Blackness in Germany and Austria* (2012) by Charlotte Szilagyi, Sabrina Rahman, and Michael Saman presents case studies of visible and invisible race in cultural productions and includes close readings of canonical German literature (Heinrich von Kleist's *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo*), novels (Hugo Bettauer's *Das Blaue Mal*), films (Riefenstahl's *Olympia*, Reiner Werner Fassbinder's *Whity*), and opera (Ernst Krenek's *Jonny spielt auf*). In her monograph *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (2016), Wendy Sutherland examines how representations of blackness in philosophy, anthropology, aesthetics, and drama influence the construction of a white

[7] See Dirk Göttsche's articles "Colonial Legacies and Cross-Cultural Experience: The African Voice in Contemporary German Literature," "Cross-Cultural Self-Assertion and Cultural Politics: African Migrants' Writing in German since the Late 1990s," "Self-Assertion, Intervention and Achievement: Black German Writing from a Postcolonial Perspective," and "Recollection and Intervention: Memory of German Colonialism in Contemporary African Migrants' Writing."

bourgeois German self. Her book offers convincing evidence that the eighteenth-century German stage grappled with the representations of blackness during the Age of Goethe, even though the German states were neither colonial powers nor direct participants in slave trade at that time.

Notions of blackness in literature and the history of diasporic experiences have been well researched. This research plays a significant role in understanding Black German experiences and writing as part of, but different from, other diasporic experiences and postcolonial literatures. In her study, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora* (2004), Michelle Wright points out that the experiences of Afro-Germans are unique in comparison to those of Black Diasporas in other Western countries. Faced with "a racist discourse directed at Africans rather than Afro-Germans," Black Germans are perceived as "Others-from-Without," rather than as "Others-from-Within" (like Black Diasporas in Britain, France, and the United States).[8] Heike Fehrenbach's *Race after Hitler: Black Occupation Children in Postwar Germany and America* (2005), and Timothy L. Schroer's *Recasting Race After WWII: Germans and African Americans in American-Occupied Germany* (2007), argue that after WWII German notions of race shifted from the Jewish-Aryan to the black-white difference, partly as a consequence of American occupation. Maria Höhn and Martin Klinke's *A Breath of Freedom: The Civil Rights Struggle, African American GIs, and Germany* (2010) traces some roots of the American Civil Rights Movement in the often positive experiences of Black soldiers in postwar Germany. More recent publications, for example Sara Lennox's *Remapping Black Germany* (2016), take a more intersectional approach. The collection makes a main contribution to the field of Black German

[8] See Michelle M. Wright, *Becoming Black: Creating Identity in the African Diaspora*, pp. 190-91. For a discussion of the problems of applying the concept of African diaspora to the experience of Black Germans, see Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experiences of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*, pp. 37–38, and Tina Campt, *Other Germans: Black Germans and the Politics of Race, Gender, and Memory in the Third Reich*, pp. 171–81.

Studies. The chapters not only add further detail to previous research in the field, they also highlight the importance of reconceiving German history, philosophy, politics, and culture in light of the significant contributions made by Black Germans.

The focus on Black German history and diasporic politics dominates the scholarship. Aesthetic considerations are rare and when they do occur they often tie Afro-German writing to African, African American, or Francophone diasporic aesthetic. In her 2002 article "Showing her Colors: An Afro-German Writes the Blues in Black and White," Karein K. Goertz connects the poetics of early feminist Afro-German poets to African and African American influences. Arina Rotaru's 2017 article "May Ayim and Diasporic Poetics," explores May Ayim's aesthetic in relation to the poetic agenda of the Afro-French experimental movement *Négritude*. While drawing these connections is important, such considerations neglect to explain what gave rise to a consciousness that is both diasporic and German. In *Where Do I Belong? The Dynamics of the Self in Afro-German Autobiographies* (2015), Antje Friedrich points to the importance of commonality within the term *Afro-German*. The term marks two cultural heritages united by a hyphen in one double-stranded structure. The hyphen visualizes the connection between both strands of cultural influence while denoting an emerging identity. Afro-Germans can no longer be regarded as outsiders to the German imagined community simply because they identify as black. The term challenges the perception of Black Germans as Others-from-Without, as well as Others-from-Within; the connected strands emphasize German and black are no longer conflicting categories. The term visualizes simultaneity and accentuates unity, while still recognizing difference.

The concept of a unity that recognizes difference shapes Afro-German literary expression. Early feminist Afro-German poets use a double-stranded approach to create new

diasporic voices by combining diasporic and national literary influences. The idea of doubling continues with the generation of Afro-German spoken word poets and hip-hop artists. By creating images with multiple, simultaneous meanings, they employ textual elements that ignite the senses. In doing so, they create innovative texts that add to the history of national and diasporic literature. Afro-German writing constitutes another layer in the history of diasporic expression. This reflects in the multilayered Afro-German aesthetic that creates new representations of identity. For example, Black German celebrity authors reflect on their experiences through engagement with textual layering that crosses the boundaries between realism and autofiction. The older generation of memoir writers combines multiple, interacting textual layers to create a new understanding of Black German collective memory. This indicates the importance of a multilayered and double-stranded aesthetic for understanding Afro-German writing and its influences on an emerging collective identity. None of the previously mentioned scholarship has considered situating Afro-German textual productions within national and larger diasporic crossovers between literary aesthetic and cultural identity.

For the Afro-German Diaspora it is literary expression—poetry and autobiography— not political activism, that creates consciousness. Dirk Göttsche notes that Afro-German literature first gave "[…] expression to Afro-German self-assertion, the exploration of transatlantic African diasporic culture, and the fight against continuing German racism from a feminist perspective" ("Self-Assertion" 88). It was only after the publication of Afro-German poetry and autobiographical essays in the mid-1980s that activist groups, such as ISD (Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland, Initiative of Black People in Germany) and ADEFRA (the association of Black German women), emerged with a focus on diasporic politics. Heeding Göttsche's assertion about the important role of Afro-German literary productions, my project puts Afro-

German texts in dialogue with aesthetic considerations and cultural impact. Afro-German literature's success is partly a result of its self-conscious integration of literary traditions spanning the history of European and diasporic writing practices. At the same time, it also comes from a self-conscious positioning in relation to national and global cultural activism, which is deserving of further attention.

My dissertation turns to literary writing practices and their impact on Black German collective identity. The writing practices that shape parameters of collective identity—métissage, imagery, autofiction, multilayering—organize my dissertation and provide the four key categories for analyzing Afro-German texts. My study aims to uncover the affinities between contemporary Afro-German literature and global diasporic, as well as national cultural productions in terms of their shared contributions to the emergence of Black German collective identity. Drawing these connections while also investigating how Black German literature engages in aesthetic multiplicity—the playful combination of various textual practices—that shapes Afro-German collective identity, is a new approach to the topic at hand. Ultimately, this project asks: How does the Afro-German literary imagination form and deform Black German identity? More specific, how do writing practices work to establish Afro-German collective identity, and how do Black German authors use these practices to write themselves into German and diasporic literary history?

In this project, writing across margins signifies literary writing practices that work to establish parameters of collective identity. These parameters range from the emergence of Afro-German voices to a new understanding of Afro-German blackness; from a new recognition of Afro-German identities, to the rise of a multilayered Afro-German memory. Moments of intersection and discovery are not only thematic, but also impact the form of the literary texts

and their function within the public sphere. Afro-German writing practices help to bend and transgress the boundaries of literary and social categories. They function as a form of aesthetic activism. The texts, and the aesthetic practices through which they are created, speak directly to existing power relations and to the public. Akin to Patricia Hill Collins' concept of intellectual activism, which she describes in *On Intellectual Activism* as activism that "[…] aims to speak directly to the people. In contrast to directing energy to those in power, a focus that inadvertently bolsters the belief that elites are the only social acts who count, those who speak the truth to the people talk directly to the masses" (xiii), aesthetic activism also speaks directly to the public, though in different ways; Afro-German literature speaks to the people via aesthetic playfulness and multiplicity. These stories that describe and represent moments of crossing margins also allow for a public emergence of collective identity.

This project investigates writing practices in contemporary works of Afro-German literature spanning from the mid-1980s to the mid-2010s. Emerging in the last thirty years against the backdrop of othering and the marginalization of Black Germans, Afro-German literature is a relatively new field. The publication of *Farbe bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* (1986) [Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out (1992)], an anthology mixed with poetry and personal stories, marks the beginning of Afro-German literature. The decision to include two genres in my analysis—poetry and autobiography—allows for the consideration of Afro-German literature's formative literary categories. While other forms are still emerging—for instance, Afro-German prose and drama—it was poetry and autobiography that inspired an interest in the unveiling of Afro-German history. Poetic anthologies and Afro-German autobiographies of the late 1980s and 1990s prompted further research into the previously neglected history of Black German presence in

German-speaking countries. This history may be new to readers of this project and will be discussed in further detail to outline its close relationship with the emergence of Black German literary production.

Afro-German History

The history of the African diaspora in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland begins in late medieval and early modern times. The *Hofmohren*, black African servants and musicians, were employed as symbols of status and fashionable accessories by German monarchs and aristocracy at large.[9] The use of black servants extended into the later nineteenth-century and emerged from the history of the transatlantic slave trade, as well as from African-European commercial and political networks.[10] The acquisition of black servants through purchase or as gifts, and their forced displacement, first introduced an African presence into German-speaking countries. Though they often lived scattered across Germany, in the eighteenth century there was at least one German village with exclusively black inhabitants. The "Mohrenkolonie Mulang" (Colony of Moors) was located near Kassel and founded by the Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel Friedrich II (1720-85).[11] The first known text on Black experiences written by a Black German intellectual was presented in Latin by the philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo. He completed his *Dissertatio inauguralis de iure maurorum in Europa* (Dissertation: On the Rights of Moors in Europe) in 1729 at the University of Wittenberg where he earned his doctorate in philosophy. Amo was born in Ghana in 1703 and at the age of five was forcefully displaced to Germany as a "present"

[9] See Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren.*
[10] See, for example, Bechhaus-Gerst and Klein-Arendt, *Die (koloniale) Begegnung*, and Blanchard et al., *Human Zoos*.
[11] See Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama*.

from the Dutch West Indian Company to Count Anton Ulrich von Wolfenbüttel. He studied logic, metaphysics, physiology, astronomy, history, politics, and law before receiving his degree. Not only an example of a Black philosopher within the German Enlightenment, his story also reveals that the diasporic struggle for academic and general recognition within Germany is centuries old.[12]

European Imperialism at the end of the nineteenth century increased Black presence in Germany. Between the late nineteenth century until the end of WWI (1884-1919), Germany had colonial and economic relationships with the African continent. Germany's Imperial colonies in Africa split into three larger regions: German East Africa, German Southwest Africa, and German West Africa. The brief colonial period saw an increase in the number of Africans and Black Germans living in Germany, with new arrivals originating from the countries of present-day Tanzania, Rwanda, Burundi, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Cameroon, Togo, and Ghana. Relationships that developed between German colonial settlers and African women resulted in the German colonial government implementing a functional ban on interracial marriages throughout colonial Germany as early as 1890.[13] By 1912 interracial marriages were also banned in Southwest Africa and German East Africa. These restrictions on marriage rights placed critical constraints on the notion of Black German citizens, as it was through marriage that white German men extended the right of citizenship to their wives and children. Many Black Germans were also descendants of Black Askari troops recruited during WWI to fight for Kaiser Wilhelm

[12] Historians traced relationships between African communities and Germanic states back to antiquity. See Blackshire-Belay's *The African-German Experience* for examples and artifacts that show a legacy of the African-German experiences throughout the Middle Ages. *Crosscurrents: African-Americans, Africa, and Germany in the Modern World* by McBride et. al calls for expanding the boundaries of Afro-German studies' traditional canon and cites several examples of mingling of Germanic populations and African populations prior to German colonial expansion. While such historical work is invaluable, it is beyond the scope of this project to unpack the continuity of Afro-German diasporic experience that Blackshire-Belay, Hopkins, and McBride trace to antiquity.

[13] See Tina Campt's *Converging Specters of an Other Within: Race and gender in prewar Afro-German history*.

in Germany's East Africa campaign.[14] Though Germany had relinquished all of its overseas colonies by the end of WWI, the diasporic presence within the German nation state remained.

The end of WWI and the occupation of the Rhineland by approximately 30,000 – 40,000 French soldiers, including Afro-French men[15], resulted in the birth of the next generation of Black German children, who were often derogatorily referred to as *Besatzungskinder*, *War Babies*, or *Rheinlandbastards*.[16] Biracial children of Black soldiers were also depicted as "carriers of infectious diseases" (Campt, "Converging Specters" 336-37) bestowed on them by their fathers, particularly sexually transmitted diseases. Such children became the bodies through which anti-black discourses played out across Germany. Black German children of French Colonial soldiers and White German women were constructed as victims of their own circumstance, and, ultimately, unacceptable threats to the homogenous White German citizens.[17] For German nationalists the occupation and policing of their homeland by Black African soldiers was a humiliation, and the children of these interracial relationships were often seen as living proof of this shame. With the rise of National Socialism grew the desire for racial purity and homogeneity; parents and guardians of young Black Germans on the cusp of puberty were ordered to deliver the children to the local Department of Racial and Hereditary Welfare. On January 30, 1933 Hitler was appointed Reich Chancellor of Germany; the sterilization program to eliminate future generations of those considered racially unfit to reproduce followed in 1937.[18]

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[14] See Byron Farwell, *The Great War in Africa, 1914-1918* and Richard Holmes, *The Oxford Companion to Military History*, p. 361.
[15] See *Showing our Colors* by May Ayim et. al.
[16] See Poddar Prem, Rajeev S. Patke, Lars Jensen, and John Beverley's "Black Germans."
[17] See *Showing our Colors* by May Ayim et. al.
[18] Ibid.

Among this group were the biracial children growing up in Germany's Rhineland and an estimated 400 – 500 Black German teenagers[19] who were sterilized by NS doctors.

All non-Aryan people living in Germany, including the 20,000 – 25,000 Black individuals of African, Afro-Diasporic, or Afro-German descent became subject to the Nuremberg Laws of 1935. With the rise of Adolf Hitler, much of the anti-black discourse exacerbated by the end of WWI became enshrined in public law. In *Other Germans*, Tina Campt argues that Nazi Germany must be understood from a racial perspective, where race is understood "as the organizing principle of social, political, and economic life in the Reich, […] founded on its ability to produce specific racialized categories of legitimate and illegitimate subjects" (Campt 2005, 165). Hitler introduced the notion of the state's population all belonging to one of three distinct categories: citizen, subject of the state, and alien. He argued that simply being born within the confines of the state was not sufficient to garner its rights.[20] Thus, citizenship, and its rights and protections, were not extended to mixed-race children. Black Germans were victims of a robust sterilization program that resulted in hundreds of Black German children being sterilized, while Black German youth were moved into concentration camps.[21] Firpo Carr, author of *Germany's Black Holocaust,* documents the experiences of black female Holocaust survivors who were subjected to scientific experimentation on their bodies. Scientific thought was used as justification for Nazi violence against Black German bodies.

The fear of the *Black Oth*er guided NS propaganda. The SS, Hitler's paramilitary organization, took over existing, independent black establishments and performance groups in an

[19] See, for more details, Susan Samples, "African Germans in the Third Reich" and Reiner Pommerin, *Sterilization of the Rhineland Bastards: The fate of the Colored German Minority, 1917-1937.*
[20] See Hitler's *Mein Kampf.*
[21] See Okuefuna's *Hitler's forgotten Victims.*

effort to present a primitive image of those of African descent. Such performances were used as vehicles of Nazi propaganda to confirm their own stereotypes.[22] It was not only Black individuals in the world of theatre and live performance who were used to promote NS thought; Minister Joseph Goebbels, Hitler's Reich Minister of Propaganda, also used the German feature film industry for propaganda purposes. Werner Egiomue, an Afro-German teenager and a film extra during the Nazi period, describes the industry as follows: "They had an agent. He knew all the Blacks in Berlin. He had all their addresses. The Cultural Department contacted him when they were casting a film. They'd say we need six Blacks, or four Chinese, three Japanese. All were available in Berlin. Then we'd play the natives in films like 'Congo Express,' 'Quax in Africa,' or 'Auntie Wanda from Uganda.'"[23] Through such films Black actors and extras were able to network and connect with one another. To some, the film studios provided a level of protection from the brutality of the NS regime.[24] Others were not as fortunate; many performers from such shows and films disappeared or were deported to working and concentration camps. Those who escaped often fled the country, while others survived aided by friends, relatives, and their own inventiveness. Famous examples of survival include the Michael family, Gert Schramm, and Hans J. Massaquoi. Cameroonian-German Theodor Michael and Gert Schramm, both born in the years between world wars, would eventually become significant male voices in contemporary Afro-German memoir writing. Massaquoi later emigrated to the U.S. and became

[22] A good example for such performances is the *Hillerkus Africa Show* founded by Juliette Tipner, whose mother was from Liberia, and Adolf Hillerkus, her white German husband. These traveling road shows of "African" performances, craft displays and talks, started in 1936 with the goal to display African talent to the German public. In 1940, Goebbels took over the show using it for propaganda purposes and as useful tool to gather all Black German individuals. For more details see Clarence Lusane, *Hitler's Black Victims: The Historical Experience of Afro-Germans, European Blacks, Africans, and African Americans in the Nazi Era*.

[23] See the full interview in the documentary film *Black Survivors of the Holocaust* by David Okuefuna.

[24] See "Under the Shadow of National Socialism" in *Black Germany* by Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft.

managing editor of *Ebony*, an influential magazine for African Americans.[25] The publication of his Anglophone autobiography *Destined to Witness: Growing Up Black in Nazi Germany* (1999) paved the way for other Afro-German men's narratives to emerge.

Long before the outbreak of WWII, many African American theorists, scientists, musicians, and writers gravitated to Berlin and other German metropolitan centers. The iconography of the Weimar Republic reflects the widespread fascination with Black life, particularly with "Black Americans."[26] In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the extensive list of African Americans who had lived in Germany included names such as Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Josephine Baker, Jesse Owens, Mary Church Terrell, and W.E.B. Du Bois. Mary Church Terrell was a founding member of the National Association of Colored Women and in 1895 was one of the first African American women to earn a college degree in the U.S. Her studies were not limited to America and her autobiography, *A Colored Woman in a White World* (published ca. 1940), includes various chapters on experiences she had while studying at the Humboldt University in Berlin, including her participation in the 1904 International Women's Congress. Du Bois also studied in Berlin in the 1890s and later became a co-founder of the National Association for the Advancement for Colored People (NAACP), as well as the Pan African Congress. He protested lynching, the southern Jim Crow laws, and other forms of racial discrimination. As a proponent of Pan-Africanism he supported solidarity among African and African-diasporic communities. His *Berlin Days*, as Du Bois referred to them, were influential and can be considered a coming-of-age moment for the young intellectual.[27] After

[25] Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu: Erinnerungen eines Afro-Deutschen* and Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann: Mein Leben in Deutschland* will be the focus in chapter four of this dissertation.
[26] See, for example, Scott Nearing, "Schwarze Amerikaner."
[27] See Barkin's *"Berlin Days,"1892-1894: W.E.B. Du Bois and German Political Economy*.

returning to the U.S., Du Bois went on to complete his graduate studies, becoming the first African American to earn a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He returned to Germany in the 1930s and took note of the rising wave of German racism and anti-Semitism. Though such issues were not new to Germany, the latest wave had taken on a more violent form.

After WWII and the defeat of the NS regime, consequences of the NS era continued to affect the Black German population. West German authorities encouraged German women to undergo abortions if they conceived children with African American G.I.s.[28] While the government coercion of abortion occurred at the local level, single women pregnant with a *Mischlingskind* (biracial child) were shamed, with terms such as *Negerhure* (negro whore) commonly directed at them. Mothers of biracial children often gave birth secretly; the rising number of children given up for adoption triggered political debates over public costs.[29] *Afrodeutsche Nachkriegskinder* became scientific curiosities to anthropologists in West Germany. In 1952, Walter Kirchner studied the children with the support of the Berlin Youth Welfare Office and State Health Office; his goal was to "assess whether different character traits and developmental pattern could be detected among Afro-Germans" (Fenner 93-94). Rudolf Sieg followed in 1955 with a study of 100 three-to-six-year-olds living in German orphanages, comparing "the size and relation of limbs; assess hip width, arm length, shoulder span, eye color, length of fingers, skull length and width, ear size and determine[d] the tone of skin on a chart demarcating five shades from white to dark brown" (Fenner 94). While Sieg recognized the potential trauma of such observations, the children nevertheless endured being treated like lab specimens without parents to advocate for their human rights. Lighter skinned children (those

[28] See Fehrenbach's "Black occupation children and the devolution of the Nazi racial state."
[29] For more information see Werner Sollor's *The Temptation of Despair: Tales of the 1940s*.

who could pass for white), were believed to have a greater chance of assimilating into White German society. Debates over interracial relationships and the children who resulted from such relationships did not suddenly come to an end along with the war; rather, the discourse shifted from relationships between Jewish men and White German women to relationships between foreign men of Color and White German women.[30] Specifically, racial discourses in the postwar era were linked to discussions of interracial sexual relations and reproduction between German women and African American soldiers. Such conversations were carefully crafted to avoid speaking of Jewish and Slavic relationships with German women in explicitly racialized terms.[31]

In the decades that followed, an increasing number of Africans immigrated to West and East Germany. Many were students or professionals, but a number were also on-the-job trainees. In the 1960 and 70s in East Germany, approximately 1,000 students, skilled workers, and trade unionists received public funds to further their education.[32] Whereas GDR officials heralded their recruitment as "international solidarity," West Germany considered similar programs to be developmental aid for Africa.[33] Although the African "guests" were expected to return to their home countries, some stayed. As a result, another generation of children was born to African fathers and White mothers in both East and West Germany. The struggle for recognition faced by these children differed little from earlier generations of Black Germans. Scholars identified a "new racism" that had emerged in postwar Germany and in other European states (namely, Britain and France).[34] This new iteration provided an ideological revision of traditional

[30] See "Black occupation children and the devolution of the Nazi racial state" by Heidi Fehrenbach.
[31] Ibid.
[32] See Ilona Schleicher, "Elemente von entwicklungspolitischer Zusammenarbeit von FDGB und FDJ."
[33] See Marion Kraft's *Coming in from the Cold*.
[34] The term was coined 1981 by Martin Barker and refers to public discourse that depicts immigrants as threat. See Rita Chin, pp. 13, 92, 178-9, 241.

biological racism predicated on cultural difference. Instances of anti-Semitism triggered revulsion among the German majority, while other forms of racism, including anti-Black racism, remained unaffected. This was due in part to the pervasiveness of Western colonial stereotypes and negative presumptions about Black Germans, as well as the sexualization of non-white bodies leading to both overt and covert forms of anti-Black racism.[35] Stereotypical images of diasporic individuals were perpetuated by everyday German cultural artefacts, such as the German toy from the 1950s, *Haut den Bimbo* (Hit Darky), games like *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann?* (Who is afraid of the black man?), children's songs such as *Zehn kleine Negerlein* (Ten little Negroes), and also hiking songs such as *Negeraufstand in Kuba* (Negro Revolt in Cuba); these cultural markers stressed the perceived inferiority of Black Germans and emphasized a lack of belonging to the White German imagined community.[36]

The history of stereotyping, othering, and marginalization contributed to a life of isolation. Black Germans were dispersed across Germany and had limited knowledge of each other. In fact, the federal government of West Germany pursued a policy of isolation or removal,[37] and parents of biracial children were often encouraged to place their children in homes or to give them up for adoption. Many Afro-Germans grew up in institutions for children with special needs or were adopted by families in the United States. In the summer of 1985, African American writer and activist Audre Lorde taught at the Freie Universität Berlin and helped to bring together women of Afro-German heritage. They produced the anthology *Farbe bekennen* (Showing our colors), which provided the foundation for the development of an Afro-

[35] For more detail see Isabell Cserno, "Pancakes, Chocolate, and the Trap of Servitude: A Reading of Race in the United States and Germany"; Rosemarie Lester's *Trivialneger: Das Bild des Schwarzen im westdeutschen Illustriertenroman*; and David Ciarlo's *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany*.
[36] See *Farbe bekennen*, p. 126-29.
[37] Deborah Janson's article "The Subject in Black and White: Afro-German Identity Formation in Ika Hügel-Marshall's Autobiography Daheim Unterwegs: Ein Deutsches Leben."

German identity and movement. The editors of the book were professor and filmmaker Dagmar Schultz, historian Katharina Oguntoye, and activist poet May Ayim (then Opitz). Shortly after the anthology's publication two Afro-German organizations formed: ADEFRA (Schwarze Frauen in Deutschland – Black Women in Germany) and ISD (Initiative Schwarze Deutsche – Initiative of Black Germans). Women were active forces in organizing the Afro-German movement, which from its inception was concerned with issues of race and gender in West Germany and, later, in reunified Germany.[38] For these organizations and their members, writing was a discursive and political act that helped to establish an Afro-German identity and a new intellectual tradition. This tradition documented, validated, and privileged their experiences. Through multiple literary productions, Afro-Germans positioned themselves in societies that had too often ignored their existence. Through writing, Afro-Germans emerged from their social isolation to become activists and public intellectuals, presenting through their own experiences the ways in which the political, the personal, and the pubic intertwine.

The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 generated a resurgence of the belief in German solidarity and identity. In this new Germany, Afro-German and other minority voices were no longer of public interest. As East and West Germany moved towards reunification, with the prospect of reconstruction and rising unemployment rates looming large, the presence of minorities and migrants was no longer desired. With its rhetoric of *Heimat* (homeland) and *Volk* (people), the new German solidarity once again redrew the line between those who were considered part of the national collective and those who were not. The old ideological and

[38] While women were prominent activists, Afro-German men also organized during the initial stages of the movement, helping to create new traditions and practices. However, it took almost twenty years for the stories of Afro-German men to be heard. Today, their voices have a larger presence and I will specifically discuss them in chapter two, three and four.

geopolitical division between East and West was now replaced by a border line along perceived ethnic and racial lines. The early 1990s saw right-wing violence and terror sweep across the country. The violence against immigrants reached its peak in 1992 with the Riots of Rostock-Lichtenhagen, Germany's worst race riot since WWII. Between August 22-24, 1992, a mob of 400 right-wing protesters fed up with the flow of refugees into their neighborhood—many of whom were housed in the overcrowded Central Refugee Shelter, known as the Sunflower Tower—attacked the roughly 11,500 immigrant residents.[39] Even after the Rostock violence had died down, racially motivated violence would continue to plague not only immigrants but also Germany's Black German minority. On June 12, 2000, Alberto Adriano, a German of Mozambique descent, was attacked and killed by a right-wing youth gang in Dessau, a city in former East Germany. This attack was only one of thousands of hate crimes against members of visible ethnic minorities in Germany. According to *Die Zeit*, a German national weekly newspaper, more than 130 people died due to racial terror in German streets between 1990 and 2012.[40] This figure does not take into account the racially motivated incidents that were not reported.

In 2012, according to Deutsche Welle, over half a million of Germany's population were Black Germans. The Black German community is more diverse than ever before; it consists of children of colonial migrants from Africa who survived the NS regime, children of African American G.I.s and West German women who often came of age in isolation, as well as children from African students and political refugees. The individuals come from diverse backgrounds and may have little in common, both in their daily lives and in terms of their connections to

[39] See thvo's article "Das Stigma Lichtenhagen."
[40] See Staud's article "Rechte Gewalt: Eine furchtbare Bilanz."

Germany and the global diaspora. What allows them to unite, however, is their sense of a shared history with, and as part of, the German nation. While questions of inclusion and exclusion that occupied the group of women who initiated the Afro-German community remain relevant, old and new generations of Afro-Germans work on expanding perceptions of nation and race to include cultural habits, and religion. The challenge for those who build the Afro-German community today comes from two directions: without and within. Wider pressures from the white German majority, the rise of PEGIDA (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes, Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the West) and AfD (Alternative für Deutschland, Alternative for Germany), for example, may help the Afro-German community to continue to forge a common position. To sustain this cultural identity, however, Afro-Germans must continue to create themselves in an act of will, like any other group, by continuing to connect past, present, and future through literary productions.

Afro-German Literature

Literary expression gave rise to a movement that combined Black German history with poetic and political activism. The anthology *Farbe bekennen* combined Ayim's research into the history of Africans in Germany with autobiographical narratives, essays, and poetry. The anthology exposed the origin of Afro-German invisibility, and in the process challenged and redefined German cultural identity.[41] One of the most significant contributions was its demonstration that the post-WWII occupation of Germany was not the defining historical moment for Black Germans. Rather, it revealed the origins of Black Germans to be

[41] See Leroy Hopkins, "Writing Diasporic Identity: Afro-German Literature since 1985."

geographically disparate and historically diffuse. The work effectively displaced WWII as the source of Black German identity and replaced it with excavations of German colonialism, WWI, and the Weimar Republic. The double-stranded approach – to combine literary discourse with historical inquiry and cultural politics – distinguishes the Afro-German movement from other diasporic movements rooted in political activism. The Afro-German consciousness is a product of aesthetic activism more so than political activism; aesthetic activism established an Afro-German community through life writing and poetry.

One of the most recent developments in poetry is the revival of spoken word. The poetics of the 1980s and 90s, by authors such as Ayim, is not reflected in the work of present day Black German poetry.[42] Young Afro-German artists are more likely to turn to spoken word and hip-hop lyrics. Artists like Philipp Khabo Köpsell and Chantal-Fleur Sandjon are part of a growing Afro-German spoken word community. Köpsell's first book of poetry, *Die Akte James Knopf,* was published in 2010. He has since contributed works to edited volumes like *Afro-Shop* (2014) and *Arriving in the Future* (2014). Sandjon published her poetry in *Black Berlin* (2013) and *Afro-Shop*. Both poets explore potential pathways beyond binaries of black/white, African/German, and American/German.[43] Transgressing binaries is a central concern of the younger generation of Black German hip-hop artists. With the arrival of the rap group *Advanced Chemistry* in 1987, a new generation of Black German hip-hop artists emerged who no longer tried to pass as African American. Rather, they viewed African American identity as a "detour through which they established a Black German identity" (Weheliye, *Phonographies* 169). The collaborative hip-hop group *Brothers Keepers,* with its icon *Samy Deluxe,* constructs a Black German identity that

[42] See Dirk Göttsche, "Self-Assertion, Intervention, and Achievement."
[43] See Pricilla D. Layne's chapter "The Future is Unwritten" in *White Rebels in Black*.

demands recognition for German belonging and asserts independence from American hip-hop.[44] Deluxe's negotiation between German stereotypes and the dominance of African American culture creates compelling textual productions. His work pushes toward Afro-German discourses that move through African American diasporic culture to explore a different, specifically German, vision of "good cohabitation" between people from different ethnic backgrounds. Hip-hop and spoken word artists of the younger Afro-German generation contribute to making the Afro-German Diaspora more visible through their popular cultural productions.

The approach of combining Afro-German experiences with self-assertion, first used by the feminist Black German movement, also informs Black German autobiographies. Ika Hügel-Marshall's *Daheim unterwegs: Ein deutsches Leben* (At home on the move: A German life, 1998) uses Ayim's poem "entfernte verbindungen" as its epigraph. The search for connections and origins characterizes most of the early autobiographies. While a powerful tool for the early feminists of the Black German movement, it took almost another twenty years for the autobiographies of Black German men to surface. With the 1999 publication of Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi's autobiography *Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger* (originally published in English as *Destined to Witness*), Black German men began to tell their stories. The publication of his two autobiographies (*Neger, Neger, Schornsteinfeger*, 1999 and *Hänschen klein, ging allein*…, 2004) paved the way for men's narratives and was instrumental in promoting inquiry into the experiences of Afro-Germans in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Such inquiry became a leitmotif in the autobiographical writing of Black Germans.[45] For example, the autobiographical volume *Die Farbe meiner Haut* (The color of my skin, 2009) by ManuEla Ritz, includes the draft

[44] See Fatima El-Tayeb, "'If You Can't Pronounce My Name, You Can Just Call Me Pride': Black German Activism, Gender and Hip Hop."
[45] See Dirk Göttsche, "Self-Assertion, Intervention and Achievement."

of a one act drama on Black German historical experiences. It features amongst its characters the Enlightenment philosopher Anton Wilhelm Amo, jazz musician Billy Mo, and poet May Ayim.[46] Such historical self-assertion has led to both wider academic research and public recognition of Black German literature.

As more Afro-German authors emerge, new developments in life writing are bound to occur. Celebrity authors who were born after 1968 in East Germany contribute to a shift in contemporary Black German literature as they turn towards performing a subjective normality of their lives.[47] Performative normality, at times to a mainstreaming of Afro-German experiences, plays a significant role in Black German celebrity narratives. Abini Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind: Meine Familie und andere Wunder* ('Chocolate Child': My Family and Other Miracles, 2003) and Detlef Soost's (co-authored by Anne Ascher) *Heimkind – Neger – Pionier: Mein Leben* (Foster Child – Negro – Pioneer: My Life, 2005) cross-map Black-German and post-Wende discourses. Zöllner and Soost both engage in narratives of personal achievement, success, and integration into the Western culture of unified Germany. Narratives of achievement, however, are not exclusive to Afro-German authors from East Germany. West German and Austrian celebrities from sports, music, and television have published autobiographies in recent years that fit this mold.[48] Although individual approaches vary, the texts display strategies of performative

[46] See ManuEla Ritz, "Homestory Deutschland: Erlebt-gelebte schwarze deutsche Geschichte oder In Verbindung mit den Ahnen," in *Die Farbe meiner Haut*.
[47] See Natasha A. Kelly, "'Sie sind afro-deutsch? ... Ah, ich verstehe': Zur Entstehung eines neuen deutschen Literaturgenres."
[48] See Charles M. Huber, *Ein Niederbayer im Senegal: Mein Leben zwischen zwei Welten* (A Lower Bavarian in Senegal: My Life between Two Worlds, 2004); Steffi Jones, *Der Kick des Lebens: Wie ich den Weg nach oben schaffte* (The Kick of Life: How I Managed the Road to Success, 2007); Jimmy Hartwig, *Ich möcht noch so viel tun': Meine Kindheit, meine Karriere, meine Krankheit* (There's Still So Much That I'd Like to Do: My Childhood, My Career, My Illness, 1994) and *Ich bin ein Kämpfer geblieben: Meine Siege, meine Krisen, mein Leben* ('I Remained a Fighter: My Victories, My Crises, My Life', 2010); Arabella Kiesbauer, *Mein afrikanisches Herz* ('My African Heart', 2007).

normality, which have little connection with the diasporic politics of the feminist Black German movement. It may seem, from a critical perspective, that individual authors' pride in their personal achievements plays into the hands of publishers and readers who welcome deceptive literary evidence that the days of racism and othering are over. Yet, do celebrity autobiographies only confirm stereotypes of racialized entertainers? No; ultimately, these authors use celebrity narratives to explore new forms of Black German recognition that transgress a history of Afro-German invisibility.

The most recent development in autobiographical writing is Afro-German male authors born prior to WWII. Their critical engagement with historical othering emphasizes cross-mapping. The texts intersect Black German experiences with critical memory of National Socialism, the Holocaust, and the demise of the German Democratic Republic. The memoirs retell the history of Black German expulsion and self-assertion during the Nazi-era, in post-war East and West Germany, and in the context of resurgent right-wing violence following German reunification. Among such works are Theodor Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu – Erinnerungen eines Afro-Deutschen* (Black German, 2015) and Gert Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann: Mein Leben in Deutschland* (Who's afraid of the Black man [also a German children's game]: My life in Germany, 2011). Both memoirs are unique in that their authors were born prior to Hitler's rise to power and they reflect on memories of their black fathers. In contrast, Black German men born immediately after the war often grew up without contact with their fathers. Michael and Schramm's memoirs also reflect on their social circumstances; Michael had a difficult youth, growing up with foster families and working in *Völkerschauen* (human zoos) at an early age, while Schramm's memoir reflects on a rather sheltered childhood spent in a small village in Thüringen. Both authors frame their memoirs as

critical interventions into post-unification German cultures of memory. Their efforts allow for a reclaiming of Afro-German memories and an expansion of German cultures of memory through the repositioning Afro-German memories within such discourses.

Approach and Chapter Outline

To investigate the processes of intersection, interpretation, and construction, this project reflects on how Afro-German writing practices develop parameters of collective identity by combining close readings with cultural and aesthetic theory. The choice of focusing on specific writing practices and collective identity grows out of the conviction that in literature there is an intricate relationship between cultural difference and aesthetic alterity. Norbert Mecklenburg argues that the potential of literature is based on the literary staging of "cultural differences" (434). He emphasizes "regardless of whether a literary work cements, transforms or deconstructs cultural differences, they are always being exposed and staged [vorgeführt]," suspending and problematizing their power (ibid.). Like other critics, Mecklenburg points to the literary techniques of modernist and postmodernist writing for evidence. They undercut the currency of established discourses and challenge ideas in the field of cross-cultural experiences as they do in other fields, such as diasporic experiences. Especially diasporic writing is associated with the "dialogic imagination" (Bakhtin), "hybridity, syncretism, métissage, creolization," and other forms of literary defamiliarization.[49] It is important to consider diasporic contexts with the goal not to affirm racial authenticity of diasporic forms but instead to retrieve histories of cross-

[49] Norbert Mecklenburg, "Interkulturelle Literaturwissenschaft," pp. 435-36 and "Über kulturelle und poetische Alterität: Kultur - und literaturtheoretische Grundprobleme einer interkulturellen Germanistik;" see also Paul Michael Lützeler, *Postmoderne und postkoloniale deutschsprachige Literatur* (2005).

fertilization. In *The Black Atlantic*, Paul Gilroy points at the importance "to accept complicity and syncretic interdependency of black and white thinkers" (34). This acceptance helps to achieve a pluralist position that celebrates complex representations of a black particularity that is internally doubled.[50] This internal doubling manifests in diasporic discourses and artistic production.[51] Such discourses concern the tension between a desire for representation and the recognition of the complex layering of identities and the resulting need to defer representation, as well as claims for homogeneity, essence, and home.

In my dissertation, Afro-German texts draw from modern, post-modern, and diasporic writing practices, as well as build on the genres of poetry and autobiography. The theoretical background of this project lies in the intersections of black diasporic and European theories on literature and identity. In my analysis of the texts, I build upon discussions of cultural identity and the context of literary aesthetics, drawing from cultural theorists, sociologists, and historians, as well as from philosophers and literary scholars, to show how adapted writing practices peculiar to the Afro-German Diaspora facilitate the emergence of Afro-German collective identity beyond political activism. Consequently, my project suggests a revised understanding of German diasporic writing, one that emphasizes aesthetic multiplicity in relation to the processes of collective identity construction. My work offers an approach to exploring both the formation and aesthetics of the Afro-German collective through that of literary expression. In doing so, it shows how literary texts influence national and diasporic formations of collective identity.

This dissertation consists of four chapters. Each chapter explores one specific writing practice that establishes a parameter of collective identity. The literature addressed in this

[50] See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.
[51] See W.E.B. Du Bois, *Souls of Black Folk* and Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*.

analysis includes fictional/non-fictional texts comprised of Afro-German poetry and autobiographies. The first two chapters group together works of poetry. Chapter one turns its focus to feminist poetry and chapter two engages in spoken word poetry and hip-hop. Chapters three and four direct their attention to autobiographical works, respectively focusing on celebrity autobiography and memoir. All of these works adapt and use literary practices in interesting ways to construct parameters of collective identity and their analysis can serve to reflect on broader aesthetic activist practices.

The starting point of this project is Afro-German feminist poetry by Helga Emde, Katharina Oguntoye, and May Ayim. The chapter explores the rhetorical and intertextual connections the poems represent. More specific, I reflect on how the aesthetic development of Afro-German feminist poetry breaks the history of Afro-German silence and establishes Afro-German voices. My focus lies on the relationship between aesthetic practices and minority representation, as well as on how feminist poets of mixed cultural and biracial heritage weave together threats from diverse cultures, languages, and literary paradigms. I will build on Françoise Lionnet's *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self -Portraiture* (1989) and her essay "'Logiques métisses': Cutural Appropriation and Postcolonial Representations" (1992). Lionnet's definition of métissage—a textual braiding of traditions— explains how writing can function as a liberating force, enabling the writer to create an image of a plural self that embraces ambiguity. Her assertion informs what I call Afro-German poetic métissage. Poetic métissage designates a textual interweaving in Afro-German feminist poetry and helps to understand the poetry's transformative function of silence. First, an analysis of Emde's *Der Schrei* (The Scream, 1986) illustrates how poetic métissage helps to explore topics of emancipation and voice. Second, close readings of Oguntoye's *Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus* (Female Relationships

and Racism, 1984) and Ayim's visual symbols in *blues in schwarz weiss* (blues in black and white, 1995) and *nachtgesang* (nightsong, 1997) show how a métissage of textual and visual influences form connections to the avant-garde movement. Finally, the reading of Ayim's *tanzkurs* (dancing lessons, 1992) illustrates how poetic métissage brings together avant-garde expression and sociopolitical commentary.

The second chapter examines how Afro-German spoken word poetry by Chantal-Fleur Sandjon, Philipp Khabo Köpsell, and Samy Deluxe deploys double-imagery practices. I will build on Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic* (1995) and his readings of W.E.B. Du Bois' *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Gilroy elicits the significance of two-ness, or double-consciousness, for understanding transatlantic diasporic cultures and their literary productions. Double-consciousness illustrates the theorization of a black diasporic literary tradition linked by double-voiced textual productions. In particular, I will focus on the use of a rhetoric similar to the black vernacular tradition that is prevalent throughout Afro-German spoken word poetry. Afro-German spoken word overlaps with the tradition of street rhymes within black vernacular culture. I will build on Henry Louis Gates' concept of Signifyin(g) practice that he describes in *The Signifying Monkey* (1988). Gates' theory about the tradition of Signifyin(g) informs my understanding of an aesthetic that I term Afro-German double-imagery. Double-imagery refers to the two-ness of textual elements which ignite the senses by creating images with multiple, simultaneous meanings. This chapter illustrates how diasporic modes of seeing, thinking, and being create a contemporary double-imagery and help to define new conceptions of German blackness. I will demonstrate how Afro-German double-imagery creates engaging texts able to escape single-stranded representations of German blackness. Close readings of Sandjon's *bln zu rädern* (bln on wheels, 2014), Köpsell's *Applaus für Schuhcreme* (Applause for Shoe Polish, 2014) and

Elefantenfriedhof (Elephant Graveyard, 2014), as well as Deluxe's *Poesiealbum* (Autograph Book, 2011) will provide evidence of the ways in which double-imagery practices challenge the reader to deconstruct antithetical notions of black and white.

The third chapter explores the relation between autofiction and Black German recognition in celebrity autobiographies by Abini Zöllner and Detlef Soost. This chapter looks at how celebrity autobiographies by East German authors deploy autofiction in life writing to bring forth new ways of conceptualizing Black German recognition in pre-, and post-unification Germany. I deploy Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf's understanding of autofiction drawn from her works *Auto(r)fiktion, Literarische Verfahren der Selbstkonstruktion* (2013) and *Sich selbst erzählen. Autobiographie – Autofiktion – Autorenschaft* (2018), as well as from her essay "Autofiktion oder: Autobiographie nach der Autobiographie" (2006). She develops the concept of fictionalized autobiographies beyond a poststructuralist understanding and points to the importance of autofiction for the field of cross-cultural experiences. Autofiction allows for a constant boundary crossing and opens the realm of plurality. Wagner-Egelhaaf's understanding of autofiction as a tool to write identity at the nexus of fiction and 'reality' informs my analysis of Afro-German celebrity autobiography. Autofiction in Black German celebrity life writing allows the minority subject to situate itself and craft an image of its own cultural identity. This chapter looks at how celebrity autobiographies by East German authors deploy autofiction in life writing to bring forth new ways of conceptualizing Black German recognition in pre-, and post-unification Germany. It illustrates how theories of recognition and autofiction are linked to autobiographical writing, particularly to Black German celebrity autobiographies. Close readings of Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* (Chocolate Child, 2003) and Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* (Foster Child – Negro – Pioneer, 2005) illustrate how autofiction stages moments of

parental, mutual and communal recognition that create a national recognition of Germany's Black German minority population. This chapter reflects on the ways in which autofiction creates a detour into the realm of fiction to explore the conjunction of celebrity and Afro-German experiences, creating a space in which to reflect on agency and objectification, as well as narrate Afro-German recognition.

The final chapter focuses on Afro-German memoirs by Theodor Michael and Gert Schramm. Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* (Black German, 2015) and Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* (Who's afraid of the Black Man, 2011) use a peculiar form of textual multilayering to examine Black German historical experiences that help to establish a Black German collective memory. I am particularly interested in this textual practice, I refer to as palimpsestic multilayering. My term is inspired by Max Silverman's *Palimpsestic Memory: The Holocaust and Colonialism in French and Francophone Fiction and Films* (2014). His study deals with the literary and cinematic representation of traumatic historical memories that cast these memories as interconnected and potentially mutually enriching. In both Afro-German memoirs, accounts of African diasporic history, German colonialism, National Socialism, and the rise and demise of the German Democratic Republic are brought into contact via narrating the lives of their main subjects. This chapter reflects on how palimpsestic multilayering functions as an act of memory, bringing together scattered minority histories, re-envisioning and re-writing Black German collective and German cultural memory, as well as establishing connections to the global diaspora while contributing to German memory discourses.

The Epilogue to this project presents an opening rather than a moment of closure. While it represents the final stage of my work, it reveals avenues of research that expand the discussions initiated here. It takes into consideration the importance of investigating aesthetic

practices for the field of Black German Studies, points to still emerging forms of Black German literature, and highlights the contribution that the study of textual practices in Black German literature makes to discourses on blackness.

Chapter One

"Der Schrei": Poetic Métissage and Avant-Garde Voices in Afro-German Feminist Poetry

In 1986, a group of Afro-German feminists published *Farbe bekennen: Afro-Deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte* [Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out (1992)]. Co-edited by May Ayim, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schulz, the anthology is composed of poetry, oral histories, and socio-historical treatises. In addition to interviews with Afro-German artists, authors, and poets (Miriam Goldschmidt, Raja Lubinetzki)[52], and the inclusion in the appendix of a self-portrait of the Afro-Dutch lesbian group Sister Outsider, the anthology is particularly noteworthy for its poetic activism.

Farbe bekennen provided an opportunity for minority poets to come together and understand themselves as Afro-German. While they endeavored to bring to light the ignored history of a marginalized group, the editors adopted the descriptor "Afro-Deutsch" as an expression of self-identification. The concept—modeled after the term Afro-French—was chosen to positively reflect shared concerns of identity and community. The differences between the terms "Afro-German" and "Afro-French" are temporal, as well as historical, with regards to diasporic subject formations. The former came into usage in the 1980s, the latter as early as in the 1930s; both terms entertain a linguistic connection to the compound "African American." While the anglophone African American diaspora functions as a parameter of influence, especially in contemporary Afro-German spoken word poetry[53], the other two terms also reflect

[52] Goldschmidt was Afro-German actress, author and director. She played for Peter Brooks in Paris and Peter Stein in Berlin. In Berlin, she appeared in Genet's "Die Neger" and in "Kalldewey, Farce" by Botho Strauss. Goldschmidt died of cancer in August 2017. For more information see http://kulturportal.de/-/kulturschaffende/detail/23171. Raja Lubinetzki is Afro-German poet and published her first full volume of poetry in 2001. See Lubinetzki, *Der Tag ein Funke: Gedichte* (Gerhard Wolf Janus Press, 2001). She also published two of her poems ("eine haut" and "allein das ists nicht") in the volume, *Vogel oder Käfig sein: Kunst und Literatur aus unabhängigen Zeitschriften in der DDR 1979-1989*.

[53] See chapter two of this dissertation.

strategies of assimilation peculiar to European diasporic experiences in francophone and German-speaking spaces.[54] According to Ayim and Oguntoye, "Afro-German" reflects the structure of the term "African American" as an expression of joint cultural origin (Ayim et al., xxii). The term confronts the ways in which Germans approach the issue of racial diversity and was developed for the purpose of combating the exclusion of such citizens from the European public sphere.[55]

The anthology contains a variety of poetic titles that imply strong modernist influences rather than a specific heritage within African or African American poetic expression. Works such as *Der Schrei* (The Scream 1986) by Helga Emde and *Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus* (Female Relationships and Racism 1984) by Katharina Oguntoye complicate the use of a diasporic framework to create a linear narrative that culminates in a "suppressed black presence."[56] The poetry of Emde, Oguntoye, and Ayim exemplifies the development of stylistic complexity in the formative years of Afro-German poetry. This stylization peaks with Ayim's poetry of the 1990s, especially with her collections *blues in schwarz weiss* (1995) [Blues in Black and White (2003)] and *nachtgesang* (nightsong, 1997). The aesthetic progression from narrative poetry to avant-garde practices situates Afro-German feminist poetry within the larger German context of post-1945 poetry by women, as well as diasporic poetic discourses that rewrite an untold past, speak of a united present, and dream of an emancipated future.

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[54] See Arina Rotaru's article "May Ayim and Diasporic Poetics" about artistic strategies of integration.
[55] See Carol Blackshire-Belay, *The African-German Experience* and Tina Camps's *Other Germans* for a history of Afro-German experiences.
[56] See Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* on the grounding of a queer diasporic Afro-German community embracing its "inauthentic," fractured nature rather than resolving it through a projected, unambiguous past.

In their analysis of feminist Afro-German poetry, scholars often seek to find a significant contribution to German minority literature. Literary scholars, such as Karein K. Goertz and Arina Rotaru, mainly focus on the poems' representations of minorities, identity constructions, and the meaning of the African diaspora for Afro-German writing. Goertz notes: "By exploring the complex legacy of her Ghanaian heritage, as well as the richness of African culture in the diaspora, Ayim is able to convert the German construct of blackness […]" (307). She sees the recovery of African identity as a source of agency; for her, it is mainly the African tropes that insert difference into the German poetic language discourse. Other scholars, such as Arina Rotaru, note that it was the close connection to Audre Lorde that made the African American model of artistic expression "a major standard of comparison through her central position within the genesis of the movement …" (88). Yet, the selected poetry by Emde, Oguntoye, and Ayim does not exclusively use African and African American tropes to trace linear narratives resulting in a diasporic framework; rather, the poems simultaneously weave together diasporic expression with the use of avant-garde practices.

Taking this process of weaving as a point of departure, this chapter focuses on how the use of modernist and avant-garde devices to examine diasporic experience has helped to form and establish Afro-German voices; I am particularly interested in a practice that I henceforth refer to as poetic métissage. As a result of this use of métissage, Afro-German voices exceed the definitions of diasporic voices that anchor them to a proclamation of identity in response to negation. First, the chapter shows how Afro-German feminist poetry emerged from the weaving together of diasporic feminist influences and the rediscovery of experimental, post-1945 German poetry by women authors. Second, it illustrates how the resurfacing of modernist, visual and sound poetic avant-garde practices creates an experimental expression that merges with the

poetic expression of Afro-German experiences. Third, close readings of Afro-German feminist poetry by Emde, Oguntoye, and Ayim illustrate how poetic métissage results in engaging texts that break the historic Afro-German silence to bring forth liberated, united, and conscious voices.

Black Feminist Poetry, Poetic Métissage, the Avant-Garde and Afro-German Voices

Feminist writers of the 1980s and '90s, such as Emde, Oguntoye, and Ayim, position the Afro-German community within the larger framework of cultural representation and exchange. They also situate themselves in relation to historical events such as Germany's colonial period and National Socialism.[57] Emde, an Afro-German essayist, poet, and activist, was involved in the book project *Farbe bekennen*, and was also active in the ISD (*Initiative Schwarzer Menschen in Deutschland*); she was particularly known for her article "I too am German – An Afro-German Perspective." The article's title references the African American tradition as it alludes to Langston Hughes' composition "I, too" (1926), a poem about the perseverance of hope for a future equality, and the idea that national identity is not limited by race. Emde not only references the connection to the African American poetic tradition, she also emphasizes the importance for Afro-Germans to speak about, and for, themselves. Likewise, the significance of finding an Afro-German voice is central to Oguntoye's work as a writer, historian, activist, and poet. She is probably most famous for co-editing *Farbe bekennen* and founding the intercultural association Joliba.[58] The focus on fostering diasporic relations, as well as the search for a public voice by which to write oneself into the poetic discourse, was a goal shared by other female

[57] See *Farbe Bekennen: Afro-deutsche Frauen auf den Spuren ihrer Geschichte*, p. 9.
[58] Oguntoye found Joliba (another name for the Niger River, meaning "big river") in 1997 as a place for intercultural networking and aiding immigrants. See Grace Montesano "Katharina Oguntoye and the Joliba Intercultural Network".

writers and poets, such as Ayim. Ayim's poetics are frequently identified with feminist and queer movements to the exclusion of all else, likely owing to the fact her work was shaped by the queer, feminist, and literary activist Audre Lorde.[59]

In the 1980s, Audre Lorde, an African American writer and facilitator in the founding of the Afro-German movement, reflected on the need to examine "vital connections and differences" between "African-European, African-Asian, African-American women, as well as between African-American women and their African sisters" (Lorde, Foreword vii). Lorde invited diasporic connections but even more so promoted a mantra of "connected differences" (Florvil 162). Her ideas about diaspora and kinship served as a model for the Afro-German movement, one which embraced difference yet recognized communality through marginalization. Afro-German women like Ayim, Oguntoye, and Emde were drawn to Lorde's ideas about the interconnections among poetry, emotions, the erotic, identity, and female kinship. For Lorde, all women were potential poets; she writes that "each one of us holds an incredible reserve of creativity and power, of unexamined and unrecorded emotion and feeling" that is "neither white nor surface" but "dark," "ancient," and "deep" (Lorde, "Poetry is not a Luxury" 36-37). She encouraged the Afro-German community and stressed that women could use this reservoir to deal with sexism, racism, and homophobia. This approach motivated evolving Afro-German feminist writers to continue the legacy of poetry as a means of establishing a public voice for the sake of community building and as an act of aesthetic resistance.

For Afro-German feminist writers, to find a public voice means to find a poetic voice. Lorde speaks on the struggle of finding a voice in *The Transformation of Silence into Language*

[59] See Katharina Gerund, "Transracial Feminist Alliances?"; as well as Jennifer E. Michaels, "The Impact of Audre Lorde's Politics and Poetics on Afro-German Women Writers."

and Action (1977), pointing to its importance through the transformation of silence: "I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important to me must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood." Transforming silence into productive struggle and action is the starting point in Lorde's understanding of Self. She stresses that poetry is "the most subversive form of language" and sees the form as inspiration for others to gain a voice. It was Lorde who believed it was essential for Afro-Germans to break their silence; her poetry provided feminist Afro-German poets "a model for coming to speech" (Florvil 151). Lorde's poetry served as a prototype for Afro-German poets and informed their understanding of alternative aesthetics. Afro-German feminists shared Lorde's understanding of art as betterment.[60] Rooted in daily experiences, feminist poetry was understood by Lorde to be part of an alternative aesthetics: "[…] where art and poetry become part and parcel of one's daily living, one's daily expression, the need to communicate, the need to share one's feelings, to develop within oneself the best that is possible. And the definition of art as betterment, I think, is a mainstay of the alternative aesthetics" (qtd. in J. W. Hall 3). This understanding of alternative aesthetics paved the way for Afro-German feminists to unite daily experiences with poetic expression and creative word play.

Afro-German poets saw the need to renew an outdated German language. In their poetry, Afro-German women struggled with their native German language. Like other diasporic and feminist writers, Afro-German poets are ambivalent about their language. Though German is their native tongue and the language in which they write, they also identify it as the language of racism and oppression, one which excludes their experiences within society. In many of their works, Afro-German feminist poets call out the racial biases which imbue the German language.

[60] See J.W. Hall, Conversations with Audre Lorde, p. 3.

Embedded in the language, for example, is the color symbolism of Christianity, with its historical associations of white with purity, nobility, and goodness, and black with death, dirt, and evil.[61] To break such patterns of unexamined racial bias within the German language, Afro-German female poets experiment with language in order to develop expressions for their experiences. In doing so, the poets subvert a marginalizing language and complicate the assumption that the oppressed cannot speak through the language of the oppressor. Ayim observed: "I use the German language with its racist elements that are often aimed at me."[62] Once silenced by exclusionary language, such experiments become an important trademark of Afro-German feminist poetry; many poems deconstruct German syntax, and use puns to unmask automatized racist elements within the German language (Michaels, "The Impact" 32). Ayim experimented with new words when the old ones did not suffice; one example is the word "schein-heit" (u-not-y), found in the subtitle to her poem *grenzenlos und unverschämt* (borderless and brazen: a poem against the German "u-not-y" 1995). The poem, a critical commentary on the German reunification in 1990 and the persistent lack of unity, is a play on words with *die Einheit* (the unity) and *der Schein* (the appearance). The hyphenated noun *schein-heit* (u-not-y) visualizes the continuing post-unification separation of Germany's white majority and black minority populations. The word play reflects the exclusion of minorities and people of color—those marked as Others-from-Without—from the unification that brought together the German white majority. Efforts to find a voice and establish an Afro-German consciousness within Germany's cultural and literary landscape is one aspect of Afro-German feminist poetry.

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[61] See for example May Ayim, "Weißer Stress und Schwarze Nerven," *Grenzenlos und unverschämt,* p. 111. Also see Chris Lange, "Evatöchter wider Willen: Feministinnen und Religion". Negative qualities associated with the word *black* exist in many European cultures. Franz Fanon notes that in Europe the black man is the symbol of evil and that the color associated with Satan is black. See Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*.

[62] See May Ayim, "Ein Brief aus Münster," *Grenzenlos und unverschämt,* p. 11. „Ich benutze die deutsche Sprache mit ihren rassistischen Elementen, die oft gegen mich selbst gerichtet sind, zumeist unreflektiert."

Yet, to summarize this poetry under the label of identity politics would fail to acknowledge the potency of its poetics. Rather than separating aesthetic considerations and discourses of identity, it is more productive to ask: how do experimental poetic structures drive the emergence of a public voice?

Reading Afro-German poetry reveals the myriad ways by which experimental poetry established public voices that extend mainstream conceptions of Germanness through the weaving of diasporic identities into a national cultural discourse. The term métissage, discussed by literary scholar Françoise Lionnet in *Autobiographical Voices: Race, Gender, Self-Portraiture* (1989), references the creation of voice and identity out of multiple strands of cultures. Lionnet's work supports the assertion that one does not need to meet all expectations of any given society in order to have a complete voice within it. In particular, she focuses on the moment of appropriation, claiming: "contemporary women writers especially have been interested in reappropriating the past so as to transform our understanding of ourselves" (9). It is the act of weaving, or, as Lorde phrased it, the act of poetic experimentation, which allows for a transformation of Black German silence into a beautiful tapestry of voices; henceforth I refer to this idea as poetic métissage. Poetic métissage encourages the telling of Afro-German experiences by weaving together varied, often fragmented pieces.

To understand the role of poetric métissage in the aesthetic fabric of poems by Emde, Oguntoye, and Ayim, it is important to reflect on the origin of the term. Lionnet, who primarily writes on Anglo- and Francophone texts, defines the term métissage as "a cloth made of two fibers," or, a "third cultural entity […] new and independent even though rooted in the preceding elements" (14-15). Like a tapestry composed of many threads, the many facets of cultural history combine to create whole voices. While Lionnet's term applies more specifically to a cultural

middle ground for those writers who represent multiple races and cultures, as well as multifaceted voices, this chapter will refer to the middle ground created in the aesthetics of such poetry. Lionnet states elsewhere in *Logique Metisses* that "the subject thus becomes quite adept in braiding all the traditions at its disposal, using the fragments that constitute it in order to participate more fully in a dynamic process of transformation" (5). It is the concept of braiding that extends the term métissage to Afro-German texts in order to illustrate the ways in which the writers' experimental aesthetics help to weave public voices.

While influenced by the diasporic feminist movement and its textual braiding, Afro-German poets simultaneously build on traditions in German poetry. Starting in the 1960s and continuing well into the '80s and '90s, experiments with emancipatory forms and styles gained momentum as women poets reclaimed many spheres of personal experience once considered taboo. In both the East and West taboos were challenged as myths were rearticulated in feminist terms; love became a vehicle for a feminine consciousness and an explicit eroticism was introduced. Karen Leeder points out that poems with social and political commentary, written with strong subjective dimensions, resulted in many writers developing individual styles far from the mainstream.[63] It was Ingeborg Bachmann who managed to "create a new modern poetic language which was at once of its times yet did not obscure its roots in German tradition" (Leeder 205). Bachmann indicates her confidence in the utopian potential of the poetic world in her Frankfurt lectures on the problems of contemporary poetry in 1959/60, inspiring many female poets to follow her lead.[64] Marie-Thérèse Kerschbaumer's *Neun Canti auf die irdische Liebe* (Nine Songs to Worldly Love, 1989) demonstrates a disrupted syntax of long lines that

[63] See Karen Leeder, "Post-1945 Women's Poetry from East and West", p. 210.
[64] Ibid.

serves to illustrate a tentative search for identity. Ilse Aichinger's poetry of the late 1970s experienced a resurgence of interest during the 1990s; it is unusual in that despite the moral tone of much of her work, her use of language is highly experimental. Collections such as *schlechte Wörter* (bad words, 1976) or *verschenkter Rat* (given away advice, 1978) are representative of her use of collage and experimental techniques, an approach many attribute to French Surrealist influences. Similar strands of experimental poetry – originating in Dada – were embraced by the underground scene of the 1980s GDR and include poets such as Friederike Mayröcker and Elke Erb. Mayröcker's volume *Winterglück* (Winterbliss, 1986) appears to be written as a series of 'self-portraits' and displays a sense of perpetual movement. Her texts use collage techniques and exploit a fragmentary syntax. Erb's *Vexierbild* (Picture Puzzle, 1983) exposes the dynamics of the writing process while developing voice and mixing experiences, reflection, and linguistic games with typographical experimentation. Many other women poets existed on the margins of the underground GDR scene of the late 1980s. Due to their use of experimental poetic forms, Gabriele Stötzer and Barbara Köhler are perhaps the most interesting poets to emerge since 1989. Stötzer's texts *zügel los* (rein less) and *grenzen los fremd gehen* (boundless going astray) are concerned with liberating the feminist self from the constraints of societal norms, rationality, and the rules of language. Barbara Köhler's collections *Deutsches Roulette* (German roulette) of 1991, which reflects on German reunification, and *Blue Box* of 1995, demonstrate combinations of formal variety, from long cycles of rhythmic prose poems to the modernist 'box' poems. Poetry by women was established in the 1980s and 1990s as an independent and distinctive aesthetic force in the German literary scene. By rediscovering experimental forms of poetry, Afro-German voices were raised, and their historical silence shattered.

The rediscovery of experimental forms, and the endurance of avant-garde practices, is a recurring pattern in literary and art history. In *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), Bürger claims that the *historic avant-garde*—the avant-garde movements of the first half of the twentieth century—have failed. He claims it isn't so much the transformation of art styles that is essential to avant-garde movements such as Expressionism, Futurism, and Dadaism, but rather the transformation of whole lives. Bürger argues that these movements failed to reorganize social reality because of the inability to overcome the distinction between art and life; the repetition of gestures and devices by artists of the *neo avant-garde*, or *post avant-garde* of the 1950s and '60s, was nothing more than an empty recycling of forms and strategies.[65] Other avant-garde scholars, such as Jochen Schulte-Sasse, hold a more positive view of the endurance of avant-garde practices. He claims that "the success of any theory of the avant-garde can be measured by how convincingly it can anchor the avant-garde formal principle of collage and montage" (qtd in Bürger, xxxix).[66] However, Benjamin Buchloh is critical of such rigid and obsolete standpoints and argues for a dialectical approach to these positions.[67] In *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry* (2000), Buchloh describes the importance of looking at artistic productions within the framework of specific theoretical and historical questions. In order to recognize and understand historically marginalized Afro-German feminist poetry as an art movement, it must first be examined with a focus on form of experimentation and on poetic themes in relation to the formation of Afro-German voices. Larger diasporic influences of alternative aesthetic, as well as the rise in experimental forms of poetry by women writers, provided additional motivation to

[65] See Bürger's *Theory of the Avant-Garde* that looks at the establishment's embrace of socially critical works of art. He suggests that in complicity with capitalism, art as an institution neutralizes the political content of the individual work.
[66] See Schulte-Sasse's "Foreword: Theory of Modernism versus Theorie of the Avant-Garde," in *Theory of the Avant-Garde* by Peter Bürger.
[67] See Benjamin Buchloh, *Neo-Avantgarde and Culture Industry*.

those searching for a voice through the rediscovery of modernist and avant-garde modes of expression. This would problematize an aspect considered lost by some scholars (Bürger; Schulte-Sasse), namely the contemporary relevance of avant-garde practices for the purpose of breaking down barriers between art and life, and the ability of such practices to intervene in social reality in order to bring about social change.

Experimental poetry has unfolded across time and national boundaries. The historical avant-garde and the neo-avant-garde, as well as the digital avant-garde (from the 1990s to the present), show that avant-garde practices resurface during periods of technological and cultural change and exchange.[68] They respectively introduced new artistic modalities and re-purposed the strategies of historical avant-gardists. Experimental practices, such as abstract, visual, and sound poetry, produce works through the medium of language that "experiment" with the interplay between the visual, the sonorous, and the verbal. Such experiments allow poets to work on the raw, inchoate emotions that seldom find expression in everyday life. German Expressionist poets of the early twentieth century, such as Jakob van Hoddis and Johannes R. Becher, used experimental practices to express important inner truths; they created a style that was declamatory, endeavoring to awaken the fears and aspirations of human existence, which European societies of that time had rendered inauthentic.[69] Experimental poets of the neo-avant-garde generation, such as Max Bense and Ernst Jandl, focused more on the materiality of language, which led them to visual and sound poetry. The emergent texts existed as "observable objects" in the nexus between inner "self and world" (Bense 175). In their search for a language

[68] See Eduardo Ledesma's dissertation *The Historic Avant-Garde, the Neo-Avant-Garde and the Digital Age* about the continuity of avant-gardes in times of cultural exchange and technological progress.
[69] For detailed information about modernist and German avant-garde poets see Ingo Roland Stoehr's *German Literature of the Twentieth Century: From Aestheticism to Postmodernism*.

with which to express diasporic self and minority experiences in the world, Afro-German feminists rediscovered modernist and avant-garde practices. This re-purposing of strategies allows Afro-German feminist poets to end their historic silence as they discover new ways to voice Black German experiences.

Expressionist Intertext and Liberation of Voice

Focusing on expression, Helga Emde engages with poetic métissage in her exploration of the topic of liberation. Emde's *Der Schrei* (The Scream, 1986) gives a contemporary twist to feelings of anxiety and exclusion. The four-stanza poem uses Edvard Munch's Expressionist painting *The Scream* (1893) as its primary intertext; the work tells of the experiences of a female Afro-German through the weaving together of accounts of early childhood and young adulthood in the imagined white German community. The account of alienation culminates in an outcry. Emde's poem, like Munch's painting, presents the world solely from a subjective perspective and radically distorts it for emotional effect.[70] The choice of expressionist intertext voices Afro-German experiences from an interior, subjective point of view that traces the structure of prejudice and unveils feelings of anxiety in unexpected places. Furthermore, the title alludes to feelings of depersonalization, a sense of distortion within the environment and the self.[71] The poem then unfolds as two parallel strands, with the speaker sharing her diasporic experiences as well as her environment's reaction to them. This double stranded approach allows the poem to braid together two perspectives about one diasporic experience. The dialectical approach shows

[70] See Chris Baldick's entry for "Expressionism" in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*.
[71] See Daphne Simeon and Jeffrey Abugel *Feeling Unreal: Depersonalization Disorder and the Loss of the Self*, p. 127.

the central conflicts: Black German experiences of marginalization and displacement from the white majority in society with related feelings of anxiety and fragility, and personal journeys of liberation, both in terms of emancipation from anxiety and from an absence of voice.

Der Schrei centers upon the relationship of a biracial child/young adult with her white German peers.

Der Schrei

weil armut erfinderisch macht, hatte ich immer sachen zum spielen.

und dann freunde. viele. scharenweise.

sie spielten mit meinen sachen und machten sie kaputt.

liefen weg. und ich war wieder alleine.

warum?

laßt mich mit!

ich möchte zu euch gehören. aber sie waren einfach weg.

Sarottimohr, Mohrenkopf. (1-8)[72]

[72] All quotations from Emde's "Der Schrei" are taken from the following edition: Katharina Oguntoye et al., *Farbe bekennen* (Orlanda, 1986). Line numbers will be inserted after the block quotes and in the text.

[**The Scream** // because necessity is the mother of invention, i always had things to play with. / and then friends. plenty. in droves. / they played with my things and broke them. / ran away. and i was alone again. / why? / let me go with you! / i want to belong to you, but they were just gone. / Sarotti-Moor, Moorhead.][73]

Though the poem starts with the relatively positive image of a child—however poor—growing up with a creative imagination and many friends, the motif of destruction and fragmentation is introduced early on. The idyllic image of a well-liked child is interwoven with a shortened sentence structure. The fragmented sentence "und dann freunde." (and then friends.), followed by one-word sentence constructions "viele." (plenty.), and "scharenweise." (in droves.), alludes to the ruptured relationship between the children. The rupture in friendships manifests in the destruction of material belongings: "sie spielten mit meinen sachen und machten sie kaputt./ liefen weg. und ich war wieder alleine." (they played with my things and broke them. / ran away. and I was alone again, 3-4). The demand „ich möchte zu euch gehören." (I want to belong to you.) triggers silence and absence, „aber sie waren einfach weg." (but they were just gone., 7). The stanza's final line exposes the reason for the alienating interactions: the biracial child's status as the black other. Labels such as "Sarottimohr" and "Mohrenkopf" (Sarotti-Moor, Moorhead, 8) combine with feelings of isolation and a childhood experienced as an Other-from-Without.

For most of Germany's white majority, labels such as *Mohrenkopf* and *Sarottimohr* evoke positive memories of childhood and German commodity culture. Racialized images like the Sarotti-Mohr—the logo of German chocolate producer Sarotti—were systematically merchandized and appeared on cups and cans, as key pendants and porcelain figurines.[74] Helga Emde remembers that in the 1950s the Sarotti-Mohr was "as well known as the Mercedes star"

[73] This and all subsequent translations are my own.
[74] See Rita Gudermann, *Der Sarotti-Mohr: Die bewegte Geschichte einer Werbefigur*, pp. 114-117.

(35). The famous black servant became buyable and received "honored places in German living rooms."[75] However, for Afro-German children, the term was often used to mark their difference as "brown babies."[76] In her poetry, Emde recalls the derogatory language of the 1950s and uses the terms "Sarottimor" and "Mohrenkopf" to highlight the alienating function of conflating human beings with consumer products such as Sarottimohr's chocolate and Mohrenkopf's pastries. The first stanza's fabric already creates a voice for marginalized experiences by exposing the structure of white prejudice and the use of such racially demeaning terms. The speaker's childhood memories of being the black other, alongside critical reflections (warum? [why?]) and appellative demands directed at the white majority (laßt mich mit! [let me go with you!), are shut down with racial slurs and expose feelings of alienation.

This sense of alienation intensifies over the course of the poem as the vertical axis braids together questions and statements made in response to the ugly ethnic slurs. The second and third stanzas use a form of unidirectional speech, through which the lyrical voice tries to communicate with its peers.

warum schämt ihr euch?

warum bemitleidet ihr mich?

warum quält ihr mich?

Nigger.

[75] See Joachim Zeller, *Bilderschule der Herrenmenschen,* p. 223.
[76] The term is used for children born to African American soldiers and white European women after WW II. In Germany, during the 1950s, the term Mischlingskinder was revived for Afro-German children. See Tina Campt and Pascal Grosse, "Mischlingskinder," pp. 48-78.

laßt mich wie ihr sein.

schaut, ich mache mein haar glatt,

meine lippen schmal und kleide mich hübsch

Exotin.(9-16)

[why are you embarrassed? / why do you pity me? / why do you agonize me? / Nigger. / let me be just like you. / look, i straighten my hair. / my lips are narrow and i dress nicely. / Exotic.]

Crafted in alliteration form, the inquiry regarding the motivations behind embarrassment, pity, and torture culminates in the derogatory slur "Nigger" (12). All attempts of inclusion fail. The wish for equality, "laßt mich wie ihr sein" (let me be just like you), triggers bodily alterations such as "ich mache meine Haare glatt,/ meine lippen schmal und kleide mich hübsch." (I straighten my hair./ my lips are narrow and I dress nicely, 14-15), and ceases with the label „Exotin." (Exotic, 16). While the terms "Sarottimohr," "Mohrenkopf," "Nigger," and "Exotin" (Sarotti-Moor, Moorhead, Nigger, Exotic, 8, 12, 16) can be read as derogatory marginalization based on skin color and one-word replies intended to preclude deeper interactions, the poem's last stanza reveals that anxiety of exclusion and isolation are not solidly rooted within the minority population.

Existential loneliness and isolation transfer into Afro-German experiences of adulthood. Appeals to common humanity fail as fractured conversations work to sustain exclusion. In condensed form, the final stanza continues the cycle of refused inclusion and recognition.

ich bin ein mensch, ein weibliches wesen, versteht ihr mich nicht?

Sex.

ihr macht mich ungleichwertig.

hausfrau und mutter.

Neinnnnnn. bitte, versteht mich denn niemand.

Doch.

wir alle. aber bleibe wie du bist und verändere dich nicht.

nein, keine bildung, wo bleiben sonst wir????

aber versteht mich doch, ich will gleichwertig sein.

aber doch bitte nicht wie wir!

du gehörst nicht zu uns.

HILFE sie wollen mich steinigen und fast schaffen sie es. (17-28)

[I am a human, a female being, don't you understand me? / Sex. / you make me unlike. / homemaker and mother. / noooooo. please, does nobody understand me? / on the contrary. / we all. but stay as you are and don't change. / no, no education, where will we be left at then??? / but understand, I want to be equal. / but please not like us! / you don't belong to us. / HELP they want to stone me to death and they almost succeed.]

A vertical strand of rejection intensifies feelings of isolation as the lyrical voice seeks empathy:

"ich bin ein mensch, ein weibliches wesen, versteht ihr mich denn nicht? /Sex ./ihr macht mich

ungleichwertig. /hausfrau und mutter. /Neinnnnnn.bitte, versteht mich denn niemand." (I am a

human, a female being, don't you understand me? / Sex. / you make me unlike. / homemaker and mother. / noooooo. please, does nobody understand me?, 17-22). The moment of recognition, marked by an emphatic particle and an accepting response, "Doch. / " wir alle. aber bleibe wie du bist und verändere dich nicht." (on the contrary. / we all. but stay as you are and don't change, 22-23), exposes white fragility.[77] White fragility is defined as a state in which "the smallest amount of racial stress becomes intolerable" (DiAngelo, 2), triggering a set of defensive responses by the white majority. The poem braids together these responses of anger and fear with the anxiety Black Germans experience as a result of white fragility. The poem's poetic fabric exposes the interdependent structure of anxieties. White fragility, informed by white anxiety, continues the cycle of marginalization and perpetuates anxious feelings within black minority populations. The poem horizontally aligns negation ("nein" [no], 24), foreclosure of equity ("keine bildung" [no education], 24), and defensive behavior ("wo bleiben sonst wir ????/ aber doch bitte nicht wie wir! / du gehörst nicht zu uns!" [where will we be left at then???/ but please not like us! / you don't belong to us.], 24, 26, 27), and weaves in the black other's anxious plea for racial equity ("aber versteht mich doch, ich will geichwertig sein." [but understand, I want to be equal.]). The defensive response of the white majority, however, reinstates the demarcation line between the German insiders ("wir" [us]) and the biracial outsider ("du" [you]), which leads to the ultimate cry for help.

The final stanza connects intensified experiences of anxiety, rejection, and exclusion. The capitalization of key moments creates a chain of rejection on a vertical axis: "Sarottimohr," "Mohrenkopf," "Nigger," "Exotin," "Sex," "Doch," and "HILFE" (Sarotti-Moor, Moorhead,

[77] See Robin J. DiAngelo's work *White Fragility* and *What Does It Mean to Be White? Developing White Racial Literacy*.

Nigger, Exotic, Sex, On the contrary, HELP). The final cry for help, "HILFE sie wollen mich steinigen und fast schaffen sie es" (HELP, they want to stone me to death and they almost succeed), connects moments of isolation with a method of capital punishment. Stoning, the throwing of stones at an individual until they die, is a particularly slow form of execution that provides the executioners with a sense of anonymity; no one person from the group can be clearly identified as the killer. The poem's final line connects moments of exclusion, aligned on the vertical axis, with a group punishment resulting in the slow death of an individual. The act of a murder committed en masse becomes the metaphor for biracial experiences that are shaped by recurring feelings of loneliness and emotional death. The death is ultimately prevented by a poetic cry for help that disrupts the murderous attempt, one which almost succeeds: "und fast schaffen sie es." (and they almost succeed). The expressionist intertext allows for the staging of both black and white fear; these anxious feelings braided together by poetic métissage expose the workings of white fragility. It is the staging of this white fragility and its reinforcement of racial hierarchy, as well as black silencing, which enables the female Afro-German voice to push back.

The poetic métissage can also be read as a way of leaving behind old racial hierarchies. The feminist voice abandons familiar patterns of Afro-German silence, historically rooted in German public discourses, and explores unfamiliar and explosive new patterns. The poetic cry for help that disrupts Afro-German silence simultaneously represents inner and outer changes. In that sense the poem's métissage becomes symptomatic of the poetic figure's liberation of voice. While the struggle of voices to end racial hierarchies continues, liberated Afro-German voices continue to actively challenge these hierarchies, granting the poetic métissage new purpose and effect. Rather than simply exposing the workings of white fragility, poetic métissage communicates a new liberation of voices and the end of Afro-German silence. One question,

however, remains: how can liberated voices unite when they still face the challenge of racial prejudice?

Visual Poetry and Unity of Voice

Oguntoye's narrative poem *Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus – Freundinnen oder worüber ich immer so gerne mit dir gesprochen hätte* (Female Relationships and Racism – Girlfriends or what I would have always loved to talk to you about, 1984) strikes by incorporating visual poetry. The poem's weaving of narrative- and concrete poetry with Afro-German feminist experiences finds visual expression and solution to the dividing forces of racial prejudice and its effects on relationships. The material quality of concrete poetry, namely the visual image it produces, disrupts the power of silenced words while simultaneously bringing forth a solution to combat silence.

The corruptive power of silence in female, interracial relationships is the main motif in the poem's first narrative section.

> **Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus**
>
> **Freundinnen oder worüber ich immer so gerne mit dir gesprochen hätte.**
>
> bis jetzt war rassismus in meinen beziehungen zu frauen kein thema für mich. ich akzeptiere stillschweigend das tabu, das zwischen mir und meinen freundinnen bestand. manchmal fühle ich mich sicher in dieser schattenzone des unausgesprochenen. konnte doch so jede von der anderen nur das beste annehmen. keine peinlichen gespräche brachten die freundlichen frau-zu-frau-schwingungen zwischen den freundinnen in

> disharmonie. doch manchmal, und das mit den jahren immer dringlicher, spüre ich eine bedrohung, die von diesem totschweigen ausgeht. mir wird bewusst, daß das nichtwissen um die ängste der anderen, die ängste noch anwachsen läßt. auf beiden seiten werden sie übergroß und der versuch, sich darüber noch irgendwie zu verständigen bzw. sich diese ängste gegenseitig mitzuteilen, muß fehlschlagen. Es wird schwieriger, umso enger, länger und näher eine beziehung ist, denn keine schafft mehr den sprung über den gedankenhaufen; (1-15)[78]

[**Female relationships and Racism – Friends or what I would have always loved to talk to you about. //** until now racism was not an issue for me in my relationships to women. / I hold my tongue and accept the taboo, that exists between me / and my girlfriends. sometimes I feel safe in / this shadow region of the unspoken. this way, / one could assume only the best about the other one. no embarrassing conversations / turned the friendly woman-to-woman vibes between the / girlfriends disharmonious. but sometimes, and that more to pressing with the years, / I felt a threat, that originates form this silencing / to death. I some to realize, the not knowing of the other one's fears /, would increase these fears. on both sides/ they become too big and the attempt, to communicate about them / resp. to share these fears with each other, has / to fail. it becomes increasingly difficult, the tighter, longer and closer a relationship / becomes, because no one manages to jump over these piles of thoughts][79]

Workings of covert and open racism weigh heavily on relationships, especially when silenced. As such, racism is marked as „kein thema," and „das tabu, das zwischen mir und meinen freundinnen bestand." (not an issue, the taboo, that exists between me / and my girlfriends, 1-3). The disruptive power of racism's silent presence grows over time: "doch manchmal, und das mit den jahren immer dringlicher, spürte ich eine bedrohung, die von diesem totschweigen ausgeht" (but sometimes, and that more to pressing with the years, / I felt a threat, that originates form this silencing / to death, 8-9). The heightened tension within the relationship is marked by a chain of

[78] All quotations from Oguntoye's "Frauenbeziehungen" are taken from the following edition: Katharina Oguntoye et al., *Farbe bekennen* (Orlanda, 1986). Line numbers will be inserted after block quotes and directly in the text.
[79] This and all subsequent quotations are my own.

adjectives: “schwieriger,” “enger,” “länger” and “näher” (tighter, longer, closer, 13). As thoughts about the unspoken topic intensify and emotions are guided by fear, the system of language breaks down. Thoughts guided by emotions no longer manifest in linear, structured, and manageable language patterns; they become “gedankenhaufen” (piles of thoughts, 14).

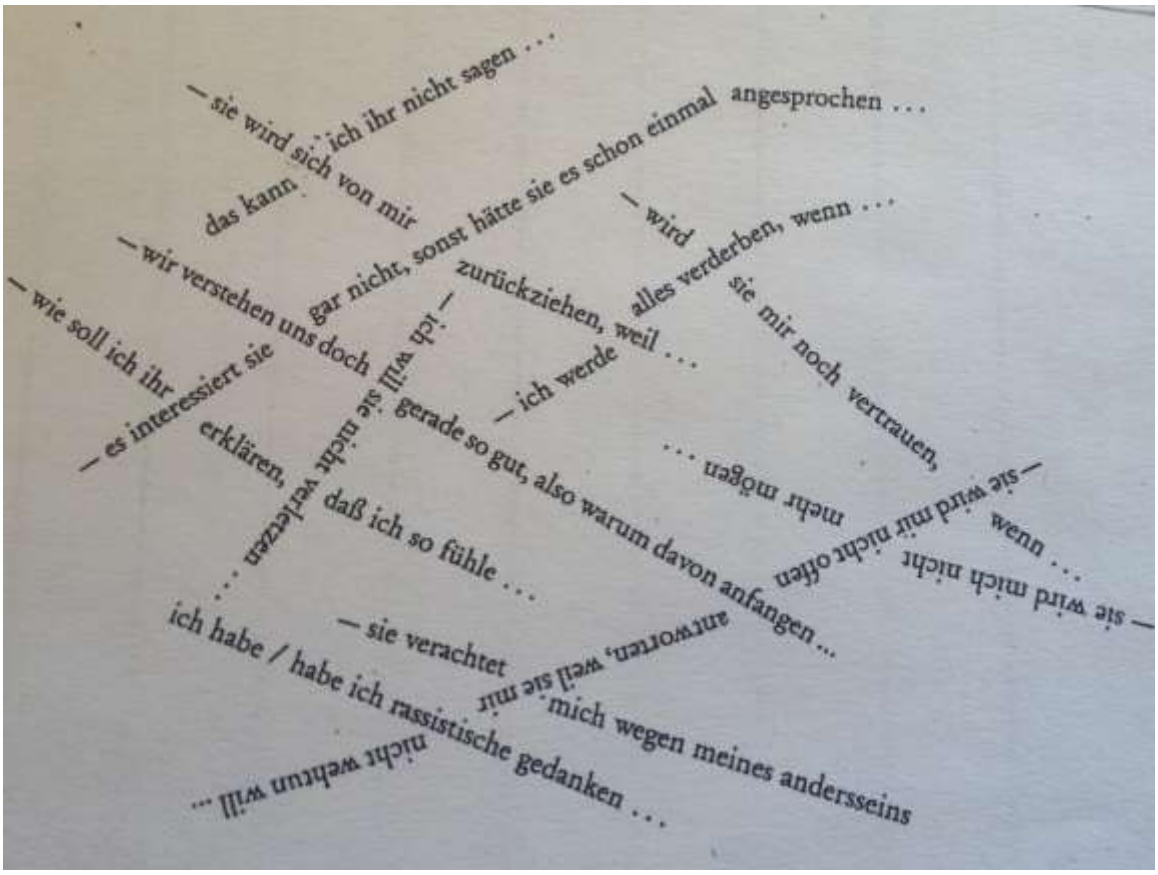

Fig. 1. “Gedankenhaufen” in Oguntoye’s *Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus*.

Corrupted by silence, the piles of thoughts also corrupt the ability to navigate through them. The interrelation of silenced thoughts and emotions, “die unausgesprochenen Gedanken,“ „– ich habe/ habe ich rassistische gedanken,“ „sie verachtet mich wegen meines andersseins,“ „sie wird mich nicht mehr mögen…“ (the unspoken thoughts, - I have / do I have racist thoughts, she despises me due to my difference, she is not going to like me anymore, see Fig. 1) depicts an unmanageable, interwoven pile of fragmented sentences. The interwoven sentence fragments

create a net of speculations (“sie wird sich von mir zuzückziehen, weil…” [she will pull back, because…]), fear (“ich werde alles verderben, wenn … [I will ruin everything, if …]), and avoidance (wir verstehen uns doch gerade so gut, also warum davon anfangen… [we are just getting along so well at the moment, so why bother…]), trapping individuals and their interpersonal relationships alike. This poetic métissage creates an image through which voice is given to the untamable workings of unspoken thoughts, subverting them into presence.

The poem’s final stanza returns to narrative form and reveals the deep threat to female relationships posed by racial bias, while simultaneously weaving in its antidote.

> aber diese unausgesprochenen gedanken hinterlassen ihre wirkung
> und die kann der feundinnenschaft ganz schön zusetzen.
>
> für mich war es immer am schlimmsten zuzusehen, wie meine freundinnenschaften am mangel an offenheit langsam austrockneten. das ist wie mitten in einer oase verdursten, weil wir sie für eine fatamorgana halten. (16-21)

[but these unspoken thoughts leave their effect / this can take a lot out of the female friendship // for me it was the worst to watch how my female / friendships slowly dried out due to the lack of honesty. that is / like dying of thirst in an oasis, because we believe it to be a fata morgana.]

The consequence of unspoken words is damaging: “diese unausgesprochenen Gedanken hinterlassen ihre wirkung / … / für mich war es immer am schlimmsten zuzusehen, wie meine freun- / dinnenschaften am mangel an offenheit langsam austrockneten.“ The final metaphor aligns female friendships with an oasis, "einer oase“ (20). This nurturing place for human existence, however, is threatened by the absence of sincerity. This absence kills personal relationships which nurture life in an environment dominated by racial bias: “das ist wie mitten in einer oase verdursten, weil wir sie für eine fatamorgana / halten.” (that is / like dying of thirst

in an oasis, because we believe it to be a fata morgana, 21). Ultimately, the métissage of narrative and concrete poetry exposes the toxic power of silence and absence of sincerity that sustain racial biases.

Yet, the poetic métissage introduces the antidote to racial hierarchies. By approaching and visualizing the power of silence through the poetic métissage of narrative and visual poetry, the poem brings forth "offenheit" (openness, sincerity). While the poem's visual poetry illustrates the toxic web of silenced thought, the narrative unites "freundinnenschaften" (female relationships) and "offenheit" (openness, sincerity) within the metaphor of the "oase" (oasis). The poem thus communicates a sense of unity in openness. The poetic métissage is not just a metaphor for the threat of racial biases to female relationships; the interwoven poetic construct also brings forth an alternative that unites struggle with repose. It renders the poem's narrative dependent on the interplay of opposing forces. Ultimately, the use of poetic métissage contributes to the poem's visual emotion: to create unity rather than rupture. But visualized connections are also compelling meditations on the role of métissage in establishing unity with other global diasporic voices.

Ayim's engagement with visual poetry elicits temporal connections to other diasporas. The images in *blues in schwarz weiss* (1995) and in the *nachtgesang* (1997) volume, combined with her poetry in text form, weave together visual and verbal elements that create a statement of temporal unity. The images inspired by Ghanaian Asante-art are a gesture of unity between the voices of the past and the present moment. Ayim uses the ideograms of Afro-German poetic collections as section dividers on otherwise blank pages.

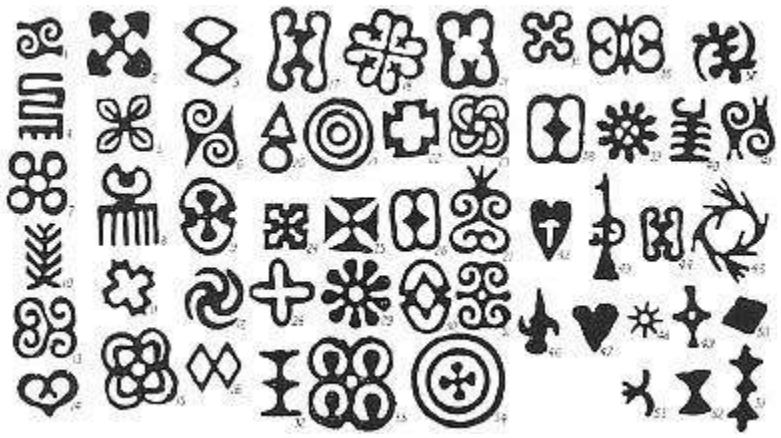

Fig 2. Adinka Symbols recorded by Robert Sutherland Rattary, 1927.

The symbols Ayim chose (see Rattary, nr. 17, 23, 27, 33, 36, 43) share a similar structure in their symbolic meaning; all are visual representations of aphorisms that unite past and present in their meaning. Both poetry volumes disclose the meaning of one of the visual representations in their epilogues. The Adinkra symbol of a bird with its head turned backwards (alternatively Nr. 27 in Rattary's symbols) uses the image of the reverted gaze commonly read as a means of uncovering colonial traces and actualizing them in the postcolonial present.[80] That, however, would be too linear of a trace since most of the symbols receive no further explanation and the reader has no conceptual understanding of their cultural origin or meaning. Instead, the backward gaze represents a larger gesture of reviving cultural and poetic codes of the past to make them viable for the present.

The Afro-German poet uses the gesture of the backward gaze and weaves symbols of the diasporic past into the Afro-German present. Her poetic agenda reexamines the power of visual images and makes use of avant-garde modes of poetic expression. She simultaneously combines verbal and visual elements, both semantically and aesthetically, creating a statement that reflects

[80] See Arina Rotaru's article "May Ayim and Diasporic Poetics."

in the visual arrangement. Ayim's poetic métissage entertains a dialogue with other diasporas, as well as with European avant-garde practices, which allows her to unite and situate Afro-German voices in the center of contemporary feminist discourse. This métissage of past and present gives voice to diasporic temporal relations that don't converge on the metaphor of a return to the homeland but which instead define Black German voices across temporal genealogies and poetic filiations in a broader European context.

Through poetic métissage, Ayim transcends the notion that diasporic voices are firmly tied to a contemporary condition, which enables her to establish a Black German consciousness attuned to both historic aesthetic expression and contemporary socio-political commentary. Her weaving of poetic influences (diasporic transatlantic poetry and German poetry written by women in the 1980s and 90s) and avant-garde forms (prose poems and visual poetry) is a constant play of harmony and dissonance.

Sound and Visual Poetry, and Consciousness of Voice

Ayim's poem *tanzkurs – eine cha-cha-choreographie für jung und alt* (dancing lessons – a cha-cha-choreography for young and old, 1992), first published in the poetry collection *nachtgesang* in 1997, uses the ironic description of a dance choreography to highlight the dangers of a right-wing resurgence in the post-1989 political landscape. The poem's onomatopoeic subtitle "cha-cha-choreographie für jung und alt" (cha-cha-choreography for young and old) recreates the shuffling sound of dancing feet and connects it to the political shuffling in post-1989 Germany. What follows is a métissage of visual and sound poetic

elements that explores the dangers of a political left-right divide through the struggles on a dancefloor.

tanzkurs

eine cha-cha-choreographie für jung und alt

es gibt
auf dem politischen tanzparkett
einen neuen rechts links
wendeschritt mit klein
großer drehung
nach rechts

links fängt an:
die linken stehen
rastlos rechts
drehen langsam
und entsetzt
nach links
andere fallen
um
und bleiben
rechts liegen

und weiter:
die links noch da sind
rufen rechts:
»haltet das maul«
und gehen dann weiter

nach links

dort hinten: marsch marsch

wiegeschritt

mit wechselschritt

nach rechts

wir schauen noch immer

nach links!: manche reihen

sich ganz fein

in der mit-te ein

und sagen dann nichts

nach rechts

wir sehen: gleichzeitig laufen

rechte gemeinsam

über die mitte

nach links

und zwar: von ost nach west

und dann von west nach ost

nachdem die zuerst

aus dem osten kamen

die im westen mitnahmen

zuletzt nach rechts

genau jetzt schauen wir

nach rechts: sie schreien

»hurra wir sind wieder da!«
und drehen geschwind
nach links

und nun
eine doppelte drehung: die rechts kriegen links
eine auf’s maul
cha!
die anderen auch: cha!
wiegeschritt: cha cha
links und rechts
cha cha
rechts und links
cha cha
links und rechts

wechselschritt: cha-cha cha
links und rechts
cha-cha cha
rechts und links
cha-cha cha
links und rechts
im wiege-und wechselschritt: cha-cha
cha-cha cha
cha cha

cha-cha cha

cha cha

cha-cha cha (1-69)[81]

[**dancing lessons – a cha-cha choreography for young and old** // there is / on the political dancefloor / a new right left / reverse move with small / big turn / to the right // left begins: the lefties stand / restless rights / turn slowly / to the left / others fall / down / and remain / laying to the right / and again: those who are still left / shout right: "shut up!" /and keep walking / to the left / back there: march march / rock turn / with two-step / to the right / we still look left!: some get / very delicately / in the mid-dle in line / and don't say anything / to the right/ we see: simultaneously walk / rights together / across the midline / to the left // in fact: from east to west /and then from west to east / after they first / coming from the east / took along those in the west / at least to the right / right this moment we look to the right: they scream / "hooray, we are back!" / and quickly turn / to the left // and now a double turn: those on the right get left / a proper punch in the face / cha / the others as well: cha! / rock turn: cha cha / right and left / cha cha / left and right // two-step: cha-cha cha / left and right / cha-cha cha /right and left / cha-cha cha / left and right /in rock- and two-step turn: cha cha / cha-cha cha / cha cha / cha-cha cha / cha cha / cha-cha cha][82]

The stanza's pattern visualizes the divide of two camps. The poem's right column tells of the struggles shuffling across the dancefloor, while the left column functions as a comment section. The poem's synthesis of harmony and dissonance is achieved through the use of double meanings—physical and political—such as "rastlos rechts" (restless right), double onomatopoeia ("marsch marsch", [march march]), unconventional word fragmentation ("in der mit-te ein", [in the mid-dle in line]), and cacophony ("von ost nach west / und dann von west nach ost, die rechts kriegen links", [from east to west/and then from west to east, those one the right get left], 35-36; 47-48). Taking from this interplay of harmony and dissonance, the poem thematizes the fracture between the written and oral articulation, between the script of a dance and the failed recitation that results in violence. The forms "haltet das maul!", "hurra wir sind wieder da!" and "eine auf's

[81] All quotations from Ayim's "tanzkurs" are taken from the following edition: May Ayim, *Nachtgesang: Gedichte*. (Orlanda,1997). Line numbers will be inserted after block quotes and directly in the text.
[82] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

maul" (shut up, hooray we are back, a proper punch in the face, 18; 43; 48) incorporate colloquialisms and slang into the poetry. Following the abrasive colloquialisms, the poem shifts towards onomatopoeic explosion and conflates a physical attack with the syllable 'cha', a fragment of the cha-cha move. What follows is the sound poetic illustration of the struggle between left and right, which culminates in the seemingly endless repetition of the cha-cha syllable combination. Inherent in this combination is the blurring of lines between two camps. The poem's "wiegeschritt: cha cha / links und rechts / cha cha / rechts und links / cha cha' links und rechts / wechselschritt: cha-cha cha / links und rechts / cha-cha cha / rechts und links /cha-cha cha / links und rechts" (rock turn: cha cha / right and left / cha cha / left and right // two-step: cha-cha cha / left and right / cha-cha cha /right and left / cha-cha cha / left and right // in rock- and two-step turn: cha cha / cha-cha cha / cha cha / cha-cha cha / cha cha / cha-cha cha, 51-62) dissolves the two political ideologies and uses them interchangeably to the extent that they ultimately appear as one sound.

The ending interrupts comprised elements of sound poetry by returning to narrative form.

das war's

ich möchte hiermit
die tanzstunden
gerne beenden
die meisten haben
gut mitgemacht
oder doch
zumindest nicht gestört
gibt es noch fragen

oder

will jemand die neuen

oder alten

schritte wiederholen?

niemand

wirklich niemand?

- sehr schön.

danke für die

Wachsamkeit! (70-88)

[that's it! - / I hereby want to / close / the dancing lessons / most of you / participated well / or at least / they did not interrupt // are there any questions left / or /does anybody want to / repeat / the new or old /steps? // no one / really no one? // - very nice / thank you for your / attention!]

Through its narrative quality and invocation of colloquial utterances such as "das war's! / ich möchte hiermit / die tanzstunden /gerne beenden /die meisten haben / gut mitgemacht /oder doch zumindest nicht gestört" (that's it! - / I hereby want to / close / the dancing lessons / most of you / participated well / or at least / they did not interrupt, 70-77) the poem utilizes the tension between experimentation and formal lyric to create political awareness. The gesture of returning to narrative poetic form allows for the voicing of resistance towards radicalizing developments in Germany's political landscape. Ayim critiques the shuffling on the political stage as "die neuen/ oder alten/ schritte" (the new or old / steps?, 80-82) and warns of the very repetition that the performative chiasmic poetic structure draws on. The poem's ironic end "wiederholen? / niemand? wirklich niemand? / - sehr schön. danke für die wachsamkeit!" (no one / really no one?

/ - very nice / thank you for your / attention!, 84-88) performs resistance to radicalization and draws on the model of audience participation.

Ayim's performative chiasmic poem speaks directly to its audience. On the one hand, *tanzkurs* relies on simple form and mimetic literary concepts such as onomatopoeia; on the other hand, it cultivates a long fragment structure with an emphasis on concrete poetry and elements of cacophony. It resembles processes of transmutation that transcend a solitary dialogue and activates audience participation through sound and movement. In cultivating a form of public engagement through weaving together written expression with sound and movement, the author cultivates political awareness and claims emotional responses as tools and means of knowledge production.

Conclusion

Poetic métissage in Afro-German feminist poetry of the 1980s and '90s brought forth liberated, united, and conscious Afro-German voices by interweaving diasporic experiences with modernist intertexts, and through the use of visual and sound poetic elements. Afro-German feminist poetry is able to utilize the potential of poetic métissage for effect. It is not just the recycling of diasporic, modernist, and avant-garde practices that informs its transformative potential, but also the repurposing of said elements for the Afro-German feminist context. Emde's *Der Schrei*, Oguntoye's *Frauenbeziehungen und Rassismus*, and Ayim's *tanzkurs*—as well as visual elements in *blues in schwarz weiss* and *nachtgesang*—evoke dynamic, challenging, and transformative poetic textures. This textured Afro-German feminist poetry advances a broadened definition of German voices and cultural identity.

Black German feminist poets compose with an assertive sensibility. The isolation experienced by Afro-German poets, coupled with the absence of a public voice, has helped shape the poetic agenda of a generation. Motivated by the desire to redefine German cultural identity and reclaim spheres of personal experience, they experiment with emancipatory forms and styles for the purpose of moving beyond the tracing of linear narratives that culminate in a diasporic framework. Having abandoned the long-held notion that Afro-German voices can be formed through affinities to anglophone- or francophone postcolonial aesthetics, Afro-German feminist poets recognize that a voice can only be created through the weaving together of multiple strands of cultures. Indeed, their works of interwoven, experimental poetic expression are a means of self-assertion. They repurpose diasporic (transatlantic and African alliances) and European literary culture (modernist and avant-garde practices) and focus on forming multifaceted Afro-German voices that expose and challenge racial hierarchies, establish poetic and temporal connections, and create a political consciousness. The 1980s and 90s were a time of societal transformation in Germany and throughout Europe; the opening of the Berlin Wall, the reunification of Germany, and the transition towards a greater European unification helped reframe discussions of German nationhood and the standing of black minorities within it. In many ways, Afro-German feminist poetry practices do just that, though poetic métissage does not merely mimic the artistic gestures of suppressed voices; it also resists them for the purpose of interrupting the tracing of linear narratives that solely culminate in a diasporic framework. Instead of exclusively focusing on a postcolonial aesthetic to create coherent narratives of voices of the oppressed, Afro-German feminist poetry exposes harmony and dissonance by weaving together diasporic influences and elements of experimental poetry that fracture the relationship between coherent narratives of biographical or identitarian displacement. The effect of this

strategy creates voices that counter the workings of silence, create temporal and aesthetic connections, and raise political awareness.

Poetic métissage in Afro-German feminist poetry asserts voices of the Black German diaspora as integral parts of German and diasporic cultural discourses. Poetic métissage is not simply critiquing voicelessness; it reveals, brings forth, and asserts Black German minority voices. Rather than relying on linear traces, Afro-German feminist poetry uses poetic métissage to reveal the hidden presence of Afro-German voices. Challenged by a historical absence, Afro-German feminist poets break that silence, establish voices that cannot be denied, and lay the foundation for future generations of poets who will continue to share stories of Afro-German diasporic experiences.

Chapter Two

"Applaus für Schuhcreme": Double-Imagery and German Blackness in Afro-German Spoken Word Poetry

In early 2014, a group of Afro-German spoken word poets, including Philipp Khabo Köpsell and Chantal-Fleur Sandjon, publicly addressed the ongoing debate on the topic of blackface in German theater. *Afro Shop* (2014), a collection of spoken word poems edited by Köpsell, was published in response to the controversy surrounding Dea Loher's play *Unschuld* (Innocence, 2012), a production which reintroduced blackface to German performance art through the use of a technique that created 'masks' which gradually wore off as the play progressed. Debates around this practice, as well as pressure from the public, inspired *Deutsches Theater* to continue the performance with the actors' faces painted white. Germany's blackface debate is often referenced as a debate around artistic freedom and political correctness[83]. The discussion, however, is not confined to the issues previously mentioned. The discourse around the historically charged theatrical practice exposes a lack of awareness and deeply rooted assumptions about the German collective.

The first assumption being that the imagined German community is predominately white. When whiteness is perceived as the norm, blackness comes to signify foreignness and perpetuates the idea of Black Germans as the other; this persistent practice is one that the Afro-German spoken word and hip-hop communities has for years openly criticized. Samy Deluxe's album *SchwarzWeiss* (2011) is an example of a work that raises awareness of how black Germans of biracial identities are represented in a majority white culture that continues to demonstrate an unwillingness to accept its black minority populations as anything but Others-

[83] Katrin Sieg offers an extensive discussion of blackfacing in contemporary German theater in her article "Race, Guilt and Innocence."

from-Without. The second assumption is that blackface can be detached from its history and discourse. Many German directors and journalists justify wearing blackface, or blacking up, without knowledge of its epistemology. Historical and physical distance become convenient arguments to justify a proliferate practice that continues to ascribe racialized assumptions to Black German minority populations. In response to blackfacing, which gained popularity in the nineteenth century and contributes to the proliferation of stereotypes such as the "happy-go-lucky darky" or the "dandified coon" (Erenberg, 73; Green, 134, 206), the question must be raised: what kind of blackness is German Blackness? How is it represented in Afro-German spoken word poetry? Does the aesthetic of Afro-German spoken word poetry elicit a German Blackness beyond the symbolism of Others-from-Without?

Contemporary Afro-German spoken word poetry helps to examine representations and articulations of German Blackness. As a work of art, poetry is the finite expression of an otherwise inaccessible experience. It provides greater access to diasporic experiences that are otherwise confined to discrete communities. Poetry and the process of diasporic expression are closely related. Since Plato's *Republic*, it is the poets who critically examine the state and yet do not merit a place within the ideal state;[84] poets exist on the margins of society. Much like the art of ancient Greek rhapsodists, Afro-German spoken word poetry trusts the spoken word as the most valuable repository for the best of its thought. Spoken word, kindred to performance art and explicitly written to be performed aloud, provides insight into dynamics of verbal performance, form, and representation. It allows for the exploration of what constitutes new conceptions of blackness and provides the opportunity to navigate through dynamics of covert racialization. Afro-German spoken word poetry dissolves constructs of social, cultural, and political borders; it

[84] See especially book III and X of the *Republic*, where Plato addresses the position of poets within the ideal state.

transgresses and challenges the concept of Germany as a homogenously white nation. The form maintains notions of critique but shifts to a focus on exclusion and the staging of multiethnic cohabitation. For the Afro-German community, I will argue, spoken word poetry defines a German diasporic cultural identity that offers representations of German Blackness that transgress the color line.

Just how poetic composition accesses diasporic perception, point of view, and a new German Blackness is a question that goes beyond binaries of black and white. Of particular interest is the way in which Afro-German spoken word poetry deploys double-imagery practices. Double imagery here refers to the two-ness of textual elements which ignite the senses. First, this chapter shows how the concept of double-consciousness helps to examine both a double-voiced aesthetic and representations of blackness. Second, it illustrates how diasporic modes of seeing, thinking, and being employ a contemporary double-imagery and help to define new conceptions of German Blackness. Third, close readings of spoken word poetry by Chantal Fleur-Sandjon, Philipp Khabo Köpsell, and Samy Deluxe will provide evidence of the ways in which double-imagery practices challenge the reader to deconstruct antithetical notions of black and white. Finally, the chapter will exemplify how Afro-German double-imagery creates engaging texts able to escape single-stranded representations of German Blackness.

Double-Consciousness, Double-Voice, Double-Imagery and German Blackness

Conceptions of blackness in German literature have a long history of stereotyping. Across time periods and genres, blackness has equated otherness. From the violent Congo Hoango in Kleist's novella *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (1811) and the biracial Viennese

dandy and beau Carlo Zeller in Hugo Bettauer's novel *Das blaue Mal: Der Roman eines Ausgestossenen* (1922), to more contemporary diasporic conceptions in Kühn's novel *Beethoven und der Schwarze Geiger* (1990/96), blackness remains most commonly associated with the concept of the alien. The history of stereotypical blackness has been traced by various scholars using different frameworks.[85] Critical discourses identify important moments in time by the way in which these conceptualizations have shifted and been imagined and reimagined by European intellectuals. Notions of blackness alternate between states which precede political articulation, such as Kleist's Congo Hoango who stands in for the racialized portrait of a violent patriarch, to instances in which it is discursively negotiated, such as in Kühn's George Augustus Polgreen Bridgetower, one of the earliest portraits of a Black European violinist traveling Europe and West Africa. The correlation between skin color and the concept of "alien," "stranger," or "other" is often the result of failures within political systems to offer a nuanced understanding of the world, an ideological failure that extends to the understanding of German Blackness.[86] Other representations give way to a recodification of German Blackness as exclusively American or African. Scholars, such as Dirk Göttsche (*Remembering Africa*, 2013) and Charlotte Szilagyi (*Imagining Blackness in Germany and Austria*, 2012), mainly focus on blackness in texts by canonical white German, Austrian, and Swiss authors. To extend this perspective beyond the

[85] Sander Gilman's *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the image of the Black in Germany* (1982) offered the first extensive treatment of the black image with an investigative lens from the Middle Ages to the twentieth century. Susann Zantop's *Colonial Fantasies* (1997) explored imaginary colonial encounters of Germans with natives in late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century literature. A more recent study *Imagining Blackness in Germany and Austria* (2012) edited by Charlotte Szilagyi et. al. offers perspectives on the ways that blackness has been configured in cultural productions from around the modern German-speaking world.

[86] Bernhard Waldenfels discusses the differences among concepts such as "foreign", "alien" and strange in his exposition (See Waldenfels "Response to the Other," pp. 35-44. See also Waldenfels, *Studien zur Phänomenologie des Fremden*, p. 20).

color line, it is necessary to include Afro-German spoken word poetry in the discourse on German Blackness.[87]

Afro-German spoken word poetry is mostly performed in urban spaces. German slam poetry events started in 1993 in Berlin and gave artists a space to be creative outside government subsidized literature houses.[88] Though in the beginning it was mostly American spoken word artists who performed in English, the concept quickly spread to other German cities such as Hamburg and Munich and the first national German-speaking poetry slam, *Spoken Word Berlin,* was launched in 1997. The event remains the largest poetry slam in Germany, hosted every first Thursday of the month in Prenzlauer Berg, one of Berlin's more creative neighborhoods. Today there are over seventy cities across German-speaking Europe with their own regular events. Berlin, however, is still the capital of slam poetry and spoken word culture. Afro-German spoken word poets, such as Köpsell and Sandjon, are part of this vibrant scene that gives voice to the experiences of Black Germans in urban spaces across German-speaking Europe.

Spoken word in the form of German hip-hop was on the rise in the late 1980s. It took almost a decade and a half until hip-hop battles, an art form originating in the Bronx of the late 1970s, reached Europe and developed an independent German hip-hop scene.[89] The German hip-hop movement was also sparked by semi-documentary films from the US hip-hop scene, such as *Wild Style* (1983) and *Beat Street* (1984. Break dance, rap music, and graffiti influenced youth

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[87] In *Souls of Black Folk* W.E.B. Du Bois identifies the color line as the twentieth century's distinctive problem. In 1952, he extends the original understanding of the color line – the segregation in the U.S. after the abolition of slavery – in the essay "The negro and the Warsaw Ghetto." He intersects color, physique and status to conclude that racial discrimination existed everywhere, beyond black vs. white. He located the root of racial discrimination in cultural patterns, perverted teachings and human prejudice.

[88] Ron Amber Deloney discusses the beginnings of spoken word in Germany in her article "Slam Poetry: Bringing the Word to Germany."

[89] See music journalist Falk Schacht's article "How German rap found its 'flow'," and the interview in which he discusses the beginnings of German hip-hop (see Schacht and Kate Müser "Falk Schacht tells DW's Kate Müser what 'Deutschrap' is – and isn't (interview from August 2013)."

from the urban regions of Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart, and cities with large US military bases, such as Heidelberg. From Heidelberg to Stuttgart, young people in cities with US bases experienced hip-hop culture first hand and eventually formed their own. Over the course of the 1990s, German hip-hop artists started to make a serious effort to emancipate themselves from US hip-hop.[90] Serious attention was given to writing convincing German lyrics. Mostly young men started to rap about their identities as Germans with immigrant or Afro-German backgrounds, as well as their experiences with every day racism. Primarily in larger cities around the country, hip-hop groups began to spring up and groups like *Brothers Keepers,* with its icon *Samy Deluxe,* established a way in which they could address political injustice and issues of equity.

Afro-German spoken word offers an alternative view to normalized, canonical, and predominantly white perspectives. Authors' backgrounds and experiences are cross-cultural; they span from the *Besatzungskinder* of the post-war generation, with typically African-American soldier fathers, to children of African migrants or African-German families. These authors' voices shared diverse experiences within the predominantly white German collective. The writings of the new millennium also show a paradigm shift: the desire to be part of something bigger. Afro-German artists embrace the diaspora and forge new alliances across continents. Contemporary spoken word poetry is brimming over with Pan-African references from Ancient Egypt to the transatlantic slave trade, and all the way to the 1960's Black Power Movement. Afro-German thinking is grounded within diasporic experiences that shape Afro-German being.

Biracial experiences in contemporary Germany—and across literary landscapes—transverse the imaginary color line. The Afro-German condition, that of being German while

[90] See music journalist Marita Berg's article "A glimpse back at hip-hop's roots in Germany."

simultaneously perceived as foreigner or outsider due to skin color, resonates with a sense of two-ness. In the beginning of the twentieth century W.E.B Du Bois described two-ness as double-consciousness, locating it within the context of the African American experience: "It is a particular sensation this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" ("Souls" 2). Since the first publication of *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), the concept of double-consciousness has evolved and shifted but remains central to understanding representations of blackness. Once an evocative characterization of the black American condition, double-consciousness not only helps to understand issues of modernity with 'race' as an analytical category, it also illustrates the theorization of a black diasporic literary tradition and their representations of blackness.

Representations of German Blackness are simultaneously German and transatlantic. Black German culture is a modern cultural-political formation connected to the experience and inheritance of forced displacement, which transcends ethnicity and the construct of a white German nation state. In *The Black Atlantic* (1993), Paul Gilroy describes the development of just such a black diasporic culture and its poetics. As Gilroy fleshes out the poetics of the Black Diaspora, he demonstrates that it is not specifically African, American, or Caribbean, but rather all at once. This simultaneity is crucial. Gilroy points to the significance of two-ness, or double-consciousness, in understanding the transatlantic diasporic culture, with particular emphasis on the importance of thinking, being, and seeing. "Double-Consciousness emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being, and seeing. The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic in that it derives from the nation state in which the ex-slaves but not-yet-citizens find themselves, rather than from their aspiration towards a nation

state of their own. The third is diasporic or hemispheric, sometimes global and occasionally universalist" (127). The concepts of being, thinking, and seeing prove equally important for the Afro-German Diaspora in the new millennium.

Living in a black body in a predominantly white environment continues to shape experiences of being. The triangular relationship of being, thinking, and seeing form literary expressions. Afro-German thinking is grounded within diasporic experiences that have shaped Afro-German being. Being is nationalistic in a contemporary sense, in that it derives from a German nation state in which Black Germans find themselves. Though the nation state acknowledges Black Germans and guarantees them full legal standing, the reality of daily life as a member of a minority population is far more complex. Ingeborg Bachmann Preis winner Sharon Dodua Otoo offers insight into such an existence in her novella *die dinge, die ich denke, während ich höflich lächle…* (the things i am thinking while smiling politely …, 2013). The text paints a portrait of a crumbling marriage and the experiences of a Black woman living in Berlin. The novella provides a window into racialized being within Germany and establishes an understanding of how this being shapes the ways in which individuals see the world around them. Black German seeing is diasporic and connected to other racialized experiences around the globe; it is simultaneously hemispheric and global as well as local and national, forming an aesthetic that can be understood as internally doubled.

The concept of double-voice helps to understand workings of expressions with formal doubling and structural play. The play with forms and structures that are internally doubled, particularly the use of a rhetoric similar to the black vernacular tradition, is prevalent throughout Afro-German spoken word poetry. Afro-German spoken word overlaps with the tradition of street rhymes within black vernacular culture. Henry Louis Gates Jr. describes this tradition as

Signifyin(g) practices.[91] In *The Signifying Monkey* (1988), he points out that Signifyin(g) practices must be understood as a black speech act, "…a metaphor for textual revisions" (Gates 88). For Gates, verbal signs appear to be doubled, at the very least, and (re)doubled upon yet closer examination (44-45). Thus, Signifyin(g) is more than the literal interpretation of words and the distractions of insults used as identity constructions, such as 'der Dealer' (the dealer) or 'die Nutte' (the prostitute). Rather than merely one specific verbal game, Signifyin(g) is a pervasive mode of language use (Gates 80). To Signify is to be figurative and to define meaning through any number of embedded tropes. Gates' understanding of the black vernacular and its practices of rhyming signifying helps to decode Afro-German spoken word poetry. That Gates speaks of insults as a form of rhetorical strategy is significant; such insults can be seen to add layers of representations to a text. Yet, does Afro-German spoken word poetry only promote stereotypical representations of blackness?

Afro-German spoken word poetry and its representations of German Blackness are doubled, forming an aesthetic that can be understood as double-imagery. Double-imagery here refers to the two-ness of textual elements which ignite the senses by creating images with multiple, simultaneous meanings; these ignited senses might be visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory, tactile, kinesthetic, or organic in nature. The double-images appeal to sights, sounds, scents, touch, movement, or actions of objects or people, and evoke responses that shift in meaning as one reads. Shifting double-images allow for representations of multiple sets of experiences and meanings present at the same time, providing a unique approach for accessing and representing German Blackness in a way that challenges a reader's expectations. This

[91] Signifyin(g) is a widely discussed concept within Anglo-American linguistics (see Claudia Mitchell-Kernan, *Language Behavior in a Black Urban Community)*; and literary discourse (see Ralph Ellison, *Little Man at Chehaw Station*; Langston Hughes, *Ask Your Mama*; Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men*). It describes a fundamentally black, familiar rhetorical practice that can be understood as a mode of rhetorical repetition and textual revision.

double-imagery allows to access and explore German Blackness without narrowing it down to one defined perception. Instead, the images evoke multiple variations of what German Blackness can entail. This allows for a representation of German Blackness that is able to simultaneously provide multiple, stable perceptions that represent its continuously updating variety. This practice of double-imagery positions Afro-German spoken word poetry within a complex dimension of representation that deserves further consideration.

Afro-German Seeing and Emancipated Blackness

As a detailed observer of Generation Y, Chantal-Fleur Sandjon's writings provide sharp-eyed examinations of diasporic experiences in contemporary urban spaces.[92] Her poem *bln zu rädern* (2014) embraces both European and diasporic influences. Akin to global imagist strands of modernism, *bln zu rädern'*s imagism captures particular moments in time through the use of verbal imagery.[93] These snapshots grant access to Afro-German seeing, allowing for a combination of verbal images that help to create a new understanding of Black German identity. Combining verbal images conflates culturally diasporic and historically German identities, revealing black minority perspectives to the reader.

Sandjon's poem is set in Berlin and employs musical tropes to examine the world. It depicts female Afro-German experiences through images of broken interracial relationships and a journey of emancipation on a Berlin subway.[94] Life on the subway as common jazz motif

[92] For more information on the author and her latest projects see Chantal-Fleur Sandjon. *Über Sandjon.* www.cfsandjon.de/bio/. Accessed 23 April 2016.
[93] I am particularly reminded of Ezra Pound's *In a Station of the Metro* (1913), and Langston Hughes' "Subway Rush Hour*"* in *Montage of a Dream Deferred* (1951) as references.
[94] Sandjon's poetry is autobiographical. For more information see Chantal-Fleur Sandjon. *Poesie & Aktivismus.* www.cfsandjon.de/bio/. Accessed 23 April 2016.

connects the poem to the tradition of Black diasporic musical culture. Diasporic Jazz as motif has been described as an impulse used to explore new possibilities. [95] In the German consciousness, the reception of Jazz during the Weimar era in Berlin was a primary locus for the negotiation and construction of meaning of a modern German culture (Wipplinger 6). In Sandjon's *bln zu rädern* Jazz simultaneously connects two cultural histories: diasporic and German. Jazz becomes the medium, as well as the soundtrack, to the contemporary negotiation and construction of German Blackness.

The poem's opening stanza defines the subway as a musical space where cultural and historical elements unite to spark auditory, visual, and olfactory senses.

bln zu rädern

ich muss in den untergrund

zombieherzen/bongotime/schnippschnippmesser-

jazz/& zigeunerwalzer

motz mir einen runter

baby

augäpfel kugeln schächtelang

[95] In his 1994 book *Playing the Changes*, Craig Hansen Werner argues that African American musical aesthetics, or the Jazz impulse, addresses how to communicate visions of new possibilities – psychological, political or aesthetic – to audiences and communities through the motif of Jazz in the city.

zurück in die zukunft

nein…mein raumschiff voyager

an bord borg hirogen & talaxianer

outta space

groovy

so sun-ra von einer kahlen rückenwand

türkenrap klingelt

meine füße breakbeaten

glotzschmidti glotzt

mein fäuste wollen fressen spüren

[winter zieht an ihnen]; (1-17)[96]

[**bln on wheels //** i need to go into the underground / zombiehearts/bongotime/snipsnipknifes- / jazz/& gypsywaltz / start the beef with me / baby / eyeballs roll shaftlong // back to the future / no…my spaceship voyager / on board borg hirogen & talaxianer / outta space / groovy / so sun-ra from a bleak real panel / turkish rap jingles / my feet breakbeat / stareschmidti stares / my fists want to feel traps / winter pulls on them][97]

The female speaker is drawn to the underground world of the Berlin subway. The textual elements "zombieherzen/bongotime/schnippschnippmesser/ jazz & zigeunerwalzer" (zombiehearts/bongotime/snipsnipknifes-/ jazz/& gypsywaltz, 2-3) evoke auditory senses while

[96] All quotations from Sandjon's "bln zu rädern" are taken from the following edition: Philipp Khabo Köpsell, editor. *Afro Shop* (epubli, 2014). Line numbers will be inserted after block quotes and directly in the text.
[97] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

establishing the underground as a diasporic sphere. Jazz is not only a musical trope but also a structuring principle. By mimicking the basic structure of a jazz tune for a combo with a slight revision, the poem's form[98] extends and revises jazz tropes, simultaneously recreating an original head/solo/head structure. The poem's first stanza sets the scene: underground city life in the German metropolis. The piece then unfolds as two parallel strands, combining verbal images from life above and below ground. This doubling allows the poem to interactively unite observations and reflections. The double-stranded aesthetic visualizes the development of the Afro-German female speaker; her frustration with a diasporic life above ground-as a result of racial stereotyping and relationship loss-intersects with her journey underground, which results in diasporic emancipation.

The subway system is a musical realm for Black German emancipation. The second and third stanzas continue with this theme by layering Afro-American, Afro Cuban, and other diasporic musical tropes in order to provide an outlet for expressing diasporic frustration. Rhythmic musical references such as "groovy / so sun-ra von einer kahlen rückenwand / türkenrap klingelt / meine füße breakbeaten," intersect with violent fantasies "meine fäuste wollen fressen spüren" (groovy / so sun-ra from a bleak real panel / turkish rap jingles / my feet breakbeat; my fists want to feel traps, 11-15;16) to create a tense imagistic. The alliterations "kahl" (bleak) and "klingelt" (jingle), as well as "füße" (feet), "fäuste" (fists), and "fressen" (traps), foster feelings of intensified anger, though empowerment shines through the feelings of

[98] Jazz compositions follow a head/solo/head structure. The first chorus presents the written melody, the head. Following each subsequent chorus, every jazz musician, who is part of the big band, in turn then improvises a solo. After the last musician finishes his/her solo, the band plays the head again, which forms the last chorus. For further theoretical detail see Levine's *The Jazz Theory Book*.

frustration: “motz mir einen runter/ baby” (start the beef with me/ baby, 4-5). Emancipation and frustration unite in double-imagery.

Verbal images craft snapshots of derogatory stereotyping and frustration, while conflating them with self -assertion.

mein rechter arm schweißperlen von nebenan

nebenan: anderer frauen brown sugar

räder surren unsere liebesschwüre

niemandland von alltagsnihilisten

er aber schenkt mir rosen & multiple orgasmen

wegen rosa verlässt er mich

zu früh

um landschaften für unsere kinder

in fenster zu ritzen; (18-26)

[my right arm, pearls of sweat from next door / next door: other women’s brown sugar / wheels hum our oaths of love / no-man’s-land of every day nihilists / but he gives me roses & multiple orgasms / due to rose he leaves me / too early / in order to cave landscapes for our children / into the window//]

The fourth stanza combines images of the derogatory hypersexualization of black life with images of emancipated loneliness: “schweißperlen von nebenan,” “anderer frauen brown sugar,” “wegen rosa verlässt er mich,” “zu früh” (pearls of sweat from next door, other women’s brown sugar, due to rose he leaves me, too early 18-19; 23-24). The exoticized image of “anderer frauen brown sugar” (19) on a subway-and the physical closeness to it- trigger images of lost intimacy

above ground, where life is a world devoid of moral principles and short-lived intimacies end all too soon: “niemandland von alltagsnihilisten / er aber schenkt mir rosen & multiple orgasmen / wegen rosa verlässt er mich/ zu früh” (no-man’s-land of every day nihilists/ but he gives me roses & multiple orgasms/ due to rose he leaves me/ too early, 21-24). Yet, being alone does not necessarily signify loneliness.

The fifth stanza turns the frustration over a lover’s loss into a cathartic moment.

ich weine den gang sauber

mein blick ziehlt auf seinen kahlen hinterkopf

arschloch.

ab jetzt kämpf ich mich allein

durch bahnhofsgemetzel & reichsmarmormassen; (27-31)

[i clean the aisle with my crying / my glimpse aims at his bare back of the head / ashole. / from now on will wrestle alone / through trainstationmassacres & reichmarblemasses]

Feelings of sadness and alertness “ich weine den gang sauber/ mein blick ziehlt auf seinen kahlen hinterkopf,” end with the derogatory expletive: “arschloch” (27-29). The stanza connects these moments of frustration, catharsis, and execration, but rather than ending with despair, the poem rejects defeat and introduces self-assertion. The emancipatory statement: “ab jetzt kämpf ich mich allein durch bahnhofsgemetzel & reichsmarmormassen” (from now on i will wrestle alone / through trainstationmassacres & reichmarblemasses, 30-31) combines the demise of relationships with the possibility of personal growth. The use of composita, such as “bahnhofsgemetzel” (trainstationmassacres) and “reichsmarmormassen” (reichmarblemasses), creates a sense of crowd density and upstages the power of the emancipatory moment.

The poem ends with a new beginning. The closing stanza returns to the Jazz theme with a change in perspective.

am achten tage werde ich wieder-

geboren

zar alexander meine hebamme auf

nuttenpumps & xtc

ein dealer schenkt mir lebenselexier

ein junkie reißt mir den kopf ab

tango zum flimmern der berliner luft luft luft

& irgendwo

noch leben

versteckt hinter gullyritzen. (39-48)

[on the eighth day, I am re- / born / zar alexander my midwife on / hookerpumps &xtc / a dealer gives me lifeblood / a druggie tears off my head / tango to the shimmering berlin air air air / &somewhere / still life / hidden behind drain gaps.]

The final stanza returns to the starting point: life above ground with a new beginning. The poem details grotesque images of a struggling existence "zar alexander meine hebamme auf / nuttenpumps & xtc / ein dealer schenkt mir lebenselexier / ein junkie reißt mir den kopf ab," (zar alexander my midwife on / hookerpumps &xtc / a dealer gives me lifeblood / a druggie tears off my head, 41-44) in order to create tension and resolution in musical unity. The reference "tango

zum flimmern der Berliner luft luft luft," (tango to the shimmering berlin air air air, 42) unites diasporic tango with Paul Lincke's unofficial anthem for the German metropolis, *Berliner Luft* (1899). The tango's inherent struggle creates a powerful, doubled image that captures the Afro-German struggle as well as the plight of a diverse German nation searching for a new understanding of German Blackness. Far more than an Argentinian pastime, the tango in Afro-German spoken word poetry embraces struggle and progression; life continues underground and the struggle of progression continues to shape Black German emancipation. Diasporic musical references frame conflicting and challenging qualities that enable the female voice to push back against feelings of hopelessness and defeat. Ultimately, double-imagery contributes to the poem's emotion: strength and emancipation rather than defeat.

Double-imagery can also be read as a way of leaving behind old identity parameters. The female speaker abandons the familiar and stereotyped facets of her German diasporic identity, and instead explores the unknown and unfamiliar. The change in her perspective from above ground to below ground, and vice versa, concurrently represents inner and outer change. The poem's double-images become symptomatic of the poetic figure's life. While the struggle of identity continues below ground, life above ground also continues, and the poem's double-imagery gains new purpose and effect. Rather than emphasizing the underground emancipatory journey, double-imagery now communicates self-assertion as a component of her life above ground. One question, however, remains: what do representations of asserted German Blackness look like?

Afro-German Thought and Assertive Blackness

Like Germany's blackface debate, Philipp Khabo Köpsell's *Applaus für Schuhcreme (grob verallgemeinert) – Ein Gedicht zur Blackface-Debatte an deutschen Theatern* (2014) is part of an ongoing negotiation of German Blackness. To this end, Köpsell uses reflective double-imagery practices. *Applaus für Schuhcreme* is a manifestation of thought and a reflection on the assertion of a new German Blackness.

Applaus für Schuhcreme (grob verallgemeinert)

Ein Gedicht zur Blackface-Debatte an deutschen Theatern

Es gilt Geister und Stümper zugleich zu bändigen

bis sich Meister von Wort und Bewegung verständigen

Ein schillerndes Spiel, eine schrille Kulisse und bissige, schmissige, witzige

Wortspiele

Farbe im Gesicht und das Wissen, dass würde er sich vor Lachen bepissen,

ihm niemand ins Wort fiele. Der falsche Mohr tanzt!

Ein Schmacken der Lippen, ein leuchtender Lackschuh

ein echter Flamingo im Kegelscheinwerfer

Ein Brandfleck im Sakko, ein lautloses Grollen

Ein hagerer Mann, fast ein Ledergerippe; (1-10)[99]

[99] All quotations from Köpsell's "Applaus" are taken from the following edition: Philipp Khabo Köpsell, *Afro Shop* (epubli, 2014). Line numbers will be inserted after block quotes and directly in the text.

[**Applause for Shoe Polish (roughly generalized)** // It is pertinent to tame ghosts and bunglers / until masters of word and movement come to an understanding / A glittering play, a jarring setting and snappy, snarky, jocular / wordplays / with color in his face and the knowledge that if he would piss himself laughing, / no one would interrupt him. The fake moor is dancing! / A smack of the lips, a shimmering patent leather shoe/ a real flamingo in the spotlight/ A burn mark in the jacket, a silent grumble / A scraggy man, almost a leather skeleton //][100]

The poem starts with a grotesque scene: "Ein schillerndes Spiel, eine schrille Kulisse und bissige, schmissige, witzige / Wortspiele / Farbe im Gesicht und das Wissen, dass würde er sich vor Lachen bepissen, / ihm niemand ins Wort fiele. Der falsche Mohr tanzt!" (A shimmering play, a jarring setting and snappy, snarky, jocular / wordplays / with color in his face and the knowledge that if he would piss himself laughing, / no one would interrupt him. The fake moor is dancing!; 3-6). The opening lines make the grotesque scene into an equally grotesque mockery of a theatrical blackface practice that is alive and well on German stages. Double-imagery unites stereotypical conceptions of blackness (the moor) with a theatrical make-up tool designed to stage blackness (the Other-from-Without). The adjectives "schillernd," "schrill," "bissig," (glittering, jarring, snappy, 3) slide the blackface character into its terrain: the critical parody. The juxtaposition of a glittering, jarring, snappy night at the theater with the perpetuation of a racially charged stereotype turns theatricality into a specter of derogatory representation. As long as the audience is entertained, the negative representation of black subjects continues. The double-imagery of theatrical parody and derogatory representation shifts between amusement and critique as the racialized subject turns out to be the "falsche Mohr" (the fake/wrong moor). Referring to the racialized subject in such a way unites two critiques: white actors instrumentalizing blackness and the casting of black actors in stereotyped roles.[101] The double-

[100] This and all subsequent translations are my own.
[101] On the issue see Sharifi, "On the Representations of Artists of Color in German Theater" and Sieg's "Race Guilt and Innocence."

imagery of the blackface character unites these two critiques and sets the stage for further doubling.

Spoken word's poetic structure is defined by immediate and predictable rhyming couplets. In *Applaus für Schuhcreme* this expectation of predictability is consistently broken and restored.

Schaut, s' ist Kritik aus kulturfremden Kreisen

Dass es "Schaumküsse" heißt, können sie auch nicht beweisen

Und Rassismus ist ein Wort, das gelogen ist

Lass die Spinner toben. Wahre Kunst ist da, wo oben ist! (15-18)

[Look, its criticism from culturally foreign circles / that it's called "chocolate covered marshmallow", they can't even prove that / And racism is a word, that is just a lie/ Let these nutcases rage / Real art is there, where it's above!]

The second stanza's couplets combine pseudo-arguments in defense of blackface and label its critique as "Kritik aus kulturfremden Kreisen" (it's criticism from culturally foreign circles, 15), placing it in the realm of speculation: "…können sie auch nicht beweisen" (they can't even prove that, 16). Throughout the poem, intermittent pseudo-arguments in favor of blackface occur in couplet variations, and rhymes repeatedly interrupted by free verse work to link the two opposing viewpoints, for and against blackface. By structuring the poem with interrupted couplet rhymes, *Applaus für Schuhcreme* stages the disruptive power of Afro-German thought.

The third stanza dismantles pseudo-arguments in favor of blackface through the mockery of tongue. The use of vernacular language, particularly the Berlin dialect, interrupts a seemingly sophisticated argument.

Die Theaterintendanz stampft empört im Kreis

Das Feuilleton fühlt sich inhaltlich komplett übergangen

Die ganze Bühne ist verstört. Ja, was soll denn der Scheiβ?

Wir ham doch nicht erst gestern damit angefangen

Das macht man so. Ham wa immer so gemacht.

Hat sich keiner beschwert. Ham se alle gelacht.

Aber jetzt schreiense alle, das wär ne blöde Aktion

Dabei hatten wir fast niemals eine Blackface-Tradition. (29-36)

[The theater director guilt stamps outraged in circles/ the feuilleton feels overlooked content wise / The whole theater is confused. Well, what to make of this shit? / We did not start with that just yesterday/ That's how you do it. We've always done it that way. / Nobody ever complained. All ya'll laughed. / But now everybody's crying, that'd be a stupid move/ And yet we almost never had a blackface tradition.]

The mimicry of the Berlin tongue creates a second simultaneous strand of meaning. Blackface on contemporary German stages is marked by "Wir ham doch nicht erst gestern damit angefangen," "Ham wa immer so gemacht," "Ham se alle gelacht," and "schreinse" (32-35), recalling the historic blackface tradition through the recreation of its very form: the mockery of tongue. Afro-German poetry mirrors the vernacular mockery of the minstrel performance and uses it to dismantle pseudo-arguments in favor of blacking up.[102] The use of dialectical mockery, a theatrical practice that has been used to mock black life based on its vernacular tradition, now

[102] The three-act structure of a minstrel performance, the theatrical form of the blackface tradition, includes a second act with a variety of entertainments, including a pun-filled stump speech. The stump speech was usually the highlight of the second act and delivered by a stump speaker, a buffoonish character. He delivered the oration in an exaggerated parody of Black Vernacular English. On more details about the minstrel shows see Robert C. Toll, *Blacking up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth Century America*.

mocks and unmasks its contemporary supporters, illustrating the assertive potential created by Afro-German double-imagery. It is a rhetorical tool that integrates historical reflection and contemporary Afro-German self-assertion through critical engagement.

Critical thought and an assertion of German Blackness apart from stereotyped otherness emerges from double-image representation in the poem's final two stanzas.

Die So-Dargestellten warten auf sich selbst

Die So-Dargestellten warten auf sich selbst und sehen sich kommen

Und werden als „zu zart-besaitet" wahrgenommen.

Die So-Dargestellten haben kein Interesse daran, so dargestellt zu werden.

Doch sie ham die Illusion, selber Rollen zu bekommen,

sollten sie sich denn als Darsteller bewerben.

Sie ham vielleicht Interesse mal den Landarzt zu spielen

denn der Arzt in ihrer Straβe sieht so aus wie sie.

Und anstelle von Othello mal den Kinderpsychologen

Doch erfordert das vielleicht zu viel Phantasie.

Blackface ist für Karnevalisten

Ist für triste weiße Männer ohne Kopf mit Schalter

Ist für Minstrel-Sänger, ist für Fachos und Rassisten

Aber nicht für Kinder in deinem Alter! (84-97)

[The So-Depicted wait for themselves / The So-Depicted wait for themselves and see themselves come / And are perceived as "too delicate" / The So-Depicted have no interest in being depicted like that. / But they carry the illusion to get parts / in case they should audition as actors. / They may be interested in playing the country doctor / because the doctor in their street looks like them. / And instead of Othello how about the child psychologist/ But maybe that requires too much imagination. // Blackface is for carnival revelers / is for dull white men without a head with a switch! / is for minstrel singers, is for fascists and racists/ but not for children your age!]

The metaphor "die So-Dargestellten" (the So-Depicted) allows for the presence of simultaneous meanings. First, the poem displays perceptions about Afro-German thought in politically correct terms: "Die So-Dargestellten warten auf sich selbst und sehen sich kommen / Und werden als 'zu zart-besaitet' wahrgenommen" (The So-Depicted wait for themselves/ The So-Depicted wait for themselves and see themselves come/ And are perceived as 'too delicate', 84-86). The second strand of meaning signifies assertion of Afro-German thought. "Die So-Dargestellten, haben kein Interesse so dargestellt zu werden" (The So-Depicted have no interest in being depicted like that, 87) critiques representations of German Blackness by a white majority. Rather than being represented by white actors in blackface, Afro-Germans desire self-representation.

The second to last stanza offers alternative representations of blackness in double-image fashion. "Sie ham vielleicht Interesse mal den Landarzt zu spielen, denn der Arzt in ihrer Straβe sieht so aus wie sie. Und anstelle von Othello mal den Kinderpsychologen" (They may be interested in playing the country doctor because the doctor in their street looks like them. And instead of Othello once the child psychologist, 90-92). The reference to Shakespeare's Othello not only hints at the long-standing tradition of black characters portrayed by white actors on German stages, it also points to the history of the tragic hero as the guiding figure in the discourse of blackness. The poem breaks with both traditions and brings forth new representations. "Landarzt" (country doctor, 90) and "Kinderspsychologe" (child psychologist, 92) transport German Blackness away from marginalizing discourses and into the center of the

white majority. Representations of Afro-German life are introduced in the third person plural. “Sie ham vielleicht Interesse,” (They may be interested, 90); “Doch sie ham die Illusion” (But they have the illusion, 89) does not use a we-voice as a rhetorical tool to express communal interest in the traditional sense; rather, the third person plural highlights the two layers of simultaneously active meaning. The first layer references the marginalized position of Afro-Germans within society while the second strand examines the group’s marginalized position within the German theatrical landscape. This double-imagery draws reflective comparisons between two strands of meaning and makes for a rhetorical tool capable of critically engaging with multiple, and sometimes opposing, ideas.

The poem closes with a personalized statement. The final stanza asserts a clear message: “Blackface ist für Karnevalstatisten/ist für triste weiße Männer ohne Kopf mit Schalter!/ist für Minstrel-Sänger, ist für Faschos und Rassisten/aber nicht für Kinder in deinem Alter!“ (Blackface is for carnival revelers/ is for dull white men without a head with a switch! / is for minstrel singers, is for fascists and racists/ but not for children your age!, 94-97). Blackface is not a theatrical tool that marks difference, but instead a device that marks those who engage in such practice as historically and politically ignorant of the history of minority populations. The personal address “nicht für Kinder in deinem Alter” (not for children your age, 97), speaks directly to the reader, rendering the poem to personal appellation as it dismantles every argument in favor of blackfacing. The practice is called out as childish behavior that serves to reveal the racial prejudice of its practitioners.

Behind the poem and its challenging reflections, Köpsell defies the expectations of his readers through the use of rhyme schemes. *Applaus für Schuhcreme* includes reoccurring interruptions of couplet rhyme flow; whoever argues in favor of blackface faces interruption. The

rhymes are short and rely heavily on interrupted doggerels. Having established a close connection to hip-hop rhymes, doggerel rhyme design governs in spoken word poetry. In a similar manner to spoken word poets, Black German hip-hop artists use their art form to negotiate German Blackness. Samy Deluxe, a former member of the group Brothers Keepers, has constructed an identity that demands recognition for German belonging while also asserting independence from American hip-hop.[103] This two-ness of rhyming expression raises the question: How does Black German hip-hop present new conceptions of German Blackness?

Deluxe uses rhyming double-imagery reflexively. Such practices as demonstrated in *Poesiealbum* (2011) allude to conceptions of German Blackness rooted in the sounds, sights, and rhetoric of the African American hip-hop tradition. Deluxe's songs experiment with hip-hop identity narratives as a source of agency, inserting diversity into the German artistic discourse and tradition. By doing so, Afro-German spoken word claims its place within German intellectual discourse and broadens such discourse through the inclusion of minority thought.

The song starts with a personal invitation to read Deluxe's poetry collection.

Poesiealbum

Guck mal hier, dies' mein Poesiealbum

Schau mal rein, in mein Poesiealbum

Schwarz auf weiß, in mei'm Poesiealbum; (1-3)[104]

[103] See Priscilla Layne, *White Rebells in Black*.
[104] All quotations from Deluxe's "Poesiealbum" are taken from "Step into German – Samy Deluxe," *Goethe-Institut*, www.goethe.de/ins/us/saf/pro/stepintogerman/dmu/samy_deluxe.pdf. Accessed 10 January 2017.

[**Autograph Book** // Look right here, this' my autograph book/ Take a look, into my autograph book/ Black on white, in my autograph book][105]

The opening lines establish his poetry as a distinctive collection that uses African American rap and hip-hop as a framework for the telling of a genre rooted in German writing tradition: autograph books, formerly known as album amicorum.[106] Deluxe's spoken word brings together two strands of intellectual history and situates Afro-German Blackness in a global discourse.

In keeping with the style of autograph books, Deluxe arranges multiple references which work to establish his credibility as a diasporic Afro-German voice.

Ich bin so brillant,

So phänomenal, fundamental, radikal

So wie in jüngeren Jahren

Als ich direkt aus'm Untergrung kam.

Diese Position, die ich mir hier erarbeitet hab',

Kann keine Geldsumme bezahlen.

[105] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

[106] The first autograph books appeared in German and Dutch linguistic regions as early as the mid-16th century. The album amicorum was a kind of visitor's book in reverse, in with a traveling male student would invite famous people he met, or teachers, as well as fellow students to write something: a proverb or verses with a signature (Schnabel, 21-23). Toward the end of the century, they were common practice throughout Germany among students and scholars and especially academics retained their autograph books to gather the correspondence of fellow intellectuals with whom they associated. The books not only functioned as sentimental artifacts but even more so as a crude form of scholarly credentials.

Aber ich komme nicht klar auf diese ganzen Rapper,

die scheinbar nix wissen über diese Kunstform.

Und deshalb muss ich die Massen

Von Neuem bekehren

Und so das Verständnis für unsere Kunst form',

Denn ich hab' dieses Haus hier mit aufgebaut

Ihr habt's demoliert, ich hab's renoviert.

Ich bin der Super-MC, ich bin das Buch von Jay-Z

Ich hab Rap für die Massen hier dekodiert

Definiert, etabliert und noch mehr schlaue Worte mit

„-iert". (25-41)

[I am so brilliant, / so phenomenal, fundamental, radical / Like in younger years / When I came straight from the underground / And this position that I worked hard for / No amount of money can pay for / But I can't cope with all these rappers / that seemingly know nothing about this artform / And that is why I have to convert the masses / once again/ And form the understanding for our art / Because I helped building this house / You demolished it, I refurbished it / I am the super MC, I am the book of Jay-Z / I am the one who decoded rap for the masses here/ Defined, established and many other smart words ending in / "-ed"]

The second stanza claims Deluxe's legacy as one of the first German hip-hop artists, a man who continues to be influential in crafting Black German expression. The stanza stages Deluxe as a messenger through the use of Afro-American musical tropes like MC (master of ceremony), and a reference to rap artist Jay-Z. Similar to Jay-Z's staging as the African American messenger of the poetic art form of rap, Deluxe claims his position as the Black German voice for poetic

rap.[107] The stanza ends with "ich bin das Buch von Jay-Z" (I am the book of Jay-Z, 38), conflating German and transatlantic hip-hop tradition into one person: Samy Deluxe. Paired with rhyming couplets in doggerel fashion, the last three lines establish Deluxe as the messenger who decodes rap for those unable to decipher it. "Dekodiert" (decoded, 39) and "noch mehr schlaue Worte mit iert" (many other smart words ending in '-ed', 41) creates a satiric doggerel rhyme which legitimizes previous hyperbolic claims. Deluxe is the ultimate diasporic messenger.

The double-image of the rhyming messenger extends into the German literary tradition. Second stanza lyrics such as "Ich bin so Schiller, so Goethe / So bitter, so böse / Noch immer der Größte / Poet, der hier lebt," (I am so Schiller, so Goethe / So bitter, so mean / Still the greates / Poet, who lives here, 49-52) place Afro-German poetry within the German literary tradition. German poets, Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, become foils to situate Afro-German hip-hop expression. "Noch immer der Größte / Poet, der hier lebt" (Still the greatest / Poet, who lives here, 51-52) situates Deluxe as not only the greatest poet within the German nation, but as the greatest living Afro-German poet within the German literary canon. This double-image inscribes Afro-German hip-hop expression into the German canon and claims its place as part of a tradition predominantly shaped by white European men.

The second stanza continues with thoughts on inclusion and diversification. It illustrates how Afro-German rhyming expression engages in dynamic construction and deconstruction of meaning. This simultaneity blurs boundaries between an established white canon and its marginalized black tradition. Deluxe weaves his voice into this trajectory to establish his position.

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[107] On the close relationship of Jay-Z and the poetic rap movement see Jay-Z *Decoded* (2010) also Adam Bradley's *Book of Rhymes: The Poetics of Hip Hop* (2009).

Wenn ihr jetzt noch mehr wollt

Fütter ich euch deutschen Dichtern Reime

Bis ihr alle Brecht wie Bertolt

Das ist für mich echter Erfolg

Wenn der Text noch mehr rollt

Und ich schein‘ wie der Morgenstern

Hoffe, dass ihr alle aus den Reim‘

und den Worten lernt. (53-60)

[I am the one to feed you German poets rhymes / Till all ya’ll Brecht like Bertolt / That’s real success in my eyes / If the text flows even more / And I shine like Morgenstern / Hope that all of you will learn from my rhymes / and words]

The fifth stanza mounts a rhetorical self- extension by inverting the context in which society defines the leading voices of the German literary canon. Deluxe’s wit places the black voice amongst—and even above—the German poetic tradition by establishing his poetic work as a source of change as symbolized through the act of feeding. “Fütter ich euch deutschen Dichtern Reime,” (I am the one to feed you German poets rhymes, 54) claims an active position and marks a new era in cultural and poetic discourse. It is now the duty of the white majority, those who shaped the literary and philosophical tradition for centuries, to remain calm and to listen.

Establishing German Blackness within the literary canon unfolds through double-imagery. “Bis ihr alle Brecht wie Bertolt / Das ist für mich echter Erfolg / Wenn der Text noch mehr rollt / Und ich schein wie der Morgenstern” (55-58) uses German poetic tropes and resignifies them. The references to poets Bertold Brecht and Christian Morgenstern not only

function as representatives of the German poetic tradition, but also constitute a second layer of meaning. The synecdochical reduction to Brecht and Morgernstern provides space for Deluxe to connect and redefine these tropes. Through the exaggerated act of feeding, Brecht's last name takes on an association with the act of throwing up. The metaphor of feeding allows for an expansion of the German poetic tradition. Deluxe does not negate the German tradition but rather embeds himself within it; the double-stranded meaning of Morgenstern establishes the Afro-German hip-hop poet as the 'shining star', the master of a new poetic.

The song closes not with a question, but with a statement. The last stanza reinforces Deluxe's position as the Black German hip-hop poet amongst the white canon.

Lass sie alle reden,

Lass die Halle beben.

Was für'n geiles Leben.

Ich mach Scheine, Scheine,

Indem ich Reime reime,

So wie Heinrich Heine.

Album kommt im Frühjahr,

Und meine Konkurrenz wird spätestens

Im August einen Fall erleben,

Der Richter und Henker für Dichter und Denker.

Er stürzte ab, denn er war von der Dürre matt,

Und stand zu dicht am Geländer

Von meinem Hotel Suit-Balkon.

Und das war's aus meinem Poesiealbum,

Und darauf reimt sich grobe Viehhaltung

Punkt. (87-102)

[Let them all talk, / Let the hall throb / What an awesome life. / I make bills, bills / by rhyming rhymes just like Heinrich Heine / Album comes out in Spring / And my competition will / experience a downfall in August, / The judge and hangman for poets and thinkers. / He fell down, because he was languid by the drought, / And stood too close to the handrail / Of my hotel suit balcony. / And that's it from my autograph book, / And to which rhymes animal stock / Period]

This stanza places the Afro-German poet amongst the central figures of the German literary canon. The rhyming alliterations, "Reime reime" and "Heinrich Heine" (91, 92), connect Afro-German poetics to Heinrich Heine's lyric poetry, a reference which unites historical and contemporary traditions into Afro-German hip-hop expression. The reference "einen Fall erleben" (experience a downfall, 95) anticipates the downfall of those Deluxe critiques, while also alluding to the poet August Heinrich Hoffmann von Fallersleben. The semantic play on the progressive nineteenth-century poet's name functions as a foil for the downfall of any who critique the assertive power of an Afro-German hip-hop poetic.

Deluxe uses rhyming signifying practices to define his vision of assertive Black German hip-hop expression. Prevalent throughout his work is a practiced defiance of our expectations for established literary references and continued rhyme flow. Whatever expectations the reader brings to the work will be charged with new meaning. Resignifying practices abound in his songs, and work to establish Afro-German hip-hop as a critical component of Black German

self-assertion. Ultimately, the rhyming treatment which asserts German Blackness as part of the German literary tradition also contributes to the song's transformative power, that of being creatively assertive rather than defeated. By asserting German Blackness through established canonical literary references, *Poesiealbum* demonstrates that double-imagery reorganizes the relation between canonical and marginalized poetic expression and appropriates the principle of blackness as otherness. The poetic assertion of German Blackness is also a compelling meditation on the role of Afro-German being and activist blackness.

Afro-German Being and Activist Blackness

Köpsell's poem *Elefantenfriedhof* (2010), published in *Die Akte James Knopf* (2010), is an example of activist German Blackness. The poem uses double-imagery as rhetorical self-expression; the speaker defends Afro-German integrity through an inversion of the meaning by which German and Western societies define the endpoint of all life. The title *Elefantenfriedhof* prompts associations of death, graveyards, and elephants. Africa's majestic animals are often symbols of strength and stand alongside markers of extinction in order to evoke feelings of devastation. The speaker situates himself at the elephant graveyard, a survivor amongst dead giants: "ich am ende der nacht, zwischen den knochen der giganten" (1-2)[108]. References to herds, bones, and burned flesh turned to sand allude to animal extinction as a result of trophy hunting, a practice that exists solely for human recreation and which poses a serious threat to elephant populations in Africa. The motif—elephant trophy hunting—embeds the poem into the context of colonial practices and issues of exploitation: "gestrandet entkleidet geschändet

[108] All quotations from Köpsell's "Elefantenfriedhof" are taken from the following edition: Philipp Khabo Köpsell, *Die Akte James Knopf* (Unrast, 2010). Line numbers will be inserted directly in the text and after block quotes.

zerklüftet, das elfenbein für fleiβige sammler" (8-9). The inseparable prefix sequence ge-, ent-, and zer-, ties the actions to the ivory market, and represents the destructive forces surrounding the illegal ivory trade. Alliterations such as "grauen genossen" and "zum sand der zeit zerrann" (4-5) speak to the endangered status of elephant populations. The extinction of African wildlife and the violent allusions to killings inflicted by white perpetrators add a second set of textual meaning: violence against black life based on white privilege.

Köpsell's poem is a critique of white privilege and a political commentary in the form of Afro-German two-ness. *Elefantenfriedhof* references influential figures of the African-American Black Panther Party (Huey P. Newton), Pan-Africanism (W.E.B. DuBois, Marcus Garvey, Kwame Nkrumah, Malcom X), the anti-apartheid movement (Stephen Bantu Biko), post-colonial studies (Franz Fanon), and African American musical genres like jazz (Billie Holiday, Nina Simone) and funk (Rick James), presented to the reader as elephant names at the grave yard.

Huey und die groβen jungs

lang schien die zeit

vorbei. Biko Fanon Nkrumah

wooah Garvey DuBois Malcom

könige zu türmen gehäuft und vergangen

die grauen ladies die grossen damen

Lady Day die dickste haut

zart doch einst durch nix zu stoppen

Miss Simone der ganze jazz

doch ihre beine verstümmelt

für schicke tischchen

um wein und asche zu tragen

Ray der blues der godfather James funk

weit sind meine augen

stille streift

vorbei. herb ist die luft; (7-25)

[Huey and the big guys / long the time seems to be / over. Biko Fanon Nkrumah / wooah Garvey DuBois Malcom / kings piled up as mountains and bygone / the grey ladies the great madams / Lady Day the thickest skin / tender but once unstoppable / Miss Simone all this jazz / but her legs mutilated / for fancy tiny desks / to carry wine and ashes / Ray the blues the godfather James funk / wide are my eyes / silence brushes / by. the air is rough]

Köpsell uses a poetic two-ness reminiscent of ritual speech acts in African-American literature. This connection is established through eponymous references to African-American tradition as well as through the textual form itself. The poem's structure presents the reader with a mode of discourse configured as "a witty one liner, a series of loosely related statements" (Smitherman 66-67); the writing practice utilizes short statements arranged in consecutive lines in a series of parallel statements. Iconic figures are introduced by first or last names in the form of single or triple references, which are then followed by descriptions of said individuals. At the same time, these one-line descriptions establish a reference to the animal world through the simultaneous use of multiple metaphors for elephants. References such as "die grossen jungs," "die grauen ladies," "die groβen damen," and "die dickste haut" (the big guys, the grey ladies, the great madams, the thickest skin, 7; 15-16), are double-voiced. In standard German the terms refer to

elephants, but in the Afro-German language community they also describe diasporic political leaders, musical legends, and unorthodox female artists.

Köpsell's use of double-imagery is accompanied by semantic and logical plays on the unexpected. This play is marked by sudden language shifts; *Elefantenfriedhof*, a predominantly German poem, closes in English.

für die ewigkeit

für jeden für mich

for whom it may concern

vielleicht nur fürs protokoll

We are somebody

we are

somebody

we are

as great as the mountains

All hail! (47-56)

[for eternity/ for everyone for me/ for whom it may concern/ maybe only for the protocol/ We are somebody/ We are/ Somebody/ We are/ As great as the mountains/ All hail!]

The transition from German into English marks an unexpected shift in meaning. It is not only a shift in language, but an alteration of perspective and attitude carried out through poetic language. The mourning of influential leaders, artists, and icons of black culture transforms into recognition of Afro-German pride. This pride is expressed in a German-language poem,

illustrated through the use of the German phrase "für die ewigkeit" (for eternity, 47). However, the recognition of Afro-German pride is limited. Set phrases, such as "vielleicht nur fürs protokoll" (maybe only for the protocol, 50), and "to whom it may concern," unmask the recognition of black cultural heritage as an act of political correctness, with only superficial awareness. The closing line, in command form, continues the use of English language and embeds the poem into a larger language community. The demand "All hail!" (56) situates the poem in a diasporic context and reflects the tension of its title.

The shift from destructive imagery to that of recognition and respect reveals what constitutes Afro-German being: an existence as a part of the German collective not yet recognized. Being black German and marked as a foreigner within the national collective is still the norm. The speaker's exclamation, "All hail!" (56), demands recognition of German Blackness as an integral part of the German collective. The poetic recognition expressed here is phrased in archaic exclamation, simultaneously expressing greeting and acclaim. The demand follows an alliteration, "we are somebody / we are / somebody / we are / as great as the mountains / All hail!" that establishes Afro-German being through repetition with alteration (51-56). Afro-Germans "are somebody," they "are," "somebody," within the German collective, and they are "as great as the mountain" (55). The demand to "hail" in conjunction with "the mountains" and the previous reference to "JAH" (29) – the Rastafarian use for the Lord God of Israel and/or Haile Selassie — establishes a larger diasporic and religious context of Afro-German being. Furthermore, it situates previous Afrocentric references to a Rastafari culture invested in black consciousness.[109] This framework highlights the speaker's demand for

[109] See Peter B. Clarke's *Black Paradise* for an insightful analysis of Rastafarianism and issues that affect the diasporic population around the world.

diasporic black German being and the recognition of such. Behind the speaker and the demand for recognition of being, Köpsell continues to play on our expectations regarding word associations; the poet built the poem to end on an activist note. The design works towards a recognition of German Blackness that blurs the lines between personal, political, and artistic realms.

Conclusion

Double-imagery in Afro-German spoken word and hip-hop draws on diasporic and German cultural references and suggests simultaneity to the audience. This simultaneity allows spoken word to access a new understanding of Afro-German expression and conveys the experiences of emancipated, asserted, and activist blackness. Afro-German spoken word is able to utilize double-imagery for effect; it is not just German or diasporic heritage, but a connected culture of local European and global diasporic references that informs the understanding of, and relationship to, double-images in Afro-German spoken word. Sandjon's *bln zu rädern*, Köpsell's *Applaus für Schuhcreme* and *Elefantenfriedhof*, and Deluxe's *Poesiealbum* all evoke dynamic, evolving verbal images. Afro-German spoken word poetry is a confluence of many verbal images used to explore the ambiguity and temporality of its double-images, and which blend national and diasporic representations, past and present.

Younger generations of Black German poets have a more reflective sensibility. In contrast to the older generation's experience of isolation and the absence of public voice, today's Black German spoken word poets benefit from the increased visibility of Black Germans since the late 1980s, as well as from a more globalized understanding of blackness. An increased understanding of Black identity as non-binary, a linear timeline of the Black collective (whether

it be postcolonial, Afrocentric, or Middle Passage), and an interest in recognizing Germany as a multiethnic nation with a history of diasporic communities has made it easier to move away from single-stranded representations of German Blackness. Having moved away from the long-standing belief that German Blackness can be represented through the tracing of diasporic roots, Afro-German spoken word artists purposefully bring a double-consciousness to bear on spoken word poetry. Indeed, their spoken word expression is a double-stranded reflective method of attaining self-knowledge. Whereas earlier generations of poets concentrated on the binary of a white majority culture versus a blackness often tethered to African or African American culture, contemporary Afro-German spoken word poets focus on a pressing existential question: what is the experience of German Blackness in an intersected world? The globalized, post-millennial world understands Blackness as the intersection of constructs that locate the black collective in history and in the specific moment of imagining; Afro-German spoken word does just that. Spoken word, however, does not merely mimic the spirit of global diasporic blackness, but also resists it by interrupting the ideological production of single-stranded representations of blackness (in the sense of binary opposition). Instead of the consistent rhymes and seamless flow of coherent representations, Afro-German spoken word poetry exposes rhyme and line breaks, challenging the audience by fracturing the relations between verbal images. The effect of strategies of mismatch and incoherence is a raised awareness and a recognition of how double-images in spoken word art are as capable of deceit as they are of revealing new representations of blackness.

Double-imagery in Afro-German spoken word asserts the presence of a German identity experienced simultaneously with diasporic cultural history, historical context, and present-day double-consciousness. Double-imagery not only critiques one-stranded representations of

German Blackness such as the Other-from-Without, it reveals and evinces visibility of a new German Blackness. Rather than relying on binary opposites, Afro-German spoken word uses double-image representations to reveal the unfamiliar terrain of new German Blackness. Challenged by historical precedents of blackness, Afro-German spoken word poets contribute to the history of poetic expression the existence of a new, asserted, and literary activist German Blackness as portrayed through their use of double-imagery.

Chapter Three

"Die neue Zeit hat uns geküsst": Autofiction and Recognition in Afro-German Celebrity Autobiography

During the memoir boom at the beginning of the new millennium, publishing house Rowohlt released two Afro-German celebrity autobiographies that garnered significant mainstream interest.[110] While the boom in memoirs has brought unprecedented attention to the cultural and economic workings of the celebrity autobiography, celebrity life writings have also been critical resources for examining discourses of identity (Rak 2013). Abini Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind. Meine Familie und andere Wunder* (Chocolate Child. My Family and Other Wonders, 2003) and Detlef Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier. Mein Leben* (D! Foster Child – Negro – Pioneer, 2005) address experiences of Black Germans in the former GDR and in post-Wende Germany. These works extend Afro-German autobiographical discourses through the inclusion of East German perspectives and seem to de-emphasize the topic of race.

Autobiography, alongside poetry, is one of the main literary genres through which Black German artists express themselves. While earlier Afro-German autobiographies, such as Inka Hügel-Marshall's *Daheim unterwegs* (1998; Invisible Woman: Growing up Black in Germany, 2008) and Hans-Jürgen Massaquoi's *Neger, Neger Schornsteinfeger!* (1999; Destined to Witness: Growing up Black in Nazi Germany, 1999), focus on Black German experiences as Others-from-Without, Zöllner and Soost shift their focus away from explicit experiences of racism within the German collective. *Schokoladenkind* and *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* are notable for their "down-playing of race" (Piesche 56), while at the same time quite striking for

[110] Several book reviews in the German speaking media illustrate the larger interest in both autobiographies at time of publication. See for example Widmann, "Vom Nachttisch geräumt," and Hortenbach, "Heimkind-Neger-Pionier: Vom DDR-Heimkind zum Popstars-Choreographen." Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* was published by Wunderlich, a smaller publishing house that belongs to the Rowohlt group.

the use of titles and cover art "that both market skin color and ethnic difference" (Steingröver 305). Central to each publication, however, is the framing of the authors' successes and failures in terms of personal defeats and accomplishments.

D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier and *Schokoladenkind* tell of the lives of two successful East German media stars. Soost, born in 1970, and Zöllner, born in 1967, grew up in East Berlin and worked as dancers and models in the GDR. In post-Wende Germany, they both worked in television and journalism. In the early 2000s, Soost became a media phenomenon with his dance choreographies for televison shows, as well as for a series of successful dance studio franchises. Zöllner worked as a journalist for the *Berliner Zeitung*. Neither Soost nor Zöllner describe childhoods of discrimination and alienation or coming-of-age journeys towards a Black German consciousness; the authors do not portray being black as the focal point of their identities. Instead, the autobiographies treat blackness as one of many important components constituting their identities: East-German, thirty-something, East Berliner, artistic, business-oriented, celebrity, parent, daughter/son, and black. Zöllner and Soost combine personal reassessment of the GDR with reflections of East Germans' difficult transition into Western society, cross-mapping Black German and post-Wende discourses. How do such generic celebrity autobiographies generate public interest in, and recognition of, Black German identities outside of exoticized blackness?

In their analysis of Afro-German celebrity autobiography, scholars argue they are to be read as narratives of personal achievement that facilitate the mainstreaming of Black German experiences. Literary scholars, such as Reinhild Steingröver and Dirk Göttsche, primarily focus on the autobiographies' targeted appeal to mainstream audiences as evidenced by the use of colloquial language, show-business anecdotes, and a divergence from traditional narratives of

Black German experiences of racial discrimination. Steingröver notes: "Zöllner's and Soost's autobiographies in particular aim to bring mainstream appeal through their flippant tone, non-challenging attitude toward the dominant white German society, and through glamorous show business stories" (293). She sees the generational factor as the main contributor to the shifting away from racial discourses in autobiographies by younger East German authors. Other scholars, such as Dirk Göttsche, note that: "*Schokoladenkind* was in many ways the earliest example of mainstreaming the Black German experience, and it is therefore not coincidental that there is no reference to the Black German movement" ("Self-Assertion" 112). Yet, the autobiographies – particularly the respective titles and cover images – both market skin color and ethnic difference. The life writing even depicts racial difference as a useful attribute in the world of show business. Literary scholar Priscilla Layne notes: "Another familiar trope for Afro-German autobiographies [post millennium] is a foray in the entertainment world and the desire for recognition" (157). While the fields of dance, fashion, and journalism accommodate popular stereotypes of exoticized black bodies, they also allow Zöllner and Soost to narrate and normalize Black German recognition without hiding difference. By contrast, earlier autobiographies such as Hügel-Marshall's *Daheim unterwegs* tell of an Afro-German ostracization by the German majority and of the desire to pass for white. The two East German autobiographies by Zöllner and Soost, however, engage in narratives of difference and refrain from expanding personal experiences of racial prejudice into a larger critique of hegemonic culture. They combine individualistic celebrity narratives with post-Wende discourses and narrate moments of interpersonal recognition.

Taking this tension of racialization, individualism, and normalization as a point of departure, this chapter focuses on how *Schokoladenkind* and *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* bring forth Black German recognition. In both autobiographies the language and actions move through a series of autofictional anecdotes to culminate in seemingly realistic autobiographical narratives with equally staged moments of interpersonal recognition. What interests me is the way in which celebrity autobiographies by East German authors deploy autofiction and realistic representations in life writing to bring forth new conceptualizations of Black German recognition in pre- and post-unification Germany. First, the chapter shows how Black German celebrity autobiography gains momentum and coincides with the rise of a new articulation of black subjects in Europe around the beginning of the twenty-first century. Second, it illustrates how theories of recognition, autofiction, and reality effects are linked to autobiographical writing, particularly to Black German celebrity autobiographies. Third, close readings of Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* and Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* reveal how such autofictions stage moments of parental, mutual, and communal recognition, which ultimately establishes greater national recognition of Germany's Black German minority population.

Black German Celebrity Autobiography, New Ethnicities, Autofiction and Afro-German Recognition

Black German autobiographical writing has become increasingly diverse since the turn of the millennium, when celebrity writers such as Zöllner and Soost emerged onto the new Black mainstream of the German mediascape. The increased diversification is linked to the

multicultural transformation of German society and the corresponding cultural changes.[111]. As post-unification Germany attempted to embrace multiculturalism in repudiation of the right-wing violence of the 1990s, the media landscape experienced a noticeable increase in the number of Black Germans working as actors, talk-show hosts, and artists in general. This change was remarkable considering in previous decades the only non-white figure in the German entertainment and mediascape was Roberto Blanco, a German speaking Afro-Cuban singer. Celebrities of the new black mainstream were predominately from television, music, and sports; personalities like Austrian talk show host Arabella Kiesbauer, former actor (*Der Alte*) and member of the German Bundestag (CDU) Charles M. Huber, and women's soccer player Steffi Jones made it possible for Black Germans to be publicly recognized as part of the German collective. The media's increased focus on the lives of Black Germans in the entertainment and professional sports industry resulted in several autobiographical works in the decade to follow.

Black German celebrity autobiographies piqued mainstream interest after Rowohlt published *Schokoladenkind* in 2003. Building on this, in 2004 Charles M. Huber published *Ein Niederbayer im Senegal: Mein Leben zwischen zwei Welten* (A Lower Bavarian in Senegal: My Life between two worlds). Huber's autobiography considers the significance of his Senegalese heritage for his successful life in Germany. Continuing this trend of success stories, dance coach Soost published his autobiography *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* the following year. In 2007, Arabella Kiesbauer, daughter of a German actor and an engineer from Ghana, built her autobiography *Mein afrikanisches Herz* (My African Heart, 2007) around a trip to Ghana that

[111] For sociological evidence see reports by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Christian Babka von Gostomski, *Fortschritte der Integration* (2010), and Sonja Haug, *Interethnische Kontakte* (2010). For a critical assessment regarding immigrants, especially from the African continent, see Rolf Benndorf, *Lebensperspektive Deutschland* (2008).

serves as a turning point of cross-cultural self-exploration. In the same year, Steffi Jones takes a different approach in *Der Kick des Lebens: Wie ich den Weg nach oben schaffte* (The Kick of Life: How I Managed the Road to Success, 2007) by juxtaposing her success as a leading figure in German women's soccer with her elder brother's descent into drugs. Although individual approaches vary, these celebrity autobiographies all display strategies of performative normality (see Göttsche, "Self-Assertion" 116); they reflect the growing presence of Black Germans in the public sphere and intervene in the categorizing of Black German identities as Others-from-Without.

Since the early 2000s, several scholarly texts contributed to a new understanding of blackness within the German context, among them Michelle Wright's *Becoming Black* (2004). Her comparative study discusses the commonalities and differences in how black writers and thinkers from the United States, the Caribbean, Africa, France and Germany have responded to white European and American claims about blackness. Until the new millennium, the German intellectual discourse built on a long history of essentializing blackness in contrast to whiteness. Sander Gilman traced this history of exoticized blackness in his book *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (1982). Gilman shows how the early, relativistic, objective aesthetics of Herder that considered white Europeans aesthetic models as destructive and exploitative, lost out to subjective, communal aesthetic concepts. Observing how these aesthetic models were applied to racial differentiation in the writings of Hegel and Schopenhauer, one sees the dominance of a social and aesthetic hierarchy that positions Blacks closer to nature than whites. Representations of such exoticized blackness can be found

throughout genres and time.[112] Breaking with this history, Wright traces more than a century of debate on blackness and considers how black thinkers responded to nineteenth-century works that addressed race, by writers such as Thomas Jefferson, G.W.F. Hegel and Count Arthur Gobineau. By analyzing black women writers including Audre Lorde, Wright reveals the diversity of black subjectivity as well as its continual evolution.

Black German celebrity autobiographies contribute to an evolving black subjectivity at a specific point in the history of the category 'black', around the beginning of the twenty-first century. Stuart Hall notes it was during this time that a new, twofold principle of articulation of a black subject took hold. This change marked the beginning of the end of an essential black subject and "the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category 'black'" (Hall 441). This tension as a paradigm of selfhood shifts the articulation of blackness in the work of representation itself. Rather than simply contesting others' representations of the diasporic subject, black artists are seeking to claim the field of representation in some new way. Rather than attempting to imitate reality, they are creating new realities and new notions of blackness. The turning point in this understanding of black subjectivity coincides with what Hall calls "new ethnicities," after which the principle of articulation becomes most important. Based on this, blackness is not an essential identity but a convergence of multiplicity and unity.[113] This does not mean there is no such thing as blackness; rather, to make use of Hall's favorite phrase, there are no guarantees to blackness. In the era of articulated blackness, this means these articulations are not postblackness or colorblindness, but

[112] See for example Ernst Lorenz Michael Rathelf's play *Die Mohrinn zu Hamburg* (1775) and Heinrich von Kleist's novella *Die Verlobung in St. Domingo* (1811).
[113] See Stuart Hall, "Race, Articulation, and Societies Structure in Dominance," pp. 303, 305, 325, 325-26.

creative and progressive moves to separate blackness from a history of drastic difference.[114] The desire to dissociate black histories from prevailing narratives of drastic difference is evidenced by the performative normality of post-millennium Black German celebrity autobiography. When viewed as a whole, most celebrity autobiographies mainstream Black German experiences and share common themes of achievement and personal growth.

Narrating personal achievement and performing normality become strategies for staging new concepts of recognition in Black German celebrity autobiographies. This is important when representing Black German identities, which have historically been denied interpersonal recognition outside of exotified otherness. In his book *Odysseys of Recognition* (2019), literary scholar Ellwood Wiggins points to the importance of performance for intersubjective recognition. More importantly, he claims that "people come to know one another as friends or enemies through involved processes that take place in intersubjective performances" (3). Black German celebrity autobiographies use textual performances that stage moments of intersubjective recognition and self-realization, and play with notions of similarity, as well as otherness. In *The Struggle for Recognition* (1995), philosopher Axel Honneth discusses interpersonal recognition as essential to self-realization. Honneth identifies three 'spheres of interaction' that are connected to three 'patterns of recognition' necessary for the development of an individual's positive relation-to-self. The tree patterns are love, rights, and solidarity.[115] The mode of recognition termed *love* refers to our physical needs and emotions being met by others and takes the form of primary relationships, such as close friends, family, and lovers. This mode provides a basic self-confidence that can be shattered by misrecognitions such as neglect or

[114] See Michelle Stephens, "New Points of Recognition: Stuart Hall's Gift to the Study," p. 99.
[115] See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Grammar of Social Conflicts*, 92; and *Disrespect: The Normative Foundations of Critical Theory*, pp. 129-42.

physical abuse. The mode of recognition termed *rights* refers to the development of moral responsibility through our moral relations to others. It is a mutual mode of recognition "in which the individual learns to see himself from the perspective of his [or her] partner in interaction as a bearer of equal rights" (Honneth, "Integrity and Disrespect" 194). The denial of rights through social and legal exclusion can threaten the sense of being a fully active, equal, and respected member of society. Finally, the mode of recognition termed *solidarity* relates to recognition of our traits and abilities. It is essential for developing self-esteem and for individualization, since personal traits and abilities are what define personal difference.[116] Consequently, unlike the relations of *love* and *rights*, self-esteem "demands a social medium that must be able to express the characteristic differences between human subjects in a universal, and more specifically, intersubjectively obligatory way" (Honneth, *The Struggle* 122). Thus, intersubjective recognition demands a cultural climate of solidarity; this is the only environment in which the acquisition of self-esteem becomes possible. For Honneth, a good society is one in which individuals have the opportunity for full self-realization: "To the extent to which every member of a society is in a position to esteem himself or herself, one can speak of a state of societal solidarity" (Honneth, *The Struggle* 17). All three spheres are crucial to the development of a positive attitude towards self. Zöllner and Soost's celebrity autobiographies engage in all three spheres to bring forth self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. Together they culminate in textual representations of new concepts of Black-German recognition.

In their analysis of Afro-German autobiographies, scholars seek to find significant patterns in the development of Afro-German autobiographical writing, as well as its

[116] See Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*, p. 122.

contributions to discussions about minority identity. Reinhild Steingröver notes: "The diversity of black German autobiographical writings helps complicate generational models of life writing in productive ways […]. It also problematizes simplistic understandings of "the black German experience" as homogenous and static (Steingröver 305). As her research has shown: "[…] external, historical, and cultural forces have shaped identity debates among black Germans for the past thirty years. The increasing presence of diverse voices from this German minority will in turn influence broader discussions about national identity" (ibd). Michelle Wright, a scholar of African Diaspora Studies, states regarding Afro-German autobiographies: "More than seeking inclusion and protesting exclusion, these texts, in 'performing' the diaspora, reveal to us the increasing uselessness of restrictive definitions that confine themselves to the heteropatriarchal mythologies of race and nation" ("Others-from-Within" 302).The idea of performance, especially textual performance, is key to thinking about autobiographical writing. Literary history scholar Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf notes that only texts as performative acts and constructivism through language make autobiographical reification possible in the first place.[117] For Wagner-Egelhaaf, it is this overlap of representation and fiction that allows a writing subject to position itself through the use of creative language. The overlap of representation and fiction is significant because it points to the importance of autofiction in the process of Black German autobiographical writing.

Autobiographical writing and autofiction are linked. The term *autofiction*, coined by French author Serge Doubrovsky, implies radical sincerity on the one hand, and the deliberate use of fictional elements on the other. Doubrovsky notes that it is elements of fiction that prevent the autobiographical self from falling for the imagined self. Literary scholar Claudia Gronemann

[117] See Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf, "Autofiktion Oder: Autobiografie nach der Autobiografie," p. 361.

further develops an understanding of autofiction by focusing on the moment of text production. Gronemann claims that autofiction ties the moment of text production to the act of mimicry: "die motivierte Übernahme von Eigenschaften oder Verhaltensmustern […], in deren Verlauf Eigenes und Fremdes ineinander übergehen."[118] This poststructuralist understanding defines autobiographies as texts that stage themselves and reflect the impossibility of portraying life 'as it really happens'. Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf develops this concept beyond a poststructuralist understanding and defines contemporary autobiographical writing as plurality, a coexistence of various models and concepts.[119] Regarding autofiction and autobiographical writing, she suggests it is the understanding of constructivism and language that allows for the positioning of the autobiographical self. Wagner-Egelhaaf identifies autofiction—not "just [as] linguistic construction"—as a method to reveal the self. This is crucial for Afro-German life-writing as it is autofiction that allows the writing self to cross historical boundaries of recognition for Germany's black minority population. The Black German subject uses autofiction to situate itself through autobiographical writing.

Autofiction in Black German life writing allows the minority subject to position itself in the realm of recognition while simultaneously examining narratives of difference. Though the provocative titles *Schokoladenkind* and *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* imply a representation of stereotyping and racialization rather than stories of normalization, the autobiographical texts with episodes of autofiction and reality effects suggest otherwise. This tension is crucial for engaging the reader. Additionally, the choice to dissociate from African diasporic discourses, such as the

[118] See Claudia Gronemann, "Postmoderne/Postkoloniale Konzepte der Autobiographie in der französischen und maghrebinischen Literatur," p. 11 and ",Autofiction' und das Ich in der Signifikantenkette," pp. 237-262.
[119] See Martina Wagner-Egelhaaf's "Autofiktion oder: Autobiographie nach der Autobiographe. Goethe – Barthes – Özdamar."

rediscovery of African parental roots, decentralizes questions of diasporic and postcolonial discourse. In fact, both autobiographies focus on pre- and post-Wende narratives of personal achievement: problems of young adulthood in East Germany, careers in entertainment and journalism, and the Wende as liberation and challenge. Stories of successful integration into the Western culture of a unified Germany complicate the idea of binary oppositions (white majority/diaspora, inclusion/exclusion, success/failure, etc.). At the same time, Black German celebrity autobiographies neither avoid nor omit addressing racializing practices in Germany. They also do not exclusively locate such issues in the West. The texts narrate experiences with racial prejudice in East and West Germany but refrain from larger critiques of a white German hegemonic culture. This, in addition to the staging of episodes that blur the lines of reality and fiction, suggests that these celebrity autobiographies do more than mainstream Black German experiences.

Celebrity autobiographies actively engage with autofiction and in their final episodes use representations of reality for their autobiographical accounts. Creating a sense of reality is particularly important in the staging of Black German recognition as it helps to achieve both acceptance and pleasure for the reader. To derive the greatest possible experience from the text and thus from the staging of a new Black German recognition, celebrity autobiographies culminate in episodes with a *reality effect*. In "The Reality Effect" (1968) and in *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Roland Barthes speaks to the importance of staging the real through the presence of the detail. For Barthes, the presence of detail is functionless in the plot but allows for a sense of reality. He notes that effective literature employs "notations (data, descriptive details) which structural analysis, occupied as it is with separating out and systematizing the main articulations of narrative, ordinarily, and up to the present, has left out…" ("The Reality Effect" 11). For

Barthes the significance of such details derives from the pleasure that results from a text.[120] Such descriptive details within Black German celebrity autobiography – for example the descriptions of regular office day routines and specific locations within the city space of Berlin – produce representations of reality that allow for the pleasurable staging of Black German recognition within German post-Wende discourses. Paired with moments of autofiction these episodes ultimately narrate accepted and appreciated Black German experiences of parental recognition, mutual recognition, and solidarity. This positions Black German celebrity autobiographies within the politics of recognition and therefore deserving of further attention.

Parental Recognition and Self-Confidence

Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* is the first autobiographical account of an East German, Jewish, Afro-German woman. The celebrity autobiography provides ten episodes[121] that include elements of any coming-of-age story: a young woman's search for happiness, friendship, and love. In her roles as model, dancer, television host, and journalist, Zöllner crafts a public persona of one who is comfortable in her own skin. Even in her accounts of racial discrimination in the GDR, Zöllner offers a continuously fast and upbeat narrative, emphasizing a life-philosophy of overcoming all odds with the strong support of her mother and friends (Steingröver 295). The philosophy of love as unconditional positive recognition by family and friends becomes the driving force in *Schokoladenkind*. The book's subtitle *Meine Familie und andere Wunder* (My

[120] See Barthes, "The Pleasure of the Text," p. 61.
[121] See Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* with the following episodes: "Die Regeln meiner Schule," "Tee statt Kaffee," "Vom Turnhallenmuff in die Glitzerwelt," "Reis muss kleben," "Die schönste Katastrophe von allen," "Als ich die DDR nicht mehr verstand," "Die neue Zeit hat uns geküsst," "Das Wunder der engen Jeans," "Leben vor dem Tod," "Die beste Veranstaltung."

Family and Other Wonders) suggests that the focus is not on the realistic accounts of Zöllner's life. Indeed, the episodic structure of her life-writing becomes the blueprint for a magical story about Zöllner and other wonders.

Schokoladenkind highlights life events with magical episodes that engage in situating the female Black-German self through parental recognition by her mother. From the beginning, the text crafts the child as a heaven-sent gift, only with a difference.[122]

> Immerhin war ich ein Sonntagskind. Doch Mamel ging in Sachen Glück lieber auf Nummer sicher und nannte mich auch noch Abini, was auf Deutsch „Du bist mein mir vom Himmel geschickter Anteil" bedeutet. Kaum hatte sie das Göttergleiche vermenschlicht, fing sie an das Menschliche zu vergöttern: „Herr Doktor, sehen Sie nur, eine afrikanische Stirn. Mein Kind hat eine afrikanische Stirn." Dann küsste sie mich mehrere Male auf den Kopf und versprach immer auf mich aufzupassen. Das Versprechen hat sie bis heute gehalten. (S 10)[123]

[After all I was a Sunday's child. But when it came to luck, Mamel always wanted to be on the safe side/ and on top of it all, she named me Abini, in German that means: "You are my from heaven/ sent piece." Shortly after she humanized the heavenly, she started/ to deify the human: "Doctor, just look at that African forehead. My child has/ an African forehead." Then she kissed my head multiple times and promised to always/ watch out for me. She kept this promise till today.][124]

The child's arrival is an act of heavenly luck. Zöllner is born on a Sunday—in Germany's socio-cultural context this means being born under a lucky star—though the absence of other markers of time, such as year, date, and hour, challenge the text's autobiographical norm. The mother's positive recognition of her daughter reflects in Zöllner's first name: Abini, the mother's heavenly-sent gift. The child equals "das Göttergleiche," (the godlike) in human form, which inspires the mother's adoration of the child. She furthermore embraces Abini's biracial heritage and is fond of the fact that the African features of Abini's father are quite pronounced. The

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[122] See Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind*, particularly the episode "Die Regeln meiner Schule."
[123] All quotations from *Schokoladenkind* are taken from the following edition: Abini Zöllner, *Schokoladenkind* (Rowohlt, 2003). Page numbers will be inserted after the block quote, accompanied by the abbreviation S.
[124] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

marker of difference, “die afrikanische Stirn” (the African forehead), elicits her affection. For Abini’s mother, Ilse, the child’s difference is a positive reminder of her past. Even though the relationship with Abini’s father did not last, the mother embraces her daughter as a token of a short-lived interracial connection.

Abini is connected to the gods and constantly receives motherly praise. Motherly recognition of young Zöllner’s physical and emotional sensitivity is also a positive recognition of her difference.

> Mamel hatte mich schon lange vor den Männern gewarnt:„Du darfst dich nicht gleich auf den Erstbesten einlassen. Bienchen, gerade du musst aufpassen. Du bist ein Schokoladenkind und zu schade dafür, einfach vernascht zu werden. Viele Männer sind Jäger, und noch mehr sind Sammler. Und du wärst ihre Trophäe. Sei bloß vorsichtig.“ (S 38)

[Mamel warned me off men a long time ago: “You may not give in to / the first one available. Bienchen, especially you have to be careful. You are a Chocolate child / and too precious to have it off with. Many men are hunter and gatherers, and even more / so collectors. And you would be their trophy. Just watch out.]

The potential risk for an adolescent Black German woman to be taken advantage of sexually or emotionally due to exoticized differences sets the scene for a magical realization of self-empowerment. “Bienchen, gerade du musst aufpassen. Du bist ein Schokoladenkind und zu schade dafür, einfach vernascht zu werden“ uses the loaded term „Schokoladenkind“ to describe Zöllner’s blackness. The text periodically employs such terms that author and activist Noah Sow identifies as highly problematic. Terms of endearment commonly used by closest family and friends, such as “Schokobaby,” “Mohrenkopf,” or “Karamell” continue to mark German blackness as otherness. “Spätestens ab der ersten Klasse sind genau die ‘scherzhaften’ Schoko-Ausdrücke, mit denen die Mutter ihr Kind bedenkt, auch diejenigen, die die Außenwelt dazu benutzt, um es einzustufen und ihm seinen Platz als ‚Exot‘ und ‚anders‘ aufzudrücken (Sow

222).[125] Zöllner, however, uses such terms to highlight difference as a positive feature. The nouns "Schokoladenkind," "Männer," "Jäger," "Sammler," and "Trophäe" create a causal noun chain that narrates blackness as a desirable gift in the wilderness of gender relations. The mother's concerns, "…gerade du musst aufpassen." and "Sei bloß vorsichtig" stage the daughter's Black German heritage as particularly desirable.

Zöllner engages in exoticizing difference but simultaneously intervenes in the history of fetishizing racialized bodies. She interrupts a history of German literary productions that simultaneously narrate appreciation for, and denigration of, a black essence. Historically, the German/European context represents the black body as wild, free, and detached from all binds of civilization; at the same time, it is described as limited, resulting from its proximity to nature. Blackness in German literary history is characterized by a unique and superior physicality, but also child-like sensibility and inferior intellect.[126] This idealization and engagement in racial difference continues into contemporary times with the emergence of glamourous beauties such as Josephine Baker (1906-75) and Anna May Wong (1905-61). Such iconic beauties – both celebrated and condemned for exemplifying primitivism and orientalism – not only combine race and celebrity in their art, they also apply pressure to the discrepancy between embodiment and abstraction.[127] Zöllner's text engages in a postmodern representation of a physically superior, child-like, and naïve female character and gives it an autofictional twist. Exoticized difference and motherly recognition lead to a magical tale of self-empowerment.

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[125] See Noa Sow's *Deutschland Schwarz Weiss*. "Those affectionate 'chocolate'-expressions that a mother might use for her child become by first grade at the latest the terminology that the exterior world uses to label the child as exotic and other."

[126] See Sander Gilman's *On Blackness Without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany*.

[127] In *Second Skin*, Anne Anlin Cheng argues that Baker embodies a crisis of nakedness (and its implied corporeal presence) that assaulted modern Western aesthetics and the conceptualization of a raced body; this crisis in turn reveals modernism's larger struggle over the threatening intimacy between persons and things.

The mother appears as a good shoulder angel during the daughter's visit to a dance club where she tries to fight off white male suitors.[128]

> Ich fragte ihn: "Hast du was im Auge?"
>
> „Ja, dich", antwortete mein Gegenüber und zog mich so angriffslustig an sich, dass mir die Luft wegblieb.
>
> Über ihm schwebte Mamel und hielt abwechselnd die Schilder „Jäger!" und „Sammler!" vor meine Stirn.
>
> Es war nicht einfach, mich von seinem starken Selbstbewusstsein zu befreien. Nach dem dritten Titel gelang es mir endlich. Ich nahm seine Hände, die sich immer wieder an meinem Po festkrallen wollten, schüttelte sie zum Abschied und sagte: „Es war nett, dich kennen gelernt zu haben." Mamel schaute mich fragend an, und ich ergänzte: "Vor allem, wenn man bedenkt, was wir alles würden anstellen können, wenn du dürftest und ich wollte." Er schaute ernüchtert, seine Wimpern hingen nach unten, und Mamel schwebte voller Genugtuung davon. (S 43)

[I asked him: "Do you have something in the eye?" / "Yes, you," my counterpart replied and belligerently pulled me closer so it made me gasp. / Mamel hovered over him and alternately held up signs that said "hunter" and "gatherer" right in front of my face. / It wasn't easy for me to free me from his strong self-confidence. After the / third song, I finally succeeded. I took his hands that repeatedly tried to cling to my butt, shook them good bye and said: "It was nice meeting / you." Mamel looked at me wondering, and I added: "Especially, when / considering, what all we could do, if you would be allowed to and I would want to." He looked disillusioned, his eye lashes hung sadly, and Mamel floated away filled with satisfaction.]

The mother's recognition of her daughter's worth brings forth Abini's self-confidence. The text stages this as a magical tale in which the mother hovers over the daughter's interaction with a male stranger. The mother, a good shoulder angel, reminds the daughter of the stranger's identity; it is the mother who causes Abini to recognize the male as "Jäger!" (hunter) and "Sammler!" (gatherer) of an exotified object, the "Schokoladenkind" (chocolate child). It is the mother's magic actions of "über ihm schweben" (hover over him), "vor meine Stirn halten" (held up right in front of my face), and "mich fragend anschauen" (looked at me wondering), that

[128] See Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind*, particularly the episode "Tee statt Kaffee."

prompt Abini's forcefully empowered response. The grammatical structure of Abini's reply, "… was wir alles anstellen könnten, wenn du dürftest und ich wollte" (what all we could do, if you would be allowed to and I would want to), places potential sexual conquests in the realm of hypotheticals; in this precise moment the mother figure disappears, and her magical doings are no longer needed. The male enemy seems defeated by Abini's self-confidence, rooted as it was in the magical appearance of her mother. Several important strands converge in these humorous autofictional patterns of recognition; the scenes of motherly affection together with the investment in blackness as embraced difference culminate in a realization of self-confidence. The recognition of Abini's emancipated self, owing to omnipresent motherly affection, manifests in her refusal of the white male suitor.

By approaching the text's autobiographical narrative through autofiction and the incorporation of episodes with a magical-realist quality, the text stages moments of Black German recognition with a sense of surprise. The effect of parental recognition scenes – the positive response to a biracial child born in East Germany in the late 1960s and the positive connotation of a child's biracial heritage – provide for a means of encountering unexpected changes, even those outside the realm of established discourses between white majority and black minority. Episodes of magic realism allow for the staging of Black German recognition by parents in a manner for which the reality of established discourses as Others-from-Without surrounding German blackness cannot account. These autofictional moments include repeated motherly praise, as well as repurposing dynamics of exoticizing difference. They bring forth a sense of self-confidence through the power of autofiction's alternative realm outside of othering discourses. The autofictional episodes are constructs that provide space in which to develop and position the Black German self and its relationship to the world, while also narrating recognition

historically linked to otherness. They render the autobiographical narrative dependent on formal experiments with autofiction, allowing new concepts of Black German recognition to emerge. Ultimately, the incorporation of autofiction in the structure of celebrity autobiography contributes to the text's emotion: evolving and dynamic rather than linear and chronological. By narrating parental recognition staged in the realm of the magical, *Schokoladenkind* foreshadows what Germany's future political discourses will bring to the fore: a larger recognition of its Black German minority. But the autofictional episodes are also compelling meditations on the role of mutual and collective recognition for situating the Black-German self.

Mutual Recognition and Self-Respect

Detlef Soost offers another strategy for situating the Black-German self. With an approach equally populist in reader appeal, he asserts his multilayered identity right away: "Vielleicht gelingt es mir, dem einen oder anderen zu zeigen, dass es mit eisernem Willen und mit harter Arbeit gelingen kann, seine Träume zu leben, wenn man akzeptiert, wer man ist. Ich habe diesen Schritt getan. Ich bin Heimkind, Neger, Pionier. Ich bin Detlef D! Soost" (13).[129] Though Soost also offers personal anecdotes among his thirty-six episodes[130], his narrative differs slightly from Zöllner's pursuit of happiness. *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* is a classic

[129] "Perhaps I can demonstrate to a few readers that one can live one's dreams through iron will and hard work, if one accepts who one is. I have taken this step. I am a foster child, Negro, pioneer." The last term references the socialist youth organization in the GDR, the young pioneers.

[130] See Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* with the following episodes: "Der is nich von dir," "Sie wird es immer wieder tun," "Freimilch," "Ein Kind voller Fragen," "Es ist richtig schön bei uns," "Was macht dieses Kind hier?," "Wir gehören zu niemandem," "Wer soll den denn bändigen," "Erste Schritte," "Leben ist nicht Wünsch-Dir-Was," "Die Nacht der lebenden Toten," "Es geht bergauf," "Und wo wohnst du?," "Endgültig," "Familie Friedrich," "Zwischen den Welten," "Fast Forward," "Mehr als ein Blumentopf," "Mein neues Leben," "Karamell," "Leben für drei," "Familienfrieden," "Prügelprogramm," "Die Mauer ist auf," "Zaungast," "Das schnelle Geld," "New York Dance Party," "Auf Abwegen," "Damen-Programm," "Haltlos," "Auf die Spitze," "Kein Ende in Sicht," "Lichtblicke," "Der Weg nach oben," "Ein Wunder zum Schluss," "Ein Blick voraus."

rags-to-riches tale as well as an engagement with narratives of black persistence. What is most striking is Soost's commitment to "iron will" and "hard work" as moral responsibility to himself and others. Due to the absence of his mother, who suffered from mental health issues and eventually passed away, Detlef grew up in a foster home. The text narrates this environment as a space that provided him with security and guidance in his everyday life. The foster home created an opportunity for the author to build a sense of self in which he was able to develop skills, talents, and responsibilities through his moral relations to others.

The text stages the development of responsibility through moral relations to others by blurring the lines between reality and fiction. The three opening episodes establish Soost's difficult early childhood with an absent father, a mother suffering from mental health issues, and an older half-sister who tries to care for her younger sibling. When all attempts at family care fail, it is the foster home that provides Soost with an environment of opportunity. Traditionally, foster care narratives in celebrity autobiographies are linked to moments of crisis (Freeman, 189), leading to a subsequent denouement. Furthermore, the historical context of 1980s GDR foster care homes tie such places to a history of psychological and physical abuse.[131] In Soost's autobiography, however, the foster home is a magical place of opportunity and self-realization, as well as the location of his first encounter with other Black German children. Information about time and place that usually serves to orient the reader in an autobiographical text is missing here, which works to situate the following encounter in the realm of autofiction. The location of the home, the year, and Soost's age are left ambiguous as he encounters other foster children for the first time, including a Black German child.

[131] In post-Wende Germany, reports about East Germany's abusive foster care system emerged in the general media. See for example Popp and Winter, "Second Class Victims - East German Children's Home Prisoners Ignored."

The text stages the first interaction with other children of Afro-German heritage within the familiar setting of wonder and surprise.[132]

> Verstanden habe ich wohl nicht, was da vor sich ging. […] Ich war völlig verblüfft. Schon der Anblick von lauter gleich angezogenen Kindern war merkwürdig. Doch vor allem einen Jungen habe ich angestarrt wie ein Weltwunder. Er war so wie ich. Noch nie zuvor hatte ich ein Kind gesehen, das auch dunkel war. Ich hatte schon ein paar mal Schwarze auf der Straße gesehen, aber das waren immer Erwachsene gewesen. Und nun stand ein Junge vor mir, der so alt war, wie ich und genauso aussah. So in den gleichen Klamotten, hätte man uns tatsächlich für Zwillinge halten können. […] Vom ersten Augenblick an bin ich Jimmy, so hieß der Junge, nicht mehr von der Seite gewichen. Wenn wir uns die Nächte mit Gruselgeschichten vertrieben, bin ich sogar in sein Bett gekrabbelt. (D 43-44)[133]

[Perhaps, I did not understand what was going on. […] I was completely baffled. / Even the sight of identically dressed children was odd. But especially / one boy I gazed at like a wonder of the world. He was like me. Never before / had I seen a child that was dark too. I did see black people / in the streets but they were all adults. And now / a boy, who was the same age and looked exactly like me, stood right before my eyes. In the same clothes, one could actually take us for twins. […] From the first / moment on, I did not leave Jimmy's, so the name of the boy, side. / When we passed our nights with horror stories, I even crawled into his bed.][134]

The text narrates a state of confusion "Verstanden habe ich wohl nicht…," "Ich war völlig verblüfft," and blurs the lines between reality and imagination. The moment of first encounter with another Afro-German is situated in a realm of the magical more so than in reality. This vision of wonder presents a simultaneous recognition of similarity between the two Afro-German children. Soost realizes "Er war so wie ich" (He was like me), and recognizes the pair as equals by narrating Jimmy as his twin. The friendship between the two, as well as their mutual recognition as equals, is established through the common denominator of blackness. The realm of the magical also provides the opportunity to stage recognition as intersubjective

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[132] See Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier*, particularly the episode "Es ist richtig schön bei uns."
[133] All quotations from *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* are taken from the following edition: Detlef Soost and Anne Ascher, *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* (Wunderlich, 2005). Page numbers will be inserted after the block quote, accompanied by the abbreviation D.
[134] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

performance.[135] Autofiction allows progression beyond the understanding that crafts recognition exclusively as a "momentary flash of realization" (Wiggins 3). The common denominator of a shared Black German experience functions as a catalyst for the children to keep recognizing each other as friends.

The magical moment allows the protagonist to find his equal counterpart, someone who functions as a mirror for Soost's Black German self. With Jimmy, his twin, it is possible to repeatedly recognize a friend and also find community based on common experiences in play, age, and ethnic background.

> Ich hatte einen Freund! Das erste Mal hatte ich einen richtigen Freund gefunden. Jimmy und ich haben uns wunderbar verstanden. Für uns hätte das Leben so bleiben können. Da sowieso Ferien waren, erschien uns das Heim wie ein Ferienlager. Wir spielten, wie ich schon lange nicht mehr gespielt hatte. […] Doch eines Tages war auch dieser Traum vorbei. (D 44)

[I had a friend! For the first time, I found a real friend. Jimmy / and I got along great. For us, life could have continued that way. Since / we were on break anyways, the foster home seemed like a summer camp to us. We played, like / I had not played in a long time. […] But one day even that dream came to an end.]

Since Jimmy is in the foster home together with his brother, Soost finds a community with which he identifies. Jimmy and Detlef get along well and develop a friendship. The friendship creates its own universe and the boundaries between reality, "das Heim" (the foster home), and magical place, "ein Ferienlager" (the summer camp), blur to the extent that it all seems like a dream, "dieser Taum" (this dream). Jimmy becomes an extension of Soost and the 'we' and 'I' merge. "Wir spielten, wie ich schon lange nicht mehr gespielt hatte" (We played like I had not played in a long time). The text uses the concept of the extended self and draws upon the assumption "that

[135] In his book *Odysseys of Recognition* (2019), p. 3, Ellwood Wiggins illustrates how recognition is not just an interior operation of the mind or a momentarily flash or realization. Instead, he shows that "people come to know one another as friends or enemies through involved processes that take place in intersubjective performance."

the boundaries of the self are redrawn, and the content of the self-concept is focused on those characteristics that make one a 'good' representative of the group or of the relationship."[136] The text invests in Detlef and Jimmy's similar age, outward appearance, Afro-German heritage, similar experiences, and repeated acts of play that serve to bind the group of friends together. The utterances "Nie zuvor hatte ich ein Kind gesehen was auch dunkel war" (Never before / had I seen a child that was dark too.), "Und nun stand ein Junge vor mir, der so alt war wie ich und genauso aussah" (And now / a boy, who was the same age and looked exactly like me, stood right before my eyes.), and "Das erste Mal hatte ich einen richtigen Freund gefunden" (For the first time, I found a real friend.) narrate the friendship based on finding a counterpart in a mostly white society. The boys develop a sense of moral responsibility through their moral relations to each other, which they established in play as well as through their shared blackness. The text invests in what Honneth describes as a mutual mode of recognition "in which the individual learns to see himself from the perspective of his [or her] partner in interaction as a bearer of equal rights."[137] The sequence of mutual recognition, however, ends once Jimmy and his brother rejoin their family back home. The passage's investment in mutual recognition sets the stage for the development of self-respect. Even though losing his friend is challenging, the recognition between friends ultimately leads to Soost's self-recognition as a bearer of equal rights in emotional connections to others. The text narrates such connections by investing in blackness as a common denominator of experiences, and by challenging such essentializing discourses.

[136] See Marilynn B. Brewer and Wendi Gardner's "Who Is This 'We'? Levels of Collective Identity and Self Representations," p. 84.
[137] See Honneth, "Integrity and Disrespect: Principles of a Conception of Morality Based on the Theory of Recognition," p. 194.

As personal interests and talents form, Black German heritage as common denominator fades into the background. The shared influences of youth culture, music, and dance become the main sources of community building. Soost's emotional connections arise from a common passion and love for dance. The text references visual culture of the 1980s as a source of new emotional bonds with equal partners.[138] In one autofictional episode, the love for dance movies substitutes for blackness as a marker of mutual recognition.

> Das Schönste am Kurs ist und bleibt aber, dass ich dort meinen Freund Yves Braunstein kennen lernte. Mit ihm arbeite ich bis heute zusammen, mitlerweile ist er sogar mein Geschäftspartner. […] Der Film „Fast Forward – Sie kannten nur ein Ziel" machte auf uns beide großen Eindruck. Ein schwarzer und ein weißer Tänzer, engste Freunde, trainieren mit ihrer Tanzgruppe in einer alten Fabrikhalle Streetjazz. Sie leben irgendwo in der Provinz, wo sie permanent auf Widerstand stoßen. Aber sie geben ihren Traum nicht auf. Und dann wagen sie eines Tages den großen Sprung nach New York. […] Mit diesen beiden schlaksigen Tänzern konnten doch nur wir gemeint sein! Sie waren wie wir. Wir fühlten uns sehr bedeutend, zu Großem berufen. Und wir ließen kaum eine Gelegenheit aus, um unseren Tanzstil aus Jazzdance und Streetdance zu präsentieren. (D 100-101)

[The best of the class is and always will be that I met my friend Yves Braunstein / there. I still work with him today, by now he is actually my business partner. […] The movie "Fast Forward – They only knew one goal" made / a huge impression on us. A black and a white dancer, best friends / trained street jazz with their dance crew in an old factory building. They lived somewhere / in the boonies, where they permanently had to face resistance. But they don't / give up their dream. And then, one day they take the plunge to New York. […] These / two lanky dancer could have only meant us! They were / like us. We felt very important, destined to do big things. And we almost never / missed an opportunity to present our style of dance, a mix of jazz dance and street dance.]

The parallel cinematic universe of *Fast Forward* (1985) narrates the adolescents' relationship as a multiracial friendship with mutual recognition. The movie's subtitle, "Sie kannten nur ein Ziel" (They only knew one goal), tells of a relationship forged through a mutual investment in becoming celebrated professional dancers. The movie's plot mirrors the boys' biographies: an

[138] See Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier*, particularly the episode "Fast Forward."

Afro-German and a white German dancer who are best friends train together for a Streetjazz performance at a run-down facility in one of Berlin's working class districts (Pankow). Detlef signifies "ein schwarzer Tänzer" (a black dancer), and Yves signifies "ein weißer Tänzer" (a white dancer); as best friends they train in "Streetjazz,"at "einer alten Fabrikhalle" (an old factory building). The dependent clause "wo sie permanent auf Widerstand stoßen" (where they permanently had to face resistance) takes up an earlier episode in the text, where Yves and Detlef get into a fight with Neo-Nazis who chase them through their neighborhood. But despite obstacles and racial prejudice, dreams of successful dance careers prevail, much like they do in the movie *Fast Forward*: "Aber sie geben ihren Traum nicht auf" (but they never give up their dream). Real life and visual culture ultimately merge in the account of the cinematic main characters: "Sie waren wie wir" (They were like us). This overlap depicts a success story where the "sie" (they) becomes "wir" (we), and the friends are on their way to success.

By approaching the text's autobiographical narrative through blending representations of reality with magical episodes, the text stages Black German recognition with a sense of celebrity. This mode of achievement follows in the footsteps of fetishized African- and African-American involvement in German entertainment and music, which dates back to colonial times; Soost, however, has made his career his own. [139] Scenes of mutual recognition are arresting not for their clichés but for their making of the celebrity. The effect of such scenes in the plot of Soost's rags-to-riches story contemplate the Black German celebrity status in a sustained way: its making, its fickleness, and its public exhilaration. Autofictional episodes bring forth a Black-German self through mutual recognition, while simultaneously aligning it with its celebrity character in the

[139] About a history of fetishized African and African American involvement in German entertainment see Peter Martin's *Schwarze Teufel, edle Mohren*.

autobiographical narrative; in the opening episode Soost includes his real name in the celebrity narrative ("Ich bin Detlef D! Soost," I am Detlef D! Soost, 13). Such episodes establish a mutually enabling fictiveness of renown and personality that facilitates the recognition of a model of multiple selves. This multiplicity allows for the narration of Black German recognition within society and on the stages of the entertainment world. The autobiographical narrative is rendered dependent on autofictional sequences to allow for the emergence of new considerations of Black German recognition that address the intimacy between agency and objectification. Ultimately, the incorporation of autofiction in celebrity autobiography contributes to the text's emotion and is performative for the celebrity audience, though not exclusively so. By narrating moments of recognition staged in the realm of the making of the celebrity, *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* foreshadows what later celebrity autobiographies will continue to bring to the fore: mainstream recognition of Black-German self-assertion and achievement in Germany's post-Wende public sphere.

Communal Recognition and Self-Esteem

In both texts, magical moments of recognition occur before a significant rupture. After narrating Germany's Wende years and reunification, the texts turn to more realistic autobiographical accounts that situate Black German experiences at the center of larger German national discourses. They reflect on the difficult transition of East Germans into Western society and cross-map Black German experiences with post-Wende discourses. The texts create reality effects to portray post-Wende discourses that set the stage for recognition of Black German

achievement and personal development as components of a reunited, multicultural German society.

D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier focuses on communal recognition of personal traits and abilities in shifting discourses of national identity.[140] The text illustrates the problems facing East Germans in the transition to Western society. Soost's teenage career as a fashion model and dancer is thrown into crisis and his inexperience with Western capitalism plunges him into a "Teufelskreis der ewigen Verschuldung" (the catch-22 of endless debt, 190). The new start, however, is a result of Soost's unique commitment to dance. He establishes a reputation as a dancing coach in German television and entertainment.

> Der Weg war frei, und ich scheute mich nicht hart zu arbeiten, um meine Versäumnisse allesamt wieder aufzuholen. Schließlich gab es da eine Menge zu tun. […] Gleich nach meinem 27. Geburtstag, im Sommer 1997, arbeitete ich in Lübeck für „Michaela" beim deutschen Vorentscheid für den „Grand Prix Eurovision". Das war eine spannende Sache, denn immerhin ging es hier darum, wer am Ende für Deutschland die Kastanien aus dem Feuer holen würde. […] Eines Abends lernte ich dort die Tänzerin Katja Pritzel vom „Ballett Centrum" am Ku'damm in Berlin kennen. „Ballett Centrum"! Das war für mich der Tempel der Heroen. Dort tanzten nur die Besten der Branche. Ich wusste gar nicht wohin, vor Stolz, als Katja Prizel mich bat, ihre Schwangerschaftsvertretung zu übernehmen. Ich sollte Street-Dance Kurse geben. Was für eine Chance. (D 203)

[The way was clear and I did not shy away from working hard, in order to make up for my shortcomings. / After all there was a whole lot to do. […] Right after / my 27th birthday, in summer 1997, I worked in Lübeck for "Michaela" at the German pre-rounds for the "Grand Prix Eurovision". That was an exciting issue, after all it was all about: who will pull the chestnuts out / of the fire for Germany. […] During an evening there, I met the dancer Katja Prizel from "Ballett Centrum" at Ku'damm in Berlin. "Ballett Centrum!" That was / the temple of heroes for me. Only the best of the industry danced there. I burst / with pride when Katja Prizel asked me to take over / during her maternity leave. I was supposed to offer street dance classes. What a chance.]

[140] See Soost's *D! Heimkind – Neger – Pionier*, particularly the episode "Der Weg nach oben."

Location and designations of time situate the story of personal achievement at the center of German society and tie it to the autobiographical subject. Soost's personal timeline "gleich nach meinem 27. Geburtstag" (right after my 27th birthday), and general time "im Sommer 1997" (in summer 1997), merge to position the autobiographical subject at the "deutschen Vorentscheid für den 'Grand Prix Eurovision'" (German pre-rounds for the 'Grand Prix Eurovision'). The text acknowledges Soost's talents as valuable in a national cultural context but also sets the stage for intersubjective recognition amongst members of the entertainment community. An engagement at a prestigious dance company in Berlin results in Soost gaining recognition as a member of the national entertainment industry.

Professional recognition provides the foundation for the development of self-esteem. In retrospect, the text links expressions of self-esteem with Soost's professional development.

> Jede Herausforderung, der man sich stellt, bringt einen weiter, und letztlich ist es unwichtig, ob die Sache nun gut oder schlecht ausgeht.
>
> Ich unterrichtete jetzt immer mehr – nicht nur meine eigene „Junior Company", sondern auch im „Dance Point" bei Caroal Häberer. Mit ihrer Hilfe hatte ich meinen Einstand in der Schlagerbranche. Eine neue Tür hatte sich geöffnet, und ich ging mit Freuden hindurch. (D 204)

[Every challenge you accept, will advance you and eventually it does not matter if it ends well or not. I taught more and more – not only my own "Junior Company", also / at "Dance Point" with Carola Häberer. Due to her help, I had my debut in the Schlager industry. A new door had opened and I was pleased / to walk right through it.]

The text echoes general proclamations of self-esteem, "jede Herausforderung, der man sich stellt, bringt einen weiter" (every challenge you accept, will advance you and eventually), and links them to the autobiographical self. The inventory of Soost's accomplishments, „Ich unterrichtete jetzt immer mehr – nicht nur meine eigene 'Junior Company'" (I taught more and more – not only my own 'Junior Company'), enables an inventory of self-esteem. The shared value of

teaching dance with, and to, others ("auch im "Dance Point" bei Carola Häberer, also at "Dance Point" with Carola Häberer) makes new accomplishments possible. As a result of these accomplishments, the text performs the growth of Soost's self-esteem, with the fearless entering into new territory: "Eine Tür hatte sich geöffnet, und ich ging mit Freuden hindurch" (A new door had opened and I was pleased / to walk right through it). Ultimately, the text combines the recognition of traits and abilities in a community with Soost's practical relation-to-self. This acquisition of self-esteem situates personal development within post-Wende Germany and simultaneously crafts Germany as a solidary society. Though it seems counterintuitive to equate post-Wende Germany with such a society, Soost's autobiography portrays Germany as a place where Black German minorities can acquire self-esteem through communal recognition. Not only does the text engage in staging Black German achievement and self-esteem, it simultaneously stages post-Wende Germany as a striving multicultural community.

The Wende and post-Wende era in Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* signify a process of liberation. The text creates representations of reality that enable the staging of political change on a very personal level.[141] Zöllner divorces her husband, terminates her dance and modeling career, and becomes a journalist for the *Berliner Zeitung.* She finds reward in her journalist work and especially in her roles as a friend, mother, and daughter.

[141] See Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind*, particularly the episode "Leben vor dem Tod."

An einem normalen Redaktionstag, der ruhig began und hektisch weiterging, an einem solchen Tag wurde bekannt, dass eine Theaterintendantin angeblich für die Stasi gespitzelt hatte. Ich musste unter grossem Zeitdruck einen Artikel schreiben und erwartete jeden Moment einen wichtigen Anruf von der Gauk-Behörde, damit ich endlich Akteneinsicht nehmen konnte. Ich war gespannt. Hatte die Frau eine Verpflichtungserklärung unterschrieben? Hatte sie Freunde und Kollegen verraten? Hatte sie überhaupt gewusst, dass man sie als Mitarbeiter führte? Es gab noch viel zu klären, wiedereinmal saß ich vor einem leeren Bildschirm. Da endlich klingelte das Telefon:

„Mama? Raouli haut mich!"

„Das ist jetzt gerade ganz ungünstig, Rubinchen. Rufst du mich nachher nochmal an?"

„Aber es tut weh."

„Dann gib mir Omi."

„Nein."

„Warum denn nicht?"

„Will mit dir sprechen."

„Seid so lieb, vertragt euch wieder. Ich kann dir jetzt nicht helfen."

„Doch."

„Was gibt's denn?"

„Ich will nämlich einen Nusskuchen backen und weiß nicht, wo die Glasur ist."

„Die ist unterm Besteckkasten."

„Okay. Tschüssi, Mama."

Ich konnte es ihr nicht übel nehmen, wenn sie mich störte. Rubinchen hatte eben ein Problem und fühlte sich verpflichtet, ihren Bruder zu verraten. So ähnlich war es dann auch bei der Intendantin. […] So ging ein Tag im verehrten Feuilleton zu Ende. Mit klaren Signalen, dass es an der Zeit ist, Feierabend zu machen und sich in das Leben außerhalb der Redaktion zu stürzen. (S 234-35)

[On a normal day at the editorial office, that quietly started and hectically continued, on such / a day word came out that a female theater director supposedly spied for the Stasi. / I had to write an article under huge time pressure / and expected a call from the Gauk-Institute at any minute now, so that / I could finally have access to the case files. I was curious. Did the woman / sign a declaration of commitment? Did she betray friends and colleagues? Did she / even know, they listed her a contributor? There was still lots to resolve, / once again I sat in front of a blank screen. Finally, the phone rang: / "Mom? Raouli hits me!" / "That is very inconvenient right now, Rubinchen. Can you call me back later?" / "But it hurts." / "Then give me grandma." / "No." / "Why not?" / "Want to talk to you." / "Would you be so kind and get along well. I can't help you right now." / "Sure, you can." / "What's that?" / "I want to bake a walnut cake and I don't know where the frosting is." / "It's underneath the silverware drawer." / "OK. Bye, mom."/ I couldn't be mad at her, when she interrupted me. Rubinchen had a problem / and felt obligated to betray her brother. Something similar eventually happened with the theater director. […] And like that a day in the revered feuilleton came to an end. With / clear signs that it was closing time and time to dive into life / outside of editing.]

Zöllner establishes herself as a trusted writer at the Feuilleton of *Berliner Zeitung.* She actively contributes to post-Wende *Vergangenheitsbewältigung;* markers such as "Stasi" (Ministry for State Security), "Gauk-Behörde" (Gauck office), and "Akteneinsicht" (access to personal files) define her as a contributor to Germany's public engagement with its socialist past. Zöllner helps find answers to questions of public interest: "Hatte sie Freunde und Kollegen verraten? Hatte sie überhaupt gewusst, dass man sie als Mitarbeiter führte?" (Did she betray friends and colleagues? Did she / even know, they listed her a contributor?); it is up to her to fill in the blank pages of an untold history. The significant key words of post-Wende discourses prime the reader for a recognition of Zöllner's journalistic talent. Instead, it is the interaction with her daughter "an einem normalen Redaktionstag" (on a normal day at the editorial office) that tells of Zöllner's other identity: "Mama? Raouli haut mich!" (Mom? Raouli hits me). The text weaves together Zöllner's role as a single mother with her talent as a journalist; it is her role as a mother and as a daughter to her own mother that informs Zöllner's perspective as a journalist. The daughter's recognition of her mother as problem solver empowers Zöllner to ask the necessary questions in her professional life. Her role within her family informs her understanding of the larger questions

in post-Wende discourses: „Rubinchen hatte eben ein Problem und fühlte sich verpflichtet, ihren Bruder zu verraten. So ähnlich war es dann auch bei der Intendantin“ (Rubinchen had a problem and felt obligated to betray her brother. Something similar eventually happened with the theater director). The text suggests Zöllner's professionalization as a contributor to solving questions of Germany's past is directly tied to her role as a single parent. In this way, it links Zöllner's individuality and self-esteem to the contribution to, and recognition of, her personal community.

By returning to the texts' representation of reality, and by focusing on personal achievement and growth as well as private matters, the texts imbue Black German recognition with a sense of pleasure for the reader. The effect of the final recognition scenes in the autobiographies predicts a means of acknowledgement. Staging reality is necessary to situate Black German recognition outside of diasporic discourses and works to embed Black German experiences at the center of national German discourses. These realistic autobiographical narratives include moments of communal recognition by professional peers and family members. They recognize Black German experiences as integral parts of the German nation state. Instead of utilizing diasporic alliances, they render the autobiographies dependent on personal and family-oriented narratives within the national German discourse, allowing the recognition of Black German self-esteem to emerge. Ultimately, the representation of reality in celebrity autobiographies contributes to the texts' emotional impact: that of being centered rather than marginalized. By narrating moments of communal recognition staged with a realistic rather than a magical effect, *Schokoladenkind* and *D!Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* foreshadow later autobiographical narratives which continue the recognition of Black German engagement in broader German national discourses.

Conclusion

Autofiction in celebrity autobiographies of the new millennium establishes a new Black German recognition. The texts intriguing potential is informed not only by performing normality and personal achievement, but by the staging of Black German interpersonal recognition beyond historical perceptions of blackness and by the repurposing of difference. Zöllner's *Schokoladenkind* and Soost's *D!Heimkind – Neger – Pionier* evoke magical, populist, and entertaining autobiographical structures. These celebrity autobiographies represent a crucial phase in the literary Afro-German movement; just like the politics of this movement, albeit in different ways, they challenge the categorizing of Black German identities as others.

Black German celebrity autobiographies have a dynamic sensibility. The autobiographies no longer follow a pattern of presenting Black German experiences as linear narratives of overcoming racist suffering. Zöllner and Soost's texts also move away from tracing diasporic roots. Both autobiographies mention but do not expand on the father figures and their African heritage. The authors do not seek diasporic belonging or respectively trace their Nigerian and Ghanaian roots. Black-German celebrity autobiographies have turned away from diasporic connections with the understanding that by telling their histories in a new way, they produce new realities and new notions of recognizing blackness in the German cultural context. Indeed, the combination of magical and realistic effects serves as a means of centering and helps establish recognition of Black German writing as a "fragmented, pluralistic, and necessarily contradictory cultural reservoir of diasporic expressivity" (Al-Samarai 58). The authors rely on Black German experiences that are not exclusively organized around difference, but rather around a "positional,

conditional and conjunctural"[142] notion of difference without a strict insistence on authenticity. The overlap of magical and realistic elements, however, does not merely negate blackness; such combinations also engage with it through staging recognition.

Black German celebrity autobiographies assert recognition at the center of German Wende and post-Wende discourses. They reveal, bring forth, and assert recognition of Black German self-confidence, self-respect, and self-esteem. Rather than relying on the politics of the Afro-German movement from the 1980s and 1990s, Black German celebrity autobiographies use autofiction and reality effects to illustrate the growing presence of Black German voices in public discourse and the diversity of Black German literature.

[142] See Hall, "New Ethnicities," p. 447.

Chapter Four

"Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu": Palimpsestic Multilayering and Memory in Afro-German Memoir

What is it like to have a history with Germany as a Black German minority? In an attempt to answer this question Germany's public international broadcaster *Deutsche Welle* (DW) launched a multimedia project on March 9, 2017. The initiative *Afro.Germany* gives a platform to Germans of color and seeks to raise awareness of the subtle, everyday racism that continues to impact German society.[143] Part of the project was the documentary film *Afro.Deutschland* (2017) in which TV host Jana Pareigis travels through Germany interviewing Afro-Germans about their stories. Among those interviewed are prominent figures like Gerald Asamoah and hip-hop artist Samy Deluxe, who speaks extensively about his personal history as a Black German. As one documentary interviewee, Theodor Wonja Michael, reminds the audience, the history of people of color in Germany spans over four hundred years.

Michael's memoir, *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu – Erinnerungen eines Afro-Deutschen* (2013; Black German, 2017), illustrates how his family has been connected to Germany for over one hundred years. The text cross-maps historical memories of African diasporic history, German colonialism, and National Socialism. Michael, a member of the first generation of native-born Afro-Germans—possibly the last surviving member—was born in Berlin in 1925.[144] He is the child of Cameroonian Theophilus Wonja Michael and Martha Wegner, a white German. The memoir traces Michael's Afro-German life throughout the social and political upheavals in the twentieth century, particularly the rise of Nazism and its racial state, WWII, post-war reconstruction in West Germany, and reunification after 1989. After the early death of

[143] See Susanne Lenz-Gleissner, "#afrogermany – How white is Germany?"
[144] See Farhad Mirza, "Being Black: Still a multi-front struggle."

his parents, the young Michael became part of a *Völkerschau* and played supporting roles in UFA colonial films until his imprisonment in a forced labor camp in 1943. Following his liberation, he was initially suspected of collaboration with the Nazis, but had achieved success by the time he retired as a public speaker and *Regierungsdirektor* (Senior Government Official) of the Federal Intelligence Service.

The memoirs of Black German survivors of National Socialism provide a unique perspective on twentieth-century German history; they reveal an important chapter in the national and global diasporic history. Gert Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann: Mein Leben in Deutschland* (Who's afraid of the Black man [also a German children's game]: My life in Germany, 2011), is the only memoir by a Black German concentration camp survivor. Schramm's work offers a different perspective on the cross-mapping of Black German experiences and the memory of National Socialism and the Holocaust (Göttsche, "Self-Assertion" 75); literary scholar Dirk Göttsche finds the text particularly noteworthy for its links between these themes, as well as Schramm's ambivalent memories of the GDR. Schramm, born in Erfurt in 1928 to a white German mother and an African-American father of Cuban descent, was imprisoned at the age of fourteen and sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp in October 1943. Thanks to the Communist-led underground he survived, though his father is presumed to have died in Auschwitz. After liberation in 1945, Schramm moved from East to West Germany before making the unusual decision to return to the GDR in 1964.[145] After retirement, he dedicated his life to educating the public about fascist regimes. He died in 2016 in Erfurt, Germany.

[145] See Dirk Göttsche, "Self-Assertion, Intervention, and Achievement," p. 75.

Both memoirs remember Black German self-assertion and adversity during the Nazi period, in postwar East and West Germany, and in the context of resurgent right-wing violence after German reunification.[146] Göttsche points to the importance of both texts because they provide a nuanced account of how consideration for the history of Germany's Black German minority challenges the concept of a German cultural memory as that of a white imagined community. Explicitly, Schramm, who writes from a perspective of Black antifascism, "frames his memoir as a critical intervention into post-unification German cultures of memory" (Göttsche, "Self-Assertion" 75) that demonstrates a growing discontent between public forms of commemoration for the victims of National Socialism and personal forms of memory and mourning. In particular, Schramm addresses the tension surrounding the debate over the role and design of the Buchenwald Memorial. Writing as an active member of the committee of former concentration camp inmates at Buchenwald, he expresses his "dissatisfaction with the politics of memory in post-unification Germany" (Göttsche, "Self-Assertion" 75). Theodor Michael's memoir, written from a working-class perspective, also takes a multidirectional approach to memory. He especially attends to the struggles of a nation unable yet to understand him, and many others, as Germans who happen to be Black. His memoir is an account of coming to consciousness as a man who proudly understands himself as both: Black and German. Accordingly, the text illuminates key aspects of modern German social history as well as post-war history and memory of the Black diaspora. The discursive frames of reference here are German cultures of memory, post-unification discourse, and international antifascism as well as African or African-American culture and modern transnational multiculturalism.

[146] Ibid.

Taking these interconnections between histories and memories as a point of departure, this chapter focuses on how the use of textual multilayering to examine Black German historical experiences has helped to form and establish a Black German collective memory. I am particularly interested in a textual practice I henceforth refer to as palimpsestic multilayering, a term inspired by Max Silverman's model of *palimpsestic memory*. As a result of this use of textual multilayering, Black German collective memory emerges and redefines Germany's cultural memory by crafting these memories as essentially interconnected and mutually enriching. First, the chapter shows how Black German memoir emerges in response to socio-demographic changes and dominant memory discourses in post-Wende Germany. Second, it illustrates how sociological and literary approaches to memory, combined with the exploration of Black German historical experiences, are linked to Black German memoir writing, and in particular, to memoirs by the older generation of Black Germans. Third, close readings of Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* and Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* reveal how palimpsestic multilayering functions as an act of memory, bringing together a scattered minority history and re-envisioning and re-writing Black German collective and German cultural memory, as well as establishing connections to the global diaspora while contributing to German memory discourses.

German Memory Discourses, Palimpsest, Textual Multilayering and Black German Memory

The past two decades have seen a sharp increase in autobiographies, memoirs, and documentaries that engage with eyewitnesses' accounts of the Third Reich[147]. This boom in national memory discourse draws attention to the passing of the last generation of first-hand witnesses to National Socialism, those who lived through this period of German history as children and young adults. The personal accounts and stories of these eyewitnesses have produced a new dialogue that also includes German minorities. After more than forty years of an institutionalized "discourse of contrition" (Fuchs and Cosgrove 6), it is now possible to address the gap between subjective experiences of history and scholarly historical explanations that have heretofore excluded experiences of Black Germans. Private minority memoirs expose the limits of Germany's official remembrance culture that for too long side-lined minority memories of pre-and post-WWII. Literary representations of Black German historical experiences are also critical responses to two other observable trends in reunified Germany's cultural memory: the flattening of Germany's past and the ritualization of memory, both resulting in a sense of historical revisionism.[148]

The flattening of Germany's past is a trend in post-Wende memory discourses. Historian Peter Reichel coined the term *Entdifferenzierung* (flattening of the past) that describes the conflation of the period of National Socialism and GDR socialism under the label of totalitarianism. This fosters a slippage between two different pasts—Nazi Germany and GDR socialism—that shifts the burden of coming to terms with the past exclusively to East

[147] See Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove, "Introduction: Germany's Memory Contests and the Management of the Past," p. 6.
[148] See Friederike Eigler's article "Writing in the New Germany: Cultural Memory and Family Narratives," p. 18.

Germans.[149] The narrow focus in post-Wende public discourses on the role of East German State Police (Stasi) and the collaboration of many citizens with it is another effect of such conflation. It results in an undifferentiated view of East Germans as either collaborators or dissidents.[150] Such a flattening out of East German history leads to a general devaluation and marginalization of East German personal and collective histories.[151]

Another aspect of German post-Wende memory discourses is the ritualization of memory. Important here is Friederike Eigler's understanding of *ritualization of memory* to "denote a growing disconnect between public commemoration of the victims of National Socialism and personal forms of memory and mourning" ("Writing" 19). Some of the major public debates in recent decades are symptomatic of this tension: the debate about the role and design of former Buchenwald concentration camp, the controversy surrounding Martin Walser's 1998 peace prize speech about the appropriate forms of commemorating the past, and the ongoing debate about the role of German victims of the Allied area bombings versus the victims of the Holocaust and German war crimes. In the introduction to *Germany's Memory Contests* (2006), Anne Fuchs and Mary Cosgrove note that this debate was prompted by W. G. Sebald's lecture *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (The Air-Raids and Literature, 1999). As Fuchs and Cosgrove establish, the publication of Günter Grass' *Im Krebsgang* (Crab Walk, 2002) illustrates that Sebald "hit a nerve by homing in on feelings" (7) just under the surface of postwar German discourse. The novel takes pains to contextualize and qualify the portrayal of Germans as victims when it describes the sinking of the ship *Gustloff* by the Soviets towards the end of the war, an act that resulted in the drownings of women and children in addition to German soldiers

[149] See Peter Reichel's *Politik mit der Erinnerung*.
[150] See Friederike Eigler's article "Writing in the New Germany," p. 18.
[151] Ibid., p. 19.

returning from the eastern front.[152] Grass adopts a complex narrative structure that complicates unreflected identification with the German victims. Ironically, however, *Krebsgang* has prompted "a public discourse on victimhood that often lacks mediation or critical self-reflection" (Eigler, "Writing" 19). The ritualization of collective memory and resulting historical revisionism, combined with a general sense of stagnation in contemporary German society, also contributes to the difficult relationship between majority and minority cultures.

There is a disconnect between dominant forms of memory and commemoration, and the global context of challenges facing Germany within Europe. Scholars of German studies, such as Leslie A. Adelson, Petra Fachinger, and Friederik Eigler, have commented critically on this disconnect.[153] Issues raised in this context concern the significance of the German past for minority cultures in Germany. It is important to ask how a consideration of the histories of minority groups living in Germany affects the very notion of a German past. Michael's memoir *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* precisely responds to such a line of inquiry and explores what it means to have a Black German history in a country that still recognizes its Black German citizens as Others-from-Without. Schramm's memoir *Wer hat Angst vorm Schwarzen Mann* speaks out against the flattening of East German history and East German life stories. These literary texts are in a unique position to capture complex and nonlinear processes of remembering. Black German memoir is a genre particularly suited to explorations of the intersections between individual and collective memories of twentieth-century German and diasporic history.

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[152] Ibid., p. 20.

[153] See Leslie A. Adelson, "The Turkish Turn in Contemporary German Literature and Memory Work"; Petra Fachinger, *Rewriting Germany from the Margins: 'Other' German Literature of the 1980s and 1990s*; Friederike Eigler, "Memory, Moralism, and Coming to Terms with the Present: Martin Walser and Zafer Şenocak."

Many Black German memoirs are written by actual witnesses to Nazi Germany, WWII, the Holocaust, and the separation and eventual reunification of Germany.[154] Much like the generation of white majority writers who are also witnesses—for example Günter Grass— Black German writers rely on their own memories; it is the experiences and outcomes of the respective groups that are significantly different. While Grass explores the theme of German wartime suffering without a hint of historical revisionism, the same can't be said of *Der Brand* (The Fire, 2002) by historian Jörg Friedrich. Friedrich's text not only adopts the perspective of Germans as victims of the Allied carpet bombings but does so with a somewhat "inflammatory register" (Fuchs and Cosgrove 8). In contrast, Black German writers draw on what Max Silverman terms *concentrationary memory*, which is a memory not limited in its scope, and which therefore escapes "ethno-cultural or religious particularization" (Pollock and Silverman 48). This approach to memory is rooted in the idea that the concentrationary camp culture the Nazi era brought onto the world—a culture of political experiments for the destruction of humans—remains and is now a permanent presence shadowing modern life.[155] Silverman argues that concentrationary memories and art in general must be invoked to show the haunting of the present by this past so that we can read for the signs of terror. Most Black German memoirs combine overlooked historical facts and events with the subsequent processes of forgetting, in addition to preserving aspects of the past which occur outside of dominant discourses of public memory. The authors' reliance on pluralist remnants of the past presents intriguing possibilities for literary representation of German and diasporic history and memory.

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[154] Besides Michael and Schramm, see also Hans J. Massaquoi's *Hänschen klein, ging allein …: Mein Weg in die neue Welt* (Little Hans went alone…[A German children's song]: My journey to the New World, 2004) and Marie Nejar's *Mach nicht so traurige Augen, weil du ein Negerlein bist: Meine Jugend im Dritten Reich* (Don't look so sad because you're a little Negro: My youth in the Third Reich, 2007).

[155] For more detail see Pollock and Silverman's *Concentrationary Memories*.

Grounding the analysis of Black German memoir in sociological studies of memory, combined with approaches used in literary and cultural studies that focus on the media of memory (*Gedächtnismedien*), is supported by the interconnectedness of both areas. The considerable increase in publications of a much more diverse range of Black German literature, with a focus on diasporic history and its significance for Germany's present, indicates the field is yet another example of the interplay between academic research and literary trends.[156] The specific kinds of memory most pertinent for a reading of Black German memoir are *collective memory* and *cultural memory*. Many scholars rely on these distinctions between collective memory and cultural memory, terms developed by Jan and Aleida Assmann.[157] The categories in the Assmann model are determined by present interests and the need for identity within a society or particular group. Collective memory denotes the memories of a large group or community as defined by current political or social interests, and cultural memory refers to the ways in which a society or nation conceptualizes and remembers the past. Cultural memory relies on a range of institutions, rituals, commemorative events, and archives—what Pierre Nora deems *lieux de memoire*, i.e., sites of memory.[158] Their distinction is particularly helpful for understanding the extent to which they counteract or support dominant memory discourses.

In his book *Palimpsestic Memory* (2013), Max Silverman introduces a new model of cultural memory called *palimpsestic memory*. With a focus on French and Francophone fiction, film, and theoretical texts, he examines the interconnections between histories and memories of the Holocaust and Colonialism. For Silverman, the figure of palimpsest successfully reflects the

[156] See Dirk Göttsche, "Self-Assertion, Intervention, and Achievement," p. 67.
[157] See Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann, "Das Gestern im Heute. Medien des sozialen Gedächtnisses."
[158] See Pierre Nora's *Les lieux de mémoire*. In English: *Realms of Memory: The Construction of the French Past*, 3 volumes, under the direction of Pierre Nora, English Language edition ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman.

hybrid and dynamic qualities of memory and captures most completely the spatialization of time. It functions "according to a complex process of interconnection, interaction, substitution and displacement of memory traces in which the particular and the universal, and memory and history, are inextricably held in an anxious relationship" (Silverman 28). By challenging linear time and discrete space, and by emphasizing the ambivalent connections between the particular and the universal (rather than representing them as binary opposites), palimpsestic memory facilitates a dialogue among people of various national and ethnic origins. Silverman builds on and advances Pierre Nora's model of *lieux de mémoire*—sites of memory— thereby drawing our attention to the articulation of the past in a wide array of sites, which broadly include monuments and museums, literary texts, cities, personages, symbols, and more.[159] His palimpsestic memory seeks to offer an understanding of memory that does not merely take an additive approach but highlights the constant interaction between collective group memories. Many critical theorists now consider the conceptualization of collective or cultural memory beyond the framework of the imagined community and the nation state. Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal, and Max Silverman introduce such a model, which they called *noeuds de mémoire*, knots of memory.[160] The knots in question are another variation of intersecting memories and are closely related to the concept of the palimpsest memories. Both models suggest that acts of memories are rhizomatic networks of temporality and cultural references that exceed territorialization. The performance of memory, however, may well have territorializing or identity-forming effects, but those effects are always contingent and open to resignification.

[159] See Pierre Nora *Les lieux de mémoire*.
[160] See Michael Rothberg, Debarati Sanyal and Max Silverman's *Noeuds De Mémoire.*

The figure of the palimpsest is of significance to the representation of Black German memories. The palimpsest as a metaphor for intersecting memories is given concrete from in *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* and *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann*. In both memoirs, histories of the African diaspora, German Colonialism, National Socialism, and the rise and demise of the German Democratic Republic are brought into contact via the lives of their main subjects. The texts engage in palimpsestic multilayering of memories and personal histories. They invoke memories predicated on transversal connections – both transnational (West and East Germany, Russia and post-Wende Germany) and transhistorical (WWI, WWII, Cold War, German Reunification). *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* and *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* create interactive memory connections. Their texts tie together multiple group memories and layer them in a manner that allows for a critical exploration of displacement and belonging, forgetting and remembrance, as well as national and minority memory. Textual palimpsestic multilayering here refers to acts of intersecting textual elements that create productive interactions of different inscriptions. Such interactions create a Black German memory that is in dialogue with dominant narratives of German and diasporic history.

Sites of Memory and Belonging

Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* is an account of the coming to consciousness of a man who understands himself as both Black and German. The text presents in sixty-eight episodes[161] key aspects of diasporic German social-, war-, and post-war history. The narrative

[161] See Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* and the episodes "Weiße Mutter, schwarzer Vater,"Die Wurzeln in Kamerun," "Die Geschichte meines Vaters," "Völkerschau," "Schule," "Der Reichstag brennt," "Zirkuskind," "Der Tod meines Vaters," "Berlin-Karlshorst," „Nicht erwünscht," "Als »Äthiopier« in Schweden," "Auf Knien dankbar," "Der Herr ist mein Hirte," "Die Gesetze von Nürnberg," "Kriegsbeginn," "Hotel Excelsior," "München,"

begins in 1925 with the birth of Theodor Michael, a biracial child and the youngest of four; his personal story is embedded in the larger political history of Friedrich Ebert's death and the presidency of Paul Hindenburg. This picture is complicated by the Cameroonian identity of his father and the early death of his German mother, Martha. After the father's divorce from his second wife, the children grow up as semi-orphans until the father joins the so-called *Völkerschauen* and takes the children on as extras. The siblings must split up after the death of their father in 1934, and Michael continues to work in circuses and in film, all the while experiencing the tightening knot of racial discrimination under the Nazis in the years leading up to WWII. As a forced laborer, he survives the war and tries to make a living as an actor in post-war Germany. Due to his biracial heritage he was not allowed to train for a profession during the Nazi regime, placing him at a disadvantage when he entered the job market. Eventually, he returns to school and earns his master's degree from the Institute of Economics and Politics in Hamburg. Later in life, Michael holds a position as editor of the journal Afrika-Bulletin and as the economic advisor for German developmental projects in Niger, Ghana, and Nigeria.

Michael crafts various forms of ID as palimpsestic documents on which he depicts multi-layered histories of displacement and belonging. In five episodes these types of documents are not backdrops for identification but rather interactive canvases where individual and social

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"Hotel Alhambra," "Cinecittà," "Münchhausen," "Die Gedanken sind frei," "Zwangsarbeiter," "Ein anderes Quartier," "Fliegeralarm," "Angst, nur Angst," "Arier," "Ein Wunder," "Befreit! Befreit?" "Die Russen," "Doswidanja," "Sieger und Nicht-Sieger," "Widersprüchliche Gefühle," "Lehrstunde in Sachen Demokratie," "Displaced Person," "Eine folgenreiche Begegnung," "Ein Ausflug," "Eine neue Familie," "Butzbach," "Kleinere und größere Katastrophen," "Eine Stellung bei der US Army," "Begegnung mit »Landsleuten«," "Showbusiness," "Wiedersehen mit den Geschwistern," "Keine Arbeit," "Theater," "Rundfunk," "Fernsehen," "Zeit der Not," "Im Sanatorium," "Vergiftetes Klima," "Endlich eine Chance," "Die Entkolonialisierung Afrikas," "Studium in Paris," "Neuanfang," "Das Afrika-Bulletin," "Terra incognita," "Afrikanische Beziehungen," "In der Heimat meines Vaters," "Beamter beim BND," "Eine neue afro-deutsche Community," "Erfahrungen," "Hell und Dunkel," "Homestory Deutschland," "Eine Reise in die (Noch-) DDR," "Zurück zum Theater," "Verlust und Neuanfang," "Letzte Rollen," "Wenn ich über mein Leben nachdenke."

history meet.[162] They function as layered sites of memory, a haunted presence surrounding Afro-German experiences of traumatic displacement. The history of the Weimar Republic, the rise of National Socialism, and the eras of WWII and decolonization are recurrent references that not only trace a history of displacement, but through their legacies ultimately evoke a sense of belonging by coming to consciousness as Afro-German. The evocation of identity documents illustrates the writing and re-writing of national belonging for biracial individuals.

The first document mentioned belongs to Michael's sister; her escape from Nazi Germany in 1937 is complicated by a document that effectively dissolved Theodor's German citizenship.

> Sie brauchte noch einen Reisepass, denn der Kinderausweis war nicht mehr gültig. Auf Antrag – bekanntlich läuft in Deutschland nichts ohne Antrag – wurde ihr ein grauer Fremdenpass mit der Eintragung „staatenlos" ausgehändigt. Wir waren „deutsche Vollwaisen" gewesen, dem deutschen Vormundschaftsgericht unterstellt. Wir hatten als „Deutsche" gegolten und uns als Deutsche verstanden. Unser Vater hatte noch einen Reisepass mit der Eintragung „Schutzgebiet Kamerun" gehabt, der allerdings nach seinem Tod verloren gegangen war. Mit diesem Fremdenpass bekamen wir nun zum ersten Mal offiziell mitgeteilt, dass wir keine deutschen Staatsangehörigen mehr waren. (DS 45)[163]

[Now she needed a passport, because the child's identity papers were no longer valid. On application—nothing happens in Germany without an application—she was given a grey Alien's passport with the entry "stateless". We had been "German orphans", wards of the German court. We had been regarded as Germans and thought of ourselves as Germans. Our father had had a German passport endorsed "Cameroon Protectorate" (which had gone missing after his death). With this Alien's passport we were officially informed for the first time that we were no longer German nationals. (BG 50)][164]

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[162] See Michael's episodes "Der Reichstag brennt," "Als Äthiopier in Schweden," "Lehrstunde in Demokratie," "Displaced Person," "Wiedersehen mit den Geschwistern."

[163] All quotations from *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* are taken from the following edition: Theodor Michael, *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* (dtv, 2013). Page numbers will be inserted after the block quote, accompanied by the abbreviation DS.

[164] All translations are taken from: Theodor Michael, *Black German: An Afro-German Life in the Twentieth Century*. Translated by Eve Rosenhaft, Liverpool UP, 2017. Page numbers will be inserted after the block quote accompanied by the abbreviation BG.

The alien passport, a document with the inscription "stateless," overwrites the German nationality for the biracial children. As the *Fremdenpass* (alien passport) replaces the *Kinderausweis* (children's identity card), the stateless identity overwrites German national belonging and the father's trace as a Cameroonian German national is erased. For Michael, the presence of the *Fremdenpass* (alien passport) is the first written sign that his biracial identity is no longer part of the German nation state. The document functions as a visible memory trace that cross-maps the systematic genocide and extermination of Germany's non-Aryan and Jewish populations.

The document is a paper trail that traces the beginnings of NS genocide back to earlier pre-war laws (Reichsbürgergesetz of 1935, Reich Citizenship Law)[165] that targeted Germany's Jewish and *Schutzangehörigen* (Germans of colonial heritage) population. German Jews were downgraded from the category of *Reichsbürger* (Reich Citizens) to the lesser category of *Staatsangehörige* (nationals), and former *Schutzangehörige* (Germans of colonial heritage) were declared *staatenlos* (stateless).[166] Based on the assertion that the NS regime, as a successor of the Weimar Republic, did not and had never owned colonies, the government claimed no responsibility for colonial migrants and their children. In 1935, these laws were recognized as part of an intensified combination of legislative, administrative, and party action against the 'non-Aryan' population of Germany. Such actions led to a catastrophic development in which the targeted populations were faced with pauperization or exile.[167] Due to its ever-changing appearance—"Kinderausweis" (children's identity card), "deutscher Reisepass" (German

[165] For details see Wilhelm Stuckart and Hans Globke, *Reichsbürgergesetz vom 15. September 1935, Gesetz zum Schutze des deutschen Blutes und der deutschen Ehre vom 15. September 1935, Gesetz zum Schutze der Erbgesundheit des deutschen Volkes (Ehegesundheitsgesetz) vom 18. Oktober 1935 nebst allen Ausführungsvorschriften und den einschlägigen Gesetzen und Verordnungen,* p. 236.
[166] See Andy Aitchison, "Genocide and 'ethnic cleansing'," p. 766.
[167] Ibid.

Passport), "grauer Fremdenpass mit Eintragung 'staatenlos'" (grey Alien's passport with the entry "stateless"—, the identification document captures the terror of the NS years and the attempt to expunge Afro-German existence, along with their memories, under layers of new legal identity inscriptions that write Afro-German presence out of the German nation state.

The second document mentioned is a Russian identification card; issued by the Soviets in late 1945, this card lists Michael as a displaced person due to war activity. It is this document that functions for him as a glimmer of hope for new belonging and simultaneously illustrates a global unawareness of the Afro-German diaspora as part of the German nation. The uncertain nature of his national identity, and his hopes to use this to his advantage, indicate a very different layering of Afro-German war-time experience projected onto the pages of the document. Here, a war-time story of Afro-German agency, rather than the terror of racial persecution and displacement, is linked with the passport.

> Ein netter russischer Unteroffizier füllte eine Karte aus mit Namen, Geburtsort und Nationalität. Da war sie wieder, diese Frage nach der Nationalität. Was war ich eigentlich? Ich überlegte. Meine Staatsangehörigkeit war mir gegen meinen Willen genommen worden. Eine andere hatte ich nicht. „Nemetzki" also deutsch, stimmte nicht mehr und "staatenlos" war keine Nationalität, also was war ich? Der Unteroffizier sah mich fragend an. Ich müsste doch wohl wissen, welcher Nationalität ich sei. Also gab ich „afrikanitzki" an. Er schrieb etwas auf die Karte, das, was ich gesagt hatte, wie ich annahm, und gab sie mir, sowie eine Anschrift, wo ich mich melden sollte. […]
>
> Ich legte meine Karte vor und erhielt ein weiteres Papier auf dem stand „amerikanitzki". Wer nun „afrikanitzki" mit „amerikanitzki" vertauscht hatte, weiß ich nicht, der Soldat in der Kommandatur oder der im Lager. Die Karte war kyrillisch beschriftet. Auf jeden Fall war ich jetzt „amerikanitzki" und das hatte viele Vorzüge. (DS 102-103)

[A friendly Russian officer filled out a card with name, birthplace and nationality. There it was again, that question about nationality. What was I then? I thought about it. My nationality had been taken from me against my will. I didn't have another one. "Nemetzki"—German—wasn't true anymore and "stateless" wasn't a nationality. The officer looked at me inquiringly: surely, I knew my own nationality. So, I said "afrikanitzki". He wrote something on the card – I assumed it was what I had said – and gave it to me with an address that I should report to. […]

I handed over my card and received another document with which "amerikanitzki" written on it. I don't know who had replaced "afrikanitzki" with "amerikanitzki", the soldier in the military headquarters or someone in the camp. In any case I was now "amerikanitzki" and that had many advantages. (BG 110)]

The confusion about Michael's national belonging, marked by the bilingual textual layers of various nationalities such as "'nemetzki' also deutsch," "staatenlos, "afrikanitzki," "amerikanitzki," ('nemetzki'—German—, stateless, afrikanitzki, amerikanitzki) leads to a clerical error. Due to Michael's misleading identification as African—with African not being a nationality—he ends up with another document identifying him as American. "Ich legte meine Karte vor und erhielt ein weiteres Papier auf dem stand "amerikanitzki" (I handed over my card and received another document with which "amerikanitzki" written on it). The recurring question of national belonging, or the absence thereof, produces an unexpected misrecognition that ultimately works to Michael's advantage. His new nationality allows him to travel freely. The ID card's changing appearance captures an endless cycle of erasure and re-writing. The act of erasing the stateless identity by rewriting it as American also reveals deeper associations with questions of belonging; African American identity has greater recognition throughout the nation state of Germany when compared to that of Black Germans. The writing of Michael as one belonging to the American imagined community is not out of place within larger societal recognition and cultural memory.

The text stages an important part of Black German history through layered textual representations. These representations unite memories of mistaken identities and trace Black

German history of misrecognition. The card intersects memories across national borders (NS Germany, Soviet Union, United States of America) and time (pre-WWII and post- WWII). Layered memories of misrecognition inflicted by German, Russian and eventually American officials come together in the textual layers of the ID card and culminate in the rewriting of Michael's identity. With a mistaken identity that identifies Michael as American, he hopes to leave Germany and the history of misrecognition behind:

> Ich hatte ja immer noch mein russisches Dokument mit der Bezeichnung „amerikanitzki". Dabei blieb es erst einmal. Ich machte mir Hoffnungen, dass ich damit aus diesem zerstörten, finsteren Land wegkam, meiner Heimat, die mich aber ausgespuckt hatte wie einen alten Kaugummi. (DS 105)

[I still had my Russian papers with "amerikanitzki" written on them. They were fine for the moment. I was hoping that I could use them to get out of this dark, ruined country, my home which had spat me out like an old piece of chewing gum. (BG 112)]

In addition to his alien passport, Michael holds on to the Russian document that identifies him as American. This document traces the rewriting of his identity and becomes physical manifestation of a symbolic future: "Ich machte mir Hoffnungen […]" (I was hoping that […]). The card captures juxtaposing memories of belonging and displacement, textually represented by the nouns "Heimat" (home) and "Land" (land), in combination with negative adjectives like "zerstört" (ruined) and "finster" (dark), which metaphorically culminate in the consumption of human life. Michael's former homeland, Germany, treated him like a used piece of gum. At the same time, the card visualizes hopes and dreams—"Hoffnungen" (hopes)—that include a new life beyond Germany's national borders, which fills the void left by an erased identity. In doing so the text establishes a connection between memory, the act of writing a palimpsest document, and the potential creation of a new diasporic identity. Michael's memories of displacement and belonging are organized according to the principle of writing documents of identification; they are first made for one purpose, and later remade for another.

Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu enables one to gauge the fractured and disconnected inscriptions of Black German identity and memories of misrecognition in the representation of multilayered documents. The text explores sites of memory not only as a set of multilayered inscriptions that testify to the past, but also as a way of writing a collective memory. The latter represents an inquiry into what is lost in the gaps between the acts of writing and the multiple layers of documents. As the text seems to layer memories of displacement and belonging onto the pages of the documents, the reader connects these documents with the memories. The process of reading pieces the memories together to produce what constitutes Black German memory. The reliance on intersecting memories presents literary representations that expose the limits of Germany's official remembrance culture. In particular, multilayered representations of Afro-German memories are performances that critically comment on the post-war memory politics that largely bring together memory discourses of the white majority. *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* sets up particular memories that expose the writing out of national memory discourses while simultaneously highlighting the constitutive power of intersecting memories: Afro-Germans as victims of misrecognition but also as agents in the resistance of historical revisionism. In a post-Wende moment linked with historical revisionism, when public forms of memory have overlooked minority memories, the memoir reveals neglected stories of identity loss and gain that can still be traced through overlaid inscriptions.

Knots of Memory and Remembrance

Gert Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* is the only memoir by a Black German concentration camp survivor; it approaches Black German memory through the subjects of resistance and remembrance. In eight chapters[168], the text turns to the life of Schramm, born in Erfurt on November 25, 1928, as the son of a white mother and an African American father of Cuban descent. He is imprisoned after an initial confrontation with the NS system and in October 1943, at the age of fourteen, is sent to Buchenwald where he survives thanks to the communist-led underground. Schramm moves from passive observer of the communist underground to beneficiary of their action and finally to an active member of the post-war labor movement and a member of the prisoner's advisory board of the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation. One of the innovations of the memoir, apart from the main character Schramm as active agent, is the focus upon choice, and responsibility. In the memoir's narrative, Schramm, one of the teenage minors saved in Buchenwald, is never recruited by, or obligated to collaborate with, the Buchenwald resistance; he willingly chooses to remain at the camp after liberation to help dissolve it. His choices—personal and political—are tied to the persecution of political and racial groups, as well as the collaboration with the SS. The layering of personal agency, persecution, and collaboration unites in entangled moments that constitute the instance of palimpsestic writing.

From the first moments after arrival at Buchenwald, the banality of death is clear. Schramm witnesses the removal of dead bodies from his sleeping box where he spent the night prior.[169] Daily confrontation with dead bodies stacked outside his building reminds him that SS

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[168] See Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* and the episodes "Behütet und beschützt. *Kindheit*," "Wechsel auf Zeit. *Kleinstadtjugend*," "Abgeführt wie ein Verbrecher. *Verhaftung*," "Vom Menschen zur Nummer gemacht. *Buchenwald*," "Endlich frei. *Neubeginn*," "Glück auf! ohne Grenzen. Unter Tage," "Wieder von vorn. *DDR*," "Die Zeiten ändern sich. *Umbrüche.*"

[169] See *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann*, p. 87.

persecution is not the only source of death in the camp; hunger, diseases, and suicide claim the rest. Schramm witnesses the killing of a Jewish inmate, a teenage boy only a few years older than him. The perpetrator is a leader of his block unit and a prisoner functionary, also known as a kapo. Kapos are assigned by SS guards to supervise forced labor in a system created to turn victims against victims. The encounter with a communist kapo, however, is the tipping point in Schramm's imprisonment. Due to the communist resistance within the camps, this encounter does not lead to Schramm's death but to his survival.

Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann explores the subjects of remembrance and resistance through the tying together of personal and multiple group memories. These knots are another variation of intersecting memories and are closely related to the concept of palimpsestic memory. The textual performance of entangled personal and group memories is what constitutes the identity-forming effect for a Black German collective memory. Schramm creates textual knots and intersects memories that undermine any polarized reading of characters as victim, perpetrator, or collaborator as each group's memory is read through and transformed by the other.

> Diese Schonzeit nach der Schinderei im Steinbruch verdanke ich dem seit Jahren verantwortlichen Kapo des Baukommandos, Robert Siewert. Die Kapos waren Häftlinge, die den Arbeitskommandos vorstanden und dem jeweligen SS-Kommandoführer verantwortlich waren. Er ließ sie einsetzen und erteilte alle Befehle. Siewert war Maurer, hatte in den zwanziger Jahren als kommunistischer Abgeordneter im Sächsischen Landtag gesessen. Unter den Häftlingen genoss er großes Ansehen, denn er hatte bei der SS erreicht, dass in seinem Kommando polnische und jüdische Jugendliche eine Maurerlehre machen durften. Immer wieder setzte er sich für andere ein; die Jungen behielt er besonders im Blick, weil sie im Lager schnell eingehen konnten. (WhA 101)[170]

[170] All quotations from *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* are taken from the following edition: Gert Schramm, *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* (Aufbau, 2011). Page numbers will be inserted after the block quote, accompanied by the abbreviation WhA.

[I owe this convalescence period after the drudgery in the pit the longstanding responsible kapo of the construction commando, Robert Siewert. The kapos were prisoners who were superiors to the work commandos and accountable to the SS detail leader. He assigned them and was in charge of all orders. Siewert was a bricklayer, in the 1920's he held a seat in the Saxon state parliament as a communist representative. He was held in high esteem amongst the prisoners, because he brought about with the SS that Polish and Jewish youth was allowed to apprentice to become bricklayers. Tirelessly, he advocated for others; he especially had an eye on the youth, since they could easily wither away in the camps.][171]

Schramm's memories of Buchenwald intersect with memories of forced labor and survival, the communist underground resistance, and the destiny of Polish and Jewish camp youth. The description of Robert Siewert ties Schramm's personal memory – "Unter den Häftlingen genoss er großes Ansehen […]" (He was held in high esteem amongst the prisoners) – to the collective Jewish and Polish Holocaust memory: "[…], dass in seinem Kommando polnische und jüdische Jugendliche eine Maurerlehre machen durften" (that Polish and Jewish youth was allowed to apprentice to become bricklayers). The text also evokes German cultural memories of individuals within the SS kapo system. Instead of staging such individuals as SS collaborators, the text presents kapo Siewert as a member of organized resistance. Siewert facilitates Black German, Polish, and Jewish survival based not only on his individual actions but on the organized communist resistance network of Buchenwald. The text ties together Siewert's various roles as private individual, SS collaborator, professional, and political activist—"Siewert", "kapo", "bricklayer", "communist representative"—that respectively intersect Schramm's private memories with German cultural memories, as well as Polish and Jewish group memories. These textual intersections constitute an act of remembrance of the communist underground movement within the death camps as that of a support system of political activism. As such, Schramm describes Siewert as a communist activist with a focus on male camp youth: "Immer wieder setzte er sich für andere ein; die Jungen behielt er besonders im Blick, weil sie im Lager

[171] This and all subsequent translations are my own.

schnell eingehen konnten“ (Tirelessly, he advocated for others; he especially had an eye on the youth, since they could easily wither away in the camps). On one hand, this extends the memory that comes immediately before, which celebrates Siewert in his activist accomplishments, “[…] er hatte bei der SS erreicht, dass polnische und jüdische Jugendliche eine Maurerlehre machen durften” (because he brought about with the SS that Polish and Jewish youth was allowed to apprentice to become bricklayers); on the other, this reads as a limitation of all activist activity by remembering the continuous presence of death within the camps. Such intersecting structures are used to connect and tie together memories related or opposed.

The representation of intersecting memories is also tied to post-WWII discourses of remembrance, particularly to the ritualization of memory. Textual knots appear in multiple places and constitute acts of memory that build networks of temporal and cultural references. Schramm, the teenage victim of NS persecution, continues to be an active member of the former concentration camp inmates of Buchenwald. As such, he ties Black German memories of resistance to ambivalent experiences of the German Democratic Republic, uniting them in a textual staging of critical remembrance. When public discourses in the 1970s GDR politicize survivor memories of Nazi Germany, conflicts arise between the regime and victim organizations. When these organizations are forced to adapt to the official interpretation of Nazism[172] and party membership, Schramm refuses to become a member of the SED (Socialist Unity Party of Germany). He furthermore challenges the party’s historical revisionism, which crafts the GDR as the only territory of full de-Nazification.

[172] Jürgen Danyel, “Die Opfer- und Verfolgtenperspektive als Gründungskonsens? Zum Umgang mit der Widerstandstradition und der Schuldfrage in der DDR” [The perspective of victims of persecution as a founding consensus? On dealing with resistance tradition and the question of guilt in the GDR], *in Die geteilte Vergangenheit. Zum Umgang mit Nationalsozialismus und Widerstand in beiden deutschen Staaten* [Divided past. Dealing with National Socialism and resistance in both German states], pp. 31-46.

> Erst versuchte er es auf die nette Tour: „Gert, dein Platz als Verfolgter des Naziregimes ist in der Partei der Arbeiterklasse! Denk doch mal darüber nach!“ Mit diesem Argument biss er natürlich auf Granit, wie dreißig Jahre zuvor die Gewerkschaftsgenossen in Berlin. Dann wurde er rigider. Es gehöre sich nicht, daß jemand wie ich auf hoher Leitungsebene parteilos sei. Ich müsse schließlich eine politische Vorbildfunktion für andere Werktätige ausüben. Dieser Spruch brachte mich in Rage: „Hör mir mal gut zu, mein Lieber. Nicht einen Tag komme ich unter fünfzehn, sechzehn Stunden aus diesem beschissenen Betrieb, Wochenende inklusive! Ich drücke mich nicht vor der Arbeit, ich sitze meine Zeit nicht in euren blöden Versammlungen ab und hole dort mein Nickerchen nach. Wenn du mich unbedingt in der Partei sehen willst, bitte sehr! Aber erst, wenn ihr vierzig Prozent eurer Mitglieder rausgeschmissen habt. (WhA 227-228)

[First, he tried it the nice way: “Gert, your place as a persecuted person of the NS regime is in the party of the working class! Think about it!” With this argument he of course banged his head against a brick wall, like the union comrades in Berlin thirty years prior. Then he became more rigid. It was supposedly bad manners that someone like me in the higher management was without party affiliation. Supposedly, I had to have a role model function for other workers. This really got me going: “Listen, my dear friend. Not one day I get out this damn company under fifteen to sixteen hours, including the weekend! I am not avoiding the work, I am not killing my time in your gatherings and get in my nap there. If you really want to see me in the party, fine! But only if you get rid of forty percent of your members first.]

Schramm draws from his post-war, working-class experiences in both West and East Germany by recalling an incident from thirty years earlier: “Erst versuchte er es auf die nette Tour: ‚Gert, dein Platz als Verfolgter des Naziregimes ist in der Partei der Arbeiterklasse! Denk doch mal darüber nach!’ Mit diesem Argument biss er natürlich auf Granit, wie dreißig Jahre zuvor die Gewerkschaftsgenossen in Berlin“ (First, he tried it the nice way: “Gert, your place as a persecuted person of the NS regime is in the party of the working class! Think about it!” With this argument he of course banged his head against a brick wall, like the union comrades in Berlin thirty years prior). Schramm textually unites post-war and cold war memories in a critique of the line drawn between National Socialism and the purified GDR. Schramm—a proclaimed Black anti-fascist—is the critical voice of a political system and its cultural memory that defines itself as anti-fascist. He challenges the myth of the *antifaschistisch – demokratische Umwälzung*

(anti-fascist democratic revolution)[173], which implies that full de-Nazification and democratization only became reality in the Soviet-controlled territories of Germany. Schramm's "Wenn du mich unbedingt in der Partei sehen willst, bitte sehr! Aber erst, wenn ihr vierzig Prozent eurer Mitglieder rausgeschmissen habt" (If you really want to see me in the party, fine! But only if you get rid of forty percent of your members first), transports the Nazi past into a socialist present and criticizes narratives of historical revisionism. His critique ties together group memories of NS survivors and Black German minorities in West and East Germany. He not only accounts for these memories but illustrates their interconnectedness across temporal and cultural discourses through his critique of socialist cultural memory. Indeed, this memory-to-memory knot accentuates the extent to which memory traces of the past overlap.

Textual knots offer much to consider. First, they recognize and establish Black German memories as closely connected with, but also differing from, other group memories. Black German memories can no longer be perceived as a marginal area of historical representation. As such, they critically comment on the dynamics of ritualization of memory. Secondly, the memory knots highlight how far intersections of minority persecution and resistance lead to reassessment of both. The text brings forth interconnected modes of personal, cultural, and collective memory to help the reader understand the effects of what Silverman describes as "superimposition and interaction of different temporal traces to constitute a sort of composite structure" (Silverman 3). In *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann,* political underground resistance adds to legacies of individual resistance, and Black German persecution becomes the barometer by which post-war political systems judge state resistance to a socialist regime and its cultural politics. Third, textual knots allow for an understanding of constantly shifting notions of remembrance and

[173] See *Wörterbuch der Geschichte,*Vol. 1: A–K (Dietz, 1984), pp. 43-46.

cultural memory. They help us to see that the ways in which we collectively remember are intersections of constructs that locate a collective in history and in the specific moments during which this collective is imagined – the 'now' through which all imaginings of said collective are imagined. Deciphering and exposing their underlying meanings is less a concern than the engagement of memory generated by encounters between the textual knots and the reader's curiosity. *Wer hat Angst* creates a series of open-ended textual knots; this provides the necessary space for the continued intersecting of past and present moments that establish collective Black German memory.

Palimpsestic Multilayering and Black German Memory

The relationship between Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* and Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* is clear. Both memoirs construct memories that are represented through layered sites of memory and interconnected knots of memory. These intersections generate and contribute to a Black German collective memory with discursive frames of reference to German cultures of memory, post-unification discourse, international antifascist, and diasporic memory. The concern in this last part of the chapter is to look at multilayering in both texts through the aspect of constituting a cohesive Black German memory. Specifically, it focuses on key moments when the autobiographical narratives conflate time and space for effect. In such moments, the text seems to undercut the logic of linear time, presenting layered memories for closer examination. In their palimpsestic layering, both memoirs alert the reader to questions of history, memory, and national identity. In addition, they prompt the need to reflect

on which stories have been transmitted, how they have been transmitted, and how that influences the future.

Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* engages in textual conflation of time and illustrates the continuity of racially motivated violence within varying German national discourses. Throughout the memoir, Schramm conflates time in pointing to the eerie relationship of events associated with the 25th of November. The significance of this day for Schramm's personal memory, as well as that of national cultural memory, is striking: it marks Schramm's birthday as a biracial German child in 1928, based on which his American father of Afro-Cuban descent is arrested by the Nazis in 1943 and sent to Auschwitz, as well as the killing of Amadeu Antio Kiowa by Neo-Nazis in 1990.[174] Throughout the memoir this date, "Ich wurde am 25. November 1928 in Erfurt geboren" (9), "Was die Nazis von einem Schwarzen mit Kind hielten, war aufgrund der Rassegesetze bekannt; …" (136), "Im November 1990 – an meinem 72. Geburtstag – wurde in Eberswalde der angolanische Vertragsarbeiter Antonio Amadeu […] zusammengeprügelt, […]" (246), signifies a reoccurring legacy of racially motivated violence that culminates in the textual conflation of time in the last chapter.

> Im November 1990 – an meinem 72. Geburtstag – wurde in Eberswalde der angolanische Vertragsarbeiter Antonio Amadeu von fünfzig Nazis so zusammengeprügelt, dass er kurz darauf starb. Ein gutes Dutzend Polizisten standen in der Nähe und rührte keinen verdammten Finger! Antonio war das erste Todesopfer rassisstischer Gewalt nach der Wende, und solche Übergriffe wiederholten sich von nun an Monat für Monat. (WhA 246-247)

[174] In 1990, black Angolan contract worker Amadeu Antonio Kiowa, who came to the small East German town Eberswalde in 1987, was attacked by a group of local white males. He was beaten unconscious, fell into a coma and died. Antonio was the first known case of racially motivated violence in reunified Germany. For more information see Christoph Dieckmann's *Zeit* article "…die ganzen Neger in der Stadt."

[In November 1990—on my 72nd birthday—an Angolan contract worker was battered by fifty Nazis in a manner that he died shortly after. A good dozen police officers stood in close proximity and did not stir a finger! Antonio was the first victim of racial violence after the fall of the wall, and such attacks now repeatedly occurred on a month to month basis.]

Though the passage starts with the relatively positive image, "Im November 1990 – an meinem 72. Geburtstag" (In November 1990—on my 72nd birthday—), the motif of racial violence and death follows immediately after. The layering of sentences collapses memories associated with this day. It brings forth interrelated Black German and diasporic memories of racially motivated violence within the various German nation states (Weimar Germany, Nazi Germany, post-Wende Germany). The noun "Geburtstag," followed by the verbs "zusammengeprügelt" (battered), and "starb" (died) alludes to the recurring cycle of birth, physical assault based on racial profiling, and eventual death. By conflating time within the narrative, Schramm frees the textual memories from the homogeneous space-time of post-Wende Germany. This allows the texts to extend and counter the cultural memories of post-Wende Germany as a democratic, multicultural nation.[175] The text brings forth reoccurring struggles resulting from a cultural memory solely tied to the framework of the German imagined community. The layered memories associated with the November 25th not only conflate time but also identify the continuity of German hate crimes, relating such crimes back to one common denominator: misguided national memory politics.

The text continues with a critical examination of Germany's post-Wende discourses, particularly regarding the sense of historical revisionism. Schramm's memoir comments on the larger debate around the reconfiguration of memory at the former Buchenwald concentration camp. He particularly reflects on "the extent to which replacing memory amounted to historical

[175] For more information on ethnic diversity in Germany see Frank Eckardt's article "Multiculturalism in Germany: From Ideology to Pragmatism – and Back?"

revision" and "the systematic discrediting of the heroic character of anti-fascist resistance" (Azaryahu 12). Buchenwald with its complex history (Nazi concentration camp, Soviet detention camp, East German memorial shrine) made the process of reorientation as a site of memory for reunified Germany's cultural memory a controversial issue.[176] According to the recommendations of the reorientation committee from 1992[177], Buchenwald now maps its respective chapters throughout history. The discussion about the appropriate commemoration of Buchenwald's history, as both Nazi concentration camp and Soviet detention camp, triggered a larger debate about Germany's past and the comparison of two German dictatorships (Nazi Germany and the communist GDR).[178] The debate lead to a post-Wende revival of the 'totalitarian' paradigm.[179] This paradigm emphasizes the notion that fascism and communism are both totalitarian systems, and hence two aspects of the same evil. This flattening of the past led to a larger discussion regarding the overshadowing of the Nazi past by the Stalinist past.[180] This flattening also took the focus of coming to terms from the Nazi past and shifted it onto East Germans and their communist regime. Parts of this discussion of the reorientation of Buchenwald surfaced in the respective use of the terms "heroes, victims and perpetrators" (Azaryahu 1). Schramm's memoir comments on these debates and the danger of erasure of East German depictions of anti-fascist resistance.[181]

The Black German Buchenwald survivor and active member of the Buchenwald Memorial Foundation, Schramm, challenges narratives of historical revisionism.

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[176] For more details see Maoz Azaryahu's article "RePlacing Memory: the Reorientation of Buchenwald."
[177] Ibid., p. 9.
[178] Ibid., p. 7.
[179] On the history of 'anti-totalitarianism' in West-Germany, see Jeffrey Herf's *Divided Memory*, p. 350; see also Ulricke Ackermann's article "Beharrlich verwechselt man in Deutschland", p. 12.
[180] See Jürgen Habermas, *A Berlin Republic*, p. 44.
[181] See Atkinson, "Buchenwald to Acknowledge Forgotten Dead of 'Camp No.2'."

> Letzten Endes ging es bei all den Diskussionen gar nicht in erster Linie um Buchenwald. Es ging eher darum, die NS-Verbrechen zu bagatellisieren und damit zu untergraben, wofür wir uns all die Jahre eingesetzt haben. Den Antifaschismus als solchen zu bekämpfen ist in dem Zusammenhang eine sehr deutsche Angelegenheit. Die Gleichsetzung des Antifaschismus mit dem System in der DDR und der Politik der SED ist gerade in Bezug auf Buchenwald irrig und falsch. Ich kenne keinen einzigen Kameraden – egal ob, »rassisch«, politisch oder religiös verfolgt –, der kein überzeugter Antifaschist ist. Damit will ich klar sagen: Was auch immer die SED für sich in Anspruch genommen haben mag – Antifaschismus steht nicht für ein Parteimonopol. Er ist zuallerest eine Haltung. Wie könnte es sonst sozialdemokratische, evangelische katholische, jüdische oder wie in meinem Fall schwarze Antifaschisten geben? (WhA 258-259)

[In the end, all these discussions were not primarily about Buchenwald. It was more about minimizing NS crimes and undermining what we had advocated for, for such a long time. To fight antifascism in this context is a very German issue. Equating antifascism with the GDR system and the politics of the SED is misguided and wrong, especially regarding Buchenwald. I do not know a single comrade – no matter if »racially«, politically or religiously persecuted – who is not a devoted antifascist. Let me make this clear: Whatever the SED claimed for itself – antifascism does not stand for a party's monopoly. It is first and foremost an attitude. How else could social democratic, evangelical, catholic, Jewish, or in my case black antifascists exist?]

For Schramm, Buchenwald—with a display of its three-part history—is a space that displays the continued absence of minority memory. Missing minority memories of anti-fascist resistance symbolize the dangerous relationship between the concealing effect of Germany's cultural memory and the continuation of national struggles with right-wing violence. Schramm offers a critique that operates across space and time to unveil new traps of historic revisionism. His critique—"Es ging eher darum, die NS-Verbrechen zu bagatellisieren und damit zu untergraben, wofür wir uns all die Jahre eingesetzt haben" (It was more about minimizing NS crimes and undermining what we had advocated for, for such a long time)—interacts with the text's following noun groups. These noun groups layer "Antifaschismus," "System der DDR," and "Politik der SED" (antifascism, system of the GDR, politics of SED) and trigger reader associations of German cultural memory regarding East Germany's anti-fascist past. The verbs "bagatellisieren" and "untergraben" (minimize, undermine) establish the altering relationship between German cultural memory regarding Buchenwald's reorientation while exposing

historical revisionism as the cause for national post-Wende issues: "Den Antifaschismus als solchen zu bekämpfen ist in dem Zusammenhang eine sehr deutsche Angelegenheit" (To fight antifascism in this context is a very German issue). The text furthermore identifies the agents of critical intervention regarding such revisionism in favor of what Jeffry Herf calls the totalitarian paradigm.[182] It is Buchenwald survivors saved by the communist underground who offer alternating perspectives: "Ich kenne keinen einzigen Kameraden – egal ob, »rassisch«, politisch oder religiös verfolgt –, der kein überzeugter Antifaschist ist" (I do not know a single comrade—no matter if »racially«, politically or religiously persecuted—who is not a devoted antifascist). The interaction between the adverb chain "rassisch," "politisch," and "religiös," layered onto the noun "Antifaschist" creates a textual interaction of memory discourses. These interacting discourses of diasporic, national cultural, and Holocaust memories allows for an act of textual remembrance of the anti-fascist resistance that counteracts post-Wende discourses of historical revisionism. They create interacting textual manifestations of minority memory that counterbalance the larger reconfiguration of national cultural memory.

Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* expands national cultural memory by establishing a continuity of Black German memory across time and space. While reflecting on his 1987 retirement, he references the 1985 publication of Oguntoye/Schultz/Ayim's anthology *Farbe bekennen*. This moment of remembrance—at the beginning of his retirement—connects memories of Europe's Black colonial and postcolonial diaspora. The text combines Michael's memories from the Weimar Republic, NS Germany, and the post-war period in conjunction with the experiences of younger generations of Black Germans. These memory layers of Black

[182] See Jeffrey Herf's *Divided Memory*, p. 350.

German experiences challenge the reader to form analogies between past and present that generate a Black German collective memory for the future.

Michael's memory of joining the Black German community interconnects histories of racial stereotyping.

> Ich selber war seit April 1987 im Ruhestand und beschloss, mich dieser Gruppierung [ISD; Initiative Schwarze Deutsche] anzuschließen. Natürlich war ich willkommen und ich fand rasch Anschluss an die für mich neuen »Landsleute«. Mir wurde schnell klar, wie sehr diese jungen Leute, denen man, wie mir früher auch, oft das »Baströckchen« aus den Völkerschauen anziehen wollte und die sich immer noch nach dem Motto »der nimmt einem von UNS den Arbeitsplatz weg« mit Arbeitgebern, uneinsichtigen Vermietern und Rassisten herumschlagen mussten, positive Vorbilder benötigten, Menschen mit langen Erfahrungen im Umgang mit der Mehrheitsgesellschaft, die deren Bedingungen aber nie akzeptiert hatten. Und genau dies konnte ich anbieten. (DS 179)

[I was retired after April 1987 and decided to join this movement (ISD; The Initiative of Black People in Germany). Of course, I was welcome, and I quickly linked up with these new "countrymen and countrywomen". It soon became clear to me how much these young people, still often expected to dress in "grass skirts" as I had in the Völkerschau, still struggling with employers, blinkered landlords and racists ("They're taking OUR jobs."), needed positive role models, people who were experienced in dealing with the majority society but had never accepted its conditions. And that was just what I had to offer.] (BG 190)

The text layers past and present acts of racialization that transcend a competitive understanding of Black German memory discourses. Memories of a racialized past—"das »Baströckchen« aus den Völkerschauen" ("grass skirts" as I had in the Völkerschau)—vertically unite with Black German experiences of the present—"nach dem Motto »der nimmt einem von UNS den Arbeitsplatz weg«" (with employers, blinkered landlords, and racists)—to transcend the notion that each generation assigns more importance to its own stories of discrimination. It is the textual representation of layered memories that creates a connection, facilitating a coherent image of collective memories. Drawing such vertical connections through time, by combining pre-WWII memories with Black German memories of the late 1980s, closes the memory gaps of Germany's diaspora, disconnected by political, spatial and temporal separation. The text builds on

interacting textual reference that create a cohesive Black German memory that ultimately intersects with experiences of the global diaspora.

In one of the last episodes of *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu*[183], Michael brings together German and American diasporic memories and establishes important connections. While working with the ISD (Initiative Schwarze Deutsche), he travels to Howard University and the University of Chicago. Michael encounters stories of racial discrimination told from the perspective of members of the African-American community. The text links Black German and African-American experiences as Michael reflects on similarities and differences in the respective collective memories.

> Schwarze Menschen werden in «weiβen» Gesellschaften immer Opfer von Diskriminierung und Rassenhass. Eigenartig war jedoch die unterschiedliche Wertung der Hautfarbe. Bei den Afro-Amerikanern gab es die unterschiedlichsten Abstufungen von ganz hell bis dunkel, schwarz. Je heller, desto besser, je dunkler, desto schlechter, diese Berwertung galt in beiden Gesellschaften. Wir konstatierten, dass diese Bewertung allgemein war und ausgeübt wurde. Hellhäutigere Menschen schätzten sich selber oft als bedeutender ein als dunkel-häutige. In der amerikanischen Sprache gibt es den Begriff »passing for white« für Menschen, denen ihre afrikanische Abstammung nicht mehr anzusehen ist. […] In Deutschland wiederum würde eine solche Person von vorneherein nicht als afro-deutsch bezeichnet werden und sich auch nicht selber so sehen. (DS 181-182)

[Black people in white societies are always victims of discrimination and race hate. But the different attitudes to skin color were striking. Among the African Americans there was an enormous range, from very light to very dark, black. The lighter, the better, the darker, the worse; this valuation applied in both societies. We observed that it applied and was also put into practice everywhere. Lighter-skinned people often saw themselves as more significant than dark-skinned ones. In America there's the concept of "passing for white", for people whose African heritage is no longer visible. […] In Germany, on the other hand someone like that wouldn't be seen and wouldn't see themselves as Afro-German.] (BG 193)

Effects of racial discrimination weigh heavily on collective memory within the Black German and African American communities. As such, "Diskriminierung und Rassenhass" (discrimination and race hate) weigh in on "die unterschiedliche Wertung der Hautfarbe" (different attitudes to

[183] See Schramm's episode "Hell und Dunkel."

skin color). The diasporic history of racial profiling manifests differently within the two collective memories and shapes their respective cultures: “Eigenartig war jedoch die unterschiedliche Wertung der Hautfarbe. Bei den Afro-Amerikanern gab es die unterschiedlichsten Abstufungen von ganz hell bis dunkel, schwarz”(But the different attitudes to skin color were striking. Among the African Americans there was an enormous range, from very light to very dark, black). The workings of white supremacist beliefs within the African American collective memory is marked by adjectives that establish a causal value judgement: “heller,” “besser,” “dunkler” and “schlechter” (lighter, better, darker, worse). As memories of racial oppression shape African American minority culture—defined by Karen D. Pyke as internalized racism—their effects manifest differently within Black German collective memory and its language use. Verbal markers of internalized racism, such as “passing for white” as translatable terms, are absent but internalized oppression also manifests within the German language and the Black German community. The automatic recognition of whiteness as Germanness, marked by “[…] würde eine solche Person [mit heller Hautfarbe] von vorneherein nicht als afro-deutsch bezeichnet werden und sich auch selber nicht so sehen“ (someone like that [with light skin] wouldn’t be seen and wouldn’t see themselves as Afro-German), outlines the larger effects of racial profiling within the German national memory and the Black German collective memory. More specifically, the national German memory context historically equated blackness with otherness, and in the context of Black German collective memory, blackness has historically been experienced as otherness.

The effects of layered memories are threefold. First, they bring together a scattered history; they re-write and re-envision not just Black German history, but German history at large. Second, they are interventions into Germany’s cultures of memory writing. Schramm’s text

creates interacting textual manifestations of minority memory that critically access larger reconfigurations of national cultural memory in post-Wende Germany. Michael's text creates intersectional memory discourses that promote a more nuanced understanding of the continuous resurfacing of racial prejudice. Third, the memoirs create a cohesive Black German collective memory through multidirectional models of memory in the spirit of Silverman's conception of memory as palimpsest. Interactive textual layers enable the emergence of a cohesive Black German memory through the building of connections with histories and memories within the German collective and beyond. This posits the importance of first-person memoirs as a key facet of contemporary memory culture. Layers of past and present intersect and illuminate one another, while the figure of the transnational diasporic community gives affective impact to the tropes of memory transmission.

Conclusion

Palimpsestic multilayering in Afro-German memoirs brings forth a Black German memory by intersecting diasporic and cultural memories of the Weimar Republic, the NS regime and WWII, and the post-war and cold war eras as well as the post-unification period. To the reader, these interconnections suggest interaction. Afro-German memoirs are able to utilize the potential of palimpsestic multilayering for effect. It is not just national cultural memories or diasporic collective memories, but an interactive culture that establishes a Black German memory as part of an evolving national German memory. Textual interactions facilitate considerations of belonging, remembrance, and minority memory. Michael's *Deutsch sein und schwarz dazu* and Schramm's *Wer hat Angst vorm schwarzen Mann* evoke textual palimpsestic

multilayerings and respective versions, such as sites and knots of memory that create transformative textual structures. These interactively textured Black German memoirs advance a broadened definition of national cultural and diasporic collective memory.

Afro-German memoirists of the witness generation write with an inclusive sensibility. Their historical and transnational experiences, coupled with a boom in national memory discourse and growing interest in minority experiences, have helped to shape a literary agenda. Motivated by the desire to redefine German cultural memory and shape spheres of collective memory, memoirists incorporate interactive forms of literary memory representation to extend the national memory framework. Having abandoned the commitment to a linear, binary account of history and memory, Afro-German memoirs purposefully bring to bear an interactive approach to memoir writing. Indeed, their expression is a multilayered, reflective method of attaining collective memory. Afro-German memoirists focus on a pressing question: what is Black German memory in an intersected world? The writers understand Black German memory as interacting constructs that produce and locate the black German collective in specific moments of interaction as well as in national and global history. Afro-German memoir does not mimic the spirit of minority memory, in a sense of opposition and detachment. Instead of consistent linear narratives and seamless flows of coherent representations, Afro-German memoir exposes intersections, overlappings, and concealings; it challenges the audience by conflating time and space. The effect of this strategy creates a Black German memory that gauges the fractured inscriptions of misrecognition and belonging, illustrates shifting notions of remembrance, and establishes connections between Black German and diasporic memories.

Palimpsestic multilayering in Afro-German memoirs asserts Black German memories as an integral part of German national and diasporic cultural history. Textual multilayering of

memory does not simply transmit information from the past into the present; through its simultaneity, it transmits responsibilities. The memoirs are intersecting, first-person accounts of history; they inform the present of its responsibilities to the past and to the future. Memoirs reveal and evince visibility of a Black German memory. Rather than relying on opposing binaries, Afro-German memoir uses overlapping memory representations to reveal the unfamiliar terrain of Black German memory. Challenged by the sidelining of minority memories in official remembrance culture, the flattening out of Germany's past and the ritualization of memory, Afro-German memoirists use textual multilayering to contribute the existence of a Black German collective memory to the history of national memory discourse.

Epilogue

As shown, Afro-German literature functions as aesthetic activism by creating collective identity through textual practices. The works analyzed here are representative examples of contemporary Black German literature, published since the 1980s, that illustrate the formative influence of writing practices on literary and social categories. My line of inquiry produces three major outcomes. First, the analysis of textual practices in Black German literature is key to understanding the formation of Black German collective identity. Second, Black German literature is evolving and produces other engaging forms of texts. Third, the study of Black German textual practices adds to the understanding of blackness as a constantly transforming concept.

The project shows that analyzing textual practices is central to understanding Black German collective identity in a way that reflects its diversity but does not deprive it of historical materiality. Afro-German literature's writing practices explore and create transforming notions of identity. This produces an understanding of aesthetics as the productive discourse for engagement with issues of identity and social justice. These texts suggest that questions of collective identity can be productively addressed as aspects of textual experiences. Breaking, rearranging, and combining aesthetic paradigms is a form of activism. The notion of disruptive aesthetics—and a discourse with it—can promote insights into our relationships with the self, each other, and the political structures in which we are embedded.

Other forms of Black German literature continue to emerge, including the publication of a growing number of prose and plays. Thematically, they range from life portraits to journeys through urban city spaces, such as Berlin, as well as time and space travel. Michael Götting's novel *Contrapunctus* (2015) presents a polyphonic and wild journey through the lives of its four

Afro-German protagonists. The novel is a portrayal of Black Germans who struggle with the remainders of Europe's colonial past and the collective consciousness of the Berlin Republic. Another example is Olivia Wenzel's play *Mais in Deutschland und anderen Galaxien* (2015), which focuses on the Black German protagonist Noah by showing scenes from his life combined with a space travel narrative.[184] These scenes range from his childhood in East Germany to his problems as an adult and dissolve when Noah sprouts wings to fly into space. What unites these works is the authors' turn to Afrofuturism—a cross-cultural philosophy of artists, musicians, and writers who draw on techno-utopian thinking of the space age to reimagine Black life—that helps embrace multiple forms of black identity. Scholars of Black German Studies have recently begun to focus on this turn to Afrofuturism in Black German literature. Priscilla Layne argues that Afrofuturist elements allow authors to challenge the notion of a homogenous Black German subject, by positing the possibility of multiple galaxies and diverse ways for the protagonists to experience their selves that do not necessarily coalesce to form unified subjects.

My work contributes to the understanding of blackness as an evolving concept. The analysis of writing practices in Afro-German literature helps to understand how blackness operates as moments of aesthetic performances and as a set of physical and behavioral characteristics that produce shared experiences. This simultaneity reveals how blackness functions as a shared concept of representation and inclusion. Scholars of Black European and African Diaspora Studies have been working to bridge the gap in the discussion on blackness as performance and blackness as a historical fact with a linear progress narrative. Michelle M. Wright dedicated her latest monograph *Physics of Blackness – Beyond the Middle Passage*

[184] My reference is the unpublished script and a staging of the play at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theatre in Berlin on 19th February 2015.

Epistemology (2015) to a critical engagement with the concept of blackness. She shows that blackness is not a "what," but rather operates at the intersection of time and space. As such, Black German literature and its textual practices are manifestations of an evolving German blackness dependent on the parameters of time and space.

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