STAGING
BLACKNESS

REPRESENTATIONS
OF RACE IN GERMAN-SPEAKING
DRAMA AND THEATER

EDITED BY
PRISCILLA LAYNE & LILY TONGER-ERK

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Priscilla Layne and Lily Tonger-Erk, Editors

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Centuries of Staging Blackness in Germany

An Introduction

Priscilla Layne and Lily Tonger-Erk

In 2017, for the first time ever on a state-funded, German theater stage, a play was cast with exclusively Black actors. In fact, this casting decision was both an artistic attraction and a political act: the Black German director Anta Helena Recke called her artistic process a "Black copy."[1] She copied the production of the play *Mittelreich* (*Middle Rich*), which had been staged by the director Anna Sophie Maler at the Münchner Kammerspiele a year earlier—using the same text, the same stage, and the same costumes—but Recke shifted one parameter: the formerly white actors were replaced by exclusively Black actors. Recke's copy claimed that Black actors can also embody the Bavarian family saga *Mittelreich*, which is based on the novel of the same name by Joseph Bierbichler, published in 2013. Above all, however, the effect of Recke's casting decision is as follows: the irritation white audiences feel when they see an entirely Black cast on stage makes visible the fact that Germans' understanding of their own history is rooted in whiteness and they expect the actors, the audience and, the theater itself, to reflect this.

The first known German-language play that depicts a Black person in German-speaking lands is called *Die M***inn zu Hamburg* (*The Female M*** of Hamburg*), published in 1776 by a rather unknown jurist and author, Ernst Moritz Michael Rathlef (1751–1827). The play is about Cadige, a woman who was stolen from Guinea, enslaved, and who now lives in Hamburg as a free woman and the companion of a white merchant's

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1. Anta Helena Recke, "Die Konstruktion von Whiteness im Theater," *RosaMag*, September 15, 2019, https://rosa-mag.de/anta-helena-recke-thematisiert-critical-whiteness-im-theater/

daughter. Although Germany did not acquire colonies until late in the 1880s, the German public in the eighteenth century was informed about the transatlantic slave trade through trade relations, travel reports, journal news, and global stories told on German stages.[2] Rathlef's drama participates in the production of this knowledge and explicitly criticizes slavery and the racist thinking of his contemporaries that legitimizes slavery. And although the piece promotes universal humanism and human rights, the play itself often reproduces the racist thinking of its time, thinking that was deeply rooted in West European color semantics. This can be seen when a rich Hamburg merchant objects to a possible wedding between his nephew Gorden and Cadige because Cadige is "as black as a raven." However, Gorden defends his lover: claiming that "the heart of this *M**** has the color of a swan and of innocence."[3] While, on the one hand, Rathlef wants to present Cadige as the ideal heroine, as the beautiful soul, on the other hand he confirms the occidental dichotomous color semantics that morality, virtue, and aesthetics are associated with the color white.[4]

What do these two excerpts from German drama and theater history have in common? Blackness as a sign of racial difference has a long history. The notion of color—and especially skin color—became a defining aspect of the concept of race (or what Hannah Arendt called "race-thinking") in the eighteenth century.[5] In European race-thinking, the understanding that whiteness is the norm from which nonwhite races deviate goes hand in hand with a cultural, physiological, and psychological hierarchization. Yet whiteness—as Richard Dyer has shown—has always been invisible in Western cultures, whereas Blackness, both as a description of skin color and in its symbolic connotation, became a visible sign of difference.[6] Because, since Bertolt Brecht,[7] theater in Germany has no longer been bound to the illusion of integrity between the actor's body and fictional character, theater could also be a space where one can play

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2. Birgit Tautz, *Translating the World: Toward a New History of German Literature around 1800* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2018).

3. Ernst Moritz Michael Rathlef, *Die M***inn zu Hamburg: Tragödie* (S.I., 1776), 18.

4. See also Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 146. See Jana Husmann, *Schwarz-Weiß-Symbolik: Dualistische Denktraditionen und die Imagination von "Rasse." Religion—Wissenschaft—Anthroposophie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010).

5. Hannah Arendt, "Race-Thinking before Racism," *Review of Politics* 6, no. 1 (January 1944): 36–73.

6. Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1997).

7. Bertolt Brecht, "Kleines Organon für das Theater," in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1967).

with the signification of whiteness and Blackness. But even today, while white bodies can universally slip into all roles in drama and theater, Black bodies seem—at least in the German context—to be fixed to certain, historically bound meanings. This is why Recke points out that, when she goes to the theater, she rarely sees Black people on stage. And when she does, they mostly play the roles of refugees or prostitutes or embody "the foreign, the mysterious, the wild, the exotic, the erotic."[8]

This volume explores the question of how Blackness—in relation to whiteness—has been staged in Germany from the eighteenth century, the birth of German national theater, until the present. It focuses on the relationship between color, racialization, and representation of Blackness in the visual politics of drama. This volume is unique in that it tries to grasp the subject in its complexity from several perspectives. On the one hand, we approach this topic from a historical depth because we are aware that the way in which Blackness is represented in cultural productions of history is not without consequences even for the present. On the other hand, we explore a theoretical depth because the merging of literary theater studies and an activist point of view can reveal the mutual, conditional structure of aesthetic and political representation. Taken together, the essays in this volume explore the connections between the German discourse on national theater and emerging ideas about race from the eighteenth century onward, analyze how dramaturges deal with older representations of Blackness in current productions, and discuss the contributions Black German playwrights and dramaturges have made to this discourse.

Our endeavors are inspired by several events that came together at a dynamic moment in German history. First, in the theater: on the one hand, blackface continues to be practiced in German theater, despite being critiqued by both academic and activist circles; on the other hand, there is also a growing presence of Black German playwrights and actors in German theater. Second, in literature: there has been increasing research into the "invention" and staging of race in German drama as well as its critical reflection in current productions. Finally, from Black Lives Matter to undocumented immigration: global events have once again pushed Blackness to center stage of political debates as well as artistic debates. All of these developments have encouraged us to revisit theater's unique contribution to discussions about race in Germany.

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8. Anta Helena Recke, "Josef Bierbichlers 'Mittelreich' als 'Schwarzkopie,'" interview by Gesa Ufer, *Deutschlandfunk*, October 11, 2017, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/muenchner-kammerspiele-josef-bierbichlers-mittelreich-als.2156.de.html?dram:article_id=397945

In recent years, the German stage has been at the forefront of such discussions, in a manner that has not always been flattering for the theater. In fact, a careful examination of the developments in German drama can offer insight into how race and national identity are being discussed in contemporary German society. The most shocking and memorable examples are several instances of blackface in the past ten years that have attracted international attention. These instances include a staging of Dea Loher's *Unschuld* (*Innocence*) in 2012 by director Michael Thalheimer at the Deutsches Theater, a staging of *Ich bin nicht Rappaport* (*I Am Not Rappaport*) the very same year at the Schlosspark Theater in Berlin by Thomas Schendel, Sebastian Baumgarten's production of Bertolt Brecht's *Die Heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe* (*Saint Joan of the Stockyards*) in Zurich, also in 2012, and more recently, in 2015, Nicolas Stemann's staging of Elfriede Jelinek's *Die Schutzbefohlenen* (*The Supplicants*) at the Berlin Theatertreffen.[9] In response to these performances, critics, including members of the Black German community and antiracist activists such as Bühnenwatch (Stagewatch), voiced their anger and disappointment that German theaters continue to engage in a practice with such a long, racist, and hurtful history. In response to this criticism, directors claimed that blackface in Germany does not have the same racist past as in the United States and therefore it should not automatically be understood as derogatory. Instead, they defended the use of blackface in the name of the freedom of the arts. These debates surrounding blackface in German theater have invoked larger discussions about the politics of race in German theater and their origins.

On the other hand, a large number of alliances, both between different ethnic and racial groups and between different agents working in theater, have formed in the last twelve years, with the purpose of questioning the whiteness of cultural institutions such as the theater "not in terms of a numerical majority amongst staff . . . , but in terms of a complex dominance consisting of structures, practices, unquestioned privileges, aesthetic concepts and variously positioned subjects."[10] In the beginning, it was individual productions, projects, and institutions that pushed for the

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9. Katrin Sieg, "Race, Guilt and Innocence: Facing Blackfacing in Contemporary German Theater," *German Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2015): 117–34.

10. Elisa Liepsch, Julian Warner, and Matthias Pees, eds., *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 21. This is an outstanding publication about the critical self-reflection of white German institutions initiated by the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm in Frankfurt.

acknowledgment of white dominance in the theater and criticized the racialization of bodies on the stage, but the topic is currently becoming more widely recognized by the public and by German city and state theaters. People are becoming increasingly aware, first, that German theaters still employ few artists of Color, second, that there is a lack of dramatic texts that convey Black perspectives on Germany, and, third, that it is important to reach an audience that represents the actual diversity of German society as a country of immigration. This change of perspective affects all levels of the theater: the ensemble policy; the repertoire, including a criticism of the canon; and the audience addressed.

The Black German Paradox: Representation on the Stage

Black Germans currently make up about 1 percent of the population. They occupy a unique position of simultaneous invisibility and hypervisibility. They are invisible because, despite having a presence in German-speaking lands that goes back to the Middle Ages, Black Germans' histories have often been erased or ignored because the white German majority prefers to imagine the country as exclusively white. And since the end of World War II and Hitler's defeat, German political discourse has refused to recognize "race" as a legitimate category, for a number of reasons. For one, in the postwar period, scientists no longer recognized race as biological; rather, it is considered a social construct. Already in 1950, UNESCO declared there was no biological basis for race. This argument was recently reiterated in the Jena Declaration of 2019, where a number of natural scientists declared "the concept of race is the result of racism, not its prerequisite."[11] For these reasons, "race" is seen as an outdated term, associated with Nazi dictatorship and its persecution of minorities. Therefore, any German citizen of African descent or someone who identifies as a Black German will not be identified as "Black" in a census.[12] On paper, Black Germans are read as just "German." But they are also hypervisible, because in public their appearance makes them the target of racial dis-

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11. See Jean Hiernaux and Michael Banton, "Four Statements on the Race Question," UNESCO (1969), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000122962. See also "Jena Declaration," University of Jena, https://www.uni-jena.de/unijenamedia/jenaer-erklaerung-en.pdf, accessed October 20, 2022.

12. The Black German organization Each One Teach One recently conducted an investigation about the lived experiences of people in Germany who identify as Black and reported in 2020. See https://afrozensus.de/reports/2020/#main, EOTO, accessed October 20, 2022.

crimination, which is why we refer to this as the "Black German paradox."[13] Black Germans are often confronted with questions that seek to Other them and exclude them from the national community, questions like, "Where are you really from?" or "How do you speak German so well?"

For decades, Black Germans did not have the language to combat racism. Up until the mid-twentieth century, they had to endure being ostracized not just socially, but also linguistically, as white Germans referred to them with racist colonial names like *M****, *N*****, and *Mischling* (mixed race).[14] But in the 1980s, when African American feminist poet Audre Lorde had a residency in Berlin, teaching at the Free University, she encouraged the Black German women she met not only to develop their own term, but to come together as a community and publish their own testimonies of being both Black and German. Together with Lorde, these Black German women coined the terms *Afrodeutsch* (Afro-German) and *Schwarze Deutsche* (Black Germans).[15] Throughout the century, Black Germans have looked to African American culture for the language and strategies to fight racism, drawing inspiration from political figures like MLK and Angela Davis and pop phenomena like Beyoncé and *Black Panther*.

Despite battling systematic erasure for centuries, Black Germans have

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13. See Tupoka Ogette, *Exit Racism: Rassismuskritisch denken lernen* (Münster: Unrast, 2017); Alice Hasters, *Was weisse Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen aber wissen sollten* (Munich: Hanser, 2019); Farma Aydemir and Hengameh Yaghoobifarah, eds., *Eure Heimat ist unser Albtraum* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2019); Noah Sow, *Deutschland Schwarz Weiß: Der alltägliche Rassismus* (Munich: Bertelsmann, 2008).

14. For a discussion about the problematic nature of the German term *Mischling* see Hasters, *Was weisse Menschen*, 31.

15. In the introduction to the volume *Showing Our Colors*, Lorde describes Afro-Germans as one group of many "hyphenated people of the Diaspora whose self-defined identities are no longer shameful secrets in the countries of our origin, but rather declarations of strength and solidarity." Audre Lorde, "Foreword," in *Showing Our Colors: Afro-German Women Speak Out*, ed. May Opitz, Katharina Oguntoye, and Dagmar Schultz (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), viii. Since then, the term has come to signify individuals who have one white German parent and one parent who is a member of the African diaspora (e.g., African American, Afro-Caribbean, African). This definition of the word has, however, since been problematized because it excludes African diasporic peoples living in Germany who do not have a (white) German parent. In addition, the term *Afro-German* (when understood as someone with one white German and one Black parent) does not necessarily do justice to the diversity of people in the second or third generation of migration. Therefore, we prefer using the term *Black German* because *Black* is not only a political term, but also more inclusive. Nicole Lauré al-Samarai, "Neither Foreigners nor Aliens: The Interwoven Stories of Sinti and Roma and Black Germans," *Women in German Yearbook* 20, no. 1 (2004): 163–83.

always found a way to tell their stories. Whereas Black German writing is known from the eighteenth century onward,[16] Black German *theater* is a much more recent development, whose origin Jamele Watkins locates in 2000.[17] Black Germans' growing engagement with theater could possibly be linked to the increasingly public presence the Black German community achieved in 2011 with the creation of Bühnenwatch. On its website, Bühnenwatch released a statement in 2011 declaring, "It is our intention to prevent any future racist depictions of blackface and racist discrimination against actors of color."[18] While this critique of blackface garnered a lot of attention, Simone Dede Ayivi, a founding member of Bühnenwatch, insists the campaign was never just about blackface:

16. Patricia Mazón and Reinhild Steingröver, eds., *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890–2000* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005).

17. Jamele Watkins, "The Drama of Race: Contemporary Afro-German Theater" (PhD diss., University of Massachusetts, 2016). Scholarship on this topic, in addition to Watkins's dissertation, includes Simone Dede Ayivi's *Diplomarbeit* examining self-representation among Black actors in both her performance *Krieg der Hörnchen* (*War of the Squirrels*) and the play *Heimat—bittersüße Heimat* (*Homeland—Bittersweet Homeland*). See Simone Dede Ayivi, "Wider den weißen Mainstream: Schwarze Selbstrepräsentation im deutschen Theaterkontext am Beispiel meiner eigenen Arbeit 'Krieg der Hörnchen' (Hildesheim, 2012) und 'Heimat—bittersüße Heimat' von Label Noir (Berlin 2010)." Julia Wissert's *Diplomarbeit* includes interviews with Black German actors, confronts the issue of blackface, and discusses representation of Blackness in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. See Julia Wissert, "Schwarz. macht. Weiß," *Diplomarbeit* (Universität Mozarteum Salzburg, 2015). Azadeh Sharifi has published several essays on the importance of Black feminism for Black German theater and on postmigrant theater. See Azadeh Sharifi, "Multilingualism and Postmigrant Theatre in Germany," *Modern Drama* 61, no. 3 (2018): 328–51; *Theater für Alle Partizipation von Postmigranten am Beispiel der Bühnen der Stadt Köln* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2011); "Antirassistische Interventionen als notwendige 'Störung' im deutschen Theater," in *Postmigrantische Visionen: Erfahrungen—Ideen—Reflexionen*, ed. Marc Hill and Erol Yildiz (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 207–22. Lizzie Stewart has also published on postmigrant theater; see "*Black Virgins, Close Encounters*: Re-examining the 'Semi-documentary' in Postmigrant Theatre," *Türkisch-deutsche Studien Jahrbuch* 5 (2015): 81–102; "Postmigrant Theatre: The Ballhaus Naunynstraße Takes On Sexual Nationalism," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* 9, no. 2 (2017): 56–68. See also Matt Cornish, *Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater after 1989* (Ann Arbor: Michigan University Press, 2017), and Azadeh Sharifi, "'Sie haben uns nicht nur nicht eingeladen, wir sind trotzdem gekommen': Diversity im deutschsprachigen Theater," in *Managing Diversity: Die diversitätsbewusste Ausrichtung des Bildungs- und Kulturwesens, der Wirtschaft und Verwaltung*, ed. Karim Fereidooni and Antonietta P. Zeoli (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2016), 231–44.

18. "Bühnenwatch," accessed January 31, 2019, http://www.buehnenwatch.com. The home page no longer exists. See https://de-de.facebook.com/buehnenwatch/, accessed October 20, 2022.

In 2011, Bündnis Bühnenwatch began the discussion that was called the "Blackface Debate." But from the very beginning this was more of a debate about racism in the theater. Blackface and the reproduction of racist images and racist language were understood to be symptoms of an industry that would rather paint *white* actors Black than employ Black actors in their ensembles. It's also an industry that can't even imagine a Black audience, otherwise they would have anticipated the critique. . . . The debate compelled the theater to change and brought attention to the missing presence of Black people on the stage. And institutions really had to question for whom the theater actually exists and which perspectives are depicted onstage and which are not.[19]

Writing from the standpoint of 2018, Ayivi later reflected that while representation had improved, there still existed a discrepancy between the number of Black Germans in state theater ensembles and those active in the independent scene. There may have been a few instances of state-funded theaters in Germany featuring performances that include Black German actors or Black German directors, but most state theater ensembles limit the number of Black actors to one at most. As Jamele Watkins indicates in *The Drama of Race*, in contrast to state theaters, most Black German theater takes place in spaces that are more informal, more precarious, and more experimental. For example, the first Black German play to be published was Olumide Popoola's *Also by Mail* (2013), which, according to Watkins, was never staged as a full-scale production; it was performed in staged readings outside the German classical theater network, in nonconventional spaces such as Westwerk in Hamburg, Circus in Frankfurt, and the English Theater Berlin, with ticket prices set at only five euros.

There are a few possible reasons why Black German theater has found more of a home in the independent scene. These playwrights, directors, and performers are often relatively young, and they present new work, rather than staging classical dramas. But, of course, there is also the undeniable factor of race. Black German actors have a difficult time finding roles—a problem that is the focus of Label Noir, an all-Black artist collective whose members "broker and connect Black actors for theater, film, and television productions." Furthermore, as Katrin Sieg points out, Black

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19. Simone Dede Ayivi, "'Internationalität ≠ Interkultur': Eine Schwarze deutsche Kritik," in Liepsch, Warner, and Pees, *Allianzen*, 143.

Germans might have a more difficult time getting funding and gaining access to established institutions if they wish to center the issue of race in their performances.[20]

Despite these challenges, one should be careful not to view Black Germans' participation in independent theater as a last resort or merely a result of exclusion and marginalization. Ayivi remarks, "Black artists [have] developed a growing understanding that they are a part of the theater industry, that their own topics and artistic questions need to be taken seriously, and that it is important for Black artists to communicate with each other."[21] Critics must consider the agency of Black German artists who might *decide* to produce art outside of state institutions. Arguably, both the impermanence of performances in the independent scene and the scene's existence apart from institutional theaters align well with Black German artists' interest in decolonization. Black German theater pieces frequently privilege performance over text, an artistic decision that can resist the colonial categorizing and collecting tendencies of the archive, recalling Diana Taylor's juxtaposition of the archive and the repertoire.[22]

It is no wonder that Black German artists are skeptical of the archive. Black Germans have, historically, been (mis)treated by scientists and historians, their remains and cultural artifacts have been stolen and misused *for* the archive, and their history has been often left out of the archive altogether. Examples of how Black bodies and art have been misused for the purpose of the national archive reach as far back as skulls stolen from victims of the German genocide against the Nama and Herero, from 1904 to 1908, in what was then the colony of German Southwest Africa (Namibia).[23] More recent examples are the Benin bronzes that the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz and the German government in 2022 agreed to return to Nigeria, and the controversy surrounding the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin in 2020. The Humboldt Forum, formerly directed by British art historian Neil MacGregor, German art historian Horst Bredekamp, and president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation Hermann Parzinger, presents the collections of several museums in

20. Katrin Sieg, "Race, Guilt and Innocence: Facing Blackfacing in Contemporary German Theater," *German Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2018): 117–34.

21. Ayivi, "Internationalität ≠ Interkultur," 76.

22. Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

23. Lars Müller, "'We Need to Get Away from a Culture of Denial': The German-Herero War in Politics and Textbooks," *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 5, no. 1 (2013): 56.

the newly constructed Berlin Castle—collections that contain objects from around the world, including former German colonies, with the pretense that how some were acquired is unclear.[24] Despite critics' insistence that it is unethical to display cultural goods taken during the colonial era without adequate critical reflection, the Foundation for the Humboldt Forum has adamantly stood behind the project. In November 2018, Bredekamp even suggested on the German radio channel Deutschlandfunk that Germany's dealings with such artifacts and archives is not problematic because it was not one of the "large colonial powers."[25] Jürgen Zimmerer, professor of global history and director of the research center Hamburgs (Post)colonial Heritage at the University of Hamburg, accused the founding directors of "colonial amnesia" and pointed out that at the opening of the Humboldt Forum in 2020 the provenances of all artifacts were not scientifically secured.[26]

The Humboldt Forum perfectly embodies the power of an archive that is maintained by white hegemony. As Diana Taylor asserts:

> The archival, from the beginning, sustains power. . . . [A]rchival memory succeeds in separating the source of "knowledge" from the knower—in time and/or space. . . . What makes an object archival is the process whereby it is selected, classified, and presented for analysis.[27]

The ways in which archives like the Humboldt Forum have dealt with communities of Color makes it even clearer why, on the one hand, some Black German theater artists might prefer an engagement with theater that highlights performance and actively rejects the politics and power of the archive. On the other hand, there are also Black German artists, like Michael Klammer, who insist on their right to perform in state houses and

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24. The museum first opened in December 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, only virtual visits were possible.

25. Numerous academic texts have sought to discount this claim and uncover Germans' colonial fantasies and colonial endeavors. See, for example, Susanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies: Conquest, Family and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770–1870* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Susanne Zantop, Sara Lennox, and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, eds., *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998); and Felix Brahm and Eve Rosenhaft, eds., *Slavery Hinterland: Transatlantic Slavery and Continental Europe, 1760–1850* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016).

26. Gero Schließ, "Kritik am Humboldt-Forum wird schärfer," DW, August 13, 2017, https://www.dw.com/de/kritik-am-humboldt-forum-wird-sch%C3%A4rfer/a-40054767

27. Taylor, *Archive and Repertoire*, 19.

play more traditional roles. These are some of the issues that are explored in the roundtable discussion included in Part III of the volume.

Institutions and Structural Racism

A key figure in the German independent theater scene, the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse Theater in Berlin has played a special role in making diversity more visible on German stages. Since 2008, the Ballhaus has been staging theater by and for people with a migration background in the second or third generation in Germany under the label "postmigrant theater." In 2013, Ballhaus directors Shermin Langhoff and Jens Hillje switched to the better-funded Maxim Gorki Theater, where they established a diverse ensemble policy. The influence of this movement now extends far beyond Berlin: the theater landscape is changing, becoming more diverse, even if there is often only one Person of Color per ensemble.[28] As a result, the discussion about racism in the theater is intensifying—it now centers around questioning structures and power relations in the theater. Jens Hillje explains: "In Germany, in particular, the theater is closely linked to state power. The theater landscape is considered a pillar of representation, which is why the entrances were very well controlled: Who is allowed to take part?"[29]

   While many theaters are now grappling with the topics of migration, refugees, and ethnic difference, the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse under the artistic direction of Afro-Brazilian and Black German director Wagner Carvalho has played a pioneering role since 2012 in showing Black perspectives in particular that differ significantly from those of the migrants of the second and third generation—and thus also from the issues of early postmigrant theater. It's about bringing the perspectives of Germans who are not white into the theater and about considering how images and discourses turn skin color into a sign of difference. Finally, the goal is also for Black actors to demand the freedom to play whatever roles they choose, instead of being typecast based on their skin color. And conversely, it is also about whiteness: about the whiteness of the ensembles, the directors, the audience, and the characters hidden under the guise of "universality."

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28. See Ayivi, "Internationalität ≠ Interkultur," 76–77.
29. Jens Hillje and Shermin Langhoff, "Keine Freiheit ohne Solidarität," interview by Anja Quickert, *Goethe Institut*, April, 2018, https://www.goethe.de/ins/pl/de/kul/sup/fee/212629 92.html

Theater is a unique medium because it is not tied to the mimetic representation of race and can instead play with the signification of whiteness and Blackness. Actors slip into new roles, and this can be explicitly thematized in the performance itself. Although it frequently happens that a white man plays Othello (e.g., Itay Tiran in the production by Burkhard C. Kosminski, Stuttgarter Schauspielhaus, 2019), the idea of casting a Black Gretchen for Goethe's *Faust* still seems to be a source of irritation on German stages, which is a point that Olivia Wenzel brings up in the roundtable in Part III.[30] It is precisely this practice that Black actors like Lara Sophie Milagro and alliances like Label Noir have been criticizing for a long time, and recently they have also been increasingly discussed in the film and television industry.[31] While white bodies are seen as universal signifiers that can embody any figure, Black bodies in Germany are still burdened with a different meaning: the foreign, exotic, wild, erotic, or unconscious. In contrast to their white colleagues, Black actors are predominantly cast in stereotypical roles about flight, migration, integration, racism, and neocolonialism. "Why do directors, artistic directors, critics and viewers in Germany fix Black skin to a few meanings, but not white skin?" Milagro asks and demands that being Black should not be misunderstood as typecast. Theater *can* be used to address issues of racism in German society or to conceptualize a "postracial" society where characters' and actors' skin color is deemed less important than other aspects of their identity.

Critique of the Canon

Which perspectives are presented on stage and which are not is linked to the question of who the theaters are actually for.[32] Perhaps one could say

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30. Gerd Brendel, "Keine Rollen für schwarze Schauspieler?," *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, October 4, 2014, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/rassismus-am-theater-keine-rollen-fuer-schwarze-schauspieler.2159.de.html?dram:article_id=299371

31. Lara-Sophie Milagro, "Die Bequemlichkeit der Definitionshoheit," *ISD-online*, March 28, 2012, http://isdonline.de/die-bequemlichkeit-der-definitionshoheit/; see also Nisma Cherrat, "Mätresse—Wahnsinnige—Hure: Schwarze SchauspielerInnen am deutschsprachigen Theater," in *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland* (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2013), 206; for Black actors in German film and theater, see Jerry Hoffmann, "In Deutschland schließt man Schwarze Schauspieler oft grundsätzlich aus," interview by Wolfgang Höbel, *Spiegel*, March 3, 2021, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/jerry-hoffmann-im-interview-in-deutschland-schliesst-man-schwarze-schauspieler-oft-grundsaetzlich-aus-a-127cf71a-4230-4fd8-a4ec-03a42ce661ef

32. See Simone Dede Ayivi, interviewed by Ina Driemel, "Über Veränderung, Ignoranz

that the canon wars[33] are currently reaching Germany's theaters, having begun in the literary-critical debates of the 1980s about a more diverse canon. "We're working on a new canon," Tobias Herzberg, director at the Maxim Gorki Theater, recently said.[34] And Lara Sophie Milagro addressed this issue with a Toni Morrison quotation: "If you find a book you really want to read, but it hasn't been written yet, then you must write it."[35] The fact that this new, diverse canon is indeed contested is evident not least by the statements of the right-wing party Alternative für Deutschland in Saxony-Anhalt, which alleges that the "ideology of multiculturalism" is a serious "threat to . . . the continued existence of the nation" and is encroaching on the big, state-funded theaters. The AfD calls for a right-wing cultural policy that employs theater culture, especially the big, state-funded theaters, as a servant of the nation: "The country's theaters . . . should always play classic German plays and stage them in such a way that they encourage identification with our country."[36]

So, on the one hand, it is a political act to decide what is staged: whose and which perspectives come on stage. On the other hand, it is not enough to add dramas by authors of Color to the canon. Additionally, it is important to check the existing canon for its racist content and to find a way to make this visible in stagings without repeating racist stereotypes. This also applies to popular canonical dramas such as Friedrich Schiller's *Die Räuber* (*The Robbers*), which does not include Black characters but contains racial descriptions of characters in dialogue. In Antù Romero Nunes's production at the Stuttgarter Schauspielhaus in 2013, the Afro-Tyrolean actor

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und Prozesse des Verlernens im Theater," in *Wessen Wissen? Materialität und Situiertheit in den Künsten*, ed. Kathrin Busch et al. (Paderborn: Wilhelm Fink, 2018), 59–68.

33. See Rachel Donadio, "Revisiting the Canon Wars," *New York Times*, September 16, 2007, https://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/16/books/review/Donadio-t.html

34. Nora Haakh, Anis Hamdoun, and Tobias Herzberg, "Der Kanon der Zukunft ist mehrsprachig: Postmigrantisches Theater und seine Strahlkraft," interview by Tobias Herzberg, *Nachtkritik*, March 2019, https://heidelberger-stueckemarkt.nachtkritik.de/2019/index.php/debatte/postmigrantisches-theater-und-seine-strahlkraft

35. labelnoir, accessed April 15, 2021, https://www.labelnoir.net/. Original quotation from Toni Morrison, in Ellen Brown, "Writing Is Third Career for Morrison," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, September 27, 1981, F11, Column 1.

36. "AfD_Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt: Wahlprogramm zur Landtagswahl in Sachsen-Anhalt 2016," AfD-Landesverband Sachsen-Anhalt, accessed April 15, 2021, https://cdn.afd.tools/sites/88/2016/12/11210138/Wahlprogramm_31102015v2.pdf. For the reaction of the East German theater to the right-wing cultural policy of the AfD, see also Peter Kümmel, "Die 'Versifften' wehren sich," *Die Zeit*, August 22, 2019, 36, https://www.zeit.de/2019/35/theater-ostdeutschland-afd-wahlkampf-verbot-konflikt-kulturgueter

Michael Klammer, cast in the role of Karl Moor, took this as an opportunity to think explicitly about skin color.

Today's directors face the question of how to best critically engage with the, in part, (proto)racist legacy of these historical plays in current performances. How should one best stage these plays today? This is especially important to address, considering how much German society has changed, from a more homogenous society to a society of immigration. How can one use performance to change our perception of canonical texts and to make visible what has perhaps been long overlooked or thought of as marginal? Can a performance make new ways of reading possible, in the vein of what Mieke Bal refers to as "preposterous history," namely an intertextual relationship that allows a newer text to change our view of a text that came before?[37]

Researching Historical Representations of Blackness in German Drama

The contributors to this volume share the conviction that questions about the perception and representation of Blackness cannot be answered ahistorically. The essays on older plays not only provoke questions concerning contemporary productions but also provide readers with the historical context for understanding how Blackness (and in consequence: whiteness) is perceived, narrated, and (textually) staged. How are race and skin color constructed and thematized in dramatic texts? How do the historical semantics of Blackness develop and shift? What options (agency) are Black characters given? And how has the complex connection between historical narrative and poetic referentiality taken shape—in view of globally discussed historical events such as the transatlantic slave trade in the eighteenth century, the revolution in Haiti in the early nineteenth century, or the racial politics of National Socialism in the twentieth century?

Despite this great potential in theater to contribute to ongoing discussions about race and identity in Germany, until now no single book has addressed the issue of race, drama, and performance covering a longer historical period. But our volume connects to an expanding field of research. To date, there has been a clear research focus on eighteenth-century drama—not surprising, since the discursive concept of race in the

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37. See Mieke Bal, *Contemporary Art, Preposterous History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

modern age was formed in philosophy, literature, and popular writings in the eighteenth century. It was not by chance that it took an American publication, Sander Gilman's *On Blackness without Blacks*, to kick off this conversation, as the interest in ethnic or racial difference and alterity in US German studies began much earlier and significantly influenced the reexamination of traditional German studies in Germany, according to Birgit Tautz.[38] Sander L. Gilman's chapter "The Image of the Black in Two Eighteenth-Century German Dramas" in *On Blackness without Blacks* explains how stereotypes about Blacks came about in eighteenth-century German literature, allegedly without any contacts with Black people due to the belated onset of German colonialism in the 1880s.[39] Uta Sadji's (1992) extensive collection of material shows that the representation of Blacks in German drama is not a marginal phenomenon.[40] Barbara Riesche (2010) systematizes this material in terms of the history of the motif and explains how Black characters in eighteenth-century dramas are portrayed as pitiful slaves or as repulsive rebels, as lovers or companions of their white liberators who appraise their European homeland and, through their foreign gaze, help to concretize the identity of the European self.[41] Birgit Tautz (2007) distinguishes in *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences in the Enlightenment* perceptions and representations of Africa from those of China.[42] In her monograph from 2016, influenced by postcolonial studies, Wendy Sutherland shows that "staging Blackness" goes hand in hand with, as the subtitle of her book has it, *Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama*.[43] And in a chapter of her latest book about the British transatlantic world on the Hamburg stage, Tautz explains the "glocal" presence of Blacks in the city while Hamburg institutions were engag-

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38. Birgit Tautz, "Introduction: Colors and Ethnic Difference or Ways of Seeing," in *Colors 1800/1900/2000: Signs of Ethnic Difference*, ed. Birgit Tautz (New York: Rodopi, 2004), 16–18.

39. Sander L. Gilman, "The Image of the Black in Two Eighteenth-Century German Dramas," in *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 35–48.

40. Uta Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Ursula Müller-Speiser, 1992).

41. Barbara Riesche, *Schöne M***innen, edle Sklaven, schwarze Rächer: Schwarzendarstellung und Sklavereithematik im deutschen Unterhaltungstheater (1770–1814)* (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2010).

42. Birgit Tautz, *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Difference: From China to Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

43. Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

ing in the world.[44] German scholars have long been participating in this ongoing debate—the research about German-language literature in a transatlantic, colonial context is currently exploding, and dramatic texts are taking a prominent position.[45] The present contributions hope to continue the American-German exchange in this field.

Publishers are also participating in this new research field by reediting works that were previously only available in digital form in hard-to-read Gothic German script: dramas that did not make it into the canon, but which criticize the racial prejudices of their contemporaries and deal with racial conflicts in family histories or plead for the equality of all humanity, regardless of skin color. This includes a large number of German-language dramas since the 1770s that criticize the cruel and inhumane practice of the slave trade, for example the play *Die N****sklaven* (*The N**** Slaves*) by August von Kotzebue.[46] Editions such as the *Theatertexte* series by Hanover-based Wehrhahn Verlag make such forgotten dramas available and readable for a larger audience—including university seminars.[47]

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44. Tautz, *Translating the World*.

45. See Norbert Otto Eke, "Schreckbilder: Die Revolution als Aufstand der 'schwarzen Männer,'" in *Das Unterhaltungsstück um 1800: Literaturhistorische Konfigurationen— Signaturen der Moderne. Zur Geschichte des Theaters als Reflexionsmedium von Gesellschaft, Politik und Ästhetik*, ed. Johannes Birgfeld and Claude D. Conter (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2007), 3–29; Sigrid G. Köhler, "Beautiful Black Soul? The Racial Matrix of White Aesthetics (Reading Kotzebue against Kleist)," *Image & Narrative* 14, no. 3 (2013): 34–45; Sigrid G. Köhler, "Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen—Zur transnationalen Abolitionsdebatte im deutschsprachigen populären Theater um 1800," in *Recht fühlen*, ed. Sigrid G. Köhler et al. (Paderborn: Fink Verlag, 2017), 63–79; Romana Weiershausen, *Zeitenwandel als Familiendrama: Genre und Politik im deutschsprachigen Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2018), 256–335; Sigrid G. Köhler, "Ein 'historisches Gemälde' gegen Sklaverei: Kotzebues dramenästhetische Bildpolitik und die Abolition im ausgehenden 18. Jahrhundert," in *The Black Diaspora and Germany / Deutschland und die Schwarze Diaspora*, ed. BDG Network (Münster: edition assemblage, 2018), 67–83; Sigrid G. Köhler, "Drastische Bilder: Journalnachrichten auf der Bühne: Versklavung und Abolition als Gegenstände moderner Geschichtsreflexion in deutschsprachigen Journalen und Theaterstücken um 1800," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 48 (2019): 376–98; Natascha Ueckmann and Romana Weiershausen, eds., *Sklavenaufstände in der Literatur* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2020); Stefan Hermes, *Figuren der Anderen: Völkerkundliche Anthropologie und Drama im Sturm und Drang* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2021).

46. August von Kotzebue, *Die N****sklaven: Ein historisch-dramatisches Gemählde in drey Akten*, ed. André Georgi with an afterword by Sigrid G. Köhler (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2019).

47. Wehrhahn also published Carl Anton Gruber von Grubenfels, *Die N****sklaven: Ein Schauspiel in drei Aufzügen*, ed. André Georgi (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2019); Carl Philipp von Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven: Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen*, ed. André Georgi (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2020); Nesselrode zu Hugenpoet, *Zamor und Zoraide: Ein Schauspiel in*

Our anthology draws broadly on research about the historical representation of Blackness and not only sheds light on the eighteenth century, but also places emphasis on the early twentieth century and the present. Readers will notice that we did not include any essays that speak to staging Blackness during the Nazi period, aside from Evelyn Annuß's discussion of blackface. The fact is, the Nazis did not make much innovation in the realm of the theater. What they did implement were *Thingspiele* (thing plays), which were staged outside for thousands of people, in line with fascist aesthetics' emphasis on large crowds.[48] The point of these plays was to get Germans in touch with their Germanic roots and create a sense of unified, Aryan identity. Therefore, the main reason one doesn't hear anything about Blackness on stage during the Nazi period was that theater (its content, actors, and audience) was unified around racial identity; therefore, Black people would not in general have been allowed on stage or even in the audience. This does not mean Black people were completely absent from the stage. There were some marginal phenomena, like the *Afrika Schau*, a variety show where Black people, including African immigrants and Black Germans, were made to perform foreign ethnicities for Nazi publics desiring an exotic show.[49] This is slightly different from the film industry, which saw the production of several colonial films in which Black Germans were employed as extras and meant to act in stereotypical ways that reaffirmed the Nazis' disparaging beliefs about African cultures.

An International and Interdisciplinary Approach

We believe a critical, *interdisciplinary* discussion about how race is staged in German theater has been lacking because of not only the divide between the German and American academies, but also the constructed border between theater studies and literary studies *in* Germany. Part of what makes this volume unique is that we seek to bridge this divide both in our inclusion of contributions from a variety of fields and in our framing of the conversation. In American German studies—which is generally more

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drey Aufzügen, ed. Sigrid G. Köhler and Julia Rebholz (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2022). Rathlefs, *Die M***inn zu Hamburg*, ed. Lily Tonger-Erk, will be published soon.

48. Henning Eichberg and Robert A. Jones, "The Nazi Thingspiel: Theater for the Masses in Fascism and Proletarian Culture." *New German Critique* (1977): 143.

49. See Theodor Michael, *Black German: An Afro-German Life in the Twentieth Century*, trans. Eve Rosenhaft (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 47.

oriented toward cultural studies—theater and literature studies are not so far afield. However, in Germany, these areas have long been separately institutionalized in a manner that has hindered an interdisciplinary conversation. And yet when it comes to addressing the staging of race in German theater, there are issues that require multiple approaches and insights from multiple disciplines. For example, when investigating the presence of Black characters in eighteenth-century German drama, it is relevant whether the figure of the *M**** was a kind of *Rollenfach* (type part) performed by white actors in blackface or such a role was performed by a Black actor like Ira Aldridge,[50] a celebrated nineteenth-century actor who toured through Europe. And while a historian might be able to answer the question of *who* played a role, a literary or theater studies scholar might be needed to determine what this meant for German drama. And furthermore, a scholar would have to be well versed in critical race studies in order to consider what the presence of Black roles and/or Black actors in German drama meant for the construction of German national identity or a particular German understanding of whiteness and self/other.

By tackling issues of racialization and Blackness in German theater, the contributors to this volume rely on an array of critical methodologies, ranging from postcolonialism and Black feminist thought to critical race theory. For scholars working on German-language performances, adopting American methodologies about race can be controversial.[51] Fatima El-Tayeb writes, "The continental European case represents a form of racialization that receives relatively little academic attention" because Europeans like to claim they are "colorblind," don't "see race," or live in homogenous societies.[52] Instead of refusing to engage with American theories about race, El-Tayeb proposes scholars *creolize* these theories:

> Creolization thus works to rid theory of its pretensions by exploring the at times tense relationship between specific circumstances and universal conditions, local applications and global connections, without aiming to dissolve them through an all-encompassing, unified model, instead allowing for the intersectional, sometimes con-

50. Krystyna Kujawinska Courtney and Maria Lukowska, eds., *Ira Aldridge 1807–1867: The Great Shakespearean Tragedian on the Bicentennial Anniversary of His Birth* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009).

51. Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xvi.

52. El-Tayeb, *European Others*, xvi.

tradictory workings of power structures and subject positions shaped though not determined by them.[53]

Thus, our goal with this volume is to *creolize* the language for discussing Blackness on stage by combining Anglophone theories with German examples to explore what scholars from disciplines outside of German studies can learn about race, racialization, gender, and performance from studying German-language examples.

The Politics of Talking about Blackness

We approach this tenuous topic by considering the difficulty of deconstructing identities pertinent to this discussion as laid out by German theater studies scholar Friedemann Kreuder.[54] Kreuder coined the term "deconstruction paradox" to describe the difficulty of deconstructing identities on the stage. According to Kreuder, even if one's goal is to show that *Humandifferenzierungen* (differences between humans) can be transgressed, one first has to name these differences, whether they depend on race, gender, age, beauty, or ability. Although the intention might be to undermine difference, one cannot avoid reproducing difference just the same. Since we cannot escape this paradox, our approach is to discuss it critically, paying special attention to language.

We have chosen to capitalize "Black" and "Blackness" in order to indicate that these terms are not based on a biological basis, but on a sociocultural subdivision associated with an experience of racism. "White" does not refer to any biological race or color either, but white people are not exposed to any racism. In a book that analyzes literary and cultural sources on Blackness in drama and theater from the eighteenth century to the present, the historical use of language to denote ethnic differences or race is also relevant. As cultural scholars, we are aware that semantics vary both historically and contextually. Together with the contributors, we

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53. El-Tayeb, *European Others*, xviii.

54. Friedemann Kreuder, "Theater zwischen Reproduktion und Transgression körperbasierter Humandifferenzierungen," in *Un/doing Differences: Praktiken der Humandifferenzierung*, ed. Stefan Hirschauer (Weilerswist: Velbrück, 2017), 232–56; Friedemann Keuder, "Un/doing differences: Ein Auftrag für zeitgenössische Theaterinstitutionen," in *Theater entwickeln und planen: Kulturpolitische Konzeptionen zur Reform der Darstellenden Künste*, ed. Wolfgang Schneider (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 91–99.

thought about how to best use language about race in an academic, but also politically and culturally sensitive, manner, so that we could, on the one hand, reproduce German sources as accurately as possible in translation, and on the other hand, not repeat offensive terms. This applies most of all to the German N-word, which cannot be translated congruently with either the American, outdated term "Negro" or the American N-word.[55] Even if it was the most common term used to designate Black people in Germany in the eighteenth century, this term has never been neutral and is certainly not neutral in the context of contemporary race theory. The same is true of the M-word, the oldest German term used by whites to construe Black people as different.[56] Therefore, we have chosen to use the placeholders *N***** and *M****.

One could argue that historical documents do not need to be—and should not be—altered in a scholarly publication because the assumed reader is a fellow scholar who can be expected to engage critically with those documents. We believe that this should be the case in the future. In the present, however, we consider a clearly visible marking to be necessary—especially regarding the recent discussions about the N-word in Germany. Currently the N-word is discussed as a racially discriminatory term in the German majority society and therefore is increasingly avoided: this is shown by the feuilleton debate that broke out in Germany in 2013 about the deletion and replacement of the N-word in classics of children's literature such as Astrid Lindgren's *Pippi Longstocking* and

55. The German N-word "refers to the Latin word *niger*, the Spanish and Portuguese word *negro* and the French word *négre*. The Latin word *niger* means 'black.' When millions of Africans were enslaved, the Spanish and Portuguese slave dealers used this word as a sweeping description for Africans. The earliest example of its use in a text stems from 1699. In Germany, the analogous term 'N.' was first used at the beginning of the 17th century"; Susan Arndt and Antje Hornscheid, eds., *Afrika und die deutsche Sprache: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk* (Münster: Unrast, 2004), 184.

56. The term *Moor* goes back etymologically to the Greek *moros*, which means "foolish," "simple-minded," "stupid," or "godless," as well as to the Latin *maurus*, which means "black," "dark," "African," The term, already in use in Germany in the Middle Ages, is employed on the one hand to refer to the inhabitants of Ethiopia, and on the other hand to refer to the population of western North Africa south of Morocco, the inhabitants of Mauritania. Due to the phonetic similarity in German, the *Mohr* is also identified with the Islamic *Maure* (Spanish *moros*). From the beginning, the term had a negative connotation due to its hostility toward non-Christians. See Susan Arndt and Ulrike Hamann, "Mohr_in," in *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht: (K)Erben des Kolonialismus im Wissensarchiv deutsche Sprache. Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk*, ed. Susan Arndt and Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard (Münster: Unrast, 2015), 649–53.

Otfried Preussler's *The Little Witch*. Another current discussion revolves around how the Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden (Dresden State Art Collections) is reviewing its online museum catalogs for racist titles of artworks and offering alternative or abbreviated titles of works.[57] A further example is the announcement of the play *Black Battles with Dogs* by Bernard-Marie Koltès, staged in 2003 at the Volksbühne Berlin—which put the German N-word in big letters on the theater's billboards.[58] Of course, there is a difference between the public use of the N-word, for example in children's literature, public museum catalogs, or theater ads, and a scholarly publication. But even in academia, we have reason to think it's still important to send a clear signal through the use of asterisks,[59] especially in regard to teaching and when respecting a nonwhite audience. In doing so, we show solidarity with those Black German scholars who point out that these terms are rooted in racism and colonialism and that their use is characterized by the enslavement and devaluation of Black people.[60]

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57. For example, the online catalog now displays a sculpture by Balthasar Permoser circa 1724 as "*** mit Perlschale (historischer Titel)," "*** with pearl bowl (historical title)." By clicking on the title, one can choose to have the original title *Mohr mit Perlschale* shown, and a warning appears: "The SKD dissociates itself from this use of language and stands for a critical examination of it." See Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden, accessed October 20, 2022, https://skd-online-collection.skd.museum/Details/Index/117608. In the newspaper *Die Zeit*, museum director Marion Ackermann and writer Lukas Rietzschel have a controversial discussion about this approach in the "Dispute" section: "Wie soll man ihn künftig nennen?," *Die Zeit*, September 8, 2022, https://www.zeit.de/2022/37/staatliche-kunstsammlungen-dres den-kunstwerke-umbenennung-rassismus

58. See Azadeh Sharifi's article in our volume.

59. For example, the historian Wolfgang Reinhard writes in the foreword to his global colonial history that he was still able to write the N-word "without any problems" in the 1980s, but is now bound by "political correctness" and is trying to avoid "the 'N-word' (as it is now called)." The fact that even a scientist who analyzes the horrors of Western colonization over sixteen hundred pages, describes the avoidance of the N-word as an seemingly annoying adjustment to the zeitgeist, gives a deep insight into conservative parts of German academia. Wolfgang Reinhard, *Die Unterwerfung der Welt: Globalgeschichte der Europäischen Expansion 1415–2015* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2018), 12.

60. Natasha A. Kelly, "Das N-Wort," in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*, ed. Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Antje Lann Hornscheidt (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes & Apsel, 2010), 157–66; Grada Kilomba, "'Don't You Call Me N***!' Das 'N-Wort', Trauma und Rassismus," in *TheBlackBook: Deutschlands Häutungen*, ed. ADB Köln and cyber Nomads (Frankfurt am Main: IKO 2004), 173–82.

Table of Contents

The volume is organized into three parts that cover historical representations of Blackness in German theater, as well as contemporary developments and issues. The first part, "Black Figures: Race-ing the Canon," consists of six essays that focus on canonical works of German theater ranging from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. We begin with a contribution from Wendy Sutherland, an expert on race in eighteenth-century German theater whose monograph *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* appeared with Routledge in 2016. Sutherland's essay, an excerpt from Chapter 3 of her book, offers an in-depth look at Blackness's presence and absence in the form of colonial goods at the dinner table in Karl Gotthelf Lessing's *Die Mätresse* (*The Mistress*, 1780). By recovering this long-forgotten play, Sutherland's essay offers an important contribution to both German postcolonial studies *and* recent efforts to better investigate Germany's involvement in the slave trade by arguing that the colonial goods depicted on the Prussian aristocratic table and the memory of the Black female invoked at the table illustrate both the invisibility and repression of slavery and the slave trade "abroad" within the eighteenth-century Prussian/European domestic sphere of "home."

Staying with the topic of slavery, Sigrid Köhler's contribution draws on her expertise in German-language abolitionist plays from the eighteenth century. In "Black Revolution: Resistance and Slavery as Theme in Popular German-Language Theater," Köhler examines a selection of German-language plays that appeared at the end of the eighteenth century and were dedicated to ending the slave trade and fighting slavery more broadly. These plays include several lesser-known texts such as Freyherr von Nesselrode zu Hugenpott's *Zamor und Zoraide* (1778), Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg's *Oronooko* (1786), Friedrich Döhner's *Des Aufruhrs schreckliche Folge, oder Die N***** (*The Insurrection's Horrible Consequence, or The N*****, 1792) and Carl von Reitzenstein's *Die N****sklaven* (*The N**** Slaves*, 1793). Köhler argues that in these plays one finds radical approaches to theories about human rights, freedom, equality, Black resistance, and revolution that precede such discussions in canonized German-language literature and sometimes contradict contemporary discourse on race by well-known authors such as Immanuel Kant. That is the benefit of taking a closer look at texts that, while long forgotten today, were widely popular in their time. Köhler's examination of these popular texts not only illuminates contemporary German perspectives on the transnational debate

over slavery, but also considers tragedy as a medium for reflecting on slavery as a fundamental element of the history of Western modernity.

We then proceed to one of the more canonical works in the next essay with Mozart's *The Magic Flute* (1791), which features the controversial raced figure Monostatos, a lowly guard aiding the high priest Sarastro to keep the coveted white female heroine Pamina captive. In several scenes, Monostatos's Blackness is associated with ugliness and barbarism, especially when he is compared to Pamina. In her analysis of the opera, entitled "Monostatos's Longing: Staging Blackness in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*," Irmtraud Hnilica closely examines how empathy functions in Monostatos's aria "All Feel the Joy of Love." Hnilica maintains that by allowing Monostatos to express his longing to be with Pamina and more generally accepted by larger society despite his appearance, Mozart attempts to work through contemporaneous discourses around race. Hnilica argues that rather than emerging from a vacuum (an example of Gilman's "Blackness without Blacks") Monostatos can actually be read as a product of existing racist, but also humanist and abolitionist, debates.

Chapters 4 and 5 feature readings of two canonical works by Friedrich Schiller: *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* (1783) and *The Robbers* (1782). Continuing with the topic of empathy, Franziska Bergmann's essay "Economies of Compassion and Skin Color in Friedrich Schiller's *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*" considers one of Schiller's few plays that feature a Black character, a play that due to its complexity and ambiguity has received little attention in Schiller scholarship. Set in Genoa in 1547, the historical tragedy focuses on the conspiracy of Fiesco, the young Count of Lavagna, against the doge Andrea Doria. Doria's tyrannic nephew, Gianettino, wants the "M***" Muley Hassan to eliminate Fiesco. However, Hassan double-crosses Gianettino and confides the plot to Fiesco, a plot that perpetuates the stereotype of the dishonest, untrustworthy "M***". In her analysis of Muley Hassan, Bergmann maintains that Schiller's characterization of him swings between humanizing and Othering, reflecting the tension around race and Orientalism during the Enlightenment. As Nina Berman demonstrates in *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989*,[61] while German thinkers sought a more humanizing depiction of Muslim characters, they still maintained a hierarchy of civilization that placed Muslims below European Christians. What is especially groundbreaking in Bergmann's analysis is how she deconstructs

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61. Nina Berman, *German Literature on the Middle East: Discourses and Practices, 1000–1989* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2011).

the play's sympathy or lack thereof for Hassan vis-à-vis Fiesco's wife Leonore, who as a white, female figure, traditionally commands sympathy when placed in relation to Black characters. With this argument, Bergmann brings German (theater) studies in constellation with critical race and whiteness studies.

In her essay "Staging Whiteness: Race and Aesthetics in Schiller's *The Robbers* and Antù Romero Nunes's 2012–2013 Production," Lily Tonger-Erk proceeds in two parts. First, she investigates the historical connection between the play's warring brothers Franz and Karl Moor, Western black-white-symbolism and European discourses around race. In the second half of the essay, Tonger-Erk considers how contemporary dramaturges grapple with the playwright's racialization of the figure Franz, whose evil and unethical ways are supposed to be mirrored in his dark and unattractive appearance. For this part of the essay, she focuses on a production of the play directed by Antù Romero Nunes and performed in the Stuttgarter Schauspielhaus in 2013. Rather than sidestepping the play's now controversial racial discourse, Nunes leans into it fully by casting Black German actor Michael Klammer in the role of Karl, the cleverer and more beloved brother. In an unconventional moment, Klammer breaks the fourth wall and reflects on the historical and contemporary stereotypes of Blacks and whites and uses this as a starting point in order to reflect on problems with racism in German society.

In the final chapter of this part, "Blackness in Heiner Müller's Imaginary," Norbert Otto Eke brings the discussion into the twentieth century with an analysis of two of Heiner Müller's plays: *The Mission* (1979) and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome* (1985). Eke contextualizes Müller's interest in Blackness against his interest in revolutionary movements. Eke suggests that Müller locates revolutionary potential in his racialized figures. Sasportas and Aaron, from *The Mission* and *Anatomy* respectively, are conceptualized as an antithesis to a Europe marked by rationality. As such, they embody the Other who is associated with the subconscious, the corporeal, and the irrational. Eke argues that with these plays, Müller opposes a sanitized, Western conceptualization of history, influenced by the Enlightenment, with his own imaginary, "Third World" perspective on history, which celebrates disorder. Rather than simply praising Blackness as a natural opposite of European culture, Müller employs Black figures in order to argue for the necessity of rethinking the relationship between body and mind in order to achieve a utopian state of being.

While the first part is primarily concerned with how white German playwrights have historically imagined Black characters in text, the next

part, "Black Performance and Practices of Blackfacing," looks at the history and reception of how these Black literary figures are embodied on stage, whether by Black people or by white Germans in blackface. The first two chapters in this part focus on the history of blackface in Germany. In his essay "Blackface and Black Faces on German and Austrian Stages, 1847–1914," Jeff Bowersox challenges the widespread assumption in Germany and Austria that there is no meaningful history of blackface in central Europe. Bowersox surveys the history of blackface performance in German-speaking lands in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in order to explore the degree of resistance and the extent of the appeal among German and Austrian audiences. Disavowing claims that Germans and Austrians were "too serious" to get blackface, Bowersox examines early appropriations of this performance that demonstrate a certain comfort with the form, as entertainers used it to produce and reinforce racial boundaries brought into question by the migration of Black entertainers and the entertainments popularly associated with them.

In the second chapter, entitled "Racisms and Representation: Staging Defacement in Germany Contextualized," Evelyn Annuß continues where Bowersox leaves off, as she interrogates how blackface performance was received by German audiences in the 1920s and 1930s. Annuß is interested in determining the differentiating functions of the "minstrel mask" in the German context once it had already become a familiar trope. Her examples vary from Ernst Krenek's jazz opera *Jonny Strikes up the Band* (1927) and Josephine Baker's stage shows, to the Nazis' "degenerate art" campaign. Annuß boldly asks whether today's social condemnation of blackface, in any and all forms, might play into the war of affect between the Left and the Right. By reviving historical, subversive blackface practices, Annuß suggests that using black "masks" in the realm of the theater can sometimes be a productive way of engaging with questions of race, identity, and authenticity. The third chapter in Part II, Jonathan Wipplinger's essay "The Biguine: The African Diasporic Presence at Weimar's End," brings in the often-neglected topic of Black agency by examining this long-forgotten café in Berlin that opened in 1932 and featured African American and Afro-European entertainers and musicians, as well as an all-Black staff. In his essay, Wipplinger reconstructs this overlooked space via photographic documentation, journalistic discussions, personal recollections, and ephemera like postcards. The Biguine represents an important chapter in the history of Black people and Black performance in Germany because this remarkable space of Black agency managed to exist at a time when there were few performance opportunities for Black artists in

traditional theaters and classical music venues and Afro-German and African diasporic communities were increasingly socially and economically ostracized while the National Socialists rose to power. Wipplinger positions the Biguine as a site by which the transnational reimagining of Weimar Germany can be furthered by showing how this space's history was informed as much by the determinants of German history as by European colonialism, American culture, and the African diasporic presence in Berlin.

This part concludes with Andrea Geier's essay, "How Education about Racism Can(not) Succeed: Blackface in Literature, Theater, and Film," which brings us to the present day, addressing the controversies surrounding contemporary instances of blackface in different German media. Geier reflects on the (still) ongoing German debate whether blackface in everyday occurrences like carnival are the same as performances on the stage, or is it possible to argue that blackface on the theatrical stage could also be considered a legitimate critical contestation with race that points to the construction rather than essentialism of racial identity.[62] To discuss possibilities and limitations of this claim, she engages with other conceptualizations of masquerade based on gender, ethnicity, and class. If it were possible to engage in an antiracist form of blackface, it would need to interrogate the racist tradition of theater or film itself and thus criticize the audience's viewing habits and expectations in German theaters. As Geier shows, this is not the case in Günther Wallraff's film *Schwarz auf Weiß* (*Black on White*, 2009). Wallraff repeatedly claimed to use blackface in an antiracist intention to educate people about racism.

We saved the final part of the book for essays about and conversations with Black German playwrights and performers, because although we find it necessary to engage with theater history and white German representations of Blackness, we wanted the final focus to be on the work of Black German artists and actors in order to signify a change in the discourse by shifting the balance of power and emphasizing Black German agency. Thus, the third and final part, "Black Artists: Race, Theater, Institution," focuses both on Black German artists' own thoughts, as well as the work of scholars writing *about* contemporary Black German actors and playwrights. This part begins with Azadeh Sharifi's essay "Coloniality and Decolonial Practices in Contemporary German Theater." Sharifi argues

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62. See Katrin Sieg, who interrogated Germans' claim to objective racial masquerading: Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

that, thanks to the legacy of playwrights like Brecht and Heiner Müller, people often think of German theater as having a leftist tradition, which is why there is allegedly no need for antiracist work to be done. Thus, there is a belief that German theater is *supposed* to make its audience uncomfortable as a form of education and critical reflection, and therefore, blackface should fall under this practice. The advent of postmigrant theater has pushed back against this myth, as it includes playwrights, directors, and actors who are Black and People of Color. Under the umbrella of postmigrant theater, German artists have uncovered the colonial structures of German theater, particularly in the form of representation—like mainstream theater's practices of Othering Black people through the use of blackface—and language use, such as employing the N-word. Sharifi also examines which artists have begun implementing decolonial techniques to change these practices, using the examples of Anta Helene Recke and Simone Dede Ayivi.

Olivia Landry's essay also discusses the German colonial past and the potential for theater to intervene in history and acknowledge counternarratives by discussing the performance *Black Bismarck*, produced by the postdramatic-influenced performance group Andcompany&Co and in collaboration with individual German and Belgian performers. Landry reads *Black Bismarck* as performing a "circum-Mediterranean" movement, sifting through the damaging scenes of exportation of neocolonial and trade policies southward and the current swell of mass migration northward and demanding the audience rethink history from a subaltern, decolonial perspective. Drawing on a multiscalar confluence of performance and theater theories ranging from Joseph Roach, Diana Taylor, and José Esteban Muñoz to Hans-Thies Lehmann and the postcolonial theories of Stuart Hall, Achille Mbembe, and Fatima El-Tayeb, Landry's essay makes a broad argument for performance as a mode and method of approaching hurtful histories with appeals to a theater of discordance that equally undoes itself as a cultural medium entrenched in a conservative and monocultural tradition.

The next chapter, Hanna Voss's "From Drama School to Stage: Young Actors of Color in German-Speaking *Sprechtheater*," provides a slightly different, empirical perspective compared to the other essays' more historical, cultural studies approaches. Voss examines the data and statistics concerning how many actors and actresses of Color are formally trained each year in Germany and how many of them are hired for theaters at the local and national level. Voss points out that within the field of *Sprechtheater*, physical human differentiations like sex, age, race, impairment, and

attractiveness are, in principle, not professionally disregarded. They represent, on the contrary, main characteristics of functional requirements. However, she proposes that in light of the backlash against blackfacing and the success of postmigrant theater, theater's approach to racial difference might be changing. Voss argues that these dynamics have set off a process of deinstitutionalizing race—which is, however, not simply synonymous with the dissolution of this institutional component. Instead, it means that the mechanisms of reproduction are changing: from unconscious to conscious and from direct to indirect. Based on an ethnographic research approach, she illustrates this thesis by presenting and analyzing empirical data about the experience of young professional actors as they move from drama school to employment on the stage.

What makes this final part unique compared to the rest of the volume is that in addition to these three academic analyses of the contemporary conditions for Black German playwrights and actors, the part is rounded out by a roundtable discussion with and an essay by Black artists. The roundtable discussion, which is based on the transcription of a conversation that took place at the "Staging Blackness" conference, consists of several well-known contemporary Black German playwrights, actors, and dramaturges, including Philipp Khabo Köpsell, Michael Klammer, Olivia Wenzel, Simone Dede Ayivi, and Rahel Jankowski. The roundtable, which was moderated by Priscilla Layne, was one of the highlights of the conference because it was a unique opportunity to learn from Black German artists working at the forefront about what kinds of challenges they have overcome and still face as they make their way through the German theater landscape. This roundtable transcription shows the racial politics of the contemporary German theater scene in a snapshot.

The final essay in the volume, "Judgment, Power, and Participation in Theater: Based on the Ascending Career of a Black Female Artist in Germany," was written by Black German theater director Anta Helena Recke. As we discussed at the start of this introduction, Recke made waves in 2017 with her all-Black casting of the Bavarian family drama *Mittelreich*, copying the production of Anna Sophie Mahler based on the novel by Josef Bierbichler. Recke's bold casting decision received mixed reviews from German audiences, with some critics welcoming her provocation, which asked German audiences to think more critically about normative whiteness in German theater and society at large, while others felt her casting was a political move that placed too much emphasis on racial politics and distracted from the content of the play. In her essay, Recke reflects on the decisions she made with her production, its reception, and what

role her production plays within the contemporary politics of German theater.

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I

Black Figures

Race-ing the Canon

Looking at the Overlooked

The Table as Global Stage in Karl Gotthelf Lessing's *The Mistress* (1780)[1]

Wendy Sutherland

In his book *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting*, Norman Bryson paraphrases Charles Sterling's definition of rhopography as "the depiction of those things which lack importance, the unassuming material base of life that 'importance' constantly overlooks."[2] Using still life painting, often perceived to be a lower form of art because it depicts scenes from the domestic sphere such as food, the subtext of which presupposes labor in cultivation and production, Bryson shows the significance of these trivial objects in representing and defining the society and class in which they appear. In this essay, I will also look at the overlooked, in particular, the repression of slavery, that is, the invisibility of slave labor embedded in the cultivation and production of colonial goods consumed in Europe as presented in eighteenth-century German bourgeois drama and its depiction of the Prussian table. I will show how the material culture of slavery manifests itself metonymically on the table in eighteenth-century Prussian daily life. Far from "lacking importance," colonial goods are central in defining the white European family and society as a whole,

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1. This chapter is an excerpt from "Stage Props and Staging Blackness: 'Looking at the Overlooked' in Karl Gotthelf Lessing's *Die Mätresse*," with references to "Slavery, Colonialism, and the Eighteenth-Century Global Stage," both in Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (Farnham: Routledge, 2016).

2. Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked: Four Essays on Still Life Painting* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008), 61; Charles Sterling, *Still Life Painting: From Antiquity to the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harper & Row, 1981), 27.

especially in Karl Lessing's bourgeois drama *Die Mätresse (The Mistress)*,[3] which, like still life painting, does not depict "those things in the world which are great—the legends of the gods, the battles of heroes, the crises in history"[4] as classical tragedy did, but rather presents the family and home, that is, the domestic sphere, as the locus of the action, and the bourgeois patriarch as hero.

Karl Gotthelf Lessing's *Die Mätresse* (1780)

Karl Lessing sets his play *Die Mätresse*,[5] published in 1780,[6] in Prussia during the reign of Friedrich II (1740–1786), made evident by the mention of the gold coins *Friedrich d'or* and Berlin as reference points in the first act. Also significant is the mention of the American Revolution, which places the action between 1776 and 1779. Like Denis Diderot's bourgeois dramas,[7] the locus of the action is an aristocratic family framed as bourgeois because of both the private family conflict depicted and Lessing's patriarch Otto von Kronfeld, who, like Diderot's Lysimond in *Le Fils naturel* (*The Natural Son*) (1757) and d'Orbesson in *Le Père de famille* (*The Father of the Family*) (1758), represents the fathers who restore bourgeois family values to a family in crisis. While Diderot's conflicts deal with the aristocratic son St. Albin's love for a bourgeois girl in *Le Père de famille* and the absence and

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3. Karl Gotthelf Lessing, *Die Mätresse* (Heilbronn: Verlag von Gebr. Henninger, 1887), l.

4. Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked*, 61.

5. The plot of *Die Mätresse* has influences from Thomas Decker's English drama *The Honest Whore* (1604), Isaac Bickerstaff's *The Maid of the Mill* (1765), and Samuel Richardson's sentimental novel *Clarissa* (1748). Apart from my book *Staging Blackness* and Eugen Wolff's *Karl Gotthelf Lessing*, there is very little research on Karl Lessing's *Die Mätresse*. Uta Sadji references Lessing's *Die Mätresse*, in *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Verlag Ursula Müller-Speiser, 1992), 142–44.

6. Otto Heinrich Freiherr von Gemmingen's popular bourgeois drama *Der deutsche Hausvater* was also published in 1780.

7. Karl Gotthelf Lessing's older brother Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, author of the first German bourgeois drama, *Miss Sara Sampson* (1755), also translated into German Diderot's dramas *Le Fils naturel* (*Der natürliche Sohn*) and *Le Père de famille* (*Der Hausvater*), along with Diderot's theoretical work on the bourgeois drama in *Das Theater des Herrn Diderot*, first published in 1760. Although the English domestic dramas such as George Lillo's *The London Merchant, or the History of George Barnwell* (1731) and Edward Moore's *The Gamester* (1753) played a significant role in the development of the German bourgeois drama, Diderot's dramas and drama theory were also influential in the development of the genre, his work having had more success in Germany than in France. See Karl S. Guthke, *Das deutsche bürgerliche Trauerspiel* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2006), 30–35.

return of the father Lysimond in *Le Fils naturel*, *Die Mätresse* presents the return of Otto von Kronfeld to his Prussian family after a long stay in America and what has happened in his absence. Juliane Brand, a virtuous woman of lower social class, has been seduced by Otto's nephew Count Mannhof, who has promised her marriage. Since she conceived a child illegitimately, her father ostracizes her and she now lives a secluded life in the country with her aunt and illegitimate son. Mannhof, however, lies and tells Otto that Juliane is the mistress of Baron Fallhorn. When Otto meets Juliane and recognizes her virtuous nature and greatness of soul, he determines to force his nephew Mannhof to keep his promise to Juliane by marrying her. Mannhof, however, is pursuing Elisabeth, Otto's niece, but she loves Baron Hochthal. When Otto learns that Mannhof is spreading the false rumor that Juliane was the mistress of another man, he disinherits Mannhof, and Otto's brother Hans refuses to allow Elisabeth to marry Mannhof. The play ends when Otto asks Hans, his sole heir, to adopt Juliane's son, who will receive one-sixth of Otto's fortune.

Ultimately, Otto's role is that of merging the von Kronfeld family, an aristocratic family, with Juliane's nonaristocratic lineage, not through marriage, but through inheritance. Otto's legacy therefore will pass down not only to his blood relative Hans, but to Juliane's illegitimate son Karlchen, whose admittance to the von Kronfeld family transcends the social boundaries of class established by society, thereby merging the classes and creating one unified legacy. Otto's declaration "All those who are virtuous are my family"[8] reflects his own moral transformation, where virtue transcends blood. It is this moral transformation that allows Otto to have compassion for Juliane and her son, who are both of a lower class and social pariahs. Compassion is both a bourgeois trait and a sign of Otto's moral whiteness, which surmounts class prejudice (*Standesvorurteil*) and class difference (*Standesunterschied*), a trait he apparently acquired while in America, where he experienced the ramifications of the American Revolution, a new model of rule, which deposed the monarchy and sought equality among all men. He also embodies the unification of virtuous nobility (*die tugendhaften Adligen*) with the virtuous bourgeoisie (*die tugendhaften Bürgerlichen*),[9] the foundation of a new German family and nation. Otto's absolutist Prussia, although an enlightened absolutist state, as Immanuel Kant declared in his essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* (*Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?*), was still

8. Lessing, *Die Mätresse*, 89.
9. Eugen Wolff, *Karl Gotthelf Lessing* (Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1886), 74.

very much a class-conscious society concerned with rank, title, and lineage, and honor was a trait used by the German bourgeoisie to construct itself in opposition to the aristocracy. Mannhof, for example, believes that giving Juliane money can substitute for her loss of honor. This assumption, however, reveals his own lack of honor.[10] His ability to lie about his treatment of Juliane in order to achieve a more socially appropriate match for himself also aligns him with the licentious traits of the aristocracy, which Otto scorns. Otto's sister-in-law Maria also embodies the vices of the aristocracy made evident in her views on marriage. Knowing of Mannhof's seduction of Juliane, Maria still advises her daughter Elisabeth to marry Mannhof because he is rich, emphasizing that women of their station must tolerate mistresses in order to have the benefits of the court:

> For that do you not go to the royal court, to the gathering? On days of the gala do you not dine on dinnerware made of gold? Do you not play cards with kings, princes, and princesses? So dear daughter! *Savoir vivre!* Courtly manners! Our virtue is bearing with grace what would drive an ordinary woman mad.[11]

At first glance, *Die Mätresse* does not appear to deal directly with race, Blackness, or whiteness. This *Sturm und Drang* drama rather focuses on the ideal of expiating aristocratic vices while merging the classes as a means of improving society as a whole. However, upon closer inspection, evidence of the global reality of the triangular trade and its repression become visible. Scene 8 of act 2 marks the middle of the act made up of sixteen scenes and is the culmination of the rising action of the plot. This scene characterizes the central family of the play and contrasts starkly with the exposition presented in act 1, that is, Juliane's ostracism because of her seduction by Mannhof, her illegitimate child, and their modest life in the country. This exposition is juxtaposed to that of the second act, where Otto tells of his journey in America. The stage directions of this act indicate that the action takes place in a stately pleasure garden with a summerhouse whose glass doors open into the garden. The glass doors are open, allowing the spectator to see into the hall (*Saal*), the salon, the room in which the family would otherwise receive guests. The space is both inside and outside, enclosed but open, marking Otto's own liminal nature as both "Americanized" and Prussian, aristocrat in class but bourgeois in

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10. Wolff, *Karl Gotthelf Lessing*, 66.
11. Lessing, *Die Mätresse*, 65.

values. Here the *Saal*, or hall,[12] which typically symbolizes the location of aristocratic gathering and representation, has more the function of the salon in Diderot's bourgeois dramas *Le Fils naturel* and *Le Père de famille*, that is, a bourgeois domestic space within the home representing family intimacy, but where outsiders can be invited in. Present at the table are the members of Otto's family: his brother Hans, Hans's wife Maria, and their daughter Elisabeth. This exchange serves as a tableau or portrait of family life set in the domestic sphere. For instance, when analyzing the settings of Diderot's *Le Fils naturel* and *Le Père de famille*, Peter Szondi suggests that the settings of Diderot's bourgeois dramas are depicted through the "principle of the tableau."[13] The domestic ritual of the meal at the table therefore frames the family, creating the family portrait or tableau of the insiders. Servants, for example, do not partake of the meal and therefore remain outside the intimate sphere that the table delineates.

> It [dining] therefore functions within the household to cement the bonds between individuals and to aid their formation into a community. The form of the table itself underlies this function by joining all those participating in the meal around its sides; it stresses interconnection and responsibility.[14]

Unbeknownst to his family, however, Otto was married to a Black woman while in America. He relates the story of his deceased Black wife, whom he brings into the circle of family through memory and recollection.

> MARIA. One can tell the confirmed bachelor right away.
> OTTO. I, Sister? I am an old widower.
> MARIA. What? You were married?

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12. Suzanne Pucci mentions that in English homes of the early modern period, the great hall served as "center of social life," particularly of the aristocratic household. The architectural shift to a more private domestic sphere becomes visible with the construction of dining rooms and drawing rooms, which promoted family intimacy. See Suzanne Pucci, "Picture Perfect: Snapshots of the Family," *L'Esprit Createur* 44, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 70. Great halls were common in English country houses and functioned as dining space for both the tenants and gentry. See Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 194.

13. Peter Szondi, "*Tableau* and *Coup de Théâtre*: On the Social Psychology of Diderot's Bourgeois Tragedy," *New Literary History* 11, no. 2 (Winter 1980): 328.

14. Catherine Richardson, "Properties of Domestic Life: The Table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," in *Stage Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 138.

HANS. Brother! And you did not notify us?

OTTO. I don't like to think of it. (*Moved.*) She was an angel of a woman.

MARIA. What is her lineage?

OTTO. God only knows! A slave trader brought her to me. She was radiantly beautiful, black like the most gleaming raven, and slender like a reed. I paid what was requested, but only little was requested to be rid of her. Her mind, her mind! And her heart! As a spouse, Brother! Every day, I discovered even more of her charms.

MARIA. A N***ess?[15] God protect us! Good that it happened in America! Here you would have caused your family much heartache. Only imagine it: marrying a N***ess! Did you continue to keep company with honorable people after that?

OTTO. Very little. I didn't need to seek out joy. I had it with me, but did not enjoy it for long. She died giving birth to her first child.

MARIA. Praise and thanks be to God! Oh! How fortunate you are to have come away scot-free from all of your excesses.

OTTO. My dear sister! I lawfully married her. Only in Europe are we capable of deserting a loved girl.

MARIA. But without knowing anything about her family?

HANS. My child, you heard, her family are M***ish.[16]

OTTO. Afterward I learned that she was a nabob's daughter who was captured and, as was common, was sold. After her death, the slave trader came once more to my home. He offered one large sum after the other for her and I could give him nothing but tears.

MARIA. Nabob! Nabob! In Africa, is that not the equivalent of "king"?

HANS. Yes, my precious treasure!

MARIA. Oh! The poor lady! To die giving birth to her first child! And you neglected to notify us of such a painful loss for our entire family? It was our duty to wear mourning for her. (*Begins to weep.*)

OTTO. If tears could arouse her from the dead, she would have risen from the dead. But no more of this! She is now in a better place, although she was also happy with me. (*Paul and two other servants bring tea, coffee, and chocolate, in addition to jam. The young lady who slipped away and picked flowers brings each one at the table a*

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15. In my chapter, *N***ess* refers to the antiquated English word *Negress* (the feminine form of *Negro*), and not to the English "N-word." The German equivalent of *Negro* is racially charged in modern German. Please see the introduction to this volume for clarification.

16. In my chapter, *M**** refers to the English word *Moor*. The German equivalent is racially charged in modern German. Please see the introduction to this volume for further explanation.

bouquet.) Pipes and tobacco too?—Good! (*Otto fills the pipe and smokes; the others eat and drink, everyone at his pleasure. To a servant:*) The gardener should open the back doors. The people when they come from work might otherwise think they are not permitted to pass through because we are inside.[17]

While Otto's presence and return from America makes the family whole again, the absence of the "N***ess,"[18] Otto's dead wife and mother to his child who also died, deceased sister-in-law to Hans and Maria, and deceased aunt to Elisabeth, presents interesting questions concerning belonging and inclusion and the boundaries between insider and outsider. The first question asked by Otto's sister-in-law concerns his wife's lineage, which is a means to establish class appropriateness and social status necessary to belong to the von Kronfeld family. However, when it becomes clear that Otto's wife was in fact a "N***ess" whom he had purchased from a slave trader, a peculiar stand-in for the traditional father who hands over his daughter to her future husband, it becomes apparent to the reader-spectator that a very strange wedding ceremony-transaction indeed has taken place. The strangeness of this marriage arrangement, however, is never questioned by those seated at the table, reflecting the repression of slavery "at home" in Europe because the members of the family remain unmoved by the institution of slavery itself. However, Maria continues by voicing concerns about the social ramifications of marrying a Black woman. Implicit in her concern is a belief in Black racial inferiority. When Maria learns that Otto's Black wife died in childbirth, she responds with great relief. Maria, like Mannhof, reflects the class consciousness of the aristocracy rigidly clinging to class rules, which, in the case of Otto's Black wife, take on a racist component of exclusion. However, when Maria

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17. Lessing, *Die Mätresse*, 31–32.

18. As representatives of Blackness, the embodied male figures of Muley Hassan in Schiller's *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* and Franz Moor in Schiller's *The Robbers* function as racial contrasts and foils to their flawed white male counterparts, Fiesco, and Karl Moor respectively. See Franziska Bergmann's "Economies of Compassion and Skin Color in Friedrich Schiller's *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* (1783)" and Lily Tonger-Eck's "Staging Whiteness: Race and Aesthetics in Schiller's *The Robbers* and Antù Romero Nunes's 2012–2013 Production" in this volume. However, Lessing's embodied white female figure Juliane Brand functions as both a double and a foil to the "N***ess," because she is able to gain respectability through Otto's intercession while simultaneously being a social outcast. Lessing's "N***ess" represents perfection, but because she is disembodied and dead, she poses no real threat to the social order.

learns that Otto's wife was a *Nabobstochter*,[19] or daughter of a king, she reconsiders her judgment and bemoans the loss of her now dead sister-in-law. Nevertheless, the deceased Black wife remains both the permanent outsider who never physically enters the portrait of the family and a failed mother who cannot bear the white man's child. Suzanne Pucci writes: "Crucial to representing the eighteenth-century family from the outset was a defining of boundaries that framed the enclosures of home."[20] Pucci adds: "The domestic is increasingly represented through its borders, which like those of the portrait, photography, and the snapshot, frame the family by drawing it within protective enclosures."[21] Pucci further describes the intruder or outsider to the family:

> As a consequence of frames put into place, the visitor as a player in the domain of sociability becomes identified either as family member or as one who does not belong. In other words, an intruder enters the picture. S/he becomes the intruder by virtue of the frames of home, room, stage, and tableau that separate the viewer or the spectator from the scenes within and that become dominant factors in marking out spaces of domestic intimacy in eighteenth-century theater, novel, and painting.[22]

In *Die Mätresse*, the Black female's belonging to the family, only in memory, marks the liminal space she occupies as the "N***ess" on the periphery of white space; this liminal space that the "N***ess" occupies is the frame (of slavery and the slave trade), which designates the borders of this family portrait. The domestic space established within the home, the "white" space of the bourgeois family, is therefore delineated or framed by

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19. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *nabob* as "a wealthy, influential, or powerful landowner or other person, esp. one with an extravagantly luxurious lifestyle; a British person who acquired a large fortune in India during the period of British rule." The word comes from the Urdu word *nawab* and designates "a Muslim official who acted as a deputy ruler or viceroy; any governor of a town or district, or person of high status." See "nabob," *Oxford English Dictionary*, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124762?p=emailAM4Jp5Q2PJK1o&d=124762. The association of the word with India reflects the lack of distinction in terms that designated the Black African and the Indian. The same terms were often used to refer to both groups, whose dark skin, which contrasted starkly to white skin, was the only major signifier of racial difference.

20. Pucci, "Picture Perfect," 68.

21. Pucci, "Picture Perfect," 70.

22. Pucci, "Picture Perfect," 71.

the intruder's Blackness, which in turn highlights this family's whiteness, not unlike court painting of the period where the aristocrat's whiteness is highlighted by the black skin of the adjacent servant. The potential entry into the white bourgeois family through marriage to the white man and mothering his heirs represents the main conflict of such unconventional dramas. Home is domestic, local, and private, as embodied in "Europe" or "Germany" and, in *Die Mätresse*, "Prussia" during the reign of Friedrich II. It is therefore fascinating that the Black female, the "N***ess" with no name, is dead before the plot begins. She and her biracial child died during childbirth in "America," the location of hybrid cultures. "America" too functions as some kind of idealized racial space where, unlike Europe, racial mixing—synonymous here with racial tolerance—seems to exist. Karl Lessing's rather historically inaccurate message minimizes the slave-based economy of "America," or more accurately, the United States of America, which did not abolish slavery until almost one hundred years after its founding. Furthermore, the universal and inclusive Enlightenment claim that "all men are created equal" in actuality meant all white men with property are created equal; for white men without property and white women were not equal to white men with property, and Black men and women were themselves the property of white men.

The absent "N***ess," however, is never recovered; she remains a permanent outsider relegated to the realm beyond the frame of this family portrait at the table. Death in childbirth conveniently prohibits her from ever partaking of a meal in Otto von Kronfeld's Prussian home. Only through memory and recollection can she join in at the family table. Pucci suggests that this construction of the outsider since the eighteenth century has been "a constitutive element of representing the intimate sphere."[23] In other words, the outsider and his or her presence in the bourgeois family defines the insider, the members of the family, and their intimate nuclear sphere—that is, those who belong to the family through marital or blood ties. For example, initially, in Diderot's *The Natural Son*, Dorval is a guest, an outsider to the family he is visiting. However, when Lysimond, the father of Rosalie, appears for her wedding to Clairville and reveals that he is also the father of Dorval, Dorval's status shifts from that of guest to that of blood relative and sibling of Rosalie. Dorval becomes an insider, avoids incest with Rosalie, and marries his appropriate match, Constance, Clairville's sister, making all related through blood or marriage. Pucci writes:

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23. Pucci, "Picture Perfect," 71.

> The outsider, voyeur, intruder in eighteenth-century texts of the family often functions as a strategy to articulate, indeed to develop, the newly emerging bourgeois value and desirability of intimate domestic space. The strategy of the eighteenth-century spectator-intruder was to claim to depict an already existing domestic entity—the intimacy of what was already there and that the intruder risks disrupting.

Diderot's outsider characters of Dorval and Sophie become insiders first, when a blood relationship is established and, second, when appropriate pairing takes place. In Diderot's *Father of the Family*, St. Albin's affection for the poor Sophie, the source of family conflict because of her low rank, becomes socially acceptable when his father, d'Orbesson, discovers that Sophie is in fact St. Albin's first cousin, therefore making her a blood relative and of the appropriate class to marry his son.

At Otto's Prussian table, this ideal domestic scene therefore remains quite curious, since in this case, the dead Black wife and mother and slavery and colonialism remain repressed—the Black woman in her death is a memory encapsulated and located in a distant and exotic place, her presence only made known and kept alive through Otto's retelling of her. As incest is repressed and avoided in Diderot's *The Natural Son*, miscegenation in Lessing's *Die Mätresse* is similarly repressed and biracial offspring averted through the death of both wife and child. Colonialism and slavery also remain distant memories and are repressed in this domestic scene of familial intimacy at "home" in the insider world of Europe far away from slave ships in the Atlantic Ocean, captive Africans on the shores of the Gold Coast of West Africa, and plantations in the Americas. The fact that Otto purchased his beloved wife from a slave trader goes unnoticed—and is not a topic for family discussion. On the table, however, are the stage properties that connect this European, Prussian family to the outsider world of slavery and colonialism. The invisibility of colonialism and slavery "at home" in Europe is therefore made visible through the stage properties of the global trade, and, like that which is hidden but in full view, they are visible but not seen. Coffee, chocolate, and tobacco figure prominently on the table and depict how European consumption of and demand for colonial goods fuel the enslavement of Africans in the Americas, while tea presupposes slave labor in Dutch colonies in Asia. This tableau or family portrait of domesticity depicts the global phenomenon of the triangular trade as both local and domestic because it is the aristocratic and bourgeois demand for these colonial goods at home that drives the trade in

these goods and promotes the mercantilist goals of the rising bourgeoisie. Not unlike seventeenth-century Dutch painting from the Golden Age,[24] depicting the domestic scenes "at home"—that is, in Dutch homes, which both the Dutch East India Company and the Dutch West India Company linked to the outside world through global trade—encoded in the family portrait at the von Kronfeld table are larger global economic and trade issues, which connect various parts of the eighteenth-century world with each other.

The table therefore is a stage, and as Catherine Richardson presents in her article "Properties of Domestic Life: The Table in Heywood's *A Woman Killed with Kindness*," "Subjects of such plays (domestic dramas) are presented through objects."[25] Here the "extratheatrical issues" of slavery and colonialism materialize in the stage properties on the table. These colonial goods symbolize stage properties for both the aristocracy and the emerging bourgeoisie because each used colonial goods as a means of staging themselves. The aristocracy developed rituals around the drinking of chocolate, coffee, and tea, and prominently displayed their "Court M***s," necessary props in the composition of court paintings. The rising bourgeoisie too, in many cases, earned its wealth and economic power from trade, because it is the merchant and banker classes that made possible these trade transactions. The aristocracy and the bourgeoisie worked hand in hand, the aristocracy granting the bourgeoisie *Privilege* (privileges) to do business. However, the slave labor needed to cultivate these goods remains both invisible and unquestioned. And unlike objects that are handed down, such as a tablecloth, candlesticks, or silverware, these stage properties are to be consumed, and because of this they lack permanence[26] in themselves and require the constant replenishment of the household to maintain the supply, reiterating the connection between domestic consumption and consumerism[27] and between bourgeois and aristocratic tastes and the necessity of slavery and the triangular trade. Whether Karl

24. See Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997); Julie Berger Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade in the Dutch Golden Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2008).

25. Richardson, "Properties of Domestic Life," 129.

26. See Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*.

27. Richardson defines consumerism as "the production and consumption of manufactured and 'luxury goods' in a society placing increasing emphasis upon the quality of the domestic environment, and significantly among the middling ranks." Richardson, "Properties of Domestic Life," 149.

Lessing intentionally meant to critique slavery and colonialism or the "acquisition, production, and distribution"[28] of colonial goods is debatable; nevertheless, these colonial goods, which figure prominently in the stage directions, show the normalcy of their presence on the Prussian aristocratic table. They signify the representation of the aristocracy's performing class and race on the stage of the table: their ability to afford and consume foreign luxury goods, and in the case of the deceased Black wife, to purchase the Black Other, thereby highlights the performative, theatrical, and even ritualist character of the table itself. These colonial goods and the memory of the Black wife are integrated into the domestic sphere "at home," but the harsh conditions under which enslaved Black Africans toiled to cultivate and process cane sugar, coffee, chocolate, and tobacco—for example, cutting cane in the blazing heat of the sun, pressing it through a mill, boiling and skimming, and the inherent threat of loss of limbs if caught in the rollers[29]—go unnoticed. Similarly, at the root of the request of Diderot's Dorval for a cup of tea[30] are eighteenth-century French connections to the Dutch trade and the "abuses of slavery—the exploitation and death that are transmuted directly into countless goods for the consumer and into obscene riches for the colonist."[31] Lysimond's return to France from Martinique implies a connection to French slavery and that his wealth was acquired from the slave labor of plantocracy on that island.

How then did these colonial goods found on the von Kronfeld's table arrive on the eighteenth-century Prussian aristocratic table? From 1751 to 1765, tea would have arrived in Prussia through the Prussian trading company Königlich Preussische Asiatische Compagnie by way of Canton and Emden. Otherwise, the Dutch East India Company would have provided Prussians, as well as the French, with a supply of tea. Coffee would have come from the Dutch colony of Surinam and Brazil via Amsterdam and Hamburg or from the French colony of St. Domingue via Nantes; chocolate from the Dutch possession of Curaçao via Amsterdam and Hamburg;

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28. Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 201.

29. Hochstrasser, *Still Life and Trade*, 193.

30. The cultivation of tea in Asia and its importation to Europe did not presuppose Black slave labor; however, the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which would have imported tea to Europe, invokes the Dutch West India Company (WIC), which imported colonial goods from the Americas and the Caribbean to Europe. Both the VOC and the WIC exemplified the broad scope of Dutch influence in world trade, including the trade in African slaves and the goods their labor produced.

31. Caroline Weber, "The Sins of the Father: Colonialism and Family History in Diderot's *Le Fils naturel*," *PMLA* 118, no. 3 (May 2003): 494.

and cane sugar, a necessary ingredient to sweeten these colonial drinks, from St. Domingue via Bordeaux and Hamburg. The firm Splitgerber & Daum then processed the raw sugar for Prussian consumption. The royal Prussian porcelain manufactory, Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur, would have produced the various containers for coffee, tea, chocolate, and sugar, including coffee and chocolate pots, cups, saucers, sugar bowls, and other items belonging to an aristocratic service. Otherwise, the Königlich Preussische Asiatische Compagnie and the Dutch East India Company also imported porcelain from China, which would have satisfied aristocratic demand. These domestic objects and colonial goods became part of table rituals in aristocratic and upper-middle-class circles, thereby cementing economic and trade bonds between the European consumers, merchants, and slave traders, the West African supplies of slaves, and raw goods cultivated in the Americas and processed in Europe.

Although the German states were not directly involved in the slave trade, German goods played an essential role in the triangular trade. Prussia and Saxony paid for their colonial goods such as coffee, chocolate, cane sugar, and tobacco in linen, and because of this, Prussian and Saxon linens became important goods in the importation of colonial goods from the Americas. Both Silesian linen and Dutch fabric were brought by Dutch ships to the West African coast in order to satisfy the demand there. In Saxony, the Oberlausitz region was the center of linen production. Oberlausitz linen was then shipped to the Spanish port town of Cadiz and then transported to the Spanish colonies in the Americas.[32] Merchants from Hamburg functioned as intermediaries in the shipping and receiving of the goods, and Saxon merchants exchanged linen for American goods and dyes such as cochineal and indigo, which were imported and then used to dye Saxon linen.

The most important producer of sugar in eighteenth-century Prussia was the firm Splitgerber & Daum, a trading company that functioned as an intermediary, supplier, and bank. David Splitgerber (1683–1764) and Gottfried Adolf Daum (1679–1743) founded the company in 1713 during the reign of Friedrich I of Prussia.[33] However, it was during the reign of

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32. Jörg Ludwig, *Der Handel Sachsens nach Spanien und Lateinamerika 1760–1830* (Leipzig: Sächsisches Wirtschaftsarchiv e. V., 1994), 58. See John Fisher, *Commercial Relations between Spain and Spanish America in the Era of Free Trade, 1778–1796* (Liverpool: Centre for Latin American Studies, University of Liverpool, 1985), 69.

33. Friedrich III was Elector (*Kurfürst*) of Brandenburg from 1688 to 1701, then king of Prussia from 1701 to 1713. Wilhelm Treue, "David Splitgerber 1683–1764," *Pommersche Lebensbilder* 4, no. 15 (1966): 70–71.

Friedrich II that the firm began to refine sugar. In the 1740s sugar that was consumed in the Mark Brandenburg and the county of Magdeburg came from refineries in Hamburg.[34] Because of this, Friedrich II decided to introduce sugar refining to Prussia. David Splitgerber financed the undertaking by building sugar refineries in Berlin. In so doing, Splitgerber secured a monopoly in the sale and refining of sugar in Brandenburg, Neumark, Pommerania, Silesia, and Glatz.[35] Splitgerber founded three sugar refineries on the Märkisches Ufer in Berlin.[36] The raw sugar arrived in Prussia through trading agents of the firm based in Bordeaux who purchased it from the French colony of San Domingue (later Haiti).[37] Splitgerber und Daum also had economic ties to the Dutch colony of Curaçao and the Spanish colony Vera Cruz, where the firm also acquired raw sugar.[38] As a result of the sugar monopoly in Prussia, Splitgerber made high profits because, as both merchant and banker, he closely linked his business affairs with the affairs of the king of Prussia, for example, as weapons supplier. In 1771 the firm opened a factory that produced combs made of ivory, a move that presumes a connection to the Dutch trade on the west coast of Africa. Splitgerber & Daum imported colonial goods such as coffee, tea, and cocoa by way of Hamburg, Amsterdam, London, Venice, Almeyda, and Lisbon and sold these goods in Germany and Poland.[39]

Foods from the New World, such as the tomato and the potato, transformed the eating habits and the tastes of Europeans. The potato became the staple in German cooking, the tomato in Italian cuisine. Luxury goods arrived at the tables of wealthy European aristocrats and bourgeoisie, like Lessing's von Kronfeld family, through the labor of enslaved Africans in the Americas made possible by European merchants and bankers and supported by an intricate network of actors in local industry and international trade. Lessing's use of these colonial goods as props illustrates the normalcy and necessity of these goods in the performance of class and race on the eighteenth-century global stage of the table.

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34. W. O. Henderson, "The Rise of the Metal and Armament Industries in Berlin and Brandenburg 1712–1795," *Business History* 3, no. 2 (1961): 72.

35. Henderson, "Rise of the Metal," 72.

36. Wilhelm Treue, "David Splitgerber: Ein Unternehmer im preußischen Merkantilstaat (1683–1764)," *Vierteljahrschrift für Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 41 (1954): 263.

37. Henderson, "Rise of the Metal," 68.

38. Hugo Rachel and Paul Wallich, *Berliner Grosskaufleute und Kapitalisten: Die Zeit des Merkantilismus 1648–1806* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1938), 216.

39. Henderson, "Rise of the Metal," 64–65. See Rachel and Wallich, *Berliner Grosskaufleute und Kapitalisten*, 216.

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Black Revolution Revolution. Or: the Failure of Tragedy

Resistance and Slavery as Theme in Popular German-Language Theater (1775–1810)[1]

Sigrid G. Köhler

"He feared the idea, widespread among n****, that they had the same rights as their masters, since such a notion would cause turmoil and outrage and finally give the n**** more freedom than they would like themselves."[2]—Fearful of outrage on the one hand while securing the privilege of equality and freedom for white people only on the other hand—that is more or less how the racist attitude of the unspecified member of Parliament quoted above toward the British abolitionist movement could be summarized, as chronicled in an article in the *Historisch-politisches Magazin* in 1791. The article itself is part of a more extensive reporting by the magazine on the British abolitionist movement, published in the *Historisch-politisches Magazin* between 1788 and 1794, documenting the heightened contemporary interest in abolition and enslavement in German-speaking contexts.[3] This reporting also indirectly reflects the effectiveness of public relations work conducted actively on a transnational level by British abolitionists since the 1780s.

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1. This essay was translated by Andrea Larson. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Andrea Larson.

2. Anonymous, "Debatte im Unterhause des großbritannischen Parlaments über die Abschaffung des Sklavenhandels," *Historisch-politisches Magazin* 9 (1791): 616.

3. For coverage about the British abolition movement in *Historisch-politisches Magazin* see Sigrid G. Köhler, "Drastische Bilder: Journalnachrichten auf der Bühne: Versklavung und Abolition als Gegenstände moderner Geschichtsreflexion in deutschsprachigen Journalen und Theaterstücken um 1800," *Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 49, no. 3 (2019): 376–98.

The transnational debate on abolition entered not only German-language magazine reporting, but also German-language literature, particularly popular literature, as shall be shown here on the basis of theater plays by authors who are hardly known today, such as Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, Franz Kratter, F. G. Nesselrode zu Hugenpott, Döhner, and Carl von Reitzenstein.[4] The selected dramas share a similar plot structure organized around a Black key player and thus protagonist. Although they don't enact specific and historically authenticated resistance fights on stage, they nevertheless engage in historical reflection through their framings, references, and allusions in both their primary and secondary texts, first regarding the contradiction between Enlightenment ideals and historical reality, and second by thematizing slavery and the slave trade as a constitutive component of modern Western history. These plays furthermore implicitly show the insufficiency of contemporary (Western) forms and genres of theater to deal with contemporary history, first and foremost the insufficiency of tragedy.[5] They can therefore be read, so the argument goes, as (meta)historical.

Outrage versus Revolution: On the Terminology of the Abolition Debate

At lease since the French Revolution, freedom and equality have been the catchphrases closely connected with the concept of revolution, a concept that wasn't limited in its contemporary use to the European context alone. For the events in Haiti during the 1790s were referred to as a revolution by several contemporaries as well.[6] However, more common in the German-language context were terms like "outrage" (*Empörung*) or "uprising" (*Aufstand*). These terms were also used by the British member of Parliament, quoted above, in reference to Haiti, not least to warn explicitly of similar developments in the British colonies.[7]

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4. The first names of the authors Nesselrode zu Hugenpott and Döhner are unknown today. For further literary examples on this topic, see Wendy Sutherland's article in this volume.

5. Of course, this does not mean that in their configuration of characters, these dramas didn't also partake in the contemporary racist discourse themselves, despite their critique of slavery and a race-based division of society. This applies in particular to the organization of the character constellations in the plays, which depict white characters as more educated or more civilized, following the unspoken assumption of a "white superiority."

6. See Florian Kappler, "Die Haitianische Revolution: Ein Paradigma der Aufklärung? Geschichte eines Erzählkomplexes des späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhunderts," *Das achtzehnte Jahrhundert* 40, no. 2 (2016): 202–11.

7. See Anonymous, "Debatte im Unterhause," 616.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, countless violent resistance movements against slavery can be noted in both Americas that are not necessarily to be understood as antislavery movements and therefore not necessarily to be viewed as part of an abolitionist movement. While the goal was always liberation on an individual level, these resistance movements did not automatically aim at abolishing the system of slavery. This changed only toward the end of the eighteenth century, significantly not least in connection with the American Revolution and in the wake of the Haitian Revolution,[8] whereby Black resistance ought not to be limited to the act of open revolt, because it can express itself in a variety of acts of refusal and sabotage.[9] The declared goal of the predominantly white, transnationally active abolitionists, however, was to achieve the abolishment of slavery not through resistance and violence, but peacefully, that is, via legislative reform. Accordingly, their work was focused on the formation of networks and public relations, and consequently not least on the information and mobilization of a white general public that needed to be addressed and convinced. It is noteworthy that when the theme of slavery and resistance is taken up in German-language literature, this is done precisely with reference to the abolitionist movement and thus along central paradigms of the contemporary (white-coded) political and philosophical discourse. As a consequence, German-language literary texts engage the question whether or how far the revolts of enslaved people should be considered legitimate fights for freedom. By linking resistance conflicts with abolition, these texts not only question the legitimacy of the contemporary system of slavery, but simultaneously point to the limited scope of the Enlightenment claim to the universality of freedom and equality.

On the discursive level, a slew of competing and at times opposing terms can be detected by the end of the eighteenth century, which not only occupy the semantic field of slavery and resistance, but also express a specific political stance on the legitimacy or illegitimacy of resistance. In early modern Europe and during the Age of Enlightenment, the terms "outrage" (*Empörung*), "uprising" (*Aufstand*), "riot" (*Aufruhr*), and "rebellion" (*Rebellion*) initially indicate violent domestic confrontations within a society ordered by status, which are directed against the violation of certified historical rights or against injustices committed by the state power or

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8. See Eugene D. Genovese, *From Rebellion to Revolution: Afro-American Slave Revolts in the Making of the Modern World* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979).

9. See Junius P. Rogrigues, ed., "Introduction," *Encylopedia of Slave Resistance and Rebellion I* (Westport: Greenwood, 2006), 23–42.

the state apparatus, but which are in turn considered unlawful by the state.[10] In terms of historical discourse, natural law takes over an important bridging function in the seventeenth and particularly the eighteenth century, insofar as it allows for the justification of resistance by taking recourse to the "natural rights" of people, without referring back to historical, prevailing law. The presumption of a right to resistance based on natural law is, however, far from self-evident. The author frequently cited as central to the justification of a right to resistance is John Locke. In his *Two Treatises of Government*, Locke legitimizes resistance against the state if the state harms people's "natural rights"—according to Locke, these rights are, above all, freedom, equality, and property.[11]

Locke, however, imagines resistance merely as a domestic struggle directed against a tyrant, and not in light of the historical institution of slavery or even from a transnational perspective. In a subtle argumentation, however, he inverts the terminology: rebels, in the proper sense of the word, are not those who revolt against the tyrant and fight for their freedom, but, instead, are those who have forcibly suspended the natural rights of man. Therefore, in the proper sense of the word, rebels are not the resistance fighters but the tyrants themselves.[12] Within the European context of the last third of the eighteenth century, the right to resistance based on natural law is for obvious reasons a central reference point for the discursive assessment and reflection of Black resistance movements—after all, slaves in Europe didn't have any historically certified rights.[13]

Since the end of the eighteenth century, the term "revolution" has denoted the radical political, as well as the societal, change of a state, justified by reference to equality and freedom, the most programmatic human rights, and therefore aims to implement not a society stratified by status but instead the ideal of a democratic society. In this sense, a revolution

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10. See Reinhart Koselleck, "Historische Kriterien des neuzeitlichen Revolutionsbegriffs," in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 72–74.

11. See John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

12. See Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 200 (Second Treatise, Chapter 19, §227).

13. Given the context of this article, i.e., the reception of the transnational debate about abolition in German-language theater, primarily white (German) authors are being considered. As an example for Black subjects, who reference human rights in their criticism of the slavery system at the end of the eighteenth century (and particularly in their address toward white subjects and institutions), see (here in reference to the American Declaration of Independence) Benjamin Banneker, *Copy of a Letter from Benjamin Banneker to the Secretary of State with his Answer* (Philadelphia: Daniel Lawrence, [1791], 1792).

finds its justification in the future, with a view to what can be achieved, and not historically in recourse to guaranteed or certified rights and privileges that have been violated. The term "revolution" is therefore characterized by utopian and transgressive semantics, and it describes a potentially uncontainable, metahistorical, and transnational process. After all, its underlying value, the "human," is legitimized not by the national affiliation of a person or their historical rights, but by the invention of a universal and ahistorical concept of the "human" based on natural law and its ascribed "natural rights."[14]

Regarding the discourses, including the legal and political critique and the legitimization of resistance movements articulated within these discourses, the terms used and their inherent semantics are therefore particularly revealing. The critique of the British member of Parliament, quoted at the beginning, disconnects resistance movements explicitly from the fight for liberation and freedom and instead continues to adhere to the colonial perspective, including its foundation based on historically and philosophically substantiated racist principles. Following contemporary race theory (and analogously also the presumption of white superiority), he denies the ability of Blacks to lead a life of freedom and depicts the resistance struggle of Black subjects as a horror scenario: given the expected violence, but clearly also given the very notion that slaves could demand equal rights. Ex negativo, his statement shows at the same time how present the revolutionary dimension was within the transnational debate about the abolition of slavery at the end of the eighteenth century.

Dramatic Revolutionary Acts: The Abolition of Slavery in Theater

In German-speaking contexts, the history of Black resistance against slavery at the end of the eighteenth century is known and medially present not least due to literature and the theater stage.[15] Between 1775 and 1810, dramas were released by authors such as F. G. Nesselrode, W. H. Dalberg, Döhner, C. von Reitzenstein, and F. Kratter,[16] who thematized the struggle

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14. See Koselleck, "Historische Kriterien," 76–80.

15. A clear assessment of the contemporary German-language journal literature about this topic is still missing.

16. Cf. F. G. Nesselrode zu Hugenpott, *Zamor und Zoraide: Ein Schauspiel in drey Aufzügen* (Offenbach am Main: Ulrich Weiß, 1778); Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, *Oronooko: Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Handlungen für die Mannheimer National-Bühne* (Mannheim: Schwan, 1786); Döhner, *Des Aufruhrs schreckliche Folge, oder Die N****: Ein Original-Trauerspiel in*

for liberation of Black subjects. These dramas are embedded in the contemporary debate on slavery and abolition in many different ways: through their prologues, through their settings (preferably a British colony in the Caribbean), through referencing contemporary history, in particular the British abolition movement, and finally through highlighting the apparent contradiction between natural law and human rights on the one hand and a plantation system built on slavery on the other.

Both of the early plays by F. G. Nesselrode and Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg incorporate transnationally known literary materials. The titles of their plays, *Zamor und Zoraide* (1778) and *Oronooko* (1786), immediately signal that they are based on adaptations that go back to Jean-François de Saint-Lambert's tale *Ziméo* and Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko*, respectively, as conveyed by Thomas Southerne's dramatization.[17] Following Saint-Lambert's *Ziméo* narrative, Nesselrode also indirectly refers to the Maroons' freedom fights in Jamaica as the historical framework for his drama. There is no comparable historical and geographical location in Dalberg's *Oronooko* play; it merely states that "the scene . . . [is] in a British colony in America."[18] In fact, central scenes of the play are not marked by concretely identifiable places or times, but instead by recourse to depic-

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fünf Aufzügen (n.p., 1792); Carl von Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven: Ein Trauerspiel in fünf Aufzügen* (Vienna: Schaumburg, 1793); Franz Kratter, *Der M***enkönig, oder Grausamkeit sprengt Sklavenketten: Ein Schauspiel in 5 Akten* (Augsburg: Bolling, 1809). The listed authors and texts have not been studied extensively to date; consequently, full names remain at times unknown and specific details about the place of publication of texts impossible. In German, the word *Mohr* is, like the N-word, part of a racist logic.

17. Saint-Lambert's *Ziméo* tale from 1769 is a French adaptation of the Oroonoko material, which was translated into German in 1772 and then generated its own chain of transmission parallel to the Oroonoko material, including, in addition to Nesselrode's play, the translation of the tale published under the author's name Georg Filmer in the *Teutschen Merkur* (1783), the reprint of the translation as part of the collection *Erzählungen von den Sitten und Schiksalen der N****sklaven* (1789) by Ernst Kolb, a poem with the same title in Herder's cycle of poems *Die N****idyllen* (1797), etc. As a third German-language play following the *Oroonoko* as well as the *Ziméo* material, besides Nesselrode's and Dalberg's plays, one should mention Franz Kratter's *Der M***enkönig* from 1809, which doesn't necessarily reference any specific material, but nevertheless offers, with its protagonist Quito, an aristocratic figure—a king to be precise—who initially argues against violent resistance to slavery, akin to the Oroonoko figure. The play, however, is more concretely tied to historical contexts than Dalberg's *Oronooko*, for instance, and concludes "happy," from the perspective of drama theory, in that the enslaved characters can liberate themselves. But instead of retaliating against the whites, they return home to their "fatherland" on ships. A society of Blacks and whites postslavery is not envisioned.

18. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 2.

tions that have coagulated into literary topoi such as a "night with moonshine"[19] or "dark forest."[20] As a consequence, the dramatic scenes of the play are located within a temporal and spatial arena that transcends distinct historical references.

The plays have in common that their protagonists Zamor and Oronooko are princes; that is, they portray aristocratic figures by European standards, who are moreover described as highly educated. So, both plays create a Black protagonist who is depicted as being on a par with the white characters, given his social status.[21] Analogous to the conception of characters in the bourgeois tragedy (and thus contradicting the contemporary discourse on race, which is constituted as scientific discourse in German-speaking contexts in the 1770s and 1780s, and mediated, for instance, by authors such as Peter Camper, Johann Friedrich Blumenbach, Samuel Thomas von Sömmering, and Immanuel Kant, among others), Zamor and Oronooko are moreover depicted as "sensitive humans" in a gesture that in turn transcends boundaries of status. Due to this conception, which follows the logic of white dramatic aesthetics, they can be ascribed the moral authority to condemn the slave trade and slavery: on the one hand, by naming what slavery means, namely unbearable atrocities and degradation of humans, on the other hand, by referring to freedom as an inalienable right of man.[22] The diction in Dalberg's *Oronooko* almost perfectly echoes natural law, describing the planned resistance as "permitted self-defense" ("erlaubte Selbstvertheidigung").[23] To be precise, these words

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19. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 62.

20. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 114.

21. This is a perfect example for the ambivalence of the plays, which attempt to transcend the racist logic in their conception of Black characters by utilizing white contemporary cultural codes in order to create equality, since at the same time these strategies also highlight the potency and omnipresence of the racialized matrix. For examples of character depictions in German-language literature that follow a racist logic of representation, see the contributions by Franziska Bergmann, Irmtraud Hnilica, and Lily Tonger-Erk in this volume.

22. Regarding the historical discourse on the connection of natural law / human rights and emotion in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Sigrid G. Köhler and Florian Schmidt, "The Enigmatic Ground: On the Genesis of Law out of Emotion in the Writings of Savigny and Uhland," *InterDisciplines: Journal of History and Sociology* 6, no. 2 (2015): 17–45. And in context of abolition, see Sigrid G. Köhler, "Menschenrecht fühlen, Gräuel der Versklavung zeigen—Zur transnationalen Abolitionsdebatte im deutschsprachigen populären Theater um 1800," in *Recht fühlen*, ed. Sabine Müller-Mall et al. (Paderborn: Fink Verlag, 2017), 63–79.

23. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 73. This formulation can already be found in Southerne's adaptation; the argument based on natural law, however, is not implemented with the same consistency in the remainder of the play. See Thomas Southerne, *Oroonoko: A Tragedy*, in *Oroo-*

are ascribed to the character of Eboan, who first has to convince Oronooko of the legitimacy of his acts based on (natural) law. Oronooko is on the whole—and by comparison with Nesselrode's Zamor—a rather temperate character, who initially still thinks and argues within the boundaries derived from a socially stratified society and only with time gradually understands and argues as "human." Even after comprehending the human rights dimension—in the German version, Oronooko refers to it as "the rights of nature,"[24]—he continues to engage in negotiations and only takes up arms in order to defend bare life.

In both plays, the significance of the argument based on natural law put forth by the Black protagonists becomes particularly evident in the discrepancy in terminology chosen by their white counterparts, who in their role as officers, governor, or lieutenant-governor represent the colonial power and therefore—just like the anonymous British member of Parliament in the *Historisch-politisches Magazin*—condemn the resistance fights as riots, rebellion, or outrage, following the logic of colonial order.[25] By referencing natural law and human rights, both dramas implicitly ascribe a revolutionary dimension to the Black fight for liberation, and do so even more radically than in the literary reference texts on which their stories are based and despite transforming it into an abolitionist act in the end. To convey this stance, the dramas rely on white mediating characters who intercede between the antagonistic parties and who reflect and comment on the events and therefore also function as identifiable figures for the audience. In addition, two recurring strategies can be identified that help to establish a network of relations between white and Black characters, since partisanship for the resistance fighters who base their arguments on natural law is initially precisely *not* motivated by natural law. The first strategy is the Enlightenment topos of a human family, known, for instance, from Lessing's *Nathan der Weise* (*Nathan the Wise*, 1779), where the notion of family is used to transcend religious borders.[26] One year earlier, Nesselrode in *Zamor und Zoraide* (*Zamor and Zoraide*) employs this topos in order to design kinship relations beyond alleged racial borders. Thus, we are told how the white plantation owner couple

noko: Adaptions and Offshoots, ed. Susan B. Iwanisziw (Burlington: Routledge, [1759], 2006), 41; see also John Hakesworth, *Oroonoko: A Tragedy: As it is now Acted at the Theatre Royal in Drury-Lane. By Thomas Southern. With Alterations*, in Iwanisziw, *Oroonoko*, 137.

24. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 92.

25. See Nesselrode zu Hugenpott, *Zamor und Zoraide*, 110; see Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 87.

26. See Helmut J. Schneider, *Genealogie und Menschheitsfamilie: Dramaturgie der Humanität von Lessing bis Büchner* (Berlin: University Press, 2011), 175–99.

Germin takes in Zoraide, Zamor's bride, and treats her like their own child. The same happens to Karl, the Germins' son. He, in turn, is cared for like a son by Abaruki, a companion of Zamor. The result of this unintended child exchange is a conception of family based on emotion, and not on biology and race. Second, we are given a notion of friendship grounded in the medium of sentimental communication, that is, of sharing the suffering and sentiment both verbally and emotionally, which is displayed in exemplary fashion in Dalberg's *Oronooko* when Blandfort and Oronooko share with each other their stories of losing a loved one.[27] Zamor's narration of his story of suffering, which dominates the middle of Nesselrode's play, also aims for this precise effect. By narrating and thus sharing verbally and emotionally, the characters are being positioned in a shared space of experience, which evidently results in a more or less pronounced change in the white characters. This conversion is not motivated by explicit psychological reasons, but it is reflected nevertheless in their statements, when they in turn position themselves against the system of slavery. The characters have noticeably undergone an affective conversion. Through these two strategies, the topos of the human family and sentimental communication, the characters of the play are made to resemble each other, so that the condemnation of slavery based on its violence and degradation of human beings becomes a moral duty, and it is radicalized at the end of the dramas by voicing the acknowledgment of human rights as the foundation of any state:

> Oh, all rulers of civilized nations shall know that they will not have genuine rule and genuine virtues in their states until they make the grounds of natural law known to all men.[28]

Consistent with their theme, both dramas conclude by (fictively) abolishing slavery, Dalberg's *Oronooko* by abolishing slavery in the entire colony, Nesselrode's *Zamor and Zoraide* by the exemplary abolition on Germin's plantation. The abolitionary act itself is given distinct room in these plays, insofar as it is staged in the form of a performative speech act, which recalls the human rights declarations in both gesture and rhetoric. This way, however, the Black fight for freedom is again contained and agency is literally put back into white hands. Nevertheless, the plays don't leave any doubt—even before the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citi-

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27. See Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 50–55.
28. Nesselrode zu Hugenpott, *Zamor und Zoraide*, 126.

zens of 1789 is made—regarding the urgency of abolition[29] or the historical exemplary function of (fictive) abolitionist acts based on human rights, since their plots are all about acts "that deserve to be recorded in yearbooks,"[30] and resistance fighters for whom "a solid monument as eternal memento"[31] ought to be erected.

In this way, both dramas reflect the historical dimension and significance as well as the legitimacy of the resistance fight. While in Nesselrode's *Zamor and Zoraide* this occurs primarily via references to history and to discourses that create a sense of historical proximity, Dalberg's play utilizes the genre-theoretical framework set by the tragedy in addition to the discursive implications of natural law. To be precise, like bourgeois tragedy, Dalberg's drama initially expands the framework with a view to the characters worthy of tragedy, however, not with a view toward status, as was typical, but rather toward the category of race. When slavery and abolition become materials worthy of tragedy in this way, it has far-reaching genre-theoretical consequences, which go beyond the question of tragic characters. According to contemporary genre theory—and in this point it still follows the Aristotelian poetics of tragedy—tragedy depicts the "universal," that is, not just the specific case understood as distinct to particular times, customs, or passions, but instead, as Herder writes, "all these accommodated by high, pure reason, and for one purpose."[32] The aim of tragedy is consequently to depict "the inner correlation of things."[33] The failing protagonist—or rather the tragic hero—who rises above the events with moral greatness is no longer the primary focus, but instead the emphasis rests on the events, that is, the plot itself. In this regard, following the Aristotelian sense, the tragedy is in fact more philosophy than historiography, but for Herder it is not detached from history. The task of tragedy is thus to picture "the great connection between events in human life that is woven by fate."[34] A tragedy thematizing abolition and slavery necessitates having to depict (historically practiced) slavery as part of "the great link" of human history, including all its atrocities, in fact as a part of

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29. A central strategy in conveying the urgency of abolition is the telling of atrocities via narrative microunits delivered, for example, in the dramatic mode of the messenger report or the teichoscopy. See Köhler, *Drastische Bilder*, 393–95.

30. Nesselrode zu Hugenpott, *Zamor und Zoraide*, 126.

31. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 132.

32. Johann Gottfried Herder, "Adrastea," in *Herders Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 23, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin: Weidmann, 1885), 376.

33. Herder, "Adrastea," 374.

34. Herder, "Adrastea," 356.

history that can no longer be negated or forgotten, and which, moreover, cannot conveniently be included when referencing a "high, pure reason" in a suitable way. The attempt to conceive of slavery as a "tragic theme" pushes tragedy to the limits of the genre, as not only the *Oronooko* play illustrates, because these dramas don't achieve a larger historical meaning or purpose. Even more so, it is precisely this very point where they deny any search for meaning and become inconsistent.

Dalberg's drama ends, following its literary reference texts, with the death of Oronooko and his beloved Imoinda. When Oronooko dies the "Hero's Death" fighting for his freedom, the question of guilt as suggested by the tragedy is easily answerable: according to Blandfort, Oronooko's friend and ally, it is due to the "bloody work" of slavery.[35] The answer gains in complexity in the case of the death of Imoinda, who had asked Oronooko for her mortal blow in order to retain her freedom and her life.[36] In contrast to the audience, Blandfort is unfamiliar with the concrete circumstances because he arrives too late. When he steps onto the stage during the relevant scene, Imoinda is already dead. As a consequence, the character can be employed dramaturgically to have him ask the (genre-specific) question of guilt and meaning in his subsequent monologue: "This is the question—was it virtue? Was it greatness of the soul? Was it intent? Was it chance?"[37] What follows, however, is not an answer and thus an evaluation or even condemnation of the act, but instead a rejection of the question altogether.

> Shall I demand to know whether the bloody deed asks to be cursed, or deserves compassion and admiration? Whether Oronooko has committed a noble or an evil act?
>
> No further, reason! Here you stand at the outermost border—a single bit of doubt, just one more thought, and you venture a powerless struggle with the divine.[38]

Apparently, Oronooko's tremendous act can no longer be integrated into a context of meaning or a notion of the "all-guiding cautiousness."[39] What

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35. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 124.

36. Against the backdrop of contemporary cultural history, this act can be read in two ways: as preserving the (white) female ideal of virtue and as Black resistance and agency. See Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (London: Verso, 1996), 57–63.

37. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 124.

38. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 124.

39. Dalberg, *Oronooko*, 124.

happened cannot be grasped in moral-philosophical terms. And this applies not just to Oronooko's act. The reiteration and insistence that Oronooko's deed can be comprehended implies simultaneously a distancing and a refusal to consider Oronooko's action as particular. As a result, the entire plot structure of the play moves into focus, and accordingly also its historical context of reference: the "bloody work of slavery" as the undeniable part of human history. And as Blandfort's disbelief shows in exemplary fashion, precisely this bloody work defies tragedy's theoretical, historical, and philosophical confines.

History's Momentum: Horrifying Images of Anarchy

In later plays by Döhner, Kratter, and Reitzenstein, the historical context is decidedly more present, not least due to concrete references to the transnational abolitionist movement. Reitzenstein's tragedy *Die N****sklaven* (*The N**** Slaves*) seeks most notably historical contextualization within a transnational communicative space, not only discursively via the characters' speech in the drama, but also via its paratexts: beginning with the internationally customary typeface Antiqua (at the time, German publishers mostly printed in Gothic type) and extending to the place of publication, Jamaica, which is listed as such on the title page, and finally the dedication to William Wilberforce in English and the references to British parliamentary decisions and speeches by representatives in the preface.[40] In addition to these paratextual references, however, intertextual references worth mentioning can also be discerned within the play. For they show that the characters' speeches, especially when they state antirevolutionary positions, as in the fifth act, are modeled in their style and rhetoric after the conservative coverage of the Haitian Revolution as can be found in contemporary journal reporting.[41] On this level, too, Reitzenstein's drama adheres closely to its contemporary frame of reference.

By comparison, Döhner's and Kratter's dramas remain on a rather discursive level, but are nevertheless no less unambiguous in their references. In Kratter's *Der M***enkönig oder Grausamkeit sprengt Sklavenketten* (*The Moor King, or Cruelty Breaks Slaves' Chains*) they culminate in the fifth act

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40. See Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*.

41. See, for example, Blanchelande, "Proclamation des Herrn von Blachelande an die freyen im Aufruhr begriffenen farbigen Leute zu St. Domingo," *Historisch-politisches Magazin* 11 (1792): 361.

in the form of a monologue that reflects the historical situation in exemplary fashion:

> Oh yes! The Parliament in England has been deliberating over these mitigating ways for more than thirty years, and with each collection of votes screaming tyranny counts a decisive majority against the overwhelming reasons of justice. Thus far, the frequent and vigorous voice of the humanitarian speaker Wilberforce has not been able to break through the callous businessman's heart armored with steel. Has there ever been a more abandoned, oppressed, and hopeless creature than the n****slave? No human heart hears his sorrows. For him alone, all courts and the pardoning clemency of the throne are deaf. All ties of brotherly duty are dissolved against him. Even the tender sentiments of conscience remain silent despite the hideousness of the abuse against him.[42]

The futility of abolitionist reform efforts, the continuation of violence and lawlessness, and persistent degradation of slaves lead toward an existence without a future. In light of the natural-law imperative of self-preservation, violent resistance becomes literally a "duty."[43] In the dramas by Döhner, Reitzenstein, and Kratter, the question of resistance itself consequently moves into the foreground. The friction between genre and history arising out of the historical setting is nevertheless not fully translated into the layout of the plays with equal consistency.

Kratter's play, titled a "Drama in Five Acts," concludes with the fiction of a happy ending, thus denying the opportunity to reconnect with its historical context. In 1809, following the independence of Haiti, the image of a favorable liberation fight is no longer mere historical fiction, and yet Kratter's play doesn't conclude with a post-slavery society in the Caribbean. After successfully overpowering the whites, neither an occupation of the island nor acts of retribution against whites follow. Quito, Kratter's protagonist and leader in the resistance fight, pleads instead for mercy and for a return to the "fatherland" in a gesture of humanist/moral greatness.[44] The historical-philosophical dimension is being reprojected onto the character and reduced to the question of virtuous greatness and freedom.

In Döhner's drama, in turn, the colonial order triumphs, thus distinctly

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42. Kratter, *Der M***enkönig*, 113.
43. Kratter, *Der M***enkönig*, 113.
44. Kratter, *Der M***enkönig*, 119.

put into opposition to the riotous rebels—even in the speech of the Black protagonist Omar. While the drama does not leave any doubt regarding the cruelty and unlawfulness of the system of slavery, the violent resistance is nevertheless condemned. The layout of the plot suggests that Black characters are being enticed to violence by a white agitator, who clearly aims to destabilize the existing colonial government. The play, however, leaves the question open against which backdrop these events happen. This plot structure is being reflected in the character of Omar, who in his hesitation to join the resistance resembles Oronooko and likewise turns into a tragic figure. Through intrigues and his involvement in the resistance movement as a consequence of his concern for his family, he is wrongfully identified as a rebel and executed. The question for an overarching historical truth is not posed, and the historical-philosophical question is undermined by an implicit moral-philosophical didactic.

Reitzenstein's tragedy behaves somewhat differently. The paratexts embed the drama directly into the context of the British abolition movement. The plot of the play is set in the time period just between two of the decisions made by the British Parliament on the abolition of the slave trade mentioned in the foreword, the first of which was doomed to fail and the second of which envisioned only a gradual abolition.[45] The dynamics of the plot feed essentially from this time interval opened by the mention of the parliamentary decisions, which at the same time initializes a crucial period of suspense.

On the plot level, two storylines are interwoven. The first depicts the love story transcending racial boundaries concerning Tado, a freed and formerly enslaved man, and Julie, the governor's daughter. Following the logic of a bourgeois tragedy, their love eventually succumbs to the resistance of Julie's father. As governor of the island, Osdal represents not only the colonial system, but also its racist "prejudices," that is to say, the "prejudices" of the "unenlightened" British colonial society. The second storyline deals with the liberation of the enslaved population on the island and their escape to Africa as planned by Tado and his friend Donald. Although Donald is a plantation owner, he is also a representative of the abolitionist cause. Here, too, the drama demonstrates its historical accuracy, since British abolitionists did in fact attempt to resettle freed slaves from North

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45. In 1792, German-language journals indeed reported (erroneously) on British abolition of the slave trade. See the anonymously published article "Großbritannische Parlements-Nachrichten: Abschaffung des Sklavenhandels," *Historisch-politisches Magazin* 11 (1792): 405.

America in western Africa, today's Sierra Leone, as early as the end of the 1780s. In Reitzenstein's tragedy, the reason given for the planned escape is the news arriving from Great Britain, which appears to announce a negative parliamentary decision on the question of abolition. The arrival of a ship carrying the relevant letters confirms these concerns. When the flight plan is uncovered, the situation escalates. Instead of a secret and nonviolent escape, the result is precisely those "horror scenes"[46] predicted in contemporary debates: Black subjects rise up against the whites. Their resistance is depicted in accordance with contemporary racist discourse in the white characters' speech as well as in secondary texts (thus also following a white matrix) as rampant violence of dehumanized creatures.

The violence continues within the drama, when only hours later, after the arrival of the first ship, a second one arrives with fresh information from London, namely the news proclaiming the parliamentary decision about the gradual abolition of slavery.[47] The successive arrival of two conflicting pieces of information from Great Britain is explained in the drama by referencing "unfavorable winds"[48] and "accidents"[49] at sea, which delayed the arrival of the first ship by months so that the news about the continuation of slavery was in fact already obsolete upon arrival. Tado and Donald therefore acted on outdated information, and Donald—the drama leaves no doubt about this point—would not have continued with the project of escape had he known of the correct parliamentary decision.

From the very beginning, Donald functions as the true protagonist. Over the course of the drama, he gradually takes over the leadership of the resistance movement, and Tado dies in the fourth act. Consequently, the genre-specific reflection on the connection between history and tragedy in Reitzenstein's drama is—contrary to the others—being conducted via a white character. Similar to Döhner's white, scheming resistance fighter, Donald is also an agitator who eloquently ignites the hearts of the slaves. In contrast to Döhner's character, however, Donald's motivation is clear from the beginning: he has "noble motives" (*edle Motive*) because he fights

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46. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 121.

47. In its perception of atrocities and anarchy, the drama compares to contemporary anti-revolutionary plays such as, for example, Iffland's *Kokarden*. For further information regarding references to the French Revolution as well as for a more detailed plot analysis, see Romana Weiershausen, *Zeitenwandel als Familiendrama: Genre und Politik im deutschsprachigen Theater des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2018), 305–21, 330–34.

48. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 21.

49. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 183.

for the equality and freedom of all humans.[50] In an approach reminiscent of Locke, he argues that it is not the opponents of slavery who are instigators and rebels, but instead its proponents.

> Above all we must know how to define riots and rebels. The few nobles, however, who attempt through sacrifice and danger to bring an end to the despicable acts by the number of human robbers greedy for gold that have fraternized to pursue these vices, the nobles who try to end the misery of those unhappy souls, which are being led away in a chain of slaves from foreign lands, cast into tight shackles from generation to generation, mistreated or murdered, those nobles who courageously undertake this mission are not rebels, but are brave representatives of humanity against abhorrent desecraters of humans.[51]

Reitzenstein's Donald thus takes up Locke's interpretation of rebellion and decidedly relates the notion of human rights to the historical institution of slavery and at the same time expands it by the dimension of race. Moreover, he refers to slavery as a "desecration of peoples" (*Völkerschändung*)[52] and calls the slaveholder and the slave trader a "murderer of peoples" (*Völkermörder*).[53]

With his love for freedom, his unmistakable sense for law and justice, and above all his "booming heart," from the very beginning the character Donald has been created, in the vein of *Sturm und Drang*, as a hotheaded young rebel who wants to shape "history." His failure then derives precisely from this design of his character. His actions based on affect result in his twofold opposition to the historical order of nature, according to the historical-philosophical interpretation, which is being presented to the audience in the drama's final scenes via an "aged colonialist." In a plea motivated by salvation history, the old colonialist lays out his arguments, which conclude in his antirevolutionary stance. First, he refers back to contemporary knowledge based on race theory, according to which men and women from Africa supposedly are "brute" and "wild" humans, unable to be directed and therefore not to be provoked to participate in a

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50. See also Donald's long monologues in the third act on natural laws: Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 95–114. For more details on the connection between human rights and feeling see Köhler, "Menschenrecht fühlen," 63–79.

51. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 12.

52. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 114.

53. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 109.

rebellion.[54] Donald allegedly ignored this "nature" of the slaves. Second—and this appears to be the much more significant argument by the colonialist—Donald purportedly defied the "inscrutable plans" of "destiny" in his "boisterous youth," a destiny that knows "when the time has come to curb the prevailing vice,"[55] in other words to bring about the abolition of slavery. The tragic moment of the play seems to reveal itself in the old colonialist's indictment, namely Donald's misjudgment of the great whole. Much like a typical tragic hero, Donald shows moral greatness in dying and recognizes his guilt: "The guilt is mine. . . . It's my awful work!"[56]

The clearly articulated condemnation of slavery and of the slave trade presented frequently in the drama, however, doesn't neatly fit into this historical-philosophical framing. Moreover, the historical-philosophical interpretation becomes rather porous in Reitzenstein's tragedy—not so much on the discursive level through the characters' speech, as in Dalberg's *Oronooko*, but through its inherently contradictory design. In addition to the condemnation of slavery and the characters of Donald and Tado, who are seeking agency to shape history, the temporal logic that drives the plot doesn't in fact correspond with the historical-philosophical interpretation. The notion of a gradual abolition doesn't match the play's portrayed urgency of putting an end to the atrocities and violence of the slave system.[57] The drama's temporal dynamic resulting from the ships arriving one after the other, which defines the plot at critical points, is made plausible by paratextual references to contemporary history; that is, it is historically motivated. This is further matched by the fact that the characters' precipitate actions are triggered by coincidence, or rather by "unfavorable winds" at sea, and that the planned escape ultimately escalates into excessive violence due to the momentum of the unleashed (revolutionary) crowd.[58] In other words: the historical-philosophical rational-

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54. See Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 180, 192. The drama offers a relativization of this perspective insofar as both Donald's and Osdal's actions are guided by their affects, despite being whites. However, this fact is considered a personal shortcoming and not a flaw based on race theory.

55. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 197.

56. Reitzenstein, *Die N****sclaven*, 185.

57. The first storyline also displays a similar contradiction when the love between Tado and Julie is depicted as transcending racial confines, which is in the third act portrayed as the result of an (aesthetic) education that finally enables Tado and Julie to find each other, notably in a garden reading "beautiful passages"—in other words in an alternative, aesthetically coded space, detached from historical time and its plantation rationality.

58. See also R. Weiershausen, who calls the conclusion of the drama "disconcerting,"

ization of the action in the fifth act stands in opposition to the repeated invasion of incalculable historical time over the course of the tragedy.

If one is to understand tragedy as a "medium of reflection for the interpretation of the world,"[59] then tragedy here is being handed over to modernity with the help of popular theater plays about slavery and resistance, such as these dramas by Reitzenstein or Dalberg, at the end of the eighteenth century. They can no longer depict confidence in a greater purpose transcending concrete history; and precisely in their refusal to frame the atrocities of slavery within a historical-philosophical logic, they lay open the aporias of modernity and insert the stories of slavery as a fundamental element into the history of Western modernity.

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because it doesn't solve the "cast out aporias" and therefore must break with genre tradition and give up its "regulatory effect." See Weiershausen, *Zeitenwandel als Familiendrama*, 332–34.

59. Daniel Fulda and Thorsten Valk, "Introduction," in *Die Tragödie der Moderne: Gattungsgeschichte—Kulturtheorie—Epochendiagnose*, ed. Daniel Fulda and Thorsten Valk (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 4.

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Monostatos's Longing

Staging Blackness in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*[1]

Irmtraud Hnilica

German-language theater from the turn of the nineteenth century plays a central role regarding representation of Blackness on stage. At the same time that national theaters, including opera houses, were established, an intense debate about *race* took place in all of Europe. The political motivation for this discourse was the abolitionist movement, which advocated for the elimination of slavery, particularly in England. The abolitionist drama (a genre that dramatizes the condition of slavery and harkens back to the bourgeois tragedy) was popular in German-language theater at this time and can be regarded as belonging to the wider context of this discourse. The Enlightenment-era desire for classification and systematization, with its penchant for racism, added to the intensity of this debate. Thus, on the one hand it is correct to say that at this time "the relativity of a Eurocentric . . . viewpoint became obvious,"[2] as Iwan Michelangelo D'Aprile and Winfried Siebers write, but describing the eighteenth century as "the epoch of acceptance of cultural diversity and the discovery of the human right to cultural identity,"[3] as D'Aprile and Siebers go on to say, does not fully capture the discourse. A more complete picture emerges when we factor in the problematic flip side of Enlightenment, namely the foundational systemic racism, coded as scientific, that has survived through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries up until the present.

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1. This essay was translated from German by Tatjana Zimbelius-Klem. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Tatjana Zimbelius-Klem.

2. Iwan Michelangelo D'Aprile and Winfried Siebers, *Das 18. Jahrhundert: Zeitalter der Aufklärung* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2008), 115.

3. D'Aprile and Siebers, *Das 18. Jahrhundert*, 115.

Samuel Thomas Sömmering with his essay *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des N****s vom Europäer* (*On the Physical Differences Differentiating N****s from Europeans*) can be counted among the founders of this influential tradition with fatal consequences. In his treatise, Sömmering initially decries the cruel treatment of slaves "similar to a commodity or animal."[4] He does so only to immediately pose the question whether this treatment might not be justified: "Practical prejudices, which are so generally spread, usually have some truth to support them."[5] To illustrate the topic in question, Sömmering uses gender relations as an analogy: "A boy will always reign over girls according to his nature, without knowing that he prevails due to his firmer, stronger body, even if he is provided with the exact same nutrition, exercise, and clothing."[6] The treatise amounts to a justification of alleged European superiority based on a "natural law," which Sömmering tries to infer from the "build and . . . the constitution"[7] of the respective bodies. Sömmering makes no attempt to hide the economic interests undergirding this racist construction of theory: his goal is to justify the exploitation of enslaved Africans. Thus, not only was slavery undergirded by racist ideas, it also produced them: "Antiblack prejudice sprang up with slavery and capitalists' need for labor."[8] Europeans had not always held so negative a view of Africa: "Before then [before slavery], educated Europeans held a generally positive attitude towards Africans, recognizing that African civilizations were highly advanced with vast libraries and centers of learning. Indeed, North Africans pioneered mathematics, medicine, and astronomy long before Europeans had much knowledge of these disciplines."[9]

It is not known whether Mozart and Emmanuel Schikaneder, the author of the libretto for *The Magic Flute*, knew Sömmering's treatise; they were familiar, though, with the work of Christoph Meiners, someone who influenced Sömmering's own thinking about race. Sömmering quotes Meiners's allegation that the "black man" has been equipped by God himself with a particular "insensitivity" and thus "created to be a slave to

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4. Samuel Thomas von Sömmering, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit des N****s vom Europäer* (Frankfurt am Main: Varrentrapp und Wenner, 1785), viii.

5. Sömmering, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit*, ix.

6. Sömmering, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit*, ix.

7. Sömmering, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit*, ix.

8. Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 2017), 21.

9. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 21.

others."[10] However, Meiners did not follow this line of argument only in *Vermischte philosophische Schriften* (*Miscellaneous Philosophical Writings*), from which Sömmering is quoting.[11] Meiners is also the author of the treatise *Ueber die Mysterien der Alten, besonders die eleusinischen Geheimnisse* (*On the Mysteries of the Ancients, in Particular the Eleusinian Secrets*),[12] not only considered the trigger for eighteenth-century fascination with the mysteries, but also seen by Jan Assmann as the most important catalyst for references to Egypt in the opera.[13] Mozart and Schikaneder were familiar with Meiners's writings and they participated—at meetings of the Masonic Lodge to which they belonged—in discourses of their time. Therefore, they must have come across early racist claims shared by Sömmering and Meiners. Another indication that Mozart was familiar with discourses around slavery is his correspondence with Wolfgang Heribert von Dalberg, who at the time was artistic director at Mannheim national theater. Mozart had offered to write a monodrama for him, hoping to find a reason to extend his stay in Mannheim.[14] In this context, Dalberg is primarily of interest as the author of the tragedy *Oronooko*,[15] which vehemently advocated for the abolition of slavery and represents the most radical of abolitionist plays, which generally supported a "humane" form of slavery.[16]

This represents a rough sketch of the history of discourse within which *The Magic Flute* and the character of Monostatos can be located, a discourse dominated by debates around slavery and racism, both demands for the abolition of slavery and racist justifications for it. The founding

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10. Sömmering, *Über die körperliche Verschiedenheit*, xiii.

11. Christoph Meiners, *Vermischte philosophische Schriften*, 3 vols. (Leipzig: Weygand, 1775–76).

12. Meiners, *Vermischte philosophische Schriften*, 3:164–342.

13. Jan Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte: Oper und Mysterium* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 2005).

14. Michael Freyhan, "Studies and Reports: Toward the Original Text of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 39, no. 2 (1986): 371.

15. Dalberg adapts the drama by Thomas Southerne with a similar name, which in turn takes up the substance of a story by Aphra Behn (both Southerne and Behn use the spelling "Oroonoko," while Dalberg uses "Oronooko"). For the history of the subject matter, see Barbara Riesche, *Schöne M***innen, edle Sklaven, schwarze Rächer* (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2010), 300.

16. The slaves in August von Kotzebue's *Die N****sklaven*, for instance, do not entirely want to overcome slavery but merely have the violent slaveholder John replaced by his brother William. See my essay "Vom bürgerlichen Trauerspiel zum Abolitionsdrama: Kotzebues 'Die N****sklaven,'" in *"Die deutsche Freiheit erdolcht": Neue Studien zu Leben, Werk und Rezeption August von Kotzebues*, ed. Julia Bohnengel and Thomas Wortmann (Hannover: Wehrhahn, 2023), 51–65.

years of national theater and German-speaking opera were a period in which cultural phantasms about Blackness were negotiated with particular intensity and from controversial positions, and it is important to consider *The Magic Flute* within this context. The slave Monostatos was not created in a vacuum, and Mozart and Schikaneder can be reproached for being fully aware of the various possible implications of such a character. Monostatos, who has so far been neglected by scholars, can be read as an, at the very least, implicit contribution to the debates around abolition. While the opera's affinity to the fairy tale has often been emphasized—Uta Sadji, for instance, presupposes the "pure fairy-tale character of *The Magic Flute*"[17]—such a reading underplays the political aspects of the drama. Based on this insight, this essay rereads the character of Monostatos in order to connect him to the political discourses of the day.[18]

The Enigma of *The Magic Flute*

The Magic Flute is as popular as it is seemingly accessible, and productions for children abound. Its ostensible harmlessness starkly contrasts with thoroughly controversial scholarship about the libretto.[19] Debates and interpretive challenges often hinge on the so-called break between the first and second acts: while the spectator mourns with the Queen of the Night over her daughter's abduction and considers Sarastro a cruel villain in the first act, the second act demands a different perspective. Now the Queen of the Night appears to be a power-hungry hysteric and Sarastro a wise and gracious sovereign whose celebration of Isis and Osiris within his "hallowed halls" Tamino and Pamina gladly join. This break between first and second act continues to present an interpretive challenge. Among the

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17. Uta Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Anif, 1992), 227.

18. A close examination of *The Magic Flute* and particularly Monostatos can be found in my article "'Alles wird so piano gesungen und gespielt, als wenn die Musik in weiter Entfernung wäre': Das Pianissimo der Monostatos-Arie in Mozarts Zauberflöte," in *Lauschen und Überhören: Literarische und mediale Aspekte auditiver Offenheit*, ed. Stefan Börnchen and Claudia Liebrand (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 2020), 177–91. It primarily deals with the implications of the following direction for musical interpretation of the Monostatos aria: "To be played and sung piano, as if the music came from a far distance." Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte* (Stuttgart: Reclam, [1791] 2014), 45.

19. Accordingly, an almost innumerable number of interpretive attempts abound; *The Magic Flute* may be "not only the most performed opera but also the most written about, at least in the German-speaking world." Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte*, 11.

continuously unanswered or at least not satisfactorily answered questions is the one posed by Peter von Matt in his essay "Papageno's Desire":

> Who is the Queen of the Night and who is Sarastro? What do they embody? How good and how evil are these two powerful creatures? The one singing the magnificent song of the hallowed halls, the hallowed walls where man loves man and revenge is unknown—how can he simultaneously be such a misogynist and women hater, such an unconditional spurner of the feminine in general? And is his antagonist, the vengeful mother goddess who flames and sparkles at night like a burning starry sky, really so wrong in her rejection of a dictatorial patriarchal state that negates her essence and has even abducted her beloved daughter? How good is the good that is victorious in *The Magic Flute*, and how bad the bad that ends up sinking—screaming—into the abyss?[20]

Gender studies affords the tools with which Matt's question—how Sarastro can sing of human kindness while being a misogynist—is easily answered: according to the history of philosophy and the history of ideas, the "man" implied in the libretto is a white man; therefore in order to really answer Matt's question as to how good the good and how bad the bad are in *The Magic Flute*, one must consider both gender *and* race simultaneously. It is not a coincidence that among those who, as von Matt writes, "end up sinking—screaming—into the abyss" is not only the Queen of the Night but also Monostatos, Sarastro's slave, who has defected to the star-blazing queen's side.

Monostatos's Longing

Monostatos is introduced in the first act by way of characterization through three other slaves who talk about his presumed imminent execution.

THIRD SLAVE. Ha, ha, ha!
FIRST SLAVE. Pst, Pst!

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20. Peter von Matt, "Papagenos Sehnsucht," in *Mozarts Opernfiguren: Grosse Herren, rasende Weiber—gefährliche Liebschaften*, ed. Dieter Borchmeyer (Bern: Paul Haupt, 1992), 153.

SECOND SLAVE. What's with the laughter?—
THIRD SLAVE. Ha, ha, ha! Our tormentor, the always eavesdropping
    blackam****, is bound to be hanged or skewered tomorrow.[21]

As we find out over the course of the conversation, Pamina has escaped her imprisonment, and although the slaves serve Sarastro, who is responsible for her kidnapping, they welcome this development. They hope with Pamina that she may "hasten to her tender mother's palace"[22] and wish the worst punishments on the odious Monostatos, whom they call a "corpulent paunch."[23] Thus Monostatos is introduced as a veritable monstrosity, a "merciless devil"[24] even. And this is exactly how he presents himself as he leads the recaptured Pamina into the palace: "My hatred," he announces, "shall ruin you!"[25] Monostatos seems to be all villain until the aria "Love Was Meant for Ev'ry Creature" complicates the picture. In this notable scene Monostatos watches—in accordance with the stage tradition of the harem guard[26]—as Sarastro's slave over the abducted Pamina. In an earlier scene she had already rejected Monostatos's advances. Now Pamina sleeps and Monostatos sings:

> Ev'ry creature feels love's pleasures,
> They can fondle, hug, and kiss,
> But I'm told to shun all loving,
> 'Cause I'm black and hideous!
> Have not I a heart inside me,
> Am I not made of flesh and blood?
> Never have a wife beside me,
> Might as well be sent to hell!
>
> So I'll chance it while I'm living,
> Nuzzle, fondle, hug, and kiss.
> Then, dear moon, please do forgive me,
> I was captured by a white woman.
> White is beautiful—I must

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21. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 21.

22. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 21.

23. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 21. This relationship establishes a connection with the "corpulent villain," whom Tamino imagines in his conversation with the Three Ladies as Pamina's "tyrant." Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 16.

24. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 22.

25. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 23.

26. Sadji, *Der M***, 216.

Kiss her, moon. Do turn away
Should you find the sight distressing,
Turn your eyes away from me!
(*Slowly and quietly he sneaks closer*.)

Reading the text in the context of its historical discourse leaves one irritated. It is unclear whether the connection to racist discourses of the time is deliberate, or whether we are called to feel with Monostatos, empathize and acknowledge his desires. Schikaneder's Monostatos aria is indeed—as is contemporaneous abolitionist drama—compatible with both of these intentions. This makes analysis a proper tightrope walk. The fact that Monostatos is himself processing the very devaluation of skin color from which he suffers is probably most unsettling. His words "'Cause I'm black and hideous" may initially be read as a critical paraphrase of a societal consensus that we are meant to understand as wrong, in the sense of "because people say (unfortunately, wrongly) a black man is hideous," "because a black man is regarded as ugly." "White is beautiful" seems to be an opinion unreservedly shared by Monostatos. Papageno, too, has already made similar remarks in reference to Pamina: "Young maiden, fair and fine, whiter even than chalk."[27] Her beauty not only makes Monostatos want to kiss her, it even forces him to do so ("I must kiss her"). Does Monostatos indeed say himself that black is ugly and white beautiful? Is this intended to lay bare the deep tragedy of a character who—not unlike Shakespeare's Othello—has finally been driven mad by evil insinuations (Shakespeare showed in Iago how this works)? Today we might call this internalized racism, as has been described by Karen Pyke.[28] Or does the aesthetic assessment of skin color suggest that this presents an objective evaluation of beauty? The aforementioned Christoph Meiners, who belonged to the wider circle around Mozart, clearly connected black with ugliness and white with beauty, after all, when he wrote of "ugly blackam****s" and the "deformity of African heads."[29] And Meiners is not an outlier: George L. Mosse showed in his *History of Racism in Europe* that racism is also based on aesthetic judgments.[30] Building on Mosse, Sigrid Köhler has shown that aesthetic judgments of such almost obscene sim-

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27. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 23.

28. Karen D. Pyke, "What Is Internalized Racial Oppression and Why Don't We Study It? Acknowledging Racism's Hidden Injuries," *Sociological Perspectives* 53, no. 4 (2010): 551–72.

29. Christoph Meiners, *Über die Natur der afrikanischen N***** (Hannover: Wehrhahn, [1790] 2000), 20.

30. George L. Mosse, *Die Geschichte des Rassismus in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 2006), 9.

plicity in their binary opposition of ugly/beautiful, as they are presented here, are just as formative for racism as they are for anthropological discourse. The latter is based in large part on aesthetic judgments, leading to a "fatal amalgamation of anthropology and aesthetics"[31] within racist discourse. Thus, we are not dealing with marginalia here but with a constituting aspect at the core of racist discourse as it has been combated by the "Black is beautiful" movement since the twentieth century.

Reading the aria as not only presenting such racism critically but also activating it—perfidiously, by having Monostatos, the figure implicated in the discourse, confirming and certifying it—is disturbing but necessary. It is worth pondering whether asking the moon, a stand-in for the audience, to close its eyes can be interpreted as a rejection of visual logic, which is the basis for this problematic aesthetic evaluation.

Monostatos's aria can thus be located within the context of contemporary imaginations of Blackness. Yet what is examined is not Monostatos's status as a slave, but his alleged inadequacy as a subject of love. The suggestive questions "Have not I a heart inside me? Am I not of flesh and blood?" bring Monostatos's humanity to the fore. Framing Monostatos's longing as a matter of love assigns him an undebatable, biologically justified status of personhood—and this is where the libretto departs from Sömmering's arguments. Simply put: whereas an early racist like Meiners looked for alleged "differences,"[32] Monostatos emphasizes physical likeness and indistinguishability. With his reference to blood, Monostatos takes up a central aspect of racist ideology and reevaluates it. Up until the twentieth century, blood was considered a determining factor in matters of race, as Cheryl I. Harris stresses in her essay "Whiteness as Property," which is seminal to critical race theory:

> Although the courts applied varying fractional formulas in different jurisdictions to define "black" . . . , the law uniformly accepted the rule of hypodescent—racial identity was governed by blood, and white was preferred. This legal assumption of race as blood-borne was predicated on the pseudo-sciences of eugenics and craniology, which saw their major development during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[33]

31. Sigrid Köhler, "Beautiful Black Soul? The Racial Matrix of White Aesthetics (Reading Kotzebue against Kleist)," *Image & Narrative* 14, no. 3 (2013): 35.

32. Meiners, *Über die Natur*, 20.

33. Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," in *Critical Race Theory: The Key Writings That Formed the Movement*, ed. Kimberlé Crenshaw et al. (New York: New Press, 1996), 283.

This had massive consequences in matters of jurisdiction, as Harris goes on the elaborate:

> In adjudicating who was "white," courts sometimes noted that, by physical characteristics, the individual whose racial identity was at issue appeared to be white and, in fact, had been regarded as white in the community. Yet if an individual's blood was tainted, she could not claim to be "white" as the law understood, regardless of the fact that phenotypically she may have been completely indistinguishable from a white person, may have lived as a white person, and may have descended from a family that lived as whites. Although socially accepted as white, she could not legally be white. Blood as "objective fact" predominated over appearance and social acceptance, which were socially fluid and subjective measures.[34]

Monostatos turns blood from the allegedly objective guarantor of supposed difference between whites and Blacks into evidence for the similarity of all people. A direct line can be drawn from Monostatos's aria in the eighteenth to critical race thinking in the twenty-first century, from the opera stage to Harris's critical race theory. The reference to the heart ("Have not I a heart inside me") now connects physical with emotional similarities. Monostatos's emotional economy is indeed central to his evaluation within the historical discourse. Monostatos is asked to refute two accusations. First he must answer for his alleged "innate insensibility,"[35] a phrase used by Meiners in an attempt to justify slavery by associating race with differing emotional capacities. The Monostatos aria takes up this racist stereotype, which Sömmering had quoted as well, and rejects it. Monostatos's emotions match those of the other characters in love; he is no less sensitive than other characters in the opera. The idea that love is commonly desired among all people is a topos we also encounter in Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. There it is the Spanish servant Pedrillo who initially is considered to be unlovable by his master Belmonte.

BELMONTE. Oh, Pedrillo, if only you knew love!
PEDRILLO. Hm! As if our kind knew none of it. I have as many tender hours as other folk.[36]

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34. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 284.
35. Meiners, *Über die Natur*, 46.
36. Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* (Stuttgart: Reclam, [1782] 2005), 19.

Within *The Magic Flute* itself Monostatos's aria corresponds to Papageno's famous "wish aria":[37] "A sweetheart or a missis / is Papageno's wish / O such a gentle dove / would be heaven here for me!" And later: "Oh can't I appeal to but one / of all these charming girls? / If one of them saves me from despair / I shall not die from grief." And: "If none will love me / The flame will consume me / But if female lips were to kiss me / I should be safe and sound."[38]

Readers who know the opera well will almost certainly hear the playful and light music playing in their head when they read these lines. Yet the longing for love[39] expressed by Papageno must, as Peter von Matt rightfully advocates, be taken seriously, including the fatal consequence if it is left unfulfilled. Before Papagena finally appears, Papageno will be as close to suicide as Pamina when Tamino refuses to speak with her because of an oath of silence and she believes that his love is extinguished. Consequently, the attestation that the desire for love is an existential need is independent of the characters it befalls; where Peter von Matt speaks of "Papageno's longing," it is appropriate to take Monostatos's longing seriously. Jan Assmann's reading appears one-sided, in contrast, when he refers to Monostatos's aria as a "love aria" only in quotation marks and states that in Monostatos "love appears as lustfulness."[40] That may be true, but it is just as true for Papageno, yet only Monostatos is scolded for his "immoral intention,"[41] as Assmann formulates it. Whereas the character of Monostatos is forced to strongly object to the insinuated unfeelingness, he is simultaneously confronted with reproach for being all too excitable.

One can also locate this criticism in eighteenth-century racist discourse; namely, it can be related to the so-called climate theory. Ever since antiquity, people have imagined that climate conditions have an effect on particular ethnicities, assuming that Europeans have the most self-control

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37. "Papageno always clearly states what he wants, and he wants a lot. Wishes move and drive him as the booming wind drives the sail boat. Already in his introductory song he defines himself as one who is driven by wishes, and each of his arias, each of his duets is inspired by a wish. As soon as he opens his mouth, he speaks in optative. The introductory song in which he, in accordance with opera tradition, explains his profession already in the second verse connects the birds, which he professionally catches, to the girls, whom he wants to capture. And he is not talking about the one and only woman, as Tamino does, but he is talking in plural." Von Matt, "Papagenos Sehnsucht," 156.

38. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 61.

39. Von Matt insists that in Papageno's case we need to indeed talk of longing, and not of drive or desire. See von Matt, "Papagenos Sehnsucht," 156.

40. Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte*, 186.

41. Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte*, 187.

because they live in mild parts of the world. The libretto appears to appeal to this understanding. Monostatos explicitly addresses the idea that inhabitants of regions with temperate climates are more tempered in their passions at the sight of Pamina, only to then repudiate it: "And who could remain cold and insensitive at such a sight, even if he were to hail from a milder region?"[42] When Tamino sings in the picture aria of his love to Pamina, which arose from the sight of her image alone, the opera offers clear proof of the unfoundedness of the climate theory and confirms Monostatos's assessment. His longing thus confronts contemporary talk of "innate insensibility" as well as a climate theory that presumes a disproportionate penchant for affect.

What remains problematic is that Monostatos, in accordance with the stereotype of the hypersexual Black man, is trying to defy Pamina's expressed will. This, however, should not be evaluated without considering the context of *The Magic Flute* in its entirety. Papageno, specifically, plays a key role as a mirror character to Monostatos. Papageno and Monostatos are corresponding characters, which is already suggested in their first encounter when each is startled at the sight of the other. The mirror function of the two characters offers a new perspective on Monostatos's announced transgression. Papageno, too, tends to take by force that which he desires. Even in his first appearance, Papageno introduces himself with the famous bird catcher's aria as phantasmagorical abductor. In the second verse he sings, "The bird catcher is who I am / Forever cheerful, tra-la-la / I'm known all over, near and far / for being great at what I do. / A net for girls is what I want / I'd catch a dozen of them for me. / I'd lock them all up in my cage / And all the girls would be mine."[43]

If one takes the lyrics seriously, this is an undisguised programmatic "raptus." There is a clear double standard—not so much in the libretto itself, but in the reception of the opera. Papageno wants to catch *all* girls, and yet he remains a sympathetic, harmless character and "everybody's darling." Monostatos, on the other hand, wants to kiss a single one, asking for forgiveness, yet scholarship calls him a "horny and brutal m***"[44] and a "sinister character through and through."[45] This is not just about the assault on Pamina. Beneath the surface such assessments are cultural

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42. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 38.

43. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 9.

44. Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte*, 74. Joachim Kaiser, too, speaks of the "lewd blackam***," in *Mein Name ist Sarastro: Die Gestalten in Mozarts Meisteropern von Alfonso bis Zerlina* (Munich: Piper, 1984), 223.

45. Assmann, *Die Zauberflöte*, 74.

phantasms about the encounter between "the man of color and the white woman," which Frantz Fanon describes in *Black Skin, White Masks*:

> Out of the blackest part of my soul, across the zebra striping of my mind, surges this desire to be suddenly white. I wish to be acknowledged not as black but as white. Now . . . who but a white woman can do this for me? By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man. I am a white man. . . . I marry white culture, white beauty, white whiteness. When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine.[46]

Monostatos's sexual transgression is also a transgression of the color line. And this is where the answer to Monostatos's question "But what has been my crime?" lies.[47] This "crime" alone explains the aggressive reactions toward him, given that "historically, . . . the Negro guilty of lying with a white woman is castrated,"[48] as Frantz Fanon noted.

Is Monostatos, then, right with his assumption that Pamina rejects him because of his skin color? On the face of it, the allegation seems absurd. Pamina references her affection for Tamino as a reason for rejecting Monostatos. Yet a pairing of Monostatos and Pamina would be impossible in the world of *The Magic Flute*, as a look at the model couple of the *Singspiel* makes clear. Not Pamina and Tamino but Papageno and Papagena are the couple at the heart of *The Magic Flute*; the scene in which the two come together with the duet "Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papagena! Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Pa-Papageno!" is the paradigmatic love scene. The two protagonists are obviously made for each other, just as the priest had promised earlier, after Papageno had proclaimed he was ready to remain a bachelor for life, given all the hurdles: "What if Sarastro had kept a girl for you, your exact likeness in color and dress?"[49] Papageno is persuaded not to renounce love just yet, and perhaps that is what moves audiences. With this, the implicit rules for love have been established: "exact likeness in color and dress" is desirable in partners. This not only implies that Papageno and Papageno are the perfect couple, it also points to the impossibility of Monostatos and Pamina as lovers—due to their

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46. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (New York: Grove Press, [1952] 1967), 63.

47. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 45.

48. Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 72.

49. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 40.

difference in "color." What follows is that while Pamina may be right in rejecting him because she had "sacrificed her heart to the youth,"[50] Monostatos still is not wrong in suspecting her rejection to be motivated by the fact that he has, as he phrases it, "the color of a black ghost."[51] At the end of the day, Pamina's reasons only distract from the fact that the underlying structural arguments are much more relevant. The power structure between Pamina and Monostatos is substantially more complicated than would be suggested by the sexual assault, which defines Pamina as a victim. "I was captured by a white woman," Monostatos sings in a striking passive construction, which must seem like a complete reversal of perpetrator and victim from Pamina's perspective. Yet Monostatos is indeed a white person's property; he is Sarastro's slave, after all, and evidently this is the fundamental experience that provides the foil for his assault on Pamina. Here, too, connections with critical race theory open up. "The hyperexploitation of black labor was accomplished by treating black people themselves as objects of property," Harris writes. "Race and property were thus conflated by establishing a form of property contingent on race: only blacks were subjugated as slaves and treated as property."[52] This difference between whites and Blacks in regard to social and judicial status, which is so fundamental for the system of slavery—"'black' racial identity marked who was subject to enslavement, whereas 'white' racial identity marked who was 'free' or, at minimum, not a slave"[53]—is still valid in Pamina's prison, at least from Monostatos's perspective. The curious wording "A white woman captured me" points this out.

The conglomeration invoked by the aria is as intricate as it is complex; an emancipatory reading is suggested as much as a racist one. Monostatos longs not only for love, but also for recognition from other characters as an equal and thereby *white* subject. The opera grants this desire its right, at least to a degree. Specifically, it presents Monostatos's emotional range as indistinguishable from that of other characters, thereby canceling out central prejudices with which Mozart's contemporaries and companions, such as Christoph Meiners, sought to justify slavery.

By establishing the symbolism implied in the distinction of black versus white, the opera also aims for a certain level of abstraction. A symbolism based on the opposition of light and dark, black and white is impor-

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50. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 49.
51. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 49.
52. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 278.
53. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 278.

tant for *The Magic Flute* as a whole. The main antagonists, Sarastro and the Queen of the Night, are marked by the contrasting identifiers of day, sun, and enlightenment on the one hand, and night, darkness, and pre-enlightenment on the other. At the very end of the opera, Sarastro proclaims his final victory: "The rays of the sun cast out the night."[54] This can be read as a programmatic rejection of all blackness. The implications for an analysis of the character Monostatos are, then, that his dark skin is decidedly overdetermined.[55] This is already evident in the comparison of Monostatos with the devil. The libretto neatly fits into established theater tradition, as Sadji stresses: "This comparison of the m**** and the devil has been prevalent on the theater stage since medieval times and is still being drawn in every slave play or bourgeois tragedy with Black protagonists, though it would generally be asserted that the poor slave's soul was not nearly as dark as his skin."[56]

Here, Sarastro formulates his insight into Monostatos as follows: "Indeed I know too much—I know your soul is as black as your face."[57] The black soul is a metaphor, an image for the evil soul, and the ease with which we comprehend all this reveals how deep-seated this association of the color black with evil is in Western culture. A "Manichean space," as Harris writes, is "rigidly bifurcated into light/dark, good/bad, white/black."[58] Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic argue along the same lines:

> In the semantics of popular culture, whiteness is often associated with innocence and goodness. Brides wear white on their wedding day to signify purity. "Snow White" is a universal fairy tale of virtue receiving its just reward. In talk of near-death experiences, many patients report a blinding white light, perhaps a projection of a hoped-for union with a positive and benign spiritual force. In contrast, darkness and blackness often carry connotations of evil and menace. One need only read *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad to see how strongly imagery of darkness conveys evil and terror. We speak of a black gloom. Persons deemed unacceptable to a group

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54. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 72.

55. Similarly, Pamina's *white* skin is overdetermined. Fanon's formulation can well be applied to Pamina as well as *The Magic Flute* as a whole, which stages a fight between the two realms of day and night: "I am white: that is to say that I possess beauty and virtue, which have never been black. I am the color of the daylight." Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 45.

56. Sadji, *Der M****, 227.

57. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 50.

58. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 276.

are said to be blackballed or blacklisted. Villains are often depicted as swarthy or wearing black clothing.[59]

It is along these lines that Sarastro refers to the Queen of the Night's plan for murder as a "black enterprise."[60] The Christian imagination of the devil as a black figure is shown to be an archaic stepping stone of an "enlightened" racism.

Many productions and scholars of *The Magic Flute* refuse, sometimes to a scandalous degree, to engage with these aspects of race, which the opera negotiates. Such a refusal to acknowledge race increases the most problematic aspects of the opera, particularly as it pertains to the devaluation of Monostatos. Yet this is not merely racist, it fails to properly interpret Monostatos's longing and, with it, *The Magic Flute* as a whole.

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59. Delgado and Stefancic, *Critical Race Theory*, 85f.
60. Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*, 50.

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Economies of Compassion and Skin Color in Friedrich Schiller's *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* (1783)[1]

Franziska Bergmann

Schiller's republican tragedy *Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua* (*Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 1783), which has received only marginal scholarly attention, counts as a particularly ambiguous drama.[2] This has to do, first, with the existence of multiple versions of the play—and in particular with its conclusion—which shine entirely different lights on Schiller's assessment of republicanism. As I would like to demonstrate in what follows, the play's high degree of openness is, second, also apparent in the depiction of the figure of Muley Hassan, who until now has been the focus of few scholarly works.[3] Namely, Muley Hassan's position consistently alternates—and this is my principal thesis—between being othered and being humanized. This is particularly clear with regard to the economy of compassion in this tragedy, since the drama initially awakens the impression that it operates with a distribution of compassion along color lines; that is, the Black figure Muley Hassan experiences no compassion and is

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1. This essay was translated from German by Nick Jones. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Nick Jones.

2. Peter-André Alt, *Schiller: Leben—Werk—Zeit*, vol. 1 (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2000), 337–38; Nikolas Immer, *Der inszenierte Held: Schillers dramenpoetische Anthropologie* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2008), 234, 238; Peter-André Alt, "Akkulturation des Wilden bei Schiller," in *Poetik des Wilden: Festschrift für Wolfgang Riedel*, ed. Jörg Robert and Friederike Felicitas Günther (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2012), 263–86.

3. See Ursula Wertheim, *Schillers Fiesko und Don Carlos: Zu Problemen des historischen Stoffes* (Weimar: Arion Verlag, 1958); Uta Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Verlag Ursula Müller-Speiser, 1992); Alt, "Akkulturation des Wilden bei Schiller."

thereby placed in the space of otherness, while the white figure Leonora—Fiesco's wife—is presented as a person particularly deserving of compassion and is thus depicted throughout by emphasizing her humanness.[4] It seems as if Schiller were here following a racist form of depiction that was in fashion at the time of European colonialism and in which the white figures are consistently portrayed as human and can therefore evoke the empathy of the audience. Black figures are meanwhile frequently styled as merely types and minor characters, appearing unsuitable for provoking any kind of compassion. The final scene of *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* relativizes the play's economy of compassion and its color lines in a decisive manner, however, and this will be outlined at the conclusion of my chapter.

The tragedy, which was published and first performed in 1783 as Schiller's second drama, belongs to the author's Sturm und Drang phase. The play revolves around Fiesco, the charismatic, albeit two-faced, hero. Fiesco operates within the context of a political conspiracy surrounding the uncompromising republican Verrina, whose goal is to protect Genoa from a potential tyrant, the nephew of the elderly Andrea Doria, the city-state's current doge, the chief magistrate in the former republics of Venice and Genoa. It remains unclear whether Fiesco, a master of disguise and role-play, truly supports the conspiracy. Verrina's interactions with Fiesco are therefore characterized by skepticism. In the case of their adversaries, it is the nephew of Doria, Gianettino, who also treats Fiesco with skepticism and sets in motion his own conspiracy to have Fiesco murdered with the help of the henchman Muley Hassan. The assassination attempt is unsuccessful and Fiesco manages to recruit Muley Hassan for his own ends, initiating a further conspiracy against Gianettino. He provides his accomplice with only partial information about his revolutionary plans. Verrina recognizes the danger posed by Fiesco to the republican liberation of Genoa, not incorrectly suspecting that Fiesco is playing with the idea of narcissistically claiming the position of duke for himself. Verrina therefore plans to kill him after the successful overthrow of Doria. The conspiracy runs its course and leads to tumultuous scenes during which Fiesco has, among others, Muley Hassan executed after he—aware that Fiesco is merely using him as a tool in the conspiracy—burns down several churches. Andrea Doria does lose his power, but Fiesco is simultaneously forced to recognize at the very moment in which he is celebrated as the new leader of Genoa that he has, in tragic irony, killed his own wife,

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4. On the question of characters worthy of tragedy see also Sigrid Köhler's contribution to this volume.

fatally mistaking her in her disguised form for Gianettino. Fiesco is unable to pass his final test: Verrina, still full of mistrust, challenges the new leader to convert to republicanism. When Fiesco refuses, he is pushed into the sea by Verrina and drowns.

For the stage version, Schiller decided on a more reconciliatory conclusion: Fiesco declares the founding of the republic after escaping Verrina's murder attempt. This article deals with the first version since it is considerably richer with regard to the skin color discourse in the tragedy.

Dehumanization: Muley Hassan's Death in Comparison to Leonora's Death

The following considerations will be illustrated by select passages from the play and against the backdrop of Schiller's theoretical text on tragedy "Über die tragische Kunst" ("On the Tragic Art," 1792): I will first turn my attention to four consecutive death scenes in the fifth act because, on the basis of those scenes, the question of the correspondence between an economy of compassion and skin color can be clearly investigated. The scenes I will analyze precede Fiesco's death scene at the end of the drama. In the first scene, Muley Hassan is executed by Fiesco's henchmen because he recognizes that he has been reduced to a mere instrument within Fiesco's intrigues and avenges himself against the duke by setting alight numerous church buildings. Directly thereafter, there is a further death: the death of Fiesco's young wife, Leonora. The portrayal of this death takes place over a total of three scenes. It should be mentioned in this context that Leonora's death is a tragic event inasmuch as she is mistakenly stabbed by her own husband, who, fooled by her disguise, believes her to be his enemy Gianettino.

When reading the death scenes, it becomes apparent that they—especially in terms of aesthetic effects—take entirely different forms. While the death scenes of Leonora are intended to depict and simultaneously evoke a high degree of compassion, thereby following the aesthetics of an eighteenth-century emotional culture of softening the heart (*Gemüt*),[5] the execution scene of Muley Hassan is not at all designed to produce compassion. To illustrate this marked difference, I would like to quote both scenes consecutively:

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5. See Lothar Pikulik, *Der Dramatiker als Psychologe: Figur und Zuschauer in Schillers Dramen und Dramentheorie* (Paderborn: mentis, 2004), 144.

ACT 5, SCENE 10[6]

Fiesco. Sacco. The M***. Soldiers.

SACCO. We caught the M*** throwing a burning fuse into the Jesuit
Cathedral—
FIESCO. I let your perfidy pass because it was aimed at *me*. Arson gets
the rope. Take him away. String him up at the church door.
M***. Foo! Foo! Foo! I find that inconvenient.—Can't we arrange a lit-
tle commutation?
FIESCO. None.
M***. (*confidentially*). Then try sending me to the galleys.
FIESCO. (*signals the others*). To the gallows.
M***. (*resisting*). I'll turn Christian.
FIESCO. The Church declines your heathen pox.
M***. (*wheedling*). Then at least send me soaked into Eternity.
FIESCO. Sober.
M***. But don't hang me on any Christian church.
FIESCO. A knight keeps his word. I promised you your own gallows.
SACCO. (*growls*). No more dawdling, you heathen. We have other things
to do.
M***. But—suppose the cord snaps?
FIESCO. (*to Sacco*). We'll double it.
M***. (*resigned*). So be it.—And the Devil can equip himself for a spe-
cial case. (*Off, with Soldiers, who hang him in the distance.*)[7]

Leonora's death is treated completely differently:

SCENE 11

Leonora falls with a broken sound.[8]

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6. This scene is only in the first edition of the Nationalausgabe from 1783; it does not fea-
ture in the stage version from 1784. Friedrich von Schiller, *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*,
vol. 4, *Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua*, ed. Edith Nahler and Horst Nahler (Weimar:
Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1983).

7. Friedrich Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, trans. Flora Kimmich (Cambridge:
Open Book Publishers, 2015), 111–12.

8. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 112.

SCENE 12

FIESCO. (*weakly propped up, muffled voice*). Have I murdered my wife, Genoese?—I beg you, don't cast such ghastly sidelong glances at what Nature's playing here.[9]

SCENE 13

FIESCO. (*Shuddering as he approaches the corpse.*) My wife lies here, murdered.—No. That says too little. (*With greater emphasis.*) I, wretch, have murdered my wife. . . . Then (*contemptuous*) two eyes fail to see, and (*with terrible emphasis*) I—murdered—my wife! (*A biting laugh.*) That is the masterpiece.

All the Conspirators clutch their weapons, moved. Some wipe away tears. Pause.

FIESCO. (*exhausted, more quietly, as he scans the circle*). Is anyone sobbing?—Yes, by God, those who throttled a prince weep. (*Melting into quiet sorrow.*) Speak! Are you weeping over death's high treason here or are you weeping over my mind's plunge headlong into unmanliness? (*Before the dead woman, grave and affecting.*) Where rock-hard murderers melt into warm tears, Fiesco's despair cursed and swore. (*Sinks down upon her, weeping.*) Leonora, forgiveness.— Rage won't bring repentance down from Heaven. (*Softly, sorrowfully. . . . more touching.*) . . . A wife shares one's sorrow.—*Who* will share my glory? (*He weeps harder and hides his face on the corpse. Compassion on all faces.*)[10]

The production of compassion is of central importance in the drama theory of the eighteenth century.[11] The question is how and why any given figure provokes compassion and which methods of portrayal should be used to that end. Let us first turn to the death scenes of Leonora, since Schiller here applies the dramaturgical praxis that he outlined as a proto-typical compassion-inducing scenario in his essay "On the Tragic Art."

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9. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 113.

10. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 115–16.

11. See Hans-Jürgen Schings, *Der mitleidigste Mensch ist der beste Mensch: Poetik des Mitleids von Lessing bis Büchner* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 1980).

Schiller writes: "Every feeling of pity implies the idea of suffering, and the degree of pity is regulated according to the degree more or less of vividness, of truth, of intensity, and of duration of this idea."[12] For my analysis of the death scenes of Leonora, the first terms of interest are *Lebhaftigkeit* (vividness) and *Vollständigkeit* (completeness/intensity); *Wahrheit* (truth) and *Dauer* (duration) are also relevant when brought into direct comparison with the death scene of Muley Hassan.

Schiller fulfills the criterium of vividness in the depiction of suffering simply by choosing the genre of drama, since the sufferings that we are witnesses of "affect us incomparably more than those that we have through a description or a narrative. The former suspend in us the free play of the fancy [*Einbildungskraft*], and striking our senses immediately penetrate by the shortest road to our heart."[13] Unlike narrative or descriptive formats, the drama is characterized by its "unmittelbare lebendige Gegenwart" (immediate, vivid present),[14] as Schiller repeatedly emphasizes, and this vividness predestines the drama, in its competition with other genres, to be capable of particularly powerfully impacting the feelings of its audience and evoking compassion.

In the death scenes of Leonora, Schiller insists on this vividness through Fiesco's lengthy and numerous monologues, in which the protagonist bemoans the tragic death of his wife, since the audience thereby receives in great detail an unfiltered insight into the innermost feelings of the mourner. The stage directions take on a supportive role in this context, admittedly introducing—inasmuch as we approach the drama as a closet drama—a mediating narrating instance but ultimately contributing through an extensive description of the figures' effects on a strong psychologization of the scene and investing it with a tragic pathos.[15] Through

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12. Friedrich Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," in *Essays Aesthetical and Philosophical: Including the Dissertation on the "Connexion Between the Animal and Spiritual in Man"* (London: Bell, 1875), 350.

13. Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," 350.

14. Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," 350. See on the concept of "lebendige . . . Gegenwart," in Gert Ueding, *Schillers Rhetorik: Idealistische Wirkungsästhetik und rhetorische Tradition* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1971), 147; Gerhard Kluge, "Schauspielkunst in Schillers Jugenddramen," in *Schauspielkunst im 18. Jahrhundert: Grundlagen, Praxis, Autoren*, ed. Wolfgang F. Bender (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1992), 240; Christoph Gschwind, *Die dramatische Wirkungspoetik im Frühwerk Schillers: Eine analytische Annäherung an das Konzept des Ideendichters* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2017), 46.

15. On the role of tragic pathos in the second half of the eighteenth century, see Ulrich Port, *Pathosformeln: Die Tragödie und die Geschichte exaltierter Affekte (1755–1888)* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2005).

the stage direction "*Compassion on all faces*," Schiller intensifies this pathos in a double mirroring effect. It is, namely, not just the legitimacy of Fiesco's suffering that is highlighted by the level of inner communication, but rather the ideal-typical emotional reaction is presented in a thoroughly pedagogical gesture and is intended to take place on the level of external communication, that is, in the audience or reader.

In reference to the criterium of completeness in the depiction of suffering, Schiller elucidates in "On the Tragic Art" that the audience can only muster empathy for a figure if they are closely familiar with the figure's "external and internal situation" and have information about the "entire context and extent"[16] of their motives. This completeness in the depiction of figures is also characteristic in the case of Leonora. From the beginning, the audience members or readers are familiarized with the details of her character, and they experience her as a virtuous and intelligent, albeit somewhat overly effusive, young woman. The mixture of positive attributes that cohere with the ideal of sentimentality together with her minor weaknesses allow Leonora to become that figure in the drama who offers to the audience the highest potential for identification. Moreover, the first appearance of Leonora at the beginning of the drama already operates with the aesthetics of compassion that characterize her death scene, confronting us in medias res with Leonora's seemingly justified sorrow about Fiesco's suspected infidelity. Against this backdrop, Schiller is able to frame Leonora's death as a particularly tragic event, and Fiesco's grief over the fatal mistaking of Leonora for Gianettino is made all the more comprehensible.

In order to illustrate the criterium of duration, it is necessary to compare the death scene of Leonora with that of Muley Hassan. Dramaturgically, the latter is designed such that, in contrast to Leonora's death scene, a high degree of emotional distance to the events is possible. This distance is, first, created entirely concretely in the onstage spatial constellation, which the stage directions describe thus: "*Off, with Soldiers, who **hang him in the distance*** [my emphasis in bold]." In the case of a performance of *Fiesco*, it would therefore be plausible to have the killing of Muley Hassan take place in the background of the stage as a peripheral event, as an event that is merely a component of Muley Hassan's stage exit. And even if we read the drama as a dramatic *text*, the stage directions create distance because such a secondary text always introduces a narrating instance; that is, the events are communicated indirectly. The noticeable laconicism of

16. Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," 353.

the stage direction "*Off, with Soldiers, who hang him in the distance*" correlates with the other elements of the scene construction.

The other stage directions remain similarly brief, and the dialogue of the figures is rendered as a stichomythic rapid exchange of blows, the function of which is to present Muley Hassan throughout as, first and foremost, a typically comedic figure. Even when faced with his imminent death, Muley Hassan remains true to his role as rogue (*Spitzbube*)[17] and, despite his resignation, presents his executioners with shrewd and impudent ripostes. In this way, the suffering that Muley Hassan experiences during the execution is given no articulation, nor do the onlooking witnesses seem to be remotely moved by the events.

The staging of Muley Hassan's death stands in radical contrast to that of Leonora.[18] While Leonora's death is depicted in great detail as a tragic event und evokes powerful emotional involvement on the levels of both internal and external communication, the depiction of Muley Hassan's execution is characterized by laconicism, comedy, and—above all—the complete absence of empathy (with regard to both the internal and external communication levels). It is here possible to invoke Helmuth Lethen and speak of a representative scene of coolness.[19]

With regard to the criterium of duration in the staging of suffering, which Schiller also explicates in "On the Tragic Art," the sequencing of emotional coolness and powerful emotional involvement in the death scenes of Muley Hassan and Leonora has an important dramaturgical function:

> In order that the heart, in spite of that spontaneous force which reacts against sensuous affections, may remain attached to the impressions of sufferings, it is, therefore, necessary that these

17. See the entry for "Spitzbube" in Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm: "spitzbub im sinne von possenreiszer, mensch der viele narreteydig treibt," accessed December 23, 2019, https://www.dwds.de/wb/dwb/spitzbube. Uta Sadji points out that Muley Hassan exhibits characteristics of a "Hofnarr" (see Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts*, 180). Ursula Wertheim places Muley Hassan in the tradition of the medieval Hanswurst figures (see Wertheim, *Schillers Fiesko und Don Carlos*, 91).

18. On tragic and banal death scenes in Schiller and other dramatists see Claude Haas, "Die 'Stunde des Absterbens': Fälle des tragischen Todes im Trauerspiel von Schiller bis Brecht," in *Benjamins Trauerspiel: Theorie—Lektüren—Nachleben*, ed. Claude Haas and Daniel Weidner (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2014), 175–98.

19. See Helmut Lethen, *Verhaltenslehren der Kälte: Lebensversuche zwischen den Kriegen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1994).

impressions should be cleverly suspended at intervals, or even interrupted and intercepted by contrary impressions to return again with twofold energy and renew more frequently the vividness of the first impression.[20]

Schiller argues here for an aesthetic technique of contrast: that is to say, Leonora's death scene dramaturgically necessitates its placement in a context in which an entirely different form of emotional reaction is first evoked. In order to make space for the complete unfolding of the emotionalizing potential of Leonora's death scene, it has to be preceded by a scene of emotional coolness.

With the alternation between emotional coolness and warmth, a further dramaturgical aspect comes into view that possesses a constitutive function in Schiller's poetology of the political and historical drama. In order to render historical material—that is, "the cold, sterile actions of the state"[21]—suitable for the stage, it requires—according to Schiller—a heroic figure whose feelings are depicted. In his preface to *Fiesco*, Schiller insists on this point:

> If it is true that only feeling stirs feeling, then, it seems to me, the *political hero* would be no subject for the stage to the extent that he must subordinate his human self in order to be a political hero. It was therefore not my task to breathe into my story the living fire that prevails in a pure product of enthusiasm, but rather to spin a cold, sterile political drama from the materials of the human heart and in just this way to reattach it to the human heart.[22]

Schiller's poetics of the historical drama correspondingly require that the political hero of the play, Fiesco, is endowed with two seemingly incompatible features. While he is, on the one hand, intended to appear as a calculating actor in the political arena who "propels action and advances intrigue,"[23] the historical drama must, on the other hand, foreground Fiesco's sensitive side.[24] In the scene sequence depicting the deaths of Muley

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20. Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," 354–55.
21. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 3.
22. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 3.
23. Ingo Uhlig, "Produktive Anaisthesis im Roman und Drama der Genieepoche," in *Gefühllose Aufklärung: Anaisthesis oder die Unempfindlichkeit im Zeitalter der Aufklärung*, ed. Katja Battenfeld et al. (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2012), 210.
24. See also Pikulik, *Der Dramatiker als Psychologe*, 133.

Hassan and Leonora, precisely those features of Fiesco are portrayed that characterize a political hero: if, in the execution scene of Muley Hassan, the cool perspective of the protagonist reflects a self-proclaimed executive instance who punishes a supposedly criminal act with a death sentence and thus eliminates a potential adversary, he presents himself in Leonora's death scenes as a sensitive individual who provokes our sympathy and thereby temporarily offers himself as an identification figure.

Irrespective of these considerations regarding aesthetic aspects, it cannot be overlooked that Schiller, by including a scene sequence in which the death of Muley Hassan precedes that of Leonora, positions himself within a racist performance tradition common to the period of European colonialism. In that tradition, it is only white figures who possess the privilege of being perceived as individuals and of being capable of triggering empathetic reactions such as compassion.[25] Without doubt, Muley Hassan is depicted as an individual over the course of the drama. Nevertheless, it must be asked why Muley Hassan's death is not staged as a compassion-inducing event. Is it because Muley Hassan, unlike Leonora, is a criminal? Or could it be that his positioning as a Black figure results in his inability to provoke compassion since he is not sufficiently similar to the implicitly white audience?

The latter consideration reveals its plausibility if we direct our attention to Schiller's reflections on the criterium of truth, which also apply primarily to the register of visuality,[26] in his essay "On the Tragic Art." The possibility of compassion, "pity," notes Schiller,

> is only possible inasmuch as we can prove or suppose a resemblance between ourselves and the subject that suffers. Everywhere where this resemblance is lacking, pity is impossible. The *more visible* and the greater is the resemblance, the more vivid is our pity; and they mutually slacken in dependence on each other.[27]

Because Schiller's drama declines to portray Muley Hassan as a compassion-inducing figure in the execution scene, he is denied any similarity

25. See Ortrud Gutjahr and Stefan Hermes, "Maskeraden des (Post-)Kolonialismus: Eine Einleitung," in *Maskeraden des (Post-)Kolonialismus: Verschattete Repräsentationen "der Anderen" in der deutschsprachigen Literatur und im Film*, ed. Ortrud Gutjahr and Stefan Hermes (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 7.

26. See, on the visual dimension of "race" on Enlightenment stages, Birgit Tautz, *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences in the Enlightenment: From China to Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

27. Schiller, "On the Tragic Art," 351; my emphasis.

with the audience. It is, however, precisely the question of similarity[28] between figure and audience that has, since Lessing's compassion aesthetics in the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* (1768, especially the seventy-fifth and seventy-sixth essays), been of central importance for the theater of the eighteenth century. The circumstance that Muley Hassan appears as radically other during his execution ultimately prevents his death from being, in the sense described by Judith Butler, grievable.[29]

Rehumanization: Fiesco's Death

Through the final exchange of blows between Fiesco and Verrina at the conclusion of the drama, however, Schiller invites a reevaluation of the execution scene. In a seemingly offhand remark made by Verrina, the rehumanization of Muley Hassan takes place:

> VERRINA. . . . Incidentally, Duke, tell me: What was the crime of that poor devil you had strung up on the Jesuit Cathedral?
> FIESCO. The rotter was putting Genoa to the torch.
> VERRINA. But *that* rotter nonetheless spared the laws?
> FIESCO. Verrina is torching my friendship.[30]

It is not just that Muley Hassan here belatedly experiences the sympathy that was denied to him in the execution scene (note the adjective "der *arme* Teufel [my emphasis]," which here means "pitiable" and "wretched," whereby the term "devil" of course identifies Muley Hassan as a Black heathen).[31] What is more, this interaction takes place shortly before Verrina shoves Fiesco into the sea and lets him drown in order to protect

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28. With regard to contemporary discussions in cultural studies on the category of similarity, such as—among others—those initiated by Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich, the discursive context of similarity and compassion in the eighteenth century would be a further aspect that could be more thoroughly explored against the backdrop of "race." Exemplary for the category of similarity, see Anil Bhatti and Dorothee Kimmich et al., "Ähnlichkeit: Ein kulturtheoretisches Paradigma," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der Deutschen Literatur* 36, no. 1 (2011): 233–47. On the question of similarity and skin color see also the contributions of Sigrid Köhler and Irmtraud Hnilica to this volume.

29. See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Power of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso Books, 2006).

30. Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, 119.

31. On the idiomatic expression "armer Teufel," see *Deutsches Wörterbuch von Jacob Grimm und Wilhelm Grimm*, Accessed December 23, 2019, http://woerterbuchnetz.de/cgi-bin/WBNetz/wbgui_py?sigle=DWB&mode=Vernetzung&lemid=GT02278#XGT02278

Genoa from his rule. This indicates that Verrina elevates Fiesco's treatment of the subaltern figure of Muley Hassan to the indicator of the duke's potential for tyranny. In doing so, Verrina also critiques Fiesco's rhetoric: the repetition of "the rotter" (*die Kanaille*) and the emphasis of the (deictic) article makes possible two interpretations that are of interest for our concerns. On the one hand, it could reveal that Verrina ironically repeats Fiesco's expressions in order to demonstrate that Muley Hassan, a person of lowly status, should not be addressed with a title. On the other hand, however, it could point to a retrospectively articulated similarity between Muley Hassan and Fiesco, which Verrina seeks to emphasize. Fiesco would, in this reading, be just as much a rotter as Muley Hassan, which is to say that difference is not constructed on the basis of skin color, and the similarity between the two figures, grounded in their respective criminal activities, is instead emphasized.[32] Retrospectively, the verbal exchange of blows between Verrina and Fiesco would thus make clear that the coolness that characterized the execution scene ultimately reflected Fiesco's tyrannical perspective; that is to say, Schiller was to some extent applying an internal focalization and we experienced the death of Muley Hassan from the perspective of the unfeeling protagonist.

Since Verrina can by no means be described as a reliable bastion of values, however, it remains unclear whether the drama ultimately supports Verrina's judgment on Muley Hassan. It is therefore not possible to conclusively determine the position that the drama assigns to Muley Hassan—whether, that is, it places him in the sphere of the other or in that of the human.

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Staging Whiteness

Race and Aesthetics in Schiller's *The Robbers* and Antù Romero Nunes's 2012–2013 Production[1]

Lily Tonger-Erk

In Friedrich Schiller's early dramas, there are two characters—Muley Hassan and Franz Moor—who are either referred to as "m***" or who evidence an outer similarity with a "m***." In Schiller's tragedy *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa* (*Die Verschwörung des Fiesko zu Genua*, 1783), "Muley Hassan, M*** from Tunis,"[2] is simultaneously a servant and despicable opponent to the handsome Count Fiesco.[3] In Schiller's first work, *The Robbers* (*Die Räuber*, 1781)—one of the most frequently produced classics for the German stage—Franz Moor occupies a similarly antagonistic, inferior position. The play depicts the rivalry between a count's two sons, Karl and Franz von Moor. On the one hand, there is the admired and freedom-loving Karl Moor, who becomes a robber. One the other, there is the younger, unloved brother, Franz, who perceives himself to be ugly and wants to seize his father's inheritance. Franz describes his own appearance with racial terms: his "Laplander's nose," "blackam***'s lips," and "Hottentot's eyes."[4] As diverse as these racial

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1. This essay was translated from German by Joshua Shelly. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Joshua Shelly.

2. Friedrich Schiller, *Fiesco's Conspiracy at Genoa*, trans. Flora Kimmich (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2015), 6.

3. On the figure of Muley Hassan, see also Franziska Bergmann's contribution to this volume.

4. I cite from the anonymously published first edition of *Die Räuber* (1781), which is free from Schiller's later emendations; I do not use the Nationalausgabe, as this uses the "Löwenausgabe" (1782) as its base text: Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber*, based on the text edi-

attributions may appear, in eighteenth-century German physiognomic discourse, they depict deviancy and Blackness.[5]

Thus both of Schiller's Sturm and Drang dramas foreground an unequal male pair characterized by racial difference: Karl and Franz Moor in one drama, Fiesco and Muley Hassan in the other. The morally better halves of both pairings are ambivalent in themselves. The fact that a robber (Karl) and a usurper (Fiesco) are nonetheless apostrophized and received as "figures of light" is due to the fact that their other halves are marked as dark, both metaphorically and racially. This contrast is used to create an aesthetic effect by providing images for the moral difference between virtue and vice: the darker the unmoral Franz appears, the more light and virtuous his brother, the leader of the robbers, Karl, appears within the visual logic of the eighteenth century. In Schiller's *The Robbers*, Blackness serves the poetological function of making whiteness shine brighter.

Already in the eighteenth century, Schiller's *Fiesco* raised the question of how to cast the role of the "m***."[6] In the nineteenth century, the role belonged to the repertoire of the Black actor Ira Aldridge, who toured throughout Europe.[7] By contrast, Franz Moor's casting is not addressed based on categories of racial belonging. The noble son of the Count of Moor, whose castle is "*in Franconia*" ("*in Teutschland*") is obviously seen as a *white* figure whose—particularly and irritatingly heterogeneous—racialized physiognomy is not described in the dramatis personae or stage directions, but in a monologue by himself. On the other hand, Antù Romero Nunes's production of *The Robbers according to Friedrich Schiller* (*Die Räuber nach Friedrich Schiller*)—staged in 2012 at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin and in 2013 at the Schauspiel Stuttgart—shows that a drama does not require roles explicitly marked as Black for Blackness to become virulent in the theater. Nunes breaks up Schiller's drama into three consecutive, lengthy monologues by the main characters: Franz speaks first, then Amalia, and finally Karl. The Afro-Tyrolean actor Michael Klammer takes on one of these roles, slipping, however, into the

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tion from Herbert G. Göpfert, in *Sämtliche Werke in 5 Bänden*, vol. 1, ed. Albert Meier (Vienna: DTV, 2004), 491–618, here I.1, 500. For the translation, see Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers*, in Friedrich Schiller, *The Robbers* and *Wallenstein*, trans. and ed. F. J. Lamport (London: Penguin, 1979), 32–33.

5. I provide a detailed explanation below.

6. See Uta Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Ursula Müller-Speiser, 1992), 184.

7. See Bernth Lindfors, *Ira Aldridge: Performing Shakespeare in Europe, 1852–1855* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2013), 152–55.

role of Karl Moor rather than Franz.[8] In the style of Schillerian verse, Michael Klammer inserts a lengthy reflection about his skin color and his audience's perception of black and white. Klammer displays his performative appropriation of the role, reflects and evades historical and contemporary black and white stereotypes, and uses these to reflect on societal racism. A theater critic in the newspaper *Die Welt* writes about Klammer that "this Afro South Tyrolean beautifully, ambiguously juggles with Schiller's morally charged terms of 'black' and 'white.'"[9] Yet even in Schiller's work, this contrast between black and white appears not only moral, but already racialized.

In my contribution, I would like to pursue the historical connection of occidental black and white symbolism with European racial discourses. To do this, I use the example of Schiller's *Robbers* and show how Nunes's contemporary production disrupts this connection. First, I analyze how the contrast of black and white in Schiller's drama functions and how it relates to eighteenth-century physiognomic theory. Subsequently, I ask how Antù Romero Nunes's production handles this literary inheritance. I pay special attention to the respective strategies of aesthetic effect (*Wirkungsästhetik*). My thesis is that the depiction of Blackness, in both the text and the production, serves, in very different ways, to stage whiteness.

Schiller's *The Robbers*

Black and White: Color Semantics and Aesthetic Effect

In his first drama, Friedrich Schiller takes a big gamble: he elevates a leader of a pack of robbers (*Räuberhauptmann*) to the lovable hero of his play. Schiller depicts the robber Karl Moor, who breaks the law and transgresses bourgeois morality for the sake of freedom, in such a psychologically differentiated manner that his audience learns "to admire, even almost love, a murderous firebrand."[10] In the "Suppressed Preface" to *The Robbers*,

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8. I saw *The Robbers according to Friedrich Schiller* at the Stuttgarter Schauspielhaus in 2013. I am grateful for Michael Klammer's impressive performance as Karl Moor, which inspired the "Staging Blackness" conference.

9. Matthias Heine, "Die Welt ist alles, was der Knall ist," *Die Welt*, August 31, 2012, https://www.welt.de/kultur/article108910697/Die-Welt-ist-alles-was-der-Knall-ist.html

10. Friedrich Schiller, "Unterdrückte Vorrede," in *Sämtliche Werke*, 1:483.

Schiller writes, "No one will despise him, everyone can pity him, even almost love him." This venture carries the risk that the bourgeois audience might misjudge the ambivalence of this "noble robber" and accuse the author himself of moral failure. To prevent this risk, Schiller explains his literary process in his "Preface to the First Edition": a dramaturgy of contrast with metaphors of light and shadow, bright and dark, white and black.

> It is the course of mortal things that the good should be *shadowed* by the bad, and virtue *shine* the brightest when *contrasted* with vice.[11]

> Es ist einmal so die Mode in der Welt, daß die Guten durch die Bösen *schattiert* werden, und die Tugend im *Kontrast* mit dem Laster das lebendigste *Kolorit* erhält.[12]

In color theory of the time, contrast and shadowing denote the *effect* of colors in combination with each other. While the term "contrast" can also mean that between warm and cold colors, the term "shadowing" explicitly refers to the contrast of light and dark. The aesthetic effect of this contrast of light and dark becomes the source of images for depicting the moral difference between good and evil, "virtue" and "vice," and is subsequently applied to the unequal brothers, Karl and Franz Moor.

On the one hand, according to Schiller, Karl Moor is rich in contrasts, that is, ambivalent. Through the friction between vice and virtue within one person, Schiller expects the audience to sympathize with the character and to increasingly perceive his virtues, rather than to search for possible failings, as one does with a saint. On the other hand, Karl Moor is contrasted with a character who is far more wicked. Only the "Mißmensch"[13] (unhuman, monster) Franz offers the necessarily stark "shadow," allowing his brother Karl, despite his weaknesses, to step into the light as morally superior. In a self-critique of his own work (*Selbstbesprechung*), Schiller makes his dramaturgical process more concrete:

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11. Schiller's "Preface," in *The Works of Frederick Schiller: Early Dramas and Romances*, ed. and trans. Henry G. Bohn (London: Bohn, 1853), p. xiii; emphasis added.

12. Friedrich Schiller, "Vorrede (zur ersten Auflage)," in *Sämtliche Werke*, 1:485; emphasis added.

13. Schiller, "Vorrede (zur ersten Auflage)," 485.

The author uses a second device by opposing a sinner, rejected by the world [Karl], to a creeping devil [Franz] who accomplishes his vile crimes with favorable success and less shame and persecution. In this manner, we [the audience], according to our severe love of righteousness, place more fault in the tray of the favored and reduce that in the tray of the punished. The first [the favored, Franz] is so much *blacker*, as he is happier; the second [the punished, Karl] is so much *better*, as he is unhappy.

Noch einen zweiten Kunstgriff benutzte der Dichter, indem er dem weltverworfenen Sünder [Karl] einen schleichenden [Teufel, Franz] entgegensetzte, der seine scheußlichern Verbrechen mit günstigerem Erfolge und weniger Schande und Verfolgung vollbringt. Auf diese Weise legen wir [das Publikum] nach unserer strengen Gerechtigkeitsliebe mehr Schuld in die Schale des Begünstigten, und vermindern sie in der Schale des Bestraften. Der erste [der Begünstigte, Franz] ist um so viel *schwärzer*, als er glücklicher, der zweite [der Bestrafte, Karl] um so viel *besser*, als er unglücklich ist.[14]

The final sentence's chiastic rhetoric makes the crossing of morality and aesthetics legible: the blacker, the worse—the whiter, the better. In the register of aesthetic effect, this means that the worse/blacker a character is portrayed, the whiter/better his counterpart appears. This color semantics is part of a long Christian tradition. In Europe, black is "the symbol of sin," Frantz Fanon commented in 1952.[15] Since the Middle Ages, the abstract color designations white and black have been used as religious symbols of godly light and devilish darkness, for the good and the evil, virtue and

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14. Friedrich Schiller, "Selbstbesprechung im Wirtembergischen Repertorium," in *Sämtliche Werke*, 1:623; emphasis added.

15. "The torturer is the black man, Satan is black, one talks of shadows, when one is dirty one is black—whether one is thinking of physical dirtiness or of moral dirtiness. It would be astonishing, if the trouble were taken to bring them all together, to see the vast number of expressions that make the black man the equivalent of sin. In Europe, whether concretely or symbolically, the black man stands for the bad side of the character. . . . Blackness, darkness, shadow, shades, night, the labyrinths of the earth, abysmal depths, blacken someone's reputation; and, on the other side, the bright look of innocence, the white dove of peace, magical, heavenly light. . . . In Europe, that is to say, in every civilized and civilizing country, the Negro is the symbol of sin." Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 146.

vice.[16] When *The Robbers* describes the devil as "the Black man"[17] and Franz, in turn, as a "creeping devil,"[18] this refers precisely to Western color symbolism.

Thus, Franz Moor's metaphorical black coloring in this dramatic text not only serves the function of characterizing Franz; above all, it serves the function of contrast with the character of Karl. With this, I return to my thesis: the depiction of blackness within Schiller's *The Robbers* serves the purpose of allowing whiteness to shine brighter and has an explicit function of producing an aesthetic effect. It allows Karl to appear as a sympathetic figure. The focus is therefore on "staging whiteness" in a metaphorical sense.[19] Schiller is interested in the figure of Karl, for whose contouring the figure of Franz is called upon and depicted in various ways as "black"—and not just on the moral-aesthetic level, but also in relationship to race. This happens, as I show, first because the Moor family is already semantically double coded by the acoustic similarity between *Moor* and *Mohr*. In German, the word for moor, the geographic feature, is spelled *Moor*. "Moor," a historical and racist word for a Black person, is spelled *Mohr*. In order to make my argument legible, I have retained the German spelling in the following paragraph. Second, this coding is consolidated in the figure of Franz, who compares his physiognomy with that of nonwhite ethnicities ("Menschensorten").[20]

Similarity: **Moor/Mohr**

At first glance, the name of the count's family, Moor, is striking against the background of color semantics. It is unlikely that the homophony

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16. Jana Husmann, *Schwarz-Weiß-Symbolik: Dualistische Denktraditionen und die Imagination von "Rasse." Religion—Wissenschaft—Anthroposophie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010). Wulf D. Hund, *Wie die Deutschen weiß wurden: Kleine (Heimat)Geschichte des Rassismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 45–59.

17. The robbers sing: "Und haben wir im Traubensaft / Die Gurgel ausgebadet, / So machen wir uns Muth und Kraft, / und mit *dem Schwarzen* Brüderschaft, / Der in der *Hölle* bratet." Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781), IV.5, 585; emphasis added. The Penguin translation of the song does not depict the color semantics.

18. Schiller describes Franz as a "schleichender Teufel" ("a creeping devil"). Friedrich Schiller, "Selbstbesprechung im Wirtembergischen Repertorium," in *Sämtliche Werke*, 1:622.

19. While not in relation to Schiller, Wendy Sutherland also shows how the representation of race shapes the construction of the white, bourgeois self. Wendy Sutherland, *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

20. Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781), I.1, 500.

between *das Moor*—a swamp-like terrain covered with black, peaty water, a bog[21]—and *der Mohr*—a common term for a person with black skin in the eighteenth century[22]—is a coincidence. This is especially unlikely within the theater, a place of the spoken word. Here the graphic difference between *Moor* and *Mohr* is not audible during the performance. One might object that the spelling becomes significant in the printed text. But the spelling practices of the eighteenth century vary, and sometimes *das Moor* is also written with an *h* and *der Mohr* is written with two *o*'s. Thus, under the *Mohr* entry, the 1739 *Universal-Lexikon* lists both "black peat soil"[23] and the "name for all Blacks."[24] And in the first printed edition of *The Robbers*, the family name *Moor* is sporadically written as *Mohr*.[25] Both text *and* performance play with the ambiguity of the family name to an extent that is hardly conceivable to us today, given our current moment of advanced lexicalization, as well as our reception of the canonized, written dramatic text.

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21. See Franz's monologue, where the word "filth," or more literally "bog" (*Morast*), is used six times as a symbol of Franz's cynical worldview: "Man is born in filth (*Morast*), and wades a little while in filth (*Morast*), and makes filth (*Morast*), and rots down again in filth (*Morast*), till at the last he is no more than the muck that sticks to the soles of his great-grandsons' shoes. That's the end of the song—the filthy (*morastige*) circle of human destiny." Schiller, *The Robbers*, IV.2, 116.

22. According to the sixty-four-volume, most comprehensive German-language encyclopedia of the eighteenth century, the *Große Vollständige Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste* published between 1731 and 1754, *Mohr* "is actually the name for the inhabitants of Ethiopia or the land of the moors (*Mohrenland*). It is, however, also the name for all blacks, the n****s and other African peoples of this color." "Mohr" in *Großes Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon aller Wissenschaften und Künste*, ed. Johann Heinrich Zedler (Leipzig: Zedler, 1739), 21:866. The term *Mohr* is the only one designating Black people: of significance for historic semantics is that no entry for *N***** or "African" (*Afrikaner*) exists. Under the entries "skin" (*Haut*) and "skin (black)," the Zedler *Lexikon* points to the difference between the "white" skin of the European and the "black" skin of the "Moor"—the lexicon is not aware of other skin colors. Based on these entries, it can be concluded that *Mohr* was the common German term—but in no way a neutral one—for Black people in the first half of the eighteenth century; an analysis of historical terminology and semantics in the second half of the century is yet to be written.

23. "Mohr," 866.

24. "Mohr," 864.

25. See, for example, "im Mohrischen Schloß," in Friedrich Schiller, *Die Räuber: Ein Trauerspiel* (Mannheim: in der Schwanischen Buchhandlung, 1782), in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, vol. 3, ed. Herbert Stubenrauch (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1953), I.1, 363.

Difference: Karl/Franz

While the family name, a sign of blood relation, refers to the similarity of the brothers Karl and Franz, and connotes both as black—which is to say, unmoral in Christian color symbolism—Franz's Blackness is racialized. In order to express his anger over his disadvantage at his brother, Karl, Franz describes his appearance with reference to racial topoi of nonwhite peoples:

> I have every right to be resentful of nature; and by my honour, I will make my rights known! Why was I not the first to creep out of our mother's womb? Why not the only one? Why did nature burden me with this ugliness? Why me? Just as if she had been bankrupt when I was born. Why should I have this Laplander's nose? Why should I have these blackam***'s lips, these Hottentot's eyes? I truly think she made a heap of the most hideous parts of every human kind as the ingredients for me. Death and damnation! Who gave her the power to make him like that, and to keep it from me?[26]

> Ich habe grosse Rechte, über die Natur ungehalten zu seyn, und bei meiner Ehre! ich will sie geltend machen.—Warum bin ich nicht der erste aus Mutterleib gekrochen? Warum nicht der Einzige? Warum mußte sie mir diese Bürde von Häßlichkeit aufladen? gerade mir? Nicht anders als ob sie bey meiner Geburt einen Rest gesezt hätte. Warum gerade mir die Lappländers Nase? Gerade mir dieses M***enmaul? Diese Hottentotten Augen? Wirklich ich glaube sie hat von allen Menschensorten das Scheußliche auf einen Haufen geworffen, und mich daraus gebacken. Mord und Tod! Wer hat ihr die Vollmacht gegeben jenem dieses zu verleyhen, und mir vorzuenthalten? (I.1)

Franz describes his facial features as the heterogeneous composite of negatively connoted physiognomies of the "Other," which are marked as unaesthetic in a double sense. For one, given the contemporary aesthetic,

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26. Schiller, *The Robbers*, 32–33. Only the comparison with the "sort of human being" is missing in the *Trauerspielfassung*. There, it reads, "Warum mußte sie *mir* diese Bürde von Häßlichkeit aufladen? Warum gerade nur *mir*? *Auf den Boden stampfend.* Mord und Tod! Warum nur *mir*!" Schiller, *Die Räuber: Ein Trauerspiel*, 3:144.

which recognized beauty, with recourse to the art of ancient Greece, as an ideal, harmonious, well-proportioned whole, the fragmented mixing of different races appears ugly.[27] For another, the "Menschensorten" mentioned—that is to say, racially constructed, ethnic communities—are also significant: "Laplander," "blackam***," and "Hottentot."[28] Initially, this combination of people from different continents seems perplexing, as it runs counter to the concepts of race, color, and geography established in the nineteenth century; this again demonstrates their constructed character. At the end of the eighteenth century, however, black color was the main characteristic ascribed to all three *Menschensorten*. Second, in European discussions about aesthetics and physiognomy, "Laplanders" and "Hottentots" were customarily "relegated to the last places in a national comparison of physiognomy."[29] And third, the question of the "Unhuman"[30] Franz's humanity is negotiated through them.[31] As Birgit Tautz notes, "It forged an image of a dramatic character that defined the limits of humanity."[32]

From the 1750s to the 1790s, the culture of the "Hottentots"—a pejorative term coined by Dutch colonists for the Khoikhoi in present-day South Africa and Namibia—was not only evaluated from an ethnographic perspective, but also from an aesthetic one, as seen in the oft-cited "Tquassouw and Knonmquaiha, a Hottentot Story" in the periodical *The Connoisseur* (1754), Rousseau's *Discours* (1755) and Lessing's *Laokoon* (1766) and the *New Novelist's Magazine* (1787).[33] In German debates, "Hotten-

27. See George L. Mosse, *Die Geschichte des Rassismus in Europa* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2006), 29, 36.

28. These pejorative terms denote historical, European constructions of supposed "peoples," that is, imagined communities that had no reference in reality. In order to keep this constructed character present and distance myself from these pejorative connotations, I set the terms in quotation marks.

29. Michaela Holdenried, "Hässlichkeit und Devianz: Monster, Mythen, Menschenkunden um 1800," in *Fremde Figuren: Alterisierungen in Kunst, Wissenschaft und Anthropologie um 1800*, ed. Alexandra Böhm and Monika Sproll (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2008), 221.

30. Schiller, "Vorrede (zur ersten Auflage)," 1:485.

31. Guthke points out that these three "sorts of human being" were still considered to be "marginal human races" in the eighteenth century. Karl S. Guthke, "Zwischen Wilden in Übersee und 'Barbaren' in Europa: Schillers Ethno-Anthropologie," in *Der Blick in die Fremde: Das Ich und das andere in der Literatur* (Tübingen: Narr Francke, 2000), 104.

32. Birgit Tautz, *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences in the Enlightenment: From China to Africa* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 141.

33. See Andreas Mielke, "Hottentots in the Aesthetic Discussion of Eighteenth-Century Germany," *Monatshefte* 80, no. 2 (1988): 135–48; Sebastian Kaufmann, *Ästhetik des "Wilden":*

tots" appeared as a prominent example of beauty's *Other*,[34] a primitive caricature of European physiognomy, clothing, mores, and customs. While the "Hottentots" were rarely attributed a black, but rather a "black-yellow and brown color,"[35] they were regarded as "the exemplary African, the 'reference-African,' in the German aesthetic discussion of the eighteenth century."[36] In eighteenth-century linguistic usage, *M**** not only referred to Ethiopians in particular, but to people with black skin in general. Zedler's *Universal-Lexicon* notes: "But this name is also given to all blacks, as n****s, and other African peoples with this color."[37] In the eighteenth century, "Laplanders"—a common term in Schiller's time for the Sami people—were likewise understood as "savages" whose men were "misshapen" and "appeared black-like."[38]

Franz's detailed description of his facial physiognomy is all the more significant because it is unusual in the dramatic genre.[39] In theater, it's not physiognomy, but countenance and gesture, with which the actor can communicate apart from his or her facial features. Therefore, Schiller's *Robbers* does not use the dramatis personae or stage directions, but a monologue, to verbally visualize Franz's appearance to the audience. This verbal self-description ensures that Franz's physiognomy not only reaches the reader, but the theater audience, too. Franz's self-disclosure simultane-

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Zur Verschränkung von Ethno-Anthropologie und ästhetischer Theorie 1750–1850 (Basel: Schwabe, 2020), 155–82.

34. Jörg Robert, "Ethnofiktion und Klassizismus: Poetik des Wilden und Ästhetik der 'Sattelzeit,'" in *Poetik des Wilden: Festschrift für Wolfgang Riedel*, ed. Jörg Robert and Friederike Günther (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 2012), 14.

35. This description is found in "Hottentotten," in Zedler's *Großes Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, 13:992.

36. Mielke, "Hottentots," 143. While Sander Gilman reads Lessing's depiction of the "Hottentots" in *Laokoon* as a derogatory depiction of Blackness, Andreas Mielke emphasizes the aesthetic functionalization and ethnological differentiation of this depiction within the context of literary satire that is not based on color or race. See Sander L. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: G.K. Hall, 1982), 25–29. However, it is problematic that Mielke explicitly ignores the racist implications of these terms and overlooks the connection between race and aesthetics. See Nicholas Hudson, "'Hottentots' and the Evolution of European Racism," *Journal of European Studies* 34, no. 4 (2004): 308–32; Tautz, *Reading and Seeing Ethnic Differences*, 157.

37. "Mohr," 864.

38. "Lappland," in Zedler, *Großes Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, 16:766.

39. See Peter Michelsen, *Der Bruch mit der Vater-Welt: Studien zu Schillers "Räubern"* (Heidelberg: Winter 1979), 74. The Nationalausgabe points to the similarly with Shakespeare's *Richard III*, who also gives his "deformity" as the reason for his malice in a monologue in the first act.

ously relieves the audience of the burden of "surface hermeneutics,"[40] which always runs the risk of going awry.

The rhetorical visualization presupposes a physiognomically educated audience that knows how to classify the "Laplander's nose," the "blackam***'s lips," and the "Hottentot's eyes." Remarkably in this context, Schiller does not fall back on the ethnological knowledge of his time about "Hottentot" lifestyles, body jewelry, and rites, for example, which characterized aesthetic discourse. Neither does Schiller raise the oft-discussed question in Enlightenment aesthetics: the extent to which the (physical) beauty of "Hottentots" and other "savages" is in the eye of the beholder or if a universal (i.e., Greco-European) ideal of beauty ought to be assumed. Instead, he simply refers back to the physiognomic details of such *Menschensorten*—that is, race—who would, for one, not qualify as white, and for another, be perceived as ugly within physiognomic discourse.[41]

The fact that "a black man is ugly,"[42] as Monostatos laments in Mozart's *Magic Flute* (*Zauberflöte*, 1791), appears to be an elementary assumption of the fusion of aesthetics and physiognomy in the eighteenth century.[43] In the final third of the century, physiognomy was an emerging science that inferred a person's mental characteristics from physical appearance, especially the face. Without getting to the bottom of the connection, both Hans Richard Brittnacher and the commentary in *The Robbers* critical edition—the Nationalausgabe—suggest that Schiller's depiction of Franz Moor could go back to Johann Caspar Lavater's writings on national physiognomies.[44] In his speech "On Physiognomy" ("Von der Physiogno-

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40. Richard T. Gray, *About Face: German Physiognomic Thought from Lavater to Auschwitz* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2004), xlv.

41. Monika Firla, "Kants Bild von den Khoi-Khoin," *Tribus* 43 (1994): 60–94.

42. Monostatos sings in W. A. Mozart, *Magic Flute*, aria no. 13: "Every creature feels the joy of love, / and bill and coo and hug and kiss—/ but I must forego love / because a black man is ugly! (*weil ein Schwarzer häßlich ist!*)," http://www.murashev.com/opera/Die_Zauberfl%C3%B6te_libr etto_German_English.

43. On Monostatos' Blackness, see Irmtraud Hnilica's contribution to this volume.

44. These writings include *Von der Physiognomik* (1772) and the successful four-volume *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe* (1775–78); "Schiller thereby unintentionally makes a concession to J. K. Lavater's physiognomic work, which he otherwise does not take very seriously and . . . mocks." *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, 3:398; Hans Richard Brittnacher, "Die Räuber," in *Schiller-Handbuch*, ed. Helmut Koopmann (Stuttgart: Alfred Körner Verlag, 1998), 326–53. *Die Sämtliche Werke in 5 Bänden*, ed. Peter-André Alt, Albert Meier, and Wolfgang Riedel (2004) does not comment on the passage at all. The commentary in *Die Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bänden*, ed. Gerhard Kluge et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Deutscher Klassiker Verlag, 1988–2004), refers to Shakespeare's *Richard III* and Schiller's own dissertation, but disregards the racial references.

mik," 1772), Lavater attempts to prove a correspondence between external appearance and the inner person as assumed by the yet-to-be-substantiated science of physiognomy. In so doing, he falls back on the alleged ugliness of "Laplanders" and "blackam***s," which he conflates with their supposed intellectual inferiority. Conversely, Lavater considers it inconceivable that great scientific achievements could be accomplished "within the body of a stupid man, a human from the madhouse," that Leibnitz, for example, could have "constructed his theodicy with the skull of a Laplander," or that Newton "might have weighed the planets and split a light beam within the head of a M***, nose pressed open, eyes protruding from his head, raised lips barely covering his teeth, everywhere fleshy and round."[45] Brittnacher points out that Schiller ascribes to Franz Moor an intelligence equal to, if not superior to, Karl Moor, and in this sense, clearly departs from Lavater.

Lavater sees a connection between external appearance and character not only on the individual level, but also on the national level, and thereby creates a physiognomic substructure for racism.[46] By contrasting national physiognomies, Lavater uses a rhetorical figure of deviance not dissimilar to Schiller's:

> It is undeniable that there is a national physiognomy, as well as a national character. . . . Just imagine a M*** and an Englishman side by side, a native of Lapland and an Italian, a Frenchman and an inhabitant of Terra del Fuego. Compare their forms, countenances, and their characters and minds.[47]

"Just imagine": Lavater prompts the imaginative act where the (European, white) individual contrasts himself with the (nonwhite) Other. The result of this contrastive parading-before-the-eyes should, again—in an act of circular reasoning—be the evidence of the difference. In his study *On*

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45. Johann Caspar Lavater, "Von der Physiognomik (1772)," in *Ausgewählte Werke in historisch-kritischer Ausgabe*, vol. 4, *1771–1773*, ed. Ursula Caflisch-Schnetzler (Zurich: NZZ, 2009), 559.

46. See Gray, *About Face*.

47. Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente, zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, vol. 4, facsimile of the edition of 1775–78 (Zurich: Orell Füssli, 1969), 267. Translator's note: No modern-day translation of Lavater's works exists. The English is modified from a 1794 translation; see Johann Caspar Lavater, *Essays on Physiognomy: For the Promotion of Knowledge and Love of Mankind*, vol. 4, trans. Thomas Holcroft (Boston: William Spotswood & Davod West, 1794), 86.

Blackness without Blacks, Sander Gilman shows how eighteenth-century, common images of the Other circulated in an imaginary, intertextual realm without assuming personal contact with the Other.[48] This is clearly on display in Lavater's chapter on national characters, in which he shifts from visual perception (*Anschauung*) to hearsay, quoting page after page of other's accounts of national characters, including "Laplanders," "M***s," and "Hottentots."

Schiller critically sideswipes Lavater by calling the physiognomic meaning of physical attributes—such as the size of the nose, ears, and mouth—into question in his medical dissertation, *An Attempt at the Connection between Man's Animal and Psychic Nature* (*Versuch über den Zusammenhang der thierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner geistigen*, 1781). He nonetheless describes a psychophysical interplay of repeated affects: namely, that "every noble and benevolent [affect] *beautifies* the body, which the vile and venomous rends in *bestial* form."[49] According to Wolfgang Riedel, Lavater's influence on Schiller surfaces most clearly in the "conviction of the congruence between moral and physical beauty or ugliness"[50]—even if a significant difference is that Schiller views the human face as the product of repeated mimicked movements. Lavater, by contrast, assumes a natural connection between the innate, external composition of the face and a person's character, which culminates in the simple phrase: "The more morally superior, the more beautiful. The more morally regressed, the uglier."[51] Of Lavater's fatal influence on Schiller, Brittnacher holds firmly to the critique that "an aesthetic racism establishes itself" within literary culture that "irrevocably ties morality to beauty," a beauty that is, in a Eurocentric connection to the art of antiquity, confined to that which is white.[52] What remains unspoken for Schiller is

48. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks*.

49. Friedrich Schiller, *Versuch über den Zusammenhang der thierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner geistigen*, in *Schillers Werke: Nationalausgabe*, vol. 20, ed. Benno von Wiese (Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1962), 37–75, especially §22, "Physiognomik der Empfindungen," 68–70.

50. On Schiller's reservations about Lavater and his position "between Lavater and Lichtenberg," see Wolfgang Riedel, *Die Anthropologie des jungen Schiller* (Würzburg: Königshausen und Neumann, 1985), 142–51.

51. Johann Caspar Lavater, *Physiognomische Fragmente zur Beförderung der Menschenkenntnis und Menschenliebe*, ed. Christoph Siegrist (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1984), 53.

52. Hans Richard Brittnacher, "Der böse Blick des Physiognomen: Lavaters Ästhetik der Deformation," in *Der falsche Körper: Beiträge zu einer Geschichte der Monstrositäten*, ed. Michael Hagner (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1995), 145.

the basic racial assumption of European aesthetics,[53] which Christoph Meiners would clumsily express only a few years later in his *Outline of Human History* (*Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit*, 1785): that only whites, that is, "Caucasian people," deserve "the name of the beautiful."[54]

Nonetheless, whiteness is not naturalized in Schiller's texts—as in racial discourse of the time from Buffon to Herder—as a sign of social and intellectual superiority, just as Blackness is not naturalized as a sign of social and intellectual inferiority. Schiller does not use the racial discourse that served to legitimize slavery by depicting black individuals as supposedly inferior. On the contrary, he explicitly, as well as implicitly, criticizes the oppression of slaves. Since the 1770s, the slave trade and colonization had been a topic among the broader public sphere, not just scholars.[55] Thus, a knowledge of colonial forms of rule underlies the rhetoric of freedom in *The Robbers*. On the one hand, Franz wishes to build his rule as a count on the "slavish fear"[56] of his subjects, with the historical semantics of the term "slave" oscillating between an Enlightenment discourse of (im)maturity and a historical reference to the slave trade. On the other hand, Karl illustrates his criticism of religion with an explicit historical reference to the church's colonial politics when he accuses the pastor in the forest of preaching love of one's neighbor and poverty, even as Christian conquerors "have slaughtered Peru for the sake of golden brooches and harnessed the pagans like beasts of burden to drag their wagons."[57]

Nonetheless, Franz's racialized physiognomy illustrates his inferiority: not only his disadvantaged status vis-à-vis inheritance law as the second born, but above all his inability to inspire his father's love, mold his self-image, and direct the audience's sympathy. In this way, Franz is portrayed as an unaesthetic, immoral, unloved, symbolically blackened unhuman ("Mißmensch").[58] Schiller aesthetically exhibits, by contrast, how hearts fly to Franz's brother: because Karl is loved by his father, Amalia, servants,

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53. See Tautz, "Reading and Seeing," 157–58; Mosse, "Die Geschichte des Rassismus," 29.

54. Christoph Meiners, *Grundriß der Geschichte der Menschheit* (Lemgo: Meyersche Buchhandlung, 1785), 43.

55. See Sigrid Köhler, "Drastische Bilder: Journalnachrichten auf der Bühne. Versklavung und Abolition als Gegenstände moderner Geschichtsreflexion in deutschsprachigen Journalen und Theaterstücken um 1800," *Lili: Zeitschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Linguistik* 48 (2019): 376–98. See also Sigrid G. Köhler's contribution to this volume.

56. Schiller, *Die Räuber* (1781), II.2, 535.

57. Schiller, *The Robbers*, II.3, 89. See Ursula Wertheim, *Schillers Fiesko und Don Carlos: Zu Problemen des historischen Stoffes* (Weimar: Arion, 1958), 93.

58. Schiller, "Vorrede (zur ersten Auflage)," 485.

and the robbers, he also appears as lovable to the audience.[59] The fact that Karl is also depicted as a "darker" type and bears the family name Moor contributes to his staging as a (morally) ambivalent character; yet compared to his brother, who is distorted to the point of inhumanity, he remains "light."

Within the drama, this difference is visibly staged in the gallery of paintings in the Moor family castle, where the portraits of the brothers hang contrastingly next to each other.[60] Karl, incognito, and Amalia initially comment on the contrast; Franz then looks at the paintings. At this point, anagnorisis occurs when Franz recognizes his own brother in the person of a (costumed) visitor to the castle: "I ought to know him! There is something grand, something familiar in his wild sunburnt face, something that makes me tremble."[61] Karl is not only described as wild and sunburned—that is, with blackened skin[62]—but also furnished in the painting with "black, fiery-flashing eyes" and "dark overhanging bushy eyebrows."[63]

The decisive rhetorical difference is that Karl's dark exterior is introduced with terms from the Sturm and Drang inventory of savagery, beauty, power, and greatness, while Franz's dark exterior is depicted with racialized terms of deviancy and ugliness. Thus, Schiller uses two different semantic registers of darkness to describe the brothers: race for Franz and Sturm and Drang for Karl. Franz's racialization is achieved precisely through the metaphorical "shading" that depicts—in the logic of historic color semantics—the younger Moor as even darker (and thus more immoral) than the older one. The "handsome, angelic, divine Karl,"[64] on the other hand, despite his faults, shines brightly as a brilliant hero, "like the light of heaven itself."[65]

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59. Schiller himself describes the love shown to Karl as an effects-oriented "device": Schiller, "Selbstbesprechung im Wirtembergischen Repertorium," 623.

60. Shakespeare's *Hamlet* had already deployed this technique of visually displaying characters' difference.

61. Schiller, *The Robbers*, IV.2, 110.

62. In the entry for "skin, (black)" in the *Universal-Lexikon*, one finds a curious distinction that shows that the historical semantics of Blackness encompasses both Franz's racialized "blackness" and the Karl's sun-induced "blackness": "the blackness of the skin is either caused by nature, or by certain coincidences; the first cannot be healed or driven out; the other sort, however, lingers from the sun's heat." In what follows, the article provides tips for bleaching sun-tanned skin. This definition of black skin thus provides the foil for the ideal of white skin. "Haut, (schwarze)," in Zedler, *Großes Vollständiges Universal-Lexicon*, 12:926.

63. Schiller, *The Robbers*, IV.2, 64.

64. Schiller, *The Robbers*, I.3, 53.

65. Schiller, *The Robbers*, IV.4, 123. Karl is repeatedly described with metaphors having to

Production: Nunes's *The Robbers according to Friedrich Schiller*

The drama sets itself apart as a genre in that it stands in the tension between textuality and performativity. No production can (or desires to) reproduce a dramatic text one to one, even if the call to be "faithful to the original" continues to resound, especially when it comes to classics like Schiller's *Robbers*. Instead, every theatrical production represents an interpretation of a dramatic text: with artistic freedom, using different media, and above all with discursive framework of reception other than that from when the work was first written. But what if the epistemic frame of a work's main themes diverges between the time the text was written and the present day, when it is produced? Historical dramas harboring racist content pose the question of how to update a production's interpretation with new virulence. In the worst case, the production overlooks and confirms this content; in the best case, it reflects it. To be critical of a theatrical performance, it is thus necessary to understand the historical dimension of the dramatic text, as well as analyze the production's strategies. Every production of Schiller's classic *The Robbers* must decide how to deal with the racist connection between ugliness and race, between (skin) color and morality that the dramatic text communicates.

In the following analysis of director Antù Romero Nunes's *The Robbers according to Friedrich Schiller*, I concentrate on how the production develops a critical stance toward the dramatic text's use of black-white contrast as a dramaturgical means to create identity.[66] Nunes's *Robbers* explicitly addresses the perception of skin color by casting an actor of color to play the "noble robber," rather than Franz Moor. Nunes shows Schiller's play split into three lengthy monologues, the final of which belongs to Karl Moor. The first monologue is given by his devious brother Franz and the second by his abandoned lover Amalia. Then: a bang and smoke. A massive stage fire announces the entrance of Karl Moor, the leader of the robbers (*Räuberhauptmann*). Yet anyone expecting a theater of illusion to fol-

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do with sheen and light: Franz ascribes "all these shining virtues" to Karl. Schiller, *The Robbers*, I.1, 28. Amalia sings of her absent lover: "Fair as angels, full of heaven's delight, / Fairer far than other youths was he, / His gaze as Maytime sunbeams tender-bright, / Mirrored in the heavenly azure Sea." Schiller, *The Robbers*, III.1, 93.

66. *Die Räuber nach Friedrich Schiller*, director Antù Romero Nunes, Schauspiel Stuttgart, video recording of the dress rehearsal from November 12, 2013. I thank Michael Klammer for providing me with the recording. In the following, I only concentrate on Klammer's monologue. For more about the entire production, see Annette Bühler-Dietrich, "Schillers *Räuber* oder das Spiel mit der Performativität," *Testi e Linguaggi* 9 (2015): 167–86.

low the stage fire will be disappointed. Afro-Tyrolean actor Michael Klammer spends the first twenty minutes chatting with the audience, interspersed with snippets of Schiller's text. Like a stand-up comedian, he asks his audience if he can call them "Eddi"—it would be much more relaxed. Audiences always have so many expectations, especially the rabble, who always want everything in black and white. He wonders, if he himself is black or white, or rather like a zebra. He speaks about the impositions of categorization, about the cross between a horse and donkey, about hybrids like the mule, about the recent blackface scandal in theater, and about *Baywatch* and vegetarians.

Only at the end of this "chat over a beer"—Moor's first scene is known to take place in "*a tavern on the borders of Saxony*"[67]—does Klammer make clear that as a freedom-loving robber, he has taken the performative liberty to "do violence to" the dramatic text and rob the audience of its expectations and time. "And why is that? Because I am a robber." Shortly afterward, Klammer/Karl mentions that he has also stolen his initial entrance from his "favorite cabaret artist," Josef Hader, just as the exhibited intertextuality of the entire monologue constantly refers to Moor's profession as a robber.

As is common in cabaret—and in contrast to Franz's and Amalia's monologues—Klammer speaks directly to his audience:

> Yes, a good evening to you. This piece is called *The Robbers* by Friedrich Schiller. My name is Karl von Moor. Relaxed from the start. Yeah, I don't know either. Are there questions, maybe? None? Good, I don't have any either. Then . . . wait, I do have one. Would it be okay if I called you, the audience, Eddi this evening, just this one time? Yeah? That we say that I am Karl and you are Eddi. It's just that it makes it easier to talk.

Klammer makes it clear in his first sentences that this is a play, and precisely for and with the audience. The figure Karl Moor and the actor Michael Klammer—who is aware of the play's fictionality and its title, who sees and speaks with his audience, who ostentatiously appropriates the role of Karl—diverge. By means of *interpellation* (in Althusser's sense of the word)[68]—"I am Karl and you are Eddi"—the audience is consolidated

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67. Schiller, *The Robbers*, I.1, 35.

68. Louis Althusser, *Ideologie und ideologische Staatsapparate: Aufsätze zur marxistischen Theorie* (Hamburg: VSA, 1977), 130–54.

into a collective subject called Eddi. From that point on, the audience is, just like Klammer/Karl, "simultaneously a real and fictional character."[69] Karl offers the audience only a limited possibility of avoiding this assignment of a collective role: "Now, if someone is absolutely against it, I will take that into consideration. Best thing is to just not feel spoken to. Yeah? Those then are *the others*." Klammer lets the audience sense the mechanisms of inclusion (everyone is Eddi) and exclusion (the others) first hand, so to speak—as well as the absurdity of naming a collective from without. It is unlikely that the heterogeneous audience members feel appropriately categorized as "Eddi." This experience can be read against the background of Klammer's criticism of categorizing others, an example being the idea that Klammer "is quite clearly a black man."

Research into racism indicates that arbitrarily classifying people by group and unilaterally naming these groups is historically a white, European privilege. Here Klammer appropriates the position of power—as the one who names—for himself. Meanwhile, the overwhelmingly white audience is placed in the position of the one who is unwillingly named. The political dimension of the address to the audience is counteracted by Klammer's playfulness, emphasized by his cheerful, intimate tone, the ridiculous name "Eddi," and not least, the aforementioned intertextuality.

Thus, Klammer addresses the audience's identity even before he discusses his own role and identity. The production makes clear that the one does not function without the other, that identity is always also a question of the gaze in which it is reflected. The actor's body, be it in connection with figure, age, gender, or race, becomes visibly noticeable from the stage. If the actor's body is not white, which means that it may not meet the traditional expectations of the German theater audience, race becomes a category of perception. Skin color does play a role, if the opposite party imbues it with meaning as an identity marker. Michael Klammer explicitly addresses his skin color in Nunes's production, or better said, the audience's act of perceiving this skin color. Thus, Klammer does not just silently accept that the audience's—or the "rabble's," as Klammer says in Schiller's words—perception of the actor's body is subject to certain attributions and expectations. Rather, he turns the tables and exposes the audience's expectations to the spotlight.

Simply by directly addressing the audience, Klammer makes the audience aware of the reality of the theatrical encounter between them and the actor. Rather than representing the dramatic text, he foregrounds the

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69. Bühler-Dietrich, "Schillers *Räuber*," 180.

stage's presence. Klammer demands that the audience imagine their encounter in "real life," in the "alley," and identifies them as "Pöbel," as ordinary, vulgar people in a Schillerian term. The "rabble" is not only the Other, but also the educated citizen in the theater: "When I say rabble, I must include you and me, Eddi." This definition of "rabble" originates from one of Schiller's prefaces, which Klammer transposes to contemporary theater: "The rabble," writes Schiller, "among whom I would not be understood to mean merely the vulgar,"[70] but also his fellow citizens, predominates within the audience.

Schiller is not confident his audience will perceive his characters' ambivalence, especially that of Karl Moor: "Here you meet villains who astound you, venerable evildoers, majestic monsters," announces Schiller in the preface.[71] Yet precisely because the audience will love the robber and murderous firebrand Karl Moor, Schiller anticipates a misreading of his play: the audience will be too shortsighted to see virtue in vice, but rather will "allow itself to be corrupted by a beautiful side, even appreciate the ugly reason, and finally accuse him, the playwright, of an apologia for vice."[72] Michael Klammer now translates this Schillerian critique of the audience as incapable of fully perceiving its counterparts as "*ganze Menschen*"[73] (men as they are) in all their facets. He does this by alleging that his audience has a binary perceptual schema that is incapable of adequately perceiving humans in all their facets, for example, his own skin color as the son of a white mother and Black father. Klammer's address to the audience functions just like Schiller's public scolding, which ultimately serves to make his audience aware of their own readerly expectations and opens it up for a reception of ambivalence.

> But really now, let's put the people from the theater into the alleyway. When they see an actor, they don't get anything. It's like with the zebra. Now, is it white with black stripes or is it black with white stripes? Yeah, the rabble only ever sees black and white. You make them real nervous when you can't put things in boxes. What's the deal with this animal? You just have to make up your mind. You have to be clear about what this animal really is. . . .
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> If that bugs you, Eddi, what I'm saying here, if you're thinking,

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70. Schiller, "Vorrede (zur ersten Auflage)," 487; see Schiller, "Preface," xvi.
71. Schiller, "Unterdrückte Vorrede," 482.
72. Schiller, "Unterdrückte Vorrede," 483.
73. Schiller, "Vorrede zur ersten Auflage," 487; "Preface," xv.

what's he rambling on about? . . . If that bugs you, then I have to say, you'd better be careful. You'd better be careful! 'Cause then you must be a racist! [Audience: Oooo . . .] Yeah, oooo. . . . Because then it's a black man who's bugging you with his . . . then I'd be careful. Ah, now with his immigrant background. I didn't start it. I'm jus' sayin'. The one who started it . . . [points finger at audience] I didn't start it. I know that part of me is white. Well, not of me, of the guy who's playing my character, he knows that a part of his family is white, but the rabble, they only see black or white, that makes them real nervous: what's up with that guy, is that white with black stripes or black with white stripes? That's what gets you. Now you have to make up your mind. I think one needs to be clear about who this guy really is. [*Ich find, da muss jetzt mal Klarheit rein in diesen Typ*]. If you ask me, he's clearly black. Nope, not true. He's a zebra! And he's also always annoyed at being boxed in like that. What's your take on that? Are you more this, or what's up with you? Or this: whoa, those people on the stage painted their faces black. What do you think? Let's have a panel discussion, come by to German . . . it's all just nonsense![74]

Klammer argues against this compulsion to classify and identify and does so by subverting another source of order, namely the line between fiction and reality, between role and actor. "*I* know that part of me is white. Well, not of me, of the guy who's playing my character, *he* knows that a part of his family is white, but the rabble, they only see black or white." Here the character speaks in a kind of metalepsis about the actor who is "always annoyed at being boxed in like that." Michael Klammer does not reveal his authentic self: "Personally, I have a very different opinion." Klammer *shows* characters and the way characters are constructed. Klammer presents Moor, but as Moor, he also presents Klammer. Thus any essentializing, identity-based reading falls short: accordingly, Klammer's monologue is not about the authentic experiences and feelings of an Afro-Tyrolean actor in the sense of *Betroffenheitstheater* (Theater of the Affected); rather, the *audience* is shown its own *perception* of this actor and its own *white* expectations by a pointing to the construction of roles. Instead of staging Blackness, Klammer stages whiteness.

Thus Klammer, as an actor of color, takes the freedom to act without

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74. Klammer refers to the blackface scandal at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, when Michael Thalheimer produced Dea Loher's *Innocence* in 2012.

deference to the audience's racialized perception. And he does so by quoting Karl Moor's plea for freedom (I.2):[75]

> Yeah, now here, Eddi, here you think that I'm starting to blather. After fifteen minutes or so, he likes to hear himself talk. This strutting rooster. Huh? I'm no rooster, I'm a peacock! And I'm not blathering, what I'm doing here is theater. This is German theater (*deutsches Sprechtheater*), there's a lot of jabbering. Blathering? Poppycock. It's my right that I'm taking here. You want me to lace my body in a corset and straitjacket my will with laws? The law is also such a wonderful invention. The law never yet made a great man, but freedom, freedom will breed a giant, a colossus. So I can do what I want here as long as I'm free, because I'm free. I can "violate" (*Gewalt antun*) a text for fifteen minutes.

"Das ist deutsches Sprechtheater!" This performative self-assessment, spoken with great pathos, thwarts dismissive categorizations like ethnic comedy or migrant theater. The "German theater" as an exclusive, high-culture institution, rather than the self-empowerment of people of color in the history of Black American comedy or German ethnic comedy, is confidently fixed as the point of reference. The fact that this needs to be specially emphasized demonstrates not least yet another expectation that Klammer criticizes in dealing with Blackness: the whiteness of the institution of the German theater itself.

Conclusion

As I have shown, Schiller's *The Robbers* uses the colors "black" and "white" on different, but interwoven levels: (1) on an aesthetic level (contrast, shading); (2) on a moral and religious level (black as the color of evil); and (3) on the racist level (physiognomy). These different registers of historic color semantics together serve to produce the aesthetic effect of "staging whiteness," by allowing the ambivalent figure Karl, through the contrast with Franz, to shine brighter. In turn, the results of this literary analysis underpin my reception of Nunes's 2012 production of *The Robbers*, which scrutinizes the black-white dichotomy and exposes it as the racist perceptual apparatus of the "rabble," which includes the theater's audience. Skin

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75. Schiller, *The Robbers*, 36–37.

color is thus addressed as a question of public perception, as a construct whose production is revealed.

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Blackness in Heiner Müller's Imaginary[1]

Norbert Otto Eke

"Marx's Delusion"

In literary and theater studies, Heiner Müller is considered one of the most influential German-speaking playwrights, poets, and intellectuals of the twentieth century after Bertolt Brecht. With scenic textures such as *The Hamletmachine* (1979), from the mid-1970s on Müller paved the way for deconstructivist drama aesthetics in the German-speaking world, which today are associated with the concept of postdramatic theater coined by Hans-Thies Lehmann.[2] For a long time, the perception of Müller's works was influenced by his ambiguous near/far relationship with Brecht and the Brechtian tradition in the theater of the GDR. On the other hand, even before German reunification, Müller advanced to become an all-German poet with influence on the international theater scene. The unrestricted freedom to travel, which he was granted from 1983 onward, enabled him to expand his intellectual terrain, among other things through encounters with poststructuralist French philosophy, and alongside early postcolonial theory—Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire (whom Müller himself translated into German), Léopold Sédar Senghor—became important considerations for his work. Poststructuralism and postcolonial theory made decisive contributions to Müller's ability to connect with avant-garde tendencies in international theater in the 1970s and 1980s with the dissolution of his aesthetic formal language.

In a very idiosyncratic manner, metaphors permeate the literary revolts

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1. This essay was translated from German by Joshua Shelly. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Joshua Shelly.

2. See Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatisches Theater* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 1999).

in Müller's late work. Müller's considerations of revolution and history had long been dominated by Karl Marx's proposed model of progress. In the revolutionary annals of *The Class Struggles in France, 1848 to 1850*, Marx argued that acceleration, in the form of the increased rate of technological innovation, would lead to the end of capitalism. With his proverbial picture of revolution as the "locomotive of history,"[3] Marx casts a narrative about the future that was, on the one hand, uncertain and open, but on the other hand, self-contained within the lifetime of the individual (who either sits in the locomotive of progress or else propels it forward). Thus, Marx's understanding of the future conveys humanity wielding a degree of sovereignty over time itself. In the 1970s, however, Müller increasingly began to question the validity of this as an orienting narrative about the meaning of human cognition (cognitive adaptation) and human activity (a symbolic and pragmatic construction of reality).

Man's sovereignty over time was a central theme of progress in the eighteenth century at about the same time that the notion of history as progressive originated. By viewing man as being in control of time, Marx could argue in favor of the subject's ability to anticipate what is still to come and act accordingly in the present. This provided the basis for the political capacity to act.[4] In the 1970s and 1980s, according to Müller, on the one hand, time did indeed seem to accelerate. But on the other hand, time also appeared to separate away from the individual's subjective understanding of time.[5] In place of the "historical" model of time, proposed by Marx, in his works Müller began to put forward a new chronotype, based on the experience of time: modernity is accelerating at a rapid rate, which is causing it to teeter on the brink of destruction.[6]

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3. Karl Marx, "Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850," in Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, vol. 7, *August 1849—Juni 1851* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1960), 85. For the English version cf. Karl Marx, *Class Struggles in France, 1848–1850*, trans. Henry Kuhn (New York: New York Labor News Company, 1924), 165.

4. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979); Hans Blumenberg, *Lebenszeit und Weltzeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1986); Helga Nowotny, *Eigenzeit: Entstehung und Strukturierung eines Zeitgefühls* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993). For the English version cf. Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, trans. Keith Tribe (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985); and Helga Nowotny, *Time: The Modern and Postmodern Experience*, trans. Neville Plaice (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994).

5. See Heiner Müller, "Es lebe der Widerspruch!—Den Widerspruch leben!," Jacques Poulet im Gespräch mit Heiner Müller, in *Werke*, vol. 10, *Gespräche 1: 1965–1987*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, [1979] 2008), 752.

6. See Norbert Otto Eke, "Zeit/Räume: Aspekte der Zeiterfahrung bei Heiner Müller," in

Drawing on Walter Benjamin, Müller had developed an understanding of revolution as an attempt to apply the brakes to what was happening: revolution as the attempt to suspend time.[7] Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, he firmly declared that one could hardly avoid "rethinking the concept of revolution . . . [with] revolution as that [which is] conservative and capital as that [which is] revolutionary."[8]

> Marx's delusion was that revolutions are the locomotive of history. Based on the reality that technical progress supersedes humanity, that is, makes [humanity] superfluous as a consequence, the role of revolution today is not to press the gas pedal, but instead the brake.[9]

In his texts, Müller stages a conflict between his revised understanding of revolution and phenomena that are viewed as eccentric according to "*our* [i.e., the European] *perspective*." Those phenomena include the "completely anarchistic or absurd liberation movements"[10] of the Third World, the alternative moments in the West, forced migrations, the subjective, the irrational, and the criminal. In Müller's text, these phenomena are depicted as metaphors for a way of thinking that contradicts with the *nomos* (law) of selection that dominates in western-oriented societies.[11]

In this respect, "Rome," as a symbol for Western thought, takes on an almost metonymical meaning in Müller's texts, representing an imperial

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Heiner Müller—Rückblicke, Perspektiven, ed. Theo Buck and Jean-Marie Valentin (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995), 133–52.

7. Walter Benjamin, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, *Abhandlungen*, part 3, *Anmerkungen der Herausgeber*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1974), 1232.

8. Heiner Müller, "Das war fast unvermeidlich: Ein Gespräch mit Stephan Speicher für 'Der Tagesspiegel', 9.11.1991," in *Werke*, vol. 12, *Gespräche 3: 1991–1995*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 106.

9. Heiner Müller, "[Der Irrtum von Marx . . .]," in *Werke*, vol. 8, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2005), 602; see Heiner Müller, "Da trinke ich lieber Benzin zum Frühstück: Betrachtungen zum Fundamentalismus," in *Werke*, vol. 11, *Gespräche 2: 1987–1991*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2008), 436–37; Heiner Müller, "Georg Büchner: Die Verweigerung des Überblicks," in *Werke*, 11:780; Heiner Müller, "Was wird aus dem größeren Deutschland?," in *Werke*, 12:39; Heiner Müller, "Zehn Deutsche sind dümmer als fünf: Gespräch mit Uwe Wittstock für 'Neue Rundschau' 2/1992," in *Werke*, 12:86.

10. Heiner Müller, "Kunst ist die Krankheit, mit der wir leben: Ein Gespräch mit Horst Laube über HAMLETMASCHINE, AUFTRAG, über Depressivität und über das Schreiben aus Lust an der Katastrophe," in *Werke*, 10:148; emphasis added.

11. Heiner Müller, "[Vor 150 Jahren . . .]," in *Werke*, 8:379.

political model that seals itself off from any changes (development, progress).[12] In the late 1970s, Müller began to associate evil with a kind of utopia, an understanding that plainly linked him to Foucault.[13] Simultaneously, this helps us better understand Müller's narratives of revolts "from below" as found in his dramatic oeuvre—including *Gundling's Life Frederick of Prussia Lessing's Sleep Dream Scream: A Horror Story* (1976), *Hamletmachine* (1979), *The Task: Memory of a Revolution* (1979), and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome: A Shakespeare Commentary* (1983–1985). These function as counterparts to the "islands of disorder" that Müller repeatedly brought into play as political catalysts.[14]

Müller's interpretation of Kleist's *Penthesilea* as, in his words, an "African play,"[15] and Büchner's poor *Woyzeck* as a "white N****"[16] (with which Müller turned the status of Woyzeck's social declassification and lawlessness in the stratified society of the nineteenth century into a metaphor) align with these physical revolts from below in contrast to rationally connoted political revolutions. In a similar manner, so does Müller's modeling of an oppositional Blackness as the antithesis to a territory of rationality and balance called Europe in two plays from Müller's final productive period as a playwright: *The Task* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*. In these plays, Müller uses origin and skin color to mark two central figures, the former Caribbean slave Sasportas and the African Aaron, as protagonists of difference, who stand in contrast to the self-narrative of European modernity as a movement of progressive rationalization and the cosmopolitan. This key concept of the cosmopolitan goes together with concep-

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12. See Nikolaus Müller-Schöll, "Global(atin)isierung: Humanitäre Katastrophen und die Katastrophe der Humanität bei Heiner Müller," in *Ich bin meiner Zeit voraus: Utopie und Sinnlichkeit bei Heiner Müller*, ed. Hans Kruschwitz (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag, 2017), 57–71.

13. See Michel Foucault, *Überwachen und Strafen: Die Geburt des* Gefängnisses, trans. Walter Seitter (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), 373; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Heiner Müller, "Es gilt, eine neue Dramaturgie zu entwickeln: Ein Gespräch mit Wend Kässens und Michael Töteberg über Terrorismus und Nibelungentreue sowie das 'Fatzer'-Fragment," in *Werke*, 10:130; Heiner Müller, "Jetzt sind eher die infernalischen Aspekte bei Benjamin wichtig: Gespräch mit Heiner Müller," in *Werke*, 12:122; For more information on the mobilization of the margins, see Müller in conversation with Gregor Gysi, in Heiner Müller, "Die Ränder sind die Hoffnung," in *Werke*, 12:211.

14. Heiner Müller, "'Mich interessiert der Fall Althusser . . .' Gesprächsprotokoll [1981]," in *Werke*, 8:245.

15. Heiner Müller, "Deutschland ortlos: Anmerkung zu Kleist. Rede anläßlich der Entgegennahme des Kleist-Preises," in *Werke*, 8:386.

16. Heiner Müller, "Heiner Müller in dem Film 'Lieb' Georg," in *Werke*, 8:347.

tions of totality, such as in the Hegelian "world plan for betterment" provided by Europeans and all the other metaphors that suggest a world of reason is coming. The notion of the cosmopolitan also implies one can appeal to (and reclaim for oneself) one's being-in-the-world or one's becoming within Enlightenment's universality and its ideas of freedom, equality, tolerance, and reason.

Müller calls upon, on the one hand, notions of a Pan-Africanism, especially on the concomitant self-assertion of negritude, and on the other hand, codes and symbols of a "racialized differentiation of power" (marking, naturalizing, positioning, exclusion)[17] in both plays and through both main figures: Sasportas and Aaron. He uses them as metaphors to help him think about revolution and history, a move that opens *The Task* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome* up to attack in current debates about racism within the theater.[18] With this context, let us consider the concept of political "Blackness" as Müller pursued it in the 1970s and 1980s.

Figurations of Blackness: Sasportas and Aaron

Racially inflected images of the reversion of human history, which form the backdrop of Eurocentric standards of civilization, already appear in the 1790s as the underside of an empathetically molded image of revolution as the progressive consciousness of freedom. Hegel later expressed this notion with the image of a "glorious sunrise" in his *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*.[19] These images were not least furthered in 1791 when news

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17. Maureen Maisha Eggers, "Rassifizierte Machtdifferenz als Deutungsperspektive in der Kritischen Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland," in *Mythen, Masken und Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland*, ed. Maureen Maisha Eggers et al. (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2009), 56–72.

18. Müller's use of the German N-word alone, irrespective of his metaphorical meaning, triggers this discussion, just as it did during the recent production of Bernard-Marie Koltès play *Black Battles with Dogs*. For a representative critique of Roger Vontobel's production of Koltès's play during Kammerspiele Bochum's 2016–2017 season, see Gerhard Preußer, "Afrika als Metapher," *Nachtkritik*, https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14025:kampf-des-negers-und-der-hunde-roger-vontobel-inszeniert-bernard-marie-koltes-in-den-kammerspielen-des-schauspielhauses-bochum&catid=38:die-nachtkritik-k&Itemid=40; and Miloš Lolićs' critique of the 2018–2019 production at the Akademietheater in Vienna, https://onlinemerker.com/wien-akademietheater-kampf-des-negers-und-der-hunde/

19. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte: Auf der Grundlage der Werke von 1832–1845*, ed. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 529.

reached Europe of slave uprisings in overseas territories held by colonial powers. To the extent that the storming of the Bastille increased the influence of the sans-culottic-plebian underclasses on politics in Paris, conservative journalism developed in an effort to expose the hopes of progress projected onto the revolution as the consummation of the Enlightenment. This was done with images of a natural "savage"—characterized by (sometimes sexual) lawlessness, gruesomeness, and chimeras enhanced with cannibalism[20]—to whom politics had opened the doors. The revolutionary system of equality was thus revealed as a social-ethical orientation corrosively threatened "from below": as a theater of fathomless terrors, whose protagonists were "savage N****s," and in particular the "Hottentots" of anthropological, philosophical, and aesthetic debates of the Enlightenment: raw children of nature and barbarians.[21] Instead of demonstrating that it might be possible to reform the social order according to reason, these images showed how revolution destroys the carefully balanced *status civilis* through the elimination of the extremes and leads humanity back into the chaos of prehistoric disorder.[22] As but one example, Heinrich Zschokke uses the words of the murderer Jean-Paul Marat to express this narrative in his 1794 play, *Charlotte Corday or the Rebellion of Calvados*:

> We sink back,
> barbarity into her n****'s arms,
> to that from which we first emerged;
> becoming tyrants, cannibals,
> with tattooed skulls, gnawing upon our brother's bones,
> those who we struck, where *Voltaire*
> and *Rousseau* had to all peoples
> the heavenly law of humanity
> once preached.[23]

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20. See Peter Schmidt, "Der Terreurjournalismus und die Darstellung des Terreurs in Deutschland nach dem Ende der Jakobinerherrschaft," *Weimarer Beiträge* 29, no. 12 (1983): 2092–2111.

21. Consider, for instance, Klopstock's ode "Das Neue" (1793), with his "Hottentots" of the "wild" "Klubbergmunizipalgüllotinoligokra- / animal republic"; see Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock, "Das Neue," in *Klopstocks Sämmtliche Werke*, vol. 4, *Oden: Erster Theil* (Leipzig: Göschen, 1854), 344. Images like these were not only used by Klopstock at the time but were also found elsewhere.

22. Here I build on my work in *Signaturen der Revolution: Frankreich—Deutschland. Deutsche Zeitgenossenschaft und deutsches Drama zur Französischen Revolution um 1800* (Munich: Fink Verlag, 1997). In this context, especially the fourth chapter, "Über die Unnatur der Revolution," is very relevant.

23. Heinrich Zschokke, *Charlotte Corday oder die Rebellion von Calvados: Ein repub-*

This description of revolution conveyed through images of civilization's reversion once again connects to the "invention of the 'N****' as the very image of disorder,"[24] a notion that dates back much farther than the French Revolution (1789). The context of upheavals in France, however, lent these criticisms a new, antirevolutionary potency.[25] This provided the older counterpart to the popular image that emerged after 1750 under the influence of Rousseau, where, by European standards, these "children of nature" were understood as "noble savages." It is within this context that Müller positions *The Task* and, especially, *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*. In both dramas Müller plays along with ideological patterns of racialization.[26] He engages with racialization by creating a revolutionary ethnicity

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likanisches Trauerspiel in vier Akten. (Aus den Zeiten der französischen Revolution.) (Stettin: Johann Sigismund Kaffke, 1794), 36.

24. Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle M***en* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 1993), 240.

25. The terrorizing image of the "Black man" as such is no invention of the eighteenth century. Instead, it is rooted in the long tradition of Judeo-Christian thought. The field of cultural studies, especially imagology (*Imagologie*), has dedicated extensive attention to the history of images that Europeans and (North Americans) have created of sub-Saharan Africans throughout the centuries. From the extensive research literature currently available, a few representative works include Urs Bitterli, *Die Entdeckung des schwarzen Afrikaners: Versuch einer Geistesgeschichte der europäisch-afrikanischen Beziehungen an der Guineaküste im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Zurich: Atlantis Verlag, 1980); Urs Bitterli, *Die "Wilden" und die "Zivilisierten": Grundzüge einer Geistes- und Kulturgeschichte der europäisch-überseeischen Begegnung* (Munich: Beck, 2004); Martin Steins, *Das Bild des Schwarzen in der europäischen Kolonialliteratur 1870–1918: Ein Beitrag zur literarischen Imagologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Thesen Verlag, 1972); Willfried Feuser, "Das Bild des Afrikaners in der deutschen Literatur," in *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik*, series A, vol. 2.4 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1976), 306–15; Willfried Feuser, "Slave to Proletarian: Images of the Black in German literature," *German Life and Letters* 32, no. 2 (1979): 122–34; Uta Sadji, *Der N****mythos am Ende des 18. Jahrhunderts in Deutschland: Eine Analyse der Rezeption von Reiseliteratur über Schwarzafrika* (Frankfurt am Main, 1979); Uta Sadji, *Der M*** auf der deutschen Bühne des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Salzburg: Müller-Speiser Verlag, 1992); Beverly Harris-Schenz, *Black Images in Eighteenth-Century German Literature* (Stuttgart: Akademischer Verlag Heinz, 1981); Sander L. Gilman, *On Blackness without Blacks: Essays on the Image of the Black in Germany* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982); Gerd Stein, ed., *Die edlen Wilden: Die Verklärung von Indianern, N****n und Südseeinsulanern auf dem Hintergrund der kolonialen Greuel: Vom 16. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1984); Andreas Mielke, *Nigra sum et formosa: Afrikanerinnen in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters. Texte und Kontexte zum Bild des Afrikaners in der literarischen Imagologie* (Stuttgart: Hellfant-Ed., 1992); Reinhold Grimm and Amadou B. Sadji, eds., *Dunkle Reflexe: Schwarzafrikaner und Afro-Amerikaner in der deutschen Erzählkunst des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1992).

26. For more about this term, see Robert Miles, *Racism* (London: Routledge, 1989). For racism as a "sense-giving instance" (*Sinngebungsinstanz*) with reference to Miles, see Tania

that he uses as a model for debating identity categories typically associated with class.[27] In *The Task*, Müller first proposes a counterpart to the traditional "white," rational revolution of the Enlightenment with the Black, revolutionary Sasportas: the bodily, concrete revolt of nature as the incommensurable reserve of utopia. *The Task* builds upon Anna Seghers's Caribbean story about a failed revolution, *The Light on the Gallows*, a story about the futile attempt of three revolutionaries (Debuisson, Sasportas, Galloudec) sent from a French convent to Jamaica during the time of the directorial republic.[28] These revolutionaries were tasked with carrying French revolutionary ideas of freedom to the slaveholder society in the Caribbean.

In the first part of *The Task*, a nameless sailor brings a letter from two of the revolutionaries who died in service to the impending revolution in Jamaica (Sasportas, Galloudec) back to Paris, to Antoine, an earlier member of the revolutionary government. The letter speaks of the failure of the mission, and the necessity that others take up the mission and successfully complete it. This message from the land of the dead first leads to this secluded intellectual's confrontation with his political past. On the level of the scenic arrangement, it triggers a play within the play consisting of three voices—Debuisson, Sasportas, Galloudec—that conveys Antoine's past discourses and visions. All that Antoine has left is pathos from the time of the heroic breakout of revolution, as well as the dead, who haunt his dreams.

At the center of this *mise en abyme* of memory stands the betrayal of the doctor Debuisson, son of middle-class Jamaican landowners. Debuisson had initially attached himself to the revolution based on insightful and rational considerations. But then, disappointed about how the revolution has played out, he decided instead to seek out a life of happiness that he could only attain in the here and now. Debuisson loses his initial belief in the necessity of killing—the breaking of bodies and the destruction of

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Meyer, *Gegenstimmbildung: Strategien rassismuskritischer Theaterarbeit* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 79.

27. See Müller, "Heiner Müller in dem Film 'Lieb' Georg," 347. "Woyzeck is a white n****. And whether or not one is a n**** is not dependent on skin color. This explains the dedication to Nelson Mandela [in the speech for the Büchner Prize, "The Wounds of Woyzeck"]. This is the oldest prison in the world, now I believe . . . only because he asked the race question as a question of class. And this is what it is really about: behind the race question one finds the question of class. And Woyzeck as a social problem is unresolved."

28. See Anna Seghers, *Das Licht auf dem Galgen: Eine karibische Geschichte aus der Zeit der Französischen Revolution* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1961).

the individual—which he once understood and legitimized as the unavoidable symptom of revolutionary "work." All this occurs as Napoleon seizes control with the coup of the 18th Brumaire, declares the revolution complete, and reorients the political system. "They were good to ride when they were still our nags, the winds of Tomorrow brushing our temple," says the sober lover of the revolution about the end of the revolutionary ideals of *liberté*, *egalité*, *fraternité*. Now, however, "The wind is blowing from Yesterday. The nags, that's us. Do you feel the spurs in your flesh. Our riders have their baggage: the dead victims of terror, pyramids of death."[29]

Debuisson thus declares the ideas of the revolution as cultural artifacts, understanding them as purely European (enlightened) achievements, as if they were unattainable, unshareable possessions of a "we" that exclusively imagines itself as Europe. His antagonist is the former slave Sasportas, whom the role of a subordinate in Debuisson's coup d'état has been literally written into his skin. While the *white* revolutionary who has been disappointed by what has transpired in the "motherland of the Revolution"[30] declares the revolution a spectacle of futility that he ends without further ado ("Our play is over, Sasportas. Watch out when you take off your make-up, Galloudec. Maybe your skin will come off with it. Your mask, Sasportas, is your face. My face is my mask"),[31] for the Black slave, who in contrast to his white master lacks a frontier of possible alternatives, nothing remains but the continuation of his work (even at the price of his own death):

> Could be my place is at the gallows and perhaps a rope is growing around my neck while I talk to you rather than kill you, to whom I owe nothing now but my knife. But death is of no importance and at the gallows I will know that my accomplices are the n****s of all races whose number grows with every minute you spend at your slaveholder's trough or between the legs of your white whore. When the living can no longer fight, the dead will. With every heartbeat of the revolution flesh grows back on their bones, blood in their veins, life in their death. The rebellion of the dead will be the war of the landscapes, our weapons the forests, the mountains, the oceans, the

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29. Heiner Müller, "Der Auftrag: Erinnerung an eine Revolution," in *Werke*, vol. 5, *Die Stücke 3*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2002), 11–42. See Heiner Müller, *The Task*, in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts for the Stage*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber (New York: PAJ Publications, 1984), 98–99.

30. Müller, *The Task*, 87.

31. Müller, *The Task*, 97.

deserts of the world. I will be forest, ocean, desert. I—that is Africa. I—that is Asia. The two Americas—that is I.[32]

Drawing on the existential-ontological négritude poems by Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédhar Senghor, with their images of revolution as an uprising (resurrection) of the dead,[33] here Müller holds up an inverted image to the secret, unspoken projections of Africans created by European culture (it remains, as such, also a projection). This image puts into play the experience of the body (intoxication, sex, and sensuality). Influenced by elementary (unreasonable) forces of nature, Sasportas contrasts the anthropocentric, essential determination of history with an irrational model of a bodily revolt without a subject: the revolt of a body that avenges itself against its reification, enslavement, and mutilation, with the retaliating natural landscape serving as a principle of liberation.

The revolt of the Black man once again provides the theatrical counterpart to the impotent and self-absorbed white revolutionary theater that Müller once exhibited earlier in an endlessly looping, satirical, self-staged circus act. According to white, revolutionary theater, the continents cited by Sasportas—America, Asia, and Africa—denote ciphers of difference, an absolute difference that defines itself as distinct from old, white Europe, complete with its hegemonic concepts of revolution:

The Theatre of the white Revolution is over. We sentence you to death, Victor Debuisson. Because your skin is white. Because your thoughts are white under your white skin. Because your eyes have seen the beauty of your sisters. Because your hands have touched the naked bodies of our sisters. Because your thoughts have eaten their breasts their bodies their genitals. Because you are a property owner, a master. Therefore we sentence you to death, Victor Debuisson. The snakes shall eat your shit, the crocodiles your ass, the piranhas your testicles. *Debuisson screams*. The trouble with you is that you cannot die. That's why you kill everything around you. For the sake of your dead institutions where ecstasy has no place. For the sake of your revolutions devoid of sex.[34]

32. Müller, *The Task*, 100.

33. Norbert Otto Eke, *Heiner Müller: Apokalypse und Utopie* (Paderborn: Schöningh Verlag, 1989), 139–42; John Pizer, "Negritude in East German Literature: Anna Seghers, Heiner Müller, and the Haitian Revolution," *The Comparatist* 35 (2011): 19–39.

34. Müller, *The Task*, 93.

In *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, Müller moves away from his past considerations of history and revolution presented in *The Task*: considerations that call into question the relationship between utopia and ideals, on the one hand, and the praxis of revolutionary violence on the other. In *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, he adopts instead a metadramatic hybrid composed of translation, reworkings, and commentary that literally rewrites Shakespeare's early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*. In this play, which tells "of the union of various cultures and civilizations and of the war of minorities,"[35] the African Aaron wages war against Rome's legally enclosed system of violence. In the character of Aaron, the Black revolutionary Sasportas takes on the form of a bogeyman who, with a spectacular vendetta, transforms the (Roman) world, enclosed by laws of reason, back into its disorderly natural state. Even more clearly than in *The Task*, in *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, Aaron—the embodiment of the Other created by the white Revolution—steps onto the stage, the antagonist as racially embodied.

In Shakespeare's tragedy, Aaron is the driving evil power behind the atrocities devastating Rome. In Müller's play, the audience associates him with the return of the repressed: of those bodies that, in the process of the emergence of civilization, are representative of nature and have been disciplined and shut out, but who once again assert their presence from behind the facade of civilized culture. With a superior staging of his hatred, Aaron causes the "destructive dynamics" that lurk beneath the surface of the ostensibly measured and reason-filled "European" world to implode. He releases that which is hemmed in by morality, religion and law; he releases those things that, like war, are channeled into social violence, thus leading old Europe toward its final downfall:

> NIGHT BLACKENS ROME THE NIGHT / OF THE N**** HIS SEX DREAMS
> OF AFRICA/ HIS SEMEN A LIGHTNING TRACE WHITE IN BLACK / THE
> LIGHTNING CHANGES ROME INTO A FOREST/ PEOPLED WITH BEASTS
> OF HIS NATIVE LAND/ THERE HE WAITS FOR HIS OTHER HUNT.[36]

In Müller's text, the memory of the racially marked Black body (which in Shakespeare's play moreover is coded antisemitically) opens up a natural-

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35. Heiner Müller, "'Geschichte geht immer auf Umwegen': Interview mit Heiner Müller," in *Werke*, 12:74.

36. Heiner Müller, *Anatomie Titus Fall of Rome: Ein Shakespearekommentar*, in *Werke*, 5:99–193. See Heiner Müller, *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, in *After Shakespeare: Macbeth: Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*, ed. and trans. Carl Weber and Paul David Young (New York: PAJ Publications, 2012), 77–171, 90–91.

corporeal dimension of history, a dimension based in Aaron's marginal position vis-à-vis the Roman state's power structures.[37] When Aaron is referred to as the "BLACK DOG,"[38] this indicates his bodily revolt from the margins. Coming from the Black continent (Africa), the audience experiences a concretization of Müller's interpretation of *Titus Andronicus* as a collision between the European (that is, rationally ordered) and tropical (irrational, naturally wild) politics that "inscribe bodies without translation through institutions or apparatuses."[39]

Aaron's revenge is fulfilled with the destruction of Rome's imperial order, an order that is not reclaimed at the end of the drama with the ascent of Adronicus's final surviving son, Lucius, to the throne. The new Caesar, who pursues the dead with his hatred and expels his Gothic allies—ultimately in vain—from the walled-in area of the city, defers Aaron's torturous death; buried up to his throat in the ground, Aaron is left to die slowly. In Shakespeare's *Titus* the racially marked natural body is banished to become one with the ground. In Müller's reading, this gains the contours of a vitalistic melting, echoing Carl Schmitt's idea of the telluric character of the partisan. Buried in the ground, Aaron is, contrary to nature, transformed backward: "SLOWLY BY WORMS FROM THE DEEP / INTO DUST WHICH COLLECTS INTO DESERT / AND GROWS OVER ROME."[40] His (knowing, triumphant) laugh emanating from his body, buried in the earth, accompanies the finale as it stumbles toward the story's end.

> IN THE CANNIBAL LOOK OF GOTH BUTCHERS
> DANCES WITH THE N**** ON ROME'S ASHES
> SLOW FOXTROT PAINTS THE SKY GRAY IN RHYTHM
> WHICH BELOW APPEARS BLACK AND GROUNDLESS
> UNTIL WHISTLING OVER THE LAST HAPPY END
> THE WORLD TRAP SHUTS OVER THE FIRMAMENT[41]

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37. In Shakespeare, the use of a "Jewish" name adds anti-Semitic overtones.

38. Müller, *Anatomie Titus*, 102. (The translation quotes "BLACK ONE," in Müller, *Anatomy Titus*, 80.)

39. Heiner Müller, "Was ein Kunstwerk kann, ist Sehnsucht wecken nach einem anderen Zustand der Welt: Ein Gespräch mit Urs Jenny und Hellmuth Karasek über VERKOMMENES UFER, den Voyeurismus und die Aufführungspraxis in beiden deutschen Staaten," in *Werke*, 10:279.

40. Müller, *Anatomy Titus*, 167.

41. Müller, *Anatomy Titus*, 167.

Blackness and Excess

The incommensurable character of his downfall turns Aaron into a reverse image of the revolutionary Sasportas, who himself is driven by hatred only at the beginning. Sasportas is the enslaved Black man, who leaves the traitor Debuisson alone with his treachery and together with the white peasant Galloudec, who is the representative of another authentic experience of declassification, continues on with the once-shouldered mission in the Blochian sense of being "dissatisfied," "unconcerned," and also "cared for."[42] Aaron is the Shakespearean figure of evil who is transformed into the gravedigger of hegemonic, occidental culture, and simultaneously comes from the margins of the system of the Roman state, yet also from within its midst, and takes the "CAPITAL / OF THE [WESTERN] WORLD"[43] in his claws. Both—Sasportas and Aaron—are metaphors for interruption that can be traced back to Kleist's "African" (as Müller understands it) *Penthesilea*. In his 1990 acceptance speech for the Kleist Prize, "Germany Placeless," Müller rotated Kleist's *Penthesilea* on a north-south political axis: "*Penthesilea* is an African play, in the tradition of over and above Hölderlin's orientalist interpretation of Sophocles. The elephants are no ornaments; these are elephants that Hannibal drove over the Alps against Rome."[44]

In this section of his acceptance speech, Müller construes the author-subject Kleist as an author of imponderability, settled at the pole opposite the territory of rationality and balance named Europe (thereby shedding a particular light on Kleist's contrast to German classicism): "Next to Goethe, the European and master of balance, and Schiller, the German who was a transposed politician, Kleist stands askew."[45] The opposition of Africa/Europe marks a difference that can be compared to features in both *The Task* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*. This difference can be seen in *Penthesilea*, in the onset of the unconscious, corporeal, irrational, and in a world that is ordered through reflective action, rationally written, and fixed from the perspective of a binary (war-)logic (friend/foe).[46] Müller sees here Dionysian excess and not just in the tearing of Achilles to shreds as the incommensurable act of an individual person (in the sense of

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42. Ernst Bloch, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 13, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970), 282.

43. Müller, *Anatomy Titus*, 79.

44. Müller, "Deutschland ortlos," 386.

45. Müller, "Deutschland ortlos," 386.

46. See Heiner Müller, "Heiner Müller im Zeitenflug," in *Werke*, 12:834.

Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the war machine in *Traité de nomadologie*), but also as a form of eccentricity whose definition is nonlimiting, unaccountable, and incalculable. Furthermore, Müller also sees exterritory, represented metonymically in his work through the Black continent (Africa), which, with the one anarchic counter principle, breaks into the ordered, regulated world, governed by a machinery of institutional arrangements. This other *nomos* of the war machine undoes, according to Deleuze and Guattari, "*the bond just as he betrays the pact. He brings a furor to* bear against sovereignty, a celerity against gravity, secrecy against the public, a power (*puissance*) against sovereignty, a machine against the apparatus."[47]

As Hans-Thies Lehmann notes, "Kleist's infamous excess (the gruesomeness, the randomness, the spiritual vulnerability)" does not appear from outside of the world, forcing its way in. Instead, it dwells in "the center of measuredness, morality, logic, the soul itself."[48] This not only destroyed Kleist's contemporaries, who were accustomed to seeing and reading otherwise; but even today, Kleist has not lost his alienating, irritating, and scandalous character. The excess (not least linguistic) and crudeness with which Kleist spells out scenes of violence and barbarity in his texts (sometimes morally coded, sometimes politically, sometimes without no recognizable reason at all), allows the "truth of the excess to come to light. That which is no longer calculable does not represent an area adjacent to the field of the calculable or its surroundings . . . instead [it represents] its inner limit and simultaneously its precondition."[49]

In Müller's work, the path from here points to those figures who resist the ideological and moral justifications for renunciation, failure, and sacrifice—those things upon which the revolution insists as necessary in order for it to be carried out (this simultaneously legitimates the misery of the present, or at least pardons it). From the Brigadier Bremer, who is transferred for disciplinary reasons in the first edition of *The Correction* (1957) to the mutilated tractor driver in *Tractor* (1955/74), from the crazed Chekist in *Mauser* (1970) to the traitor Debuisson in *The Task*—everywhere in Müller's theatrical works, the attempt to negate the ambivalence of failure in the ideological construct of an universal history of genre breaks at the obstinacy of the bodily nature; everywhere bodies rebel against their

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47. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 352.

48. Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Das politische Schreiben: Essays zu Theatertexten* (Berlin: Theater der Zeit, 2002), 159.

49. Lehmann, *Das politische Schreiben*, 159.

fragmentation and their sacrifice in the name of greater historical necessity. Starting with Kleist's excess, Müller's dramatic works point beyond the revolts of the bodies in *The Task* and *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome*. This is even clearer in his depiction of the character Marquise de Merteuil in *Quartett* (1980), who encircles the self-assertion of the body in the power games between men and women dressed in the cloak of gallantry. Even Medea's storming against Jason in *Despoiled Shore Medea Material Landscape with Argonauts* (1982) holds a connection to Kleist. At least Medea, who turned the love for Jason, the conqueror, to an object and victim of the enlightened access to her body (nature), "reinvents" herself "from the ground up" by her erratic bloody deed and for the price of destroying her progeny—her place in the rupture of the world: "With these my hands the hands of the barbarian / . . . I want to break mankind apart in two / And live within the empty middle I / No woman and no man."[50]

Early on, Müller's theater was accused of reanimating vitalistic figures of thought.[51] This accusation misses the point that those texts of Müller's from *Gundling's Life Frederick of Prussia Lessing's Sleep Dream Scream* to *Anatomy Titus Fall of Rome* set the problematic project of the Enlightenment against a "mobilization of the margins" as fundamental movements of energy (*Bewegungsenergien*), "less wish fulfillment than a world of contrary wishes in the Leiris-ian sense."[52] Something similar applies to Müller's configuration of revolutionary Blackness. Müller is aware of the constructed nature of his depiction of revolutionary Blackness and he calculates this self-awareness in his aesthetics, even if one might assume otherwise when listening to him declare himself a "N****" in one of his

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50. Heiner Müller, *Verkommenes Ufer Medeamaterial Landschaft mit Argonauten*, in *Werke*, 5:71–84. See Heiner Müller, *Despoiled Shore: Medeamaterial: Landscape with Argonauts*, in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts*, 132.

51. Richard Herzinger, "Der Tod ist die Maske der Utopie: Heiner Müller und die Mission des romantischen Modernismus," In *Text + Kritik 73: Heiner Müller*, ed. Heinz Ludwig Arnold (Munich: Edition Text + Kritik, 1997), 65. In addition, there was a fear of romantic revolutionarism. See also Ulrike Dedner, "*Der* Auftrag: Heiner Müllers Erinnerung an eine Revolution," in *Esprit civique und Engagement: Festschrift für Henning Krauß zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Hanspeter Plocher et al. (Tübingen: Stauffenburg Verlag, 2003), 97; Müller-Schöll, "Global(atin)isierung," 65.

52. Florian Vaßen, "Die entfremdete und die fremde Revolution: Reflexionen über Heiner Müllers Revolutionsstücke," in *Begegnung mit dem "Fremden": Grenzen—Traditionen—Vergleiche 11. Akten des VIII. Internationalen Germanisten-Kongresses Tokyo 1990*, ed. Eijirō Iwasaki (Munich: iudicium Verlag, 1991), 322; Michel Leiris, "Die eigene und die fremde Kultur," in *Ethnologische Schriften*, vol. 1, 7–48 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985).

conversations following his winning the Büchner Prize.[53] Whether his self-awareness is convincing or he is simply guilty of cultural appropriation is another question. As early as *Hamletmachine*, the central text that marks the end of (heroic) history and the beginning of a postheroic era in his work, Müller at least attempts a critique of the identity-centered mechanics of casting in the theater in order to counter any objections one could raise against his construction of bodies (white as well as Black) as bearers of revolutionary action. Indeed, betrayed Ophelia emerges from her role in Shakespeare's version of *Hamlet* as a fated victim. However, as a "femme revolté" conquering language and history with a destructive bodily revolt, she is decidedly marked as the imagined creation of the intellectual locked in his prison of thoughts, who, with his revolt against tradition (the "old" text that is always the same) remains stuck in his disgust for the world: "Then let me eat *your heart*, Ophelia, which weeps *my tears*."[54] An overwritten "Scherzo" interlude of phantasmic assimilation supplies an additional counterimage in the play's middle: Hamlet is confronted with the impure truth of Ophelia / the revolution; Ophelia is a "whore," the virgin, that pure originating image of one whose (still) direct nature is, for her, involved in a cultural and historical context of violence and destruction. "Hamlet" refuses to see this and instead feigns blindness: "*Face in his hands*: I want to be a woman."[55]

With characters such as Sasportas and Aaron, Müller does not literally make up his theater in Black in an identificatory reversal of the signifiers of othering.[56] In Müller's work, Blackness is depicted as a disturbance, as a distortion to the point that one can recognize the structural asymmetries in revolutionary discourse, as found concretely in the disempowering paternalism of Marx-Leninist teachings and their hegemonic claims. The counterworld of the anarchistic body does not feed into the promise of a wild, natural state that would be in a position to newly occupy the field of history, which is now bereft of reason. Instead, it points to the necessity of a redialectalization of the relationship between body and reason as the prerequisite for the opening up of utopian horizons. Penthesilea's excess,

53. Heiner Müller, "'Ich bin ein N****': Diskussion mit Heiner Müller," in *Werke*, 10:386–439.

54. Heiner Müller, *Die Hamletmaschine*, in *Werke*, vol. 4, *Die Stücke 2*, ed. Frank Hörnigk (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), 543–54. See Heiner Müller, *Hamletmachine*, in *Hamletmachine and Other Texts*, 54; emphasis added.

55. Müller, *Hamletmachine*, 55.

56. Thomas Edlinger, *Der wunde Punkt: Vom Unbehagen an der Kritik* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2015), 119.

as experienced in her unpredictable and unreasonable actions, provides Müller with an ideal model of "breaking open" (de-automatization).

According to Jacques Rancière, art is *political*, not in the reflection of social relations and conflicts, but instead in its participation in a redistribution of the perceivable. In this, Rancière provides us a way to think about the difference between *politics* (as the art of governing) and *the political* (the disruption of politics in the sense of a *mise en forme*).[57] The political occupies the scene "as a rupture in the distribution of space and competencies and incompetencies."[58] There follows in Rancière's understanding a logic of dissent: as the praxis of disruption. With his model of revolutionary Blackness, Müller moves in line with Rancière's considerations. His depiction goes beyond the self-evident idea of a purely consumptive-contemplative perception of art, insofar as something suddenly "obstructs" routine perceptions (as Müller has said elsewhere).[59] Thus, Müller once again positions his theatrical art against the loss of an empathetic historical time—as a wishing machine that still remains as a negation of the notion of a necessary "salvation from a life in the depths."[60] This notion marks the "fiery, theological nucleus"[61] of Marxism, as it does that same nucleus of Müller's lifelong conflicts with revolution and history, which situate the theater as the factory of thoughts of (utopian) possibility.

In short, Müller's modeling of Blackness does not escape the dilemma of simply updating established dualisms.[62] For all its irony, the aesthetic play with ethnocentric projections of fear and desire is not immune to an earlier imagination where the Black body is made into a place of

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57. Claude Lefort, *Fortdauer des Theologisch-Politischen?*, trans. Hans Scheulen and Ariane Cuvelier (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1999), 39.

58. Jacques Rancière, *Der emanzipierte Zuschauer*, trans. Richard Steurer (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 2009), 74.

59. Heiner Müller, "Fünf Minuten Schwarzfilm: Rainer Crone spricht mit Heiner Müller," in *Werke*, 11:357; see also Norbert Otto Eke, "Den 'Nullpunkt' des Theaters finden: Heiner Müllers Medientheorie und Praxis," in *Literatur intermedial—Paradigmenbildung zwischen 1918 und 1968*, ed. Wolf Gerhard Schmidt and Thorsten Valk (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), 343–59; Norbert Otto Eke, "'Was ist: Spielen wir weiter?' Praktiken der Entautomatisierung im Theater Heiner Müllers," in *Entautomatisierung*, ed. Annette Brauerhoch et al. (Munich: Fink Verlag, 2014), 265–79.

60. Müller, "Da trinke ich lieber Benzin," 441.

61. Theodor W. Adorno and Walter Benjamin, *Briefwechsel 1928–1940*, ed. Henri Lonitz (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1994), 143.

62. For more about this dualism, see María do Mar Castro Varela and Nikita Dhawan, *Postkoloniale Theorie: Eine kritische Einführung* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2005), 67.

inscription—even if that inscription is encoded utopianism as an agent of subversion.

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II
Black Performance and Practices
of Blackfacing

Blackface and Black Faces on German and Austrian Stages, 1847–1914

Jeff Bowersox

Introduction

There is a regularly reproduced historical anecdote about the incompatibility of Germans and Austrians with blackface minstrels.[1] Depending on the recollection it either concerns Rumsey & Newcomb's Minstrels, who visited German-speaking lands in 1862, or Haverly's Mastodon, who visited around 1880. The accounts agree that an American troupe of blackface minstrels were chased out of the country, even under the threat of legal action, because "aggressive" German audiences were "furious" that they had been swindled by white men in disguise.[2] Presuming this reflected a more general German rejection of blackface, the authors of these accounts reached for explanations. The most cogent noted the linguistic challenges minstrelsy posed for non-Anglophones, but this factor is generally passed over in favor of a supposed lack of whimsy or a failed appreciation for the Anglo-American sense of humor.[3] The facts of the

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1. See, for example, Hugh Honour, "The Art of Observation," in *The Image of the Black in Western Art*, vol. 4, *From the American Revolution to World War I*, part 2, *Black Models and White Myth*, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 69; David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 218; Cathy Covell Waegner, "Blackface Minstrelsy and Ethnic Identity as Globalized Market Commodities," in *Imagined Identities: Identity Formation in the Age of Globalism*, ed. Gonul Pultar (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014), 127.

2. Frank Dumont, "The Younger Generation in Minstrelsy and Reminiscences of the Past," *New York Clipper*, March 27, 1915, 6.

3. "Banjo and Bones," *Saturday Review of Politics, Literature, Science and Art*, June 7, 1884,

matter remain in doubt, as I have been unable to verify this "legend" in contemporary German-language sources. There is some reason to believe that German audiences might have been deceived in one way or another on various occasions, but the vision of credulous, overly serious Teutons being outraged by this deception fits a stereotype a bit too neatly to be accepted at face value.

Nevertheless, this anecdote has proved useful for telling a particular story, namely that the racialized comedy of blackface minstrelsy somehow does not suit Germans and Austrians. There are two versions of this presumed incompatibility. The first, and less subtle, was propounded most forcefully during the wave of theater controversies starting in 2012, which, as Evelyn Annuß describes in her contribution to this volume, centered on the use of white actors in makeup playing Black characters.[4] As Katrin Sieg has summarized it and as Andrea Geier notes in her contribution to this volume, the argument runs that German *Blackfacing* actually serves to "deconstruct racial identity and difference." It can do this for two reasons. First, so the argument goes, blacking-up was rare in central Europe. Second, to the extent that it has ever been practiced, blackface has never supported an oppressive social system, as it did in the United States.[5] Accordingly, those who criticized theaters' casting of white actors in minority roles imposed a foreign version of political correctness on Germany and Austria and, in the process, challenged the right to free speech. The literary commentator Denis Scheck made this point explicitly when he intervened in a related debate over the removal of racialized language from classic children's books. On his ARD show *Druckfrisch*, he complained about censorship and the erasure of history while dressed in a minstrel costume of blackface, suit and tie, and white gloves, drawing widespread

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739–40, reprinted in *The Critic*, June 28, 1884, 308–9. The legend was reproduced in two later reminiscences from 1915 that have served as the main sources for its dissemination. Dumont, "Younger Generation," 5–7; Brander Matthews, "The Rise and Fall of Negro-Minstrelsy," *Scribner's Magazine*, June 1915, 754–59, later published in *A Book about the Theater* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1916).

4. Sharon Dodua Otoo, "Reclaiming Innocence: Unmasking Representations of Whiteness in German Theater," in *The Little Book of Big Visions: How to Be an Artist and Revolutionise the World*, ed. Sandrine Micossé-Aikins and Sharon Dodua Otoo (Münster: Edition Assemblage, 2012), 54–70; Hannah Voss, *Reflexion von ethnischer Identität(szuweisung) im deutschen Gegenwartstheater* (Marburg: Tectum, 2014), 85–132; Frederike Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme: Blackface und Minstrelsy in Berlin um 1900* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2017), 271–75.

5. Katrin Sieg, "Race, Guilt, and Innocence: Facing Blackfacing in Contemporary German Theater," *German Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2015): 119.

condemnation.[6] Bemused by the response, Scheck countered that he was using blackface in a carnivalesque sense, ironically and satirically, and that blacking-up has a different meaning in Germany than it does in the United States: "Therefore I must insist that I did not wear 'blackface' in the sense of the American use of the concept."[7]

In addition to this popular discourse insisting that German uses of blackface are free of American-style racism, there is a second, academic argument for a tension between American-style blackface and German and Austrian sensibilities. In his article examining German commentary on blackface comedy in the 1880s and 1890s, Jonathan Wipplinger provides the most nuanced engagement with the legend of the swindled audience mentioned above.[8] He questions the legend's veracity but then uses it to suggest that Germans had a fundamental "resistance" to blackface. He sees the source of this resistance in a latent recognition that "Blackness" was a product of modern mass culture in a global age, a racial fantasy that was destabilized by the spectacle of white performers blacking-up. Wipplinger's analysis is insightful, particularly in identifying how Blackness could serve as a key for decoding the broader tensions of modernity. But I think he overstates the ideological resistance provoked by whites in blackface. As I will suggest in passing below, Black performers proved far more destabilizing. Indeed, as Wipplinger and Annuß also discuss in their chapters in this volume, it was Black performers who most profoundly challenged developing racial certainties and provoked strategies to diminish those challenges.[9]

By contrast, I will argue here that Germans and Austrians adopted blackface and adapted it in ways that produced and reinforced racialized

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6. Hannah Pilarczyk, "Die Maske des Denis Scheck," *Spiegel Online*, January 30, 2013, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/denis-scheck-rassistischer-sketch-in-ard-sendung-druckfrisch-a-880157.html; Sally McGrane, "A Fight in Germany over Racist Language," *New Yorker*, January 31, 2013, https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/a-fight-in-germany-over-racist-language

7. "Denis Scheck wehrt sich gegen Rassismus-Vorwürfe," *Aachener Zeitung*, February 2, 2013, https://www.aachener-zeitung.de/kultur/denis-scheck-wehrt-sich-gegen-rassismus-vorwurfe/3260903.html

8. Jonathan Wipplinger, "The Racial Ruse: On Blackness and Blackface Comedy in *Fin-de-Siècle* Germany," *German Quarterly* 84, no. 4 (2011): 457–76.

9. Jeff Bowersox, "Seeing Black: Foote's Afro-American Company and the Performance of Racial Uplift in Imperial Germany (1891)," *German History* 38, no. 3 (2020): 387–413; Kira Thurman, "Singing the Civilizing Mission in the Land of Bach, Beethoven, and Brahms: The Fisk Jubilee Singers in Nineteenth-Century Germany," *Journal of World History* 27, no. 3 (2016): 443–71.

boundaries. I will survey the history of blackface touring from the arrival of the first minstrel troupe in 1847 through a decades-long boom that began in the late 1860s. Thanks to these tours and related commentary, blackface minstrelsy became a familiar, if also recognizably "foreign," entertainment form. It did not provoke general rejection or ambivalence, even if some critics derided it as lowbrow, but instead became part of broader debates over major social changes. I will follow this survey with a close reading of four contemporary scripts and scores to show how Germans and Austrians were also willing to take up blackface tropes for themselves. "Germanized" minstrels used racial difference as a fixed point from which to comment on the morality of commercial entertainments and shifting gender norms in a distinctively central European context.[10] In this they drew discursive resources not only from colonial contexts but also from transatlantic exchanges. It is important to note that blackface minstrelsy, in central Europe as in North America and Britain, was never solely about racial degradation even if it was crucially important for establishing racist norms and practices.[11] However, to the claim that Germans and Austrians had never really worn blackface "in the sense of the American use of the concept," I respond that over the long nineteenth century they had not only adopted Anglo-American blackface but also made it their own.

Setting the Stage

In 1847–1848 a quintet named the Lantum Ethiopian Serenaders became the first minstrel group to visit the German lands.[12] They had been among the earliest imitators of F. C. German's original Ethiopian Serenaders, distinguishing themselves only through their use of a newly invented instrument called the "lantum," and they followed German's troupe from the United States to Great Britain in 1846.[13] The "Lantums" had been touring

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10. Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme*, 4–15, 253–55.

11. For a useful introduction to the extensive and diverse literature on minstrelsy, see Sarah Meer, "Minstrelsy and Uncle Tom," in *The Oxford Handbook of American Drama*, ed. Jeffrey H. Richards and Heather S. Nathans (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 81–86.

12. The members were Dryce, Laurain, Adwin, Marly, and Stainer, and little is known about them outside of their involvement in this troupe.

13. The lantum was some sort of reed instrument operated using a bellows, perhaps like an accordion or a bagpipe. A German reviewer described it as "a large pan-harmonica fitted with slides and 95 keys." "Kleine deutsche Theaterschau," *Der Humorist*, January 5, 1848, 14.

Figure 7.1. The Lantum Ethiopian Serenaders (ca. 1840s–1850s), London Picture Archive

Britain successfully since 1846, but as the market for minstrelsy became increasingly competitive they sought opportunities on the continent. In the summer of 1847 the Lantums spent five months in the Netherlands before, in October 1847, beginning their German tour. Billed generically during their tour as "American N**** singers"[14] (*amerikanische*

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14. Unless otherwise indicated, I have translated the German word *N***** into English as "Negro," which will be indicated hereafter as "N****"; the German N-word will be italicized. The German N-word is not an easy word to translate into English. Historically its use has spanned the range between, on the one hand, a descriptive use that parallels the outdated English "N****" and, on the other, the pejorative English N-word (indicated hereafter as "n*****"). As indicated in the introduction to this volume and in Geier's chapter in this volume, in the present the use of the German N-word is unquestionably offensive and racist in a way that "N****" is not in Anglophone contexts. However, I translate it here as "N****" for two reasons. First, it indicates that the term was regularly used in the period as the prevailing descriptor for Black people, a use that was not necessarily pejorative in intention even if it was also bound up with degrading colonial and racist notions. Second, it allows me to distinguish between these uses and the adoption into German of the English N-word, the dynamics of which I will briefly explain below.

N****sänger), they visited at least eleven cities and performed before two kings and four dukes.[15]

Although their show was mostly copied from other groups, it seems to have entertained audiences. The Lantums performed a mixture of comic and melancholic songs, and their closing number was a "living locomotive" routine that epitomized a sort of ethnographic clowning.[16] It was meant to reflect a characteristic "drive to imitation" (Nachahmungssucht) and childish delight of their subjects when confronted with a technological wonder.[17] The German performances were widely reported on, and reviewers agreed that the performers offered a hilarious picture of a world turned upside-down.[18] Reviewers enjoyed the spectacle of "civilized" white men clowning about, trying to convince the audience that they were Black or South Asian even as their makeup rubbed off. Their buffoonery, padded out with a measure of exotic allure, led reviewers to characterize the show as a lowbrow pleasure. At the same time, they could praise the Lantums as respectable family entertainment because, they were assured, the performers were experts who knew the character of their subjects from long study.[19] This tension produced by combining Barnumesque bunkum and presumed ethnographic insight was central to the minstrel show's appeal.[20]

We should not underestimate the degree to which these performances confused German audiences even as they delighted. Beyond a simple lack of familiarity, there were some practical barriers to audiences' full engagement with the dialogue and song lyrics. Most notably, the show was performed in English and in a minstrel version of "N**** dialect," and it is indicative in this regard that reviewers only commented on the instruments, melodies, costumes, and physical comedy. Although commenta-

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15. They began their German tour in Elberfeld and ended in Hamburg, with Marly and Stainer leaving town just as the 1848 March Revolution was kicking off. In between they performed in Cologne (Köln), Hanover (Hannover), Brunswick (Braunschweig), Württemberg, Berlin, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, Oldenburg, Weimar, and Stettin. Thanks to Sarah Adams for providing details of their Dutch tour.

16. For descriptions of the original Ethiopian Serenaders' railroad overture, which the Lantums shamelessly copied, see "The Ethiopian Serenaders," *Illustrated London News*, January 24, 1846, 61; "N****-Virtuosen," *Illustrierte Zeitung*, April 18, 1846, 260.

17. *Königlich privilegierte Berlinische Zeitung von Staats- und gelehrten Sachen*, January 8, 1848, 11; "Kleine deutsche Theaterschau," 14.

18. "Journal-Echo," *Der Humorist*, January 22, 1848, 75; "Correspondenz," *Der Ungar*, January 21, 1848, 132.

19. "Nachrichten," *Neue Berliner Musikzeitung*, November 3, 1847, 366–67.

20. Wipplinger, "The Racial Ruse," 462; Meer, "Minstrelsy and Uncle Tom," 83–84.

tors tried to explain the performances in terms of familiar categories of "national" and "folk" or highbrow and lowbrow entertainments, they inevitably returned to novelty as the defining characteristic. Perhaps the most honest reviewer noted that he found himself "in a sort of amused despair over these comics from another world, whom I simply do not know how to classify."[21] Unlike fellow commentators, the critic found the usual language of nationally distinctive characteristics to be utterly inadequate for conveying the nature of the strange performances or their obvious appeal to audiences. And while the critic doubted that a professor of aesthetics would recommend the show, there was no doubt that "he could not help but laugh as heartily and irresistibly as the entire auditorium."[22]

These carnivalesque confusions of aesthetic and ethnographic categories briefly captivated Germans, so much so that locals even tried their hand at minstrelsy. During the Lantums' first visit to Hamburg a rival venue produced a musical parody entitled "The N**** Concert, or: The Americans in Hamburg."[23] Another competing venue introduced comic blackface minstrel performances into their "*Grand Revue musicale européenne.*" Advertising the latter, promoters praised the skill of one Herr Esterton, whom they called the "Sorcerer of the South" (*Zauberer des Südens*) in a reference either to the American South or to Africa; it was apparently due to Esterton's cosmetic magic that they could black-up the two zither-playing musicians.[24] The numbers they performed made clear the reference to the Lantums; they included a "N**** polka" and a "Railroad Galop," and the show closed with all the musicians riding offstage on the yet-to-be-built railroad to Lübeck.[25]

Regrettably we do not have many details of these shows, but there are indications that Germans already were adapting the form to match their own reference points. The two blackface zitherists in the *Grand Revue* were identified in their first show as "the N****, Misters Black & White" (*den N****n, Hren. Schwarz u. Weiß*).[26] The obvious pun on racial binaries and masking was a standard minstrel trope, but this was updated for their second show. The new program billed the performers as the "the N**** Mehmed & Wialba," who, because of their "particular servility," would be

21. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 9, 1847, 2.

22. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 9, 1847, 2.

23. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 15, 1847, December 4 and 18, 1847, 1.

24. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 17, 1847, 4.

25. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 20, 1847, 4. Other venues were also inspired by the railroad routine. See *Hamburger Nachrichten*, March 11, 1848, 6.

26. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 17, 1847, 4.

involved throughout the entire program.[27] Herr Wialba is probably the same performer "from Athens" who had performed "natural magic and Egyptian wizardry" in Hamburg earlier in the year.[28] It is unclear who Herr Mehmed might be, but he likely adopted the Turkish name for this performance, perhaps to match something in Wialba's act. The Orientalist references suggest an attempt to associate the American form with a more familiar local tradition. Instead of referring to a pretentious Black dandy from an American city or a happy-go-lucky enslaved Black man from a southern plantation, the servile Wialba and Mehmed point in a different direction. They call on a connection between Black servitude and Islam that, in the German lands, was embodied in the figure of the "courtly M***" (*Hofm****).[29]

The Lantums left a memorable impression, although ultimately they proved to be a passing fad; as I will discuss below, blackface minstrelsy did not become common until the late 1860s.[30] Nevertheless, there are two points to be made about their enthusiastic reception. First, all agreed that the shows were lowbrow and had little aesthetic value but were nevertheless respectable, family shows. In a way that paralleled later *Völkerschauen* (ethnographic "people shows"), ethnographic pretensions served to authorize middle-class enjoyment of the exotic spectacle of racialized others.[31] The controversies that came in later years, such as with the legend of the swindled audience that opened this chapter, revolved chiefly around racialized debates over these aesthetic considerations rather than racial deception or a poor sense of humor. In other words, audiences were not

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27. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 20, 1847, 4.

28. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, April 15, 1847, 8.

29. On the uses of images of courtly M***s from the early modern period to the present, see Jeff Bowersox, "Troubling the Nation: Blackness and Black Germans in German Public Space," in *Curating Transcultural Spaces: Perspectives on Postcolonial Conflicts in Museum Culture*, ed. Sarah Hegenbart (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2024), 168–89. On the interplay between early modern courtly representation and the experiences of Black courtly servants, see Anne Kuhlmann-Smirnov, *Schwarze Europäer im Alten Reich: Handel, Migration, Hof* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2013), 185–225; Peter Martin, *Schwarze Teufel, edle M***en* (Hamburg: Junius, 1993), 81–193. For further historical sources, see *Black Central Europe*, https://blackcentraleurope.com

30. Ernst Kossak, "Der Thiergarten," in *Berlin und die Berliner* (Berlin: Hofmann, 1851), 132; "Correspondenz: New York," *Atlantis: Zeitschrift für Leben und Literatur in England und Amerika* 2 (1854): 575.

31. Andrew Zimmerman, *Anthropology and Antihumanism in Imperial Germany* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 173–74; Anne Dreesbach, *Gezähmte Wilde: Die Zurschaustellung "exotischer" Menschen in Deutschland 1870–1914* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2005), 286–87.

disappointed about the appearance of costumed performers as much as they were about being confronted with a burlesque spectacle when they expected an authentic and cultivated performance.

Second, the positive response to the show's presentation of comical childishness and noble suffering foreshadowed the enthusiastic reception of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[32] As Heike Paul argues, Germans embraced Beecher Stowe's melodrama chiefly because it provided a metaphor for their own suffering. Commentators used the work to talk about the demeaning treatment of German immigrants in the United States or the enduring oppression of aristocratic rule in a divided central Europe. As a consequence, German discussions tended to marginalize the particular experiences of African Americans, reducing them to buffoonish or long-suffering types.[33] Nevertheless, the book sparked a wider German interest in African American folk music mediated imperfectly through minstrelsy, not least because the many stage adaptations of the novel required music to reflect the story's themes and setting. German music publishers imported American and British minstrel hits, and many German composers wrote their own pieces, hoping to capture some essence of American popular music and African American folk forms. To judge by the new music reported monthly in *Hofmeisters Musikalisch-literarischer Monatsbericht*, so-called "N**** songs" occupied a small but fixed place within the music marketplace already by the 1850s and 1860s.[34]

This place was reinforced by the wave of blackface minstrels touring from the late 1860s. I will discuss this in more detail below, but it is worthwhile noting in passing that Germans' and Austrians' understandings of "N**** songs" were then expanded meaningfully by touring African American performers. The most significant in this regard were the Fisk Jubilee Singers in 1877–1878, who moved audiences with their "spirituals." They took the religious folk songs sung among enslaved Blacks, which spoke of endurance, redemption, and faith, and adapted them into a

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32. Grace Edith Maclean, *"Uncle Tom's Cabin" in Germany* (New York: D. Appleton & Company, 1910), 21–29, 35, 47–50.

33. Heike Paul, "'Schwarze Sklaven Weiße Sklaven': The German Reception of Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*," in *Amerikanische Populärkultur in Deutschland*, ed. Heike Paul and Katja Kanzler (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2002), 23–32; Heike Paul, *Kulturkontakt und "Racial Presences": Afro-Amerikaner und die deutsche Amerika-Literatur, 1815–1914* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 2005), 133–35.

34. The musical works and composers listed in *Hofmeister* up to 1900 can be found through the searchable database Hofmeister XIX (http://www.hofmeister.rhul.ac.uk/2008/index.html), while the Österreichische Nationalbibliothek's ANNO project (http://anno.onb.ac.at/) includes the print run from 1829 to 1945.

refined art music that demonstrated their Christian devotion, possession of a legitimate folk culture, and skill as concert singers.[35] In an entirely different vein, other touring groups of Black performers adapted minstrel styles. These performers variously sought traces of an "authentic" folk past in a commercial genre built on racist caricatures and explored entertaining ways to repurpose those racist caricatures to assert Black humanity.[36] They creatively appropriated and reinvented old tropes and incorporated choral and folk forms, using tactics that, as Evelyn Annuß describes in her chapter in this volume, were later cited by performers like Josephine Baker. They also helped to popularize the new forms of ragtime music and dance in the German-speaking lands.[37]

In the immediate wake of the Lantums and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, however, German critics could not come to any consensus on the value of "N**** songs." In the 1850s the debates were carried out mainly among a small group of commentators, but the issues they raised continued to shape the reception of blackface and Black entertainers up to 1914. Some praised them for offering a liberating encounter with an authentically African American folk essence, while others decried them as fraudulent or racially debased music aimed only at turning a quick profit.[38] This crossing of ethnographic and aesthetic categories not only made for a diverse range of opinions on these entertainments. When blackface minstrels became a more regular presence in the German lands, the genre became a particularly useful tool for expressing concerns about commercialism and the racial boundary-crossings made possible by transatlantic and colonial encounters.

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35. Thurman, "Singing the Civilizing Mission."

36. In his magnificent study of the African American blackface star Bert Williams, Louis Chude-Sokei summarizes Williams's career in this way: "He was a black man who came to fame masquerading as a white racist caricature of a 'black man' which ultimately mocked and erased that primary caricature." Louis Chude-Sokei, *The Last "Darky": Bert Williams, Black-on-Black Minstrelsy, and the African Diaspora* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

37. Bowersox, "Seeing Black"; Fred Ritzel, "Synkopen-Tänze: Über Importe populärer Musik aus Amerika in der Zeit vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg," in *Schund und Schönheit: Populäre Kultur um 1900*, ed. Kaspar Maase and Wolfgang Kaschuba (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 161–83.

38. See, for example, Moritz Busch, "Zur Charakteristik der N**** in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Das Ausland*, August 2–5, 1852, 733–35, 738–39, 745–47; Ludwig Wittig, "N****-Poesie in den Vereinigten Staaten," *Magazin für das Literatur des Auslandes*, October 1857, 489–90, 494–95, 498–99, 502–3.

Blackface as Foreign Import

Despite the success of the Lantums, the immense popularity of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and the occasional publication of "N**** songs," in the 1850s and early 1860s blackface minstrelsy was still an unfamiliar curiosity to most Germans. They understood the genre generically as a distinctively American or British entertainment form that expressed some truth about African American "character," but there were few performers to provide specificity to those vague presumptions.[39] Looking at the two largest touring troupes I have uncovered between 1848 and 1866 suggests that Germans' expectations could vary widely. First, an American "M*** and Mulatto Company" (*M***en- und Mulattengesellschaft*) performed in Berlin and Hamburg from December 1856 to February 1857. It is not clear from the press coverage whether the troupe consisted of white performers, lighter-skinned Black performers, or both, which would have been quite unusual at the time. However, it is clear that the performers blacked-up "to heighten the effect," which occasioned a humorous "fiasco" at one of their first performances in Berlin. When the audience at Kroll's Theater noticed the makeup, they heckled the performers and walked out, although they apparently did so "in a jolly mood."[40] Otherwise the company seems to have played for enthusiastic crowds, even if critics were more divided on the artistic merit of their singing and dancing.[41] By contrast, Rumsey & Newcomb's Minstrels seem to have disappointed audiences and critics alike when they briefly performed in Berlin in March and April 1862. The cause was not fraud, as per the legend of the swindled audience, but rather because their burlesque comedy was judged to be out of place in the Viktoria Theater, a venue for more respectable entertainments. Complaints ceased when organizers moved the show to a stage within a local circus.[42]

The 1866 arrival of the Jerome Christy Minstrels (aka "Jeremy Christy Minstrels" and "Christy's Star Minstrels"), one of many troupes trading on the famous name of the late E. P. Christy, marked a turning point. Likely

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39. The regular, albeit often brief, appearances of minstrels in reports on the entertainment scene in American or British cities would have helped spread this generic understanding among the German reading public.

40. *Hamburger Nachrichten*, December 4, 1856, 1.

41. *Kemptner Zeitung*, December 7, 1856, 1177; M. R., "Theater bei Kroll," *Vossische Zeitung 1. Beilage*, December 3, 1856, 2; Alwill Raeder, *Kroll: Ein Beitrag zür Berliner Cultur- und Theater-Geschichte* (Berlin: Hugo Steinitz Verlag, 1894), 328.

42. *Vossische Zeitung*, March 28, 1862, 8; Kossak, "Berliner Courier," *Die Presse*, April 11, 1862, 2; *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 13, 1862, 3.

looking for an escape from their competition in London, they performed in Hamburg from March to May 1866 and then returned again the following spring; they, or another group like them, also performed in Berlin in October and November 1867. In October 1868, two more blackface troupes opened in Berlin and Vienna, and the latter, a different troupe performing as Christy's Minstrels, was an enormous success. Their run in Vienna lasted until July 1869, interrupted only by excursions to cities like Munich, Budapest, and Graz, and they went on to close the year in Hamburg. In 1870 they split into smaller groups that toured independently, performing in major cities as well as in towns as small as Halberstadt in Prussian Saxony and Braunsberg (Braniewo) and Lyck (Ełk) in East Prussia.[43] The success of these troupes drew a regular stream of blackface performers from Britain and the United States from the 1870s through the turn of the century, when their numbers declined in the face of African American performers.[44] Even if blackface was never as widespread in central Europe as in North America or Britain, blackface performers were a regular presence in major cities, Vienna above all: from 1869 into the 1880s the Habsburg capital regularly had dueling blackface acts. Although associated with metropolitan entertainments, blackface still resonated in all parts of the German lands, as is suggested by the appearance of minstrel figures in locally run puppet theaters in cities as far apart as Czernowitz (Chernivitsi) and Cologne.[45]

This circulation of entertainers and their wider impact in commentary and visual culture mean that it would be hard to argue that German and Austrian audiences were ignorant of or resistant to blackface minstrelsy by the end of the 1870s. To provide just one measure, minstrel toys even became fashionable in the 1880s and continued to be sold up to 1914.[46] Acknowledging this familiarity is not to deny that there was potential for confusion, for example, in 1879–1880 when white American impresarios organized a spectacular touring production of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.[47] The

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43. *Deutscher Bühnen-Almanach*, 2. Teil 1871, 31, 126.

44. These generalizations are based on extensive surveys of newspapers, most notably but not exclusively those that have been digitized in databases like Austrian Newspapers Online (http://anno.onb.ac.at/), the Zeitungsinformationssystem (http://zefys.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/), and Europeana (https://www.europeana.eu/).

45. *Bukowinaer Rundschau*, December 24, 1891, 4; *Mährisches Tagblatt*, December 10, 1896, 4.

46. Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire*, 220–25; Jeff Bowersox, *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 28–30.

47. Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme*, 89–179.

Figure 7.2. Clown gags: The clowns as N**** minstrels (1903), author's collection

company included dozens of African Americans who filled out the choir and comic interludes, but many reviewers did not notice that the Black characters were all played by white actors in makeup. When this was revealed, however, it did not cause any scandal.[48] In all of the cases above, there is no evidence that audiences were as naive about or outraged by blackface deception as the legend of the swindled audience would have it.

On the contrary, I would argue that from the 1860s Germans and Austrians soon came to understand minstrelsy as a form of burlesque, racialized clowning *defined by* its deception, as is nicely illustrated by the inclusion of a minstrel among a group of clowns in a set of Liebig collectible

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48. See, for example, *Neue Freie Presse*, January 19, 1879, 7; January 21, 1879, 7.

cards.[49] Although blackface entertainers still remained a source of presumed ethnographic truth on some level, it was their mask that made minstrelsy appealing and useful to Germans and Austrians.[50] By blurring the boundaries between authenticity and parody, the minstrel mask provided cover for performers, composers, commentators, and audiences to explore subversive behavior from the position of a racialized outsider. In the process, they could grapple with issues raised by transatlantic or colonial exchanges and by the rise of an urban culture of cosmopolitan commercial entertainments. What were the ethical and political implications of embracing foreigners and their cultural forms, and how did those implications change across lines of gender and class? Was there such a thing as an authentic "national" or "folk" culture in an era of such mobility, exchange, and mutability? What was the relative value of pleasure versus edification in popular culture, and who should determine that balance? In an era of widely accessible commercial entertainments, should cultural life be organized around a quest for uplifting, universal forms or around an effort to undermine the self-serving claims of staid authorities?

As Eric Lott suggests in his study of American blackface, the embrace of minstrelsy involved a "simultaneous drawing up and crossing of racial boundaries," a desire for the culture of a racialized other that must be suppressed through ridicule that depended on the production of racialized binaries.[51] In German and Austrian appropriations of blackface, we can see this contradictory process at work. The examples that follow reveal the broad appeal of African American entertainers and entertainments, an appeal that provoked considerable anxiety among many commentators and necessitated defensive strategies. They also illustrate a "Germanization" process at work, whereby American blackface was adapted to suit local references and debates. In this sense, these sources show Germans and Austrians taking part in a transatlantic circulation of American representations of Blackness and in the local production and popularization of racialized binaries as part of an effort to contain the anxieties produced by this circulation.[52]

49. "Clown-Spaesse," *Liebig Sammelbilder* 552, no. 747 (1903).

50. Ironically, blackface performers were used to assess the authenticity of Black performers. See, for example, Rainer Lotz, *Black People: Entertainers of African Descent in Europe and Germany* (Bonn: Birgit Lotz Verlag, 1997), 229–30.

51. Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 6.

52. Grada Kilomba, "No Mask," in *Mythen/Masken/Subjekte*, ed. Susan Arndt et al. (Münster: Unrast, 2009), 80–81; Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme*, 163–76.

Appropriations

Germans and Austrians understood blackface minstrelsy as an Anglo-American form of entertainment, but this did not stop them from appropriating the form—indeed, doing so could serve as a marker of urbane cosmopolitanism. When the renowned Viennese actor and comedian Franz Tewele returned from a residency in New York in 1882, he immediately demonstrated what he had learned; he introduced a blackface minstrel into a commedia dell'arte performance being held for Kaiser Franz Josef.[53] Tewele returned to blackface for a gala Fasching event in 1901, in the context of the sudden popularity of the cakewalk and the recent tour of Barnum and Bailey's circus, which included minstrels. He headlined a troupe of actors from the Deutsches Volkstheater who put on blackface to perform as the "Original American Minstrels," repeating the concept with other performers in 1905. Tewele played a tone-deaf "musical-eccentric" who was repeatedly prevented from singing his song, and Josefina Glöckner portrayed a "*N******-*Cocotte* [*sic*]" dancing the can-can, noted as the high point of the evening.[54] Also performing were one Herr Brandt, who sang a "n*****-Dance Song" (*N******-*Tanzlied*), perhaps some parody of the cakewalk; the "Five Sisters M***ison," a blackface version of the risqué Sisters Barrison; and an actor named Greisnegger who, inspired by his name and the visiting Barnum circus, blacked-up to play the world's largest old man.[55]

    I should note that it is difficult to find Germans and Austrians who performed in blackface exclusively, but many performers, like Tewele, donned the mask occasionally, and revues regularly incorporated black-

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53. "Eine 'italienische Nacht' in Wien," *Neue Freie Presse*, March 16, 1883, 6; Jobs, "Das geistige Wien in der Karikatur," *Wiener Caricaturen*, April 14, 1907, 3.

54. The descriptions of Glöckner's and Brandt's performances used the English pejorative N-word without any translation into German. The German adoption of this word in the period was inconsistent. Its use could range from a conscious deployment of the term as a pejorative insult, often inspired by an understanding of its use in an American context, to a naive misunderstanding of the term as equivalent to the English "N****". In discussions of popular entertainments specifically, the English pejorative was often used by German commentators to indicate the commercial production of specifically American Blackness, as in blackface or in comic performances by African American entertainers. This particular usage of the term seems to have been useful not so much to convey explicit derision per se but to indicate a presumption of exaggeration or inauthenticity. African American entertainers could and did push back against this designation.

55. "Das 'Unterbrettl' im Sophiensaale," *Neues Wiener Tagblatt*, March 10, 1901, 6; F. M. M., "Feuilleton: Wiener Brief," *Innsbrucker Nachrichten*, March 15, 1901, 1.

face characters to perform American-inspired music after the turn of the century.[56] It is not difficult to find examples of blackface minstrelsy resonating more widely. For example, guests at elite costume balls regularly dressed as "*N*****" when blackface performers were in town; in Vienna I have found records of this in 1879, 1880, 1883, 1896, 1900, and 1904. More striking is the number of amateur blackface performances that were part of shows like the one at the heart of Thomas Mann's short story "Luischen."[57] Just in Vienna there are records of amateurs putting on benefit evenings with blackface performance in 1891, 1897, 1898, 1900, 1903, 1904, and 1905. Two of these involved a curious banker named Hans Zasche, who performed in 1891 as one-half of the minstrel duo the Tip Top Brothers. In 1904 he joined a blackface quartet parodying the cakewalk, and in 1905 he took on the role of the "N***** dancer" (*N*****-Tänzer*) Mr. Joung (*sic*) within a three-person blackface act. Zasche also performed in drag as part of the male quintet "The Five Sisters Baritone."[58]

Such performances by professionals and amateurs represented a sort of ongoing commentary on fashionable trends coming from the United States, many of which were associated with touring Black entertainers. Putting on a blackface mask allowed the entertainers and audiences to indulge in mass entertainments while also maintaining some critical distance by associating the problematic elements of those entertainments with abject caricatures of a racialized other. We have few details for most of these performances, but we can see these operations at work in scripts and scores produced by Germans and Austrians for their compatriots to perform. A close reading of four of these sources will illustrate the ways that minstrelsy could be used to comment on concerns about an increasingly international culture of mass entertainments, melding caricatures of American Blackness with specifically German colonial references to create distinctive blackface practices.

My first source is a "grotesque recitation" for four men, published in 1891 by the sketch writer Max Krüger. Entitled "*Die Original-N****sänger-Truppe*" (*The Original N**** Singer Troupe*), it is a straightforward score for the well-known and frequently adapted minstrel song "Rosa Lee." The song is to be sung in dialect-inflected English, and the lyrics include a

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56. Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme*, 4–6, 208–55.

57. The story was first serialized in *Die Gesellschaft* (1901) and then included in the collection *Tristan* (Berlin: Fischer, 1903).

58. "Die Dillettanten-Vorstellung bei Ronacher," *Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung*, January 11, 1891, 29–30; "Bäller und Kränzchen," *Deutsches Volksblatt*, February 18, 1891, 10; *Allgemeine Sport-Zeitung*, February 21, 1904, 185.

Figure 7.3. Max Krüger, *The Original N****-Singer Troupe* (1891), Österreichische Nationalbibliothek

guide to help Germans pronounce the unfamiliar words. Left with just the score, we would have to speculate about how this was to be performed, but thankfully Krüger provided both a dramatic cover illustration and brief instructions. The illustration shows the four male performers—including one in drag—in blackface. They are dressed as clownish *Hosenn***** (literally, "pants-wearing n****"), caricatured Black dandies who conspicuously fail at achieving the norms of respectable European dress.[59] They wear stilts for reasons unconnected to minstrelsy, and they play instruments that are not conventionally part of a minstrel show but can be played with minimal skill. As Krüger explains, the show should start with

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59. The "humor" in this derogatory figure, which could draw on American or colonial references, was that the Black man aspired to respectable norms but could never reach them and was thus doomed to a perpetual stage of half-civilization. Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38–39; Felix Axster, *Koloniales Spektakel in 9x14: Bildpostkarten im Deutschen Kaiserreich* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2014), 142–43.

ENGLISCH.

Imitation eines amerikanischen Negersängers.

von Charles Baron.

Musik von Charles Rolla Op.105.

1.

How d'you do old gentleman?
Any time I go and pen,
Crazy, lazy beggar, hold de Snut!
Don't you know what time it is?
Wont you have a little kiss?
English Beefsteak, dat is gut!
Refrain. ‖: I won't come home till morning,
Till the daylight does appear;
Du bist verruckt, my lady!
Don't you, won't you give me a glass of beer?
Oh yes! :‖

2.

Wont you please give a light?
If you don't I make you fight,
Never says a lady, no!
Now I'll tell you something nice,
And I bet, you'll be suprised,
Sapperment, mich beisst ein Floh!
Refrain. ‖: I won't come home till morning . . . . :‖

3.

Every time I get my money,
Riding on a little pony,
Krabbel an die Wand in die Höh'!
Are the people all an board?
Nee, det is der reene Mord,
I got drunk the other day!
Refrain. ‖: I won't come home till morning . . . . :‖

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Figure 7.4. Charles Baron, "Imitation of a N****-Singer" and "The Black Dandy" (1893), Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin Preußischer Kulturbesitz
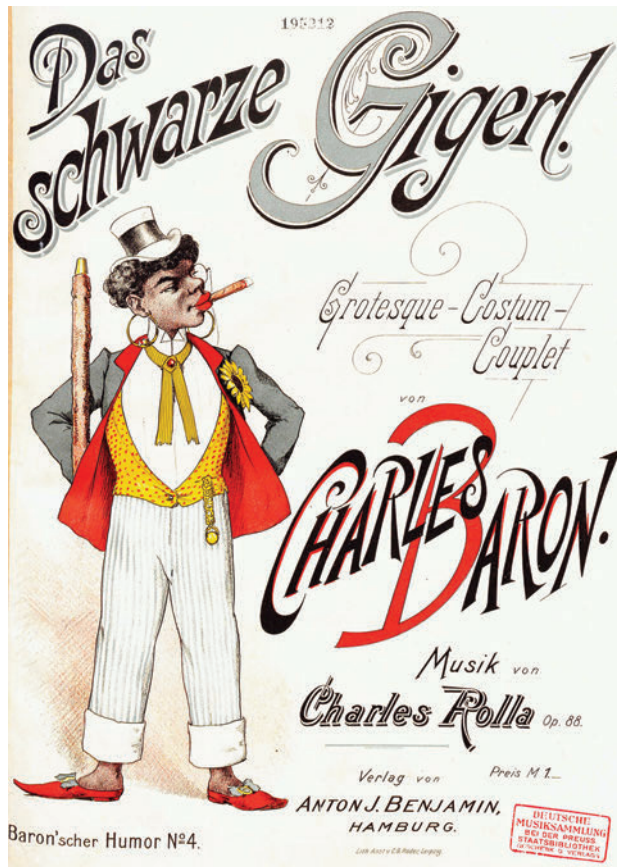
the performers making the greatest racket possible and end with a "comical march around the stage." In between, they should sing the song, but Krüger emphasizes that the performance should be "less about the entirely correct pronunciation of the English text . . . than about the mimicry."[60]

Krüger emphasizes a grotesqueness that is clearly reminiscent of but otherwise moving away from the details of American minstrelsy, which at that time was just beginning to wane in popularity. We can see further distancing from the original and a sort of "Germanization" in a second example from a longtime variety performer named Charles Baron who, in

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60. Max Krüger, *Die Original-N****sänger-Truppe: Grotesk-Vortrag für 4 Herren* (Leipzig: Ernst Eulenberg, 1891).

Renker-Vorträge Nr. 5

Die

Cakewalk-Negerin

Humoristisches Costüm-Couplet

für einen Herrn

von Felix Renker.

Figure 7.5. Felix Renker, *The Cakewalk N***ess* (1909), Deutsche Nationalbibliothek Leipzig, and Ernst Heilmann, *Portrait of the Creole Dora Dean* (1902), Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin

Portrait der Creolin Dora Dean

1893, included two blackface numbers in a collection of his greatest hits.[61] The first was entitled "Englisch: Imitation eines amerikanischen N****sängers" ("English: Imitation of an American N**** Singer"). On one level, the piece mocks the apparent incomprehensibility of minstrel lyrics: the verses are a mixture of English and pidgin German that includes syntactically nonsensical phrases and interjections. On another level, the piece offers a critique of American blackface as lowbrow culture: the lyrics revolve around a minstrel getting drunk, threatening to fight, and imposing himself on unwilling German ladies. With little bits of syncopation

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61. Charles Baron, "Englisch: Imitation eines amerikanischen N****sängers," in *Baron'scher Humor: Repertoire-Nummer des Gesangshumoristen* (Hamburg: Anton J. Benjamin, [1893] 1923).

inserted into the piece for what seems to be comical effect, this is less an appropriation than a satirical representation of the minstrel form as something less than respectable.

By contrast my third source, Baron's *Das schwarze Gigerl* (*The Black Dandy*), is an appropriation tailored to particularly German colonial references.[62] In particular, the author uses minstrel tropes to make a gendered disciplinary point often made in contemporary discussions of *Völkerschauen*: when women are in public spaces and enjoy commercial entertainment, they have a particular responsibility to behave respectably, not least by respecting racialized boundaries. The cover illustration shows a dandyish caricature clearly informed by the stereotypical features of minstrelsy, but this dandy is not American. He hails from Cameroon, speaking in a bastardized sort of English-accented German with English words thrown in, presumably to highlight his foreignness. He also is shown to be harmless through laughing interjections, although the lyrics suggest something potentially more threatening, the stereotype of the oversexed Black man. He crows over his elegance and confides that he likes dating white ladies but is sad that they do not want to kiss his large mouth. In the final couplet he recounts a misunderstanding while dancing with a white lady that led to him squeezing her until her corset broke. Resolving any tension by returning to outright buffoonery, the act closes with an unspecified grotesque dance of Baron's own invention.

The Germanization of blackface represented by Krüger and Baron can also be seen in my fourth source: *Die Cakewalk-N****in* (*The Cakewalk N***ess*), a 1909 couplet from the playwright Felix Renker.[63] The title referred both to the dance that had become enormously popular among middle-class Germans and to the Black dancers who were well known for their performances on variety stages.[64] In Renker's piece the performer is a man in blackface and salaciously revealing drag; the script instructs the performer to wear nothing more than a corset and slip, using a black jersey, undershirt, and gloves to provide the illusion of extensive dark skin showing. This eroticized Black woman is made to appear simple and primitive through flawed German and the interjection of English phrases and sounds of comical wonderment, but she also has terrifying power. Through the lyrics the character tells of performing the cakewalk before

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62. Charles Baron, "Das schwarze Gigerl," in *Baron'scher Humor*, no. 4.

63. Felix Renker, *Die Cakewalk-N****in: Humoristisches Costüm-Couplet für einen Herrn* (Dresden: E. Neumann & Co., [1909] 1921).

64. Astrid Kusser, *Körper in Schieflage: Tanzen im Strudel des* Black Atlantic *um 1900* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 297–320.

German audiences who find themselves overcome with the "fever," a drive to throw off restrictive mores and embrace the physical, the uncontrolled, the overtly sexual. Ultimately, the Germans—most especially the white men trying to get her attention—all end up looking ridiculous. They lack the innate ability that a "N***** girl" ("N*****mädchen") like her possesses, and she mocks them openly for their haplessness.

Like Baron, Renker uses this figure to raise questions about the morality of modern commercial entertainments and, using gendered ridicule, to suggest the futility of trying to imitate racial others. In this way, Renker uses blackface tropes to produce firm racial boundaries, but the stage instructions also reveal how false those boundaries were. When the performer first demonstrates the cakewalk, the text instructs him to dance the "characteristic, grotesque movements of the cakewalk" with "as much caricature as possible—but don't overdo it." There is a revealing slippage here between movements that are somehow both characteristic and caricatured. This points to the extent to which the performed dance could contain neither the actual dance nor the dancers who made it famous in the German lands.

Renker goes beyond Krüger's generically racialized clowning and follows Baron's embrace of blackface, not in response to any concern about minstrelsy but rather to respond to the challenges posed by Black entertainers. The ideological operations of this caricature become clear when we juxtapose it with a contemporary portrait by Ernst Heilemann celebrating the African American dancer Dora Dean.[65] Painted at the dawn of the cakewalk's popularity in Germany, it highlights Dean's grace, capturing both her elegant stage costume and movement. Although identified in racialized terms as "the Creole Dora Dean," the image is otherwise little different from other high-society portraits by the artist and also mirrors her self-presentation in promotional materials. The admiration reflected in Heilemann's portrait points to the ways that Black dancers like Dean poked holes in apparent racial certainties and offered ways for audiences to relate to them across racial lines.[66] Renker's blackface caricature responds to this challenge by redrawing firm and hierarchical racial boundaries. It reduces a celebrated cakewalk dancer to an abject and threatening parody defined by instinct and innate drives rather than imagination and training. It also constructs the white dancer or dance critic as a figure of creative refinement uniquely capable of defining

65. "Bildnisse von Ernst Heilemann," *Berliner Leben* 5, no. 1 (1902): 4.
66. "Bildnisse von Ernst Heilemann," *Berliner Leben* 5, no. 1 (1902): 312–20.

respectability and artistic value. By presenting Black artists as figures to be kept at a distance, Renker and others like him facilitated the appropriation of those artists' undeniably popular work, in effect writing them out of the story of the creation of modern culture. The unstable racialized categories that they produced then circulated more widely as commentators found them useful for confronting the challenges of commercial entertainments, shifting gender roles, and international entanglements.

I would argue that, rather than being unsettled by or resistant to blackface, this sort of production and circulation demonstrates Germans' and Austrians' comfort with the form. Their engagement is an important example of the role played by popular entertainments in producing and reifying racial categories in central Europe. This process was not merely inward-looking but was animated by both colonial contacts and transatlantic exchanges increasingly taking place from the middle of the nineteenth century. As the following chapters illustrate, this active engagement with and adoption of blackface have profoundly and distinctively shaped German and Austrian views of Blackness and whiteness up to the present.

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Racisms and Representation

Staging Defacement in Germany Contextualized[1]

Evelyn Annuß

Performances in blackface have become a central starting point for reflections on racisms and representation in German-language theater. However, for decades, they were not publicly discussed at all. Take Hans Neuenfels's 2001 production of *Titus Andronicus* at Berlin's Deutsches Theater, which had the white actor Ingo Hülsmann perform half-naked and covered entirely with black makeup, taking to the stage with a giant leather phallus.[2] The dramaturgical function of this stereotype of Black sexualized masculinity was fairly unclear; there were, nevertheless, no protests. In contrast, Hülsmann appeared in bright red makeup in Michael Thalheimer's 2019 adaptation of *Othello* at the Berliner Ensemble, after Thalheimer's use of blackface for Dea Loher's *Unschuld* (*Innocence*), staged eight years previously at the Deutsches Theater, met with massive criticism. Blackface was eventually replaced with white makeup.[3] The two Shakespeare productions, separated by almost two decades, testify exemplarily to the local shift in discourse caused by the so-called blackface debate of the early 2010s, which had been prompted by Bühnenwatch (Stage Watch) activists associated with the Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (Initiative of Black People in Germany).[4] Theater makeup

2. Hans Neuenfels, *Titus Andronicus*, Deutsches Theater Berlin, 2001.
3. Michael Thalheimer, *Othello*, Berliner Ensemble, 2019.
4. See www.facebook.com/buehnenwatch; http://isdonline.de/. For the recent, antirepresentationalist discourse shift in the context of the ISD, see the discussion with Bafta Sarbo and

artists have since moved on to color substitutes in order to avoid any reference to the racist history of blackface in the sense of grotesquely racialized masks from US popular culture of the nineteenth century, that is, to the defacement of Black people on stage.[5]

It is not least thanks to activist critique that it has become possible to address racist structures in German-language theater.[6] The success of the blackface debate consisted of putting the long-overdue topic on the agenda. In doing so, however, it led to differing performances being criticized similarly. This is particularly demonstrated by the two Berlin productions that created the biggest stir: Michael Thalheimer's aforementioned 2011 version of Dea Loher's *Unschuld* at the Deutsches Theater and Thomas Schendel's *I'm Not Rappaport* (Herb Gardner) at the Schlosspark-theater in 2012—one a temple of high culture, the other more of an entertainment spot.[7] While the Schlossparktheater absurdly contended that they used black makeup because no suitable actor of Color could be found for the Black role, Thalheimer demonstrably cited US minstrel shows that were increasingly used to denigrate the Black population following the abolition of slavery in the 1860s.[8] The first example is a case of racist casting policies, the other an intentional visual quotation of a racist performance tradition. This is important to differentiate so that it becomes pos-

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Eleonora Roldán Mendívil, "Klassenkampf statt Diversity-Programme: Repräsentationspolitik wird den Rassismus nicht abschaffen," *analyse & kritik* 645 (Januar 2019): 22.

5. See Eric Lott's standard study *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993). Regarding the history of blackface on German stages see also Jeff Bowersox's contribution to this volume.

6. See, for example, the scandal in Berlin's Theater an der Parkaue that led to broad discussions on racism and the abuse of power in the theater context: Ulrich Seidler, "Das ganze Theatersystem ist anfällig für Machtmissbrauch," Berliner Zeitung, February 1, 2020, https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/theater-an-der-parkaue-berlin-das-ganze-theatersystem-ist-anfaellig-fuer-machtmissbrauch-li.1388167

7. See Christopher Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Frederike Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme: Blackface und Minstrelsy in Berlin um 1900* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2017), 271–75; Joy Kristin Kalu, "Dein Blackface ist so langweilig! Was das deutsche Repräsentationstheater von den Nachbarkünsten lernen kann," *Nachkritik*, 2014, www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=10 271:in-sachen-blackfacing-zwischenruf-zu-einer-andauernden-debatte&catid=101:debatte &Itemid=84; Priscilla Layne, *White Rebels in Black: German Appropriation of Black Popular Culture* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2014), 195–96; Hanna Voss, *Reflexion von ethnischer Identität(szuweisung) im deutschen Gegenwartstheater* (Marburg: Tectum, 2014), 85–131.

8. On the historical differentiation, see Annuß, "Blackface and Critique," *Forum Modernes Theater* 29, nos. 1–2 (2019): 64–72.

sible to address distinct dimensions of racism—institutional and aesthetic—in theater and to make concrete demands, be they for alternative castings, for different training premises in acting schools, or for a nondramatic aesthetic that goes beyond (racialized) embodiment.

I would like to concentrate on the question of representational aesthetics, defacement, and othering by mapping its contemporary context. We are currently confronted by new forms of racism and terrorist violence in Germany: during Yom Kippur in 2019, a terror attack on a synagogue in Halle, Saxony, took place. Unable to enter the synagogue, the heavily armed perpetrator started shooting randomly at passersby, inevitably killing two. He was apparently attempting to outdo the respective attacks on a mosque in Christchurch, New Zealand, and an African American church in Charleston in the United States, while attracting maximum attention through reference to the Nazi history of German anti-Semitism. He had published a manifesto in advance and streamed his attack live on the internet in English, i.e., he was addressing a globalized white supremacy bubble, that is, indicating a new dimension in right-wing terror.

Simultaneously, there is a locally specific space of resonance that contributes to the acceptance of racist ideologies, triggers exclusionary practices, and can be read as a breeding ground for terrorism. And this space of resonance extends far beyond the neo-Nazi scene. Shortly prior to the attack, the *völkisch*, extremist, fraction of the right-wing populist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD, Alternative for Germany) won over 27 percent of the vote in Saxony's regional elections.[9] That was preceded by the so-called Joint Declaration 2018, initiated by the Saxon author Uwe Tellkamp and his right-wing circle, which uses social media to target refugees: "With growing bewilderment, we are noticing how Germany is being harmed by the masses of illegal immigration. We declare our solidarity with those who demonstrate for the reestablishment of constitutional order at the borders of our country."[10] The authors of this statement knew very well that this is entirely counterfactual. As a consequence of European border policies, there was anything but mass immigration in 2018. The rhetorical performance of the signatories was intended, however, to depict the German majority as a threatened minority in their own country. This logic is a fundamental characteristic of the right-wing populist

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9. The AfD became the second biggest party in Saxony's 2019 regional elections with approximately 28 percent of the vote.

10. See www.erklaerung2018.de.

politics that have become capable of winning majorities in many countries. It produces a societal climate in which racism appears increasingly legitimate. While exclusionary in locally specific ways, those forms of racism also follow the rules of a globalized economy of affect politics, in which the respective targets of resentment alternate. For precisely this reason, it is politically necessary to form broad alliances against racist policies and to focus on local conditions just as much as on global perspectives. The precondition for such alliances is to mediate between often contradictory discourses that are bound up with the historical development of different exclusionary practices as well as their presentation in the cultural field.

Against the backdrop of an increasing drift to the right, I would therefore like to address *Staging Blackness in Germany*[11] and consider the question of racist *Darstellungen* comparatively, to determine their societal and historical contexts. I am interested in the respective underlying *dispositif* of representation, its political implications, and the specifics of its contexts. Therefore, I will begin with a detour to a Halle neighborhood immediately adjacent to the one where the terror attack took place and in which, a few months before, a theater scandal had raised questions about critical perspectives on racisms and representational aesthetics (section 1). I will thereafter link it to an analogous precursory scandal in the fine arts that focused on the relationship between Blackness and whiteness developed by a specific brand of antiracist discourse developed in the United States (section 2). Finally, I will try to expand the perspective of this essay by historicizing the use of blackface on German-language stages and looking at the afterlife of minstrelsy in the Weimar and Nazi eras (section 3) and, in this way, provide an outlook on the issue of agency and alliances.

Challenging Representation, Redefining Responsibility in Thomas Köck's Ghostly Narrative

For years the Berlin-based author Thomas Köck has been blogging against Nazis and Identitarians.[12] At the time of the publication of the Joint Dec-

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11. On the history of Blackness in the German-language context from different perspectives, see, for the fin de siècle, Gerstner, *Inszenierte Inbesitznahme*; and for the postwar era Layne, *White Rebels in Black*.

12. The self-proclaimed Identitarian movement promotes the rightist phantasma of an ethnically homogenous European culture allegedly threatened by immigration, Islamization, and globalization. See www.nazisundgoldmund.net.

laration 2018 the Schauspiel Leipzig tasked him with writing a play that interwove migration and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Köck consequently produced a text about the way migrants are functionalized. In it, various Vietnamese-German stories can be discerned: stories about those who fled because of the Vietnam War, the so-called boat people who arrived in West Germany in the 1970s and were weaponized by the media during the Cold War; about the Vietnamese contract workers who, a decade later, were excluded from public life in East Germany; and about the subsequent generation growing up in unified Germany. Reflecting on the arbitrariness of border politics, the play is also relevant for a critique of the contemporary fortification of Europe and thus of new forms of institutionalized racism. *Atlas* (2019) shows how people, subjected to conflicting political interests, are confronted with the arbitrariness of border demarcations, finding themselves in illegality, losing their families, and attempting to reorganize their precaritized lives.

The play achieves this without tying its speech to individual characters. Instead, the text functions like a ghost chorus and operates, by means of enjambments and missing punctuation, like Brechtian interruptions, which break with a plot and thereby potentially create space for reflection:[13]

> see the ship
> in the middle of the night ship
> is overstated it has two oars
> it's made of wood well wood is probably
> overstated it floats so let's leave it at that
> it swims i
> i ask myself
> if there was logic to history we
> would not have to constantly tell ourselves new stories[14]

The text entangles and reflects on differing temporal references in a migration story that extends across generations. No part of it is dramatically

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13. See, for example, Bertolt Brecht, "Legende vom toten Soldaten," in *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 11 (Berlin: Suhrkamp/Aufbau, 1988), 112–15 (Eng.: "Legend of the Dead Soldier," http://www.goethe.de/ges/prj/nzv/ret/bbr/enindex.htm).

14. Thomas Köck, *Atlas* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019); "sehe das schiff / mitten in der nacht schiff / ist übertrieben es hat zwei ruder und / ist aus holz gut holz ist wahrscheinlich auch / übertrieben es schwimmt belassen wir es dabei es / schwimmt ich / ich frage mich / gäbe es eine logik in der geschichte wir / würden sie uns nicht andauernd neu erzählen müssen."

spelled out. There are merely ghostly fragments of conversations that cannot be attributed to a single figure. The play works with ambiguous expressions and calculated, referential aberrations. Rhetorically, it rejects the possibility of giving a face to a stage figure, that is, to embody a *dramatis persona*. Therein lies, in my view, the quality and the contemporary relevance of the play. It clearly confronts the growing acceptance of racist ideologies by dealing with the issue of flight, transposing it into *rhetorical defacement* (de Man).[15]

Thereby the play can be read as an allegorization of the lethal pushback of present-day refugees being rendered faceless and ultimately left to die as bare life at the outer borders of Europe. Through its form, it concomitantly raises the specter of other forms of racism and the ultimate necessity of a joint political agenda, that is, alliances of solidarity: the ghostly voicing of so-called boat people, for example, one may say, potentially invokes the global history of enslavement adjacent to the Black Atlantic as an inversion of modern flight movements. Forced onto the ships of European companies across the Indian Ocean to southern Africa in the seventeenth century, people from Southeast Asia became enslaved in the Cape Colony, which led to the formation of a color line other than that created by the US plantation system. In this way, the play offers the possibility of considering the global interrelation of colonial histories and current migration movements.[16]

Atlas addresses a form of racism that targets a supposedly surplus population with which those of us in the theater are rarely faced, as the theater is typically a sanctuary for an aloof middle class. It does so against the backdrop of contemporary border fortification, the criminalization of sea rescue operations by NGOs, and the outsourcing of border policing initiatives, for example, to Libya, where locals have established camps for new forms of enslavement, for forced labor, and for forced sex work. The play thereby makes us reflect on our own involuntary complicity and privileges, recalling the global effects of German history—colonial policies, National Socialism, the postwar period, unification,

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15. See Paul de Man's deconstructive reading of the allegorical in "Autobiography as Defacement," *MLN* 94.5 (1979): 919–30.

16. Regarding the necessity of a global perspective on colonial history and enslavement see Sebastian Conrad, *What Is Global History?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017). On the Black Atlantic, see the seminal work from Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (New York: Verso, 1993); on the ship metaphor in this context, see Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

the current political shift to the right—and the various ways in which bare life has been produced.[17]

Philipp Preuss's production of *Atlas*, though, undercut the potential of the play by having individual stage figures emerge from the flow of speech and letting the performers play out a sort of family drama. The point of departure for critics, however, was that the performers could be read as white. When Köck received the Mülheim Prize for Dramatists for his play, an anonymous flyer appeared that underlines the previously mentioned *dispositif* of representational aesthetics and its problematic:

> If *white* people use the stories of People of Color at their expense, to ultimately appeal to white fantasies and thereby earn a profit, we don't find it worthy of an award, but rather simply a new form of colonial traditions. We demand that all those involved to publicly take a stance criticizing the structural racism and cultural appropriation in their institutions. . . . Furthermore, we suggest that the proceeds of the production and the prize money be donated to nonprofit Asian-German projects that would allow people to tell their own stories self-determinedly. . . . We are more than just your inspiration.[18]

The flyer demands a form of representation that undermines the defigurative strategies used by Köck.[19] Accordingly, the flyer does not differentiate between the problematic casting policies of German theaters, for which an aesthetic of representational embodiment is constitutive, and a decidedly antidramatic play. The anonymous authors' demand for the self-determined narration of their own stories reduces theater to an expression of group-specific experiences. The play does not, however, represent anyone. It rather

17. On the production of bare life, see Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Il potere sovrano e la vita nuda* (Turin: Giulio Einaudi, 1995); *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, translated by Richard Nice (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

18. Open letter of German-Asian artists and supporters to the Schauspiel Leipzig, the Deutsche Theater Berlin, and Mülheimer Theatertage, Flyer 2019 (www.facebook.com/solidaritaetamtheater/posts/655245564937603).

19. On the problem of victim hierarchization, see the consideration of the attack on the Parisian magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Teju Cole, "Unmournable Bodies," *New Yorker*, January 9, 2015 (www.newyorker.com/culture/cultural-comment/unmournable-bodies). On the aesthetics of undetectable *speech* in the context of flight, see Bertolt Brecht, *Flüchtlingsgespräche*, in *Werke: Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe*, vol. 18, part 3 (Berlin: Aufbau/Suhrkamp, 1995); English: *Refugee Conversations* (New York: Methuen Drama, 2019).

reworks aesthetic forms that have informed German-language theater since the 1970s—for example, the plays of Elfriede Jelinek or Heiner Müller—and that differ from the theater concept of the Anglophone world by subverting the embodiment of protagonist figures rhetorically. *Atlas* does not demand the acknowledgment of individuals, but attacks arbitrary exclusionary practices. In doing so, it asks for mutual resistance without depicting it. Köck's ghostly speech in *Atlas*, in which the borders between us and them, me and you, become fluid, thus it not only echoes the brutal effects of contemporary border policies, but also provokes questions about our responsibility. In doing so, the play exposes how the focus on experience and expression disregards the politicality of specific art forms.

Controversies of Art, Race, and Representation

But why should the flyer discussed above be relevant with regard to staging Blackness? Focusing on the author's privileged skin color, it invoked the discourse of critical whiteness.[20] In this particular case, the flyer from Leipzig cites another open letter, which was sent from Berlin to New York in 2017. Causing uproar online, this letter not only indicates the global interconnection of discussions about racisms and representation but their relatedness to a specific US discourse that has become prominent in German antiracist claims. The passage quoted by the Leipzig flyer reads thus:

> The painting should not be acceptable to anyone who cares or pretends to care about Black people because it is not acceptable for a white person to transmute Black suffering into profit and fun . . . white shame . . . is not correctly represented as a painting of a dead Black boy by a white artist. . . . Even if Schutz has not been gifted with any real sensitivity to history, if Black people are telling her that the painting has caused unnecessary hurt, she and you must accept the truth of this. The painting must go.[21]

20. For a critique of the whiteness paradigm by people formerly associated with the German-based postmigrant initiative Kanak Attak, which emerged in the 1990s, see Aida Ibrahim et al. "Decolorize It!" *ak* 575, September 9, 2012, https://www.akweb.de/bewegung/diskussion-um-critical-whiteness-und-antirassismus-decolorise-it/.

21. Hannah Black, open letter to the curators of the Whitney Museum in New York regarding Dana Schutz's *Open Casket*, March 21, 2017; now no longer available on Facebook. See, however, https://conversations.e-flux.com/t/hannah-blacks-letter-to-the-whitney-biennials-curators-dana-schutz-painting-must-go/6287.

That white artists transform the pain experienced by People of Color into profit is already claimed by this letter addressed to the curators of the Whitney Biennial. Hannah Black, a Black-identified, Berlin-based creative artist, demanded shortly before her own performance at New York's PS1 that a painting by the white artist Dana Schutz, which was on display at the prestigious Whitney Museum, be taken down. Schutz's painting *Open Casket* (2016) evokes the iconic photo of Emmett Till's funeral in 1955. Schutz painted over the image, anchored in cultural memory, of the mutilated face of the fourteen-year-old Chicago boy who had been arbitrarily accused, during a family visit to Mississippi, of harassing a white woman and who was subsequently kidnapped, tortured, and murdered by her white supremacist relatives. What Schutz cited—in a fully naive way that ignored the effects of proliferating depictions of racist violence—was a specific, political context: (1) violence against young Black men in the United States against the historical background of enslavement and segregation and its afterlife in white supremacist sedition, (2) the legitimatory evocation of the phantasm of white femininity in need of protection, and (3) the image's political significance in the initiation of the civil rights movements.

Mamie Elizabeth Till-Mobley, Emmett's mother, had decided to leave her son's coffin open in order to show to the world what racist terrorism in the United States had done to her son. The terrible image of the mutilated child drew international attention and triggered an increasingly large antiracist outcry in the United States. Even sixty years after the murder of Emmett Till, racist terror attacks continue against people considered as being nonwhite. Since Donald Trump's presidency, these attacks have increased. The incessant police brutality against young Black men and their mass imprisonment at the hands of an unjust legal system, a perpetuation of the segregation laws of the nineteenth century intended to secure cheap labor power,[22] have, however, also led to the emergence of Black Lives Matter as a new social movement.

Against this backdrop, Schutz translates the historic photo into a semifigurative work of art. She paints over the testament of Emmett's mutilated face with an abstract, brown color field while blurring the edges with a

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22. See Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York: New Press, 2012). The critique of colorblindness doesn't refer here to microaggressions, as it is treated in depoliticized texts by, for example, Robin diAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2018), but to institutionalized forms of racism and therefore societal structures. This also stands in clear contradistinction to bestsellers such as Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018).

black-and-white pattern. Schutz's work reads the historic photo as an allegory instead of as the representation of a person, that is, as a symbol.[23] Through abstraction and the relationship between figure and background, the image exposes its open frame and hints to what lies beyond. Schutz's all-too-evident reference to depictions of racist violence is just as questionable as the Christian sacrifice iconography with which *Open Casket* corresponds. Even so, another reading of the image might suggest that the form of Schutz's work contributes to allegorize the permanent death threats to young Black men.

Hannah Black appears to be just as uninterested in form and its political valences as the German-Asian activists who quoted her implicitly. Schutz's painting is interpreted as mere appropriation of Black pain. Hannah Black deals with it exclusively on the level of anesthetic representation:[24] that is, first, as a one-to-one reproduction of Emmett's dead body, as a renewed mutilation through abstraction, and, second, as the exploitation of a racist spectacle of death. Against the backdrop of ongoing racist exclusion and violence, the act of publicly shaming a white artist can be understood as collateral damage.[25] However, Black and her supporters demanded that the painting be removed from public spaces—in the name of all who, in contrast to the "many white and white-affiliated critics," seriously oppose racism. And this is where the damage becomes dangerous because Black implies that other arguments are preemptively labeled defective and all possible discussions declared over.

Coco Fusco—who had become famous through her appearance with Guillermo Gómez-Peña as two undiscovered Amerindians in a human zoo-like cage in the 1990s—therefore rejected Black's position.[26] As an art-

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23. On the difference between allegory, which says something different from what it means, and the symbol as representation understood as anesthetic, see the scholarly work on Walter Benjamin's *Trauerspielbuch* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1991), 406; Bettine Menke, "Allegorie," in *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe (ÄGB): Historisches Wörterbuch in 7 Bänden*, ed. Karlheinz Barck et al., vol. 1 (Stuttgart: Metzler 2000), 70–104.

24. On the anestheticization of representation, see Juliane Rebentisch, *Die Kunst der Freiheit: Zur Dialektik demokratischer Existenz* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2012); English: *The Art of Freedom: On the Dialectics of Democratic Existence*, trans. by Joseph Ganahl (Cambridge: Polity, 2016).

25. See, in a different context, Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinction: Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 1979); English: *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984).

26. See Coco Fusco, "Censorship, Not the Painting, Must Go: On Dana Schutz's Painting of Emmett Till," *Hyperallergic*, March 27, 2012, https://hyperallergic.com/368290/censorship-not-the-painting-must-go-on-dana-schutzs-image-of-emmett-till/.

ist and art historian who had spent decades critically engaging with racism, she tackled Black's disturbing disinterest in aesthetic critique and interpreted the letter as a call for censorship and the destruction of an artwork as an uncanny reference to fascist affect politics.

And indeed, Black's critique had already been exploited by the alt-right movement. One day after her letter had come out, Milo Yiannopoulos published a split image on Breitbart News. The right-hand side showed *Open Casket*; on the left there was a portrait of Schutz over which had been written with a red pen, "Burn this shit bitch." The text was seemingly intended to recall, for the (alt-right) viewer, the sounds of gangsta rap as well as the book burnings of the Nazis. Yiannopoulos's post is exemplary of the way in which the contemporary Right plays with affect. Its political strategy simultaneously remains in the tradition of D. W. Griffith's propaganda film *Birth of a Nation* (1917) and its promotion of the Ku Klux Klan. The film marked the beginning of the translation of dramatic embodiment aesthetics into Hollywood cinema and rendered white femininity as an icon of sacrifice that justifies the militant "defense" of white supremacy.[27] Yiannopoulos's correspondingly racist and sexist victimization strategy in the name of Schutz makes clear that the problem with Black's letter isn't just about censorship. Arguably, Black and Yiannopoulos share an approach of targeting populist sensitivity triggers on social media.[28] Both decline to engage with the object of their criticism and instead make use of existing confirmation biases in order to attract as much attention as possible.

Unlike Fusco, Black does not ask how the artwork is made and what constitutes its context. Therefore Black cannot determine differing forms of racist (re)presentation, what they imply, or what enables resignification.[29] Moreover, her understanding of representation is grounded in a specifically Afropessimist reading of Blackness connected to the color line that emerged from US history.[30] For this reason, I would like to link the

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27. See Richard Dyer, "Into the Light: The Whiteness of the South in *The Birth of a Nation*," in *Dixie Debates: Perspectives on Southern Culture*, ed. Richard H. King and Helen Taylor (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 165ff.

28. See Angela Nagle, *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt Right* (Alresford, Hants: John Hunt Publishing, 2017).

29. See, for example, Alexander Garcia Düttmann, *Teilnahme: Bewußtsein des Scheins* (Paderborn: Konstanz University Press, 2011).

30. However, it is undergoing critical revisions in the United States while being reappropriated in Germany. Greg Thomas, for example, has challenged Afropessimism as "exception-

critique of the above-mentioned *dispositif* of representational aesthetics exemplified in the readings of *Atlas* and *Open Casket* to the historicization of usages of blackface in the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era.

Resignifying Blackface: Historical Context and Contemporary Challenges

Almost a decade after the flyer campaigns and Facebook posts against blackface by Bühnenwatch and others, practices of public critique in the realm of culture are developing in a way that makes it necessary to open the discussion about notions of representation. In doing so, it is important to outline the potentiality of involving comparative perspectives inasmuch as the outlook on the historicity of performance practices simultaneously demands consideration of the conditions of changeability. Not only from the privileged position of a white German theater studies specialist, but also as a politically thinking and acting being with a research focus on theories of populism and interdependence, I would like to make the case for combating the right-wing discourse with precise analytical work. Neither essentialisms nor outrage will suffice to deal with this discourse in the long term, but perhaps more effective will be a continual argumentation regarding the arbitrariness of racialization and the efficacy of forms of agency that are based on solidarity.

To indicate the possible resignification of racialized performances, I will try to show how American mass culture was translated into another context by using blackface in the Weimar Republic and the Nazi era as an example. The Nazis' hate of the minstrel mask challenges our contemporary notion of blackface and—by means of a contrarian reading—may open our current discourse to critique. The historiographic study of stag-

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alist Americanism"—and does so because this exceptionalism precludes potential alliances and the analysis of the societal causes of exclusion and violence; see "Afro-Blue Notes: The Death of Afro-Pessimism (2.0)?," *Theory & Event* 21, no. 1 (2018): 282–317. From a Pan-African perspective, the text confronts Frank B. Wilderson III, *Incognegro: A Memoir of Exile and Apartheid* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); with reference to Gloria Emeagwali, "Six Types of Afro-Pessimists," *Udadisi*, December 24, 2012, http://udadisi.blogspot.com/2012/12/six-types-of-afro-pessimists.html. For a critique of exceptionalisms see also Adolph Reed Jr., "The Myth of Authenticity and Its Impact on Politics—in New Orleans and Beyond," in *Remaking New Orleans: Beyond Exceptionalism and Authenticity*, ed. Thomas Jesse Adams and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019), 327–50.

ing Blackness in Germany thus offers the possibility of creating new lines of thought through the analysis of performative transpositions and concomitantly of establishing connections to corresponding voices in the global context.

From the late nineteenth century, minstrel shows toured the world and left unforeseen traces in their wake. The afterlife of the blackface tradition in film strengthened this development as late as the 1920s. Burnt cork was taken up in the Ghanaian concert parties and likewise in Cape Town's so-called Coon Carnival.[31] These appropriations were of course anything but an expression of African self-hatred or naive ignorance of racist performance traditions. Rather, blackface was recontextualized and adapted as the potential indicator of a new, globalized mass culture. In the act of this resignification, blackface developed a life of its own. The appropriation of the minstrel mask in entirely different regions of the African continent corresponded, however, to its appropriation in European countries that, through the triangular trade of raw materials, commodities, and humans, had historically been responsible for the invention of a Black race and its white antithesis.

In the Berlin of the 1920s, forty years after the Congo Conference where European powers met to divide up Africa, miscegenation was celebrated as the pleasure product of a new consumer culture.[32] The figurehead of this development was Josephine Baker, who, born in 1906 in the South of the United States, was the daughter of an African American mother and a white father. She later risked her life for the resistance against the Nazis in France, opting against returning "home" from Europe. After the Second World War, she committed herself to the civil rights movement. Baker does not simply represent the Black victim of a white-dominated mass culture. She instead allegorizes the capacity to act performatively in a racist world, to resignify racialized images, and to assume political positions of solidarity.

Baker can be read as a counterfigure to today's discourse on critical whiteness worth remembering. Her art stands for a pact, resistant to bourgeois appeals for individual representation—a pact between creolized dance practices, popular theater, and new media-influenced forms of per-

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31. See Catherine Cole, *Ghana's Concert Party Theatre* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001); Denis-Constant Martin, *Coon Carnival: New Year in Cape Town, Past and Present* (Cape Town: David Philip Publishers, 1999).

32. The Congo Conference is discussed at greater length by Azadeh Sharifi in her chapter.

ception.[33] In the mid-1920s, Baker therewith initiated a new fashion in Europe. Her 1925 performances in the *Revue négre* and other shows became mass attractions from Paris to Berlin to Vienna. While Baker lightened her face using makeup, her audience began to tan themselves in the sun. Baker's banana skirt and the exotic setting of her revues did indeed evoke colonial clichés. However, Baker stood for anything but the supposed authenticity that had been attributed to the people of African descent exploited in human zoos of the nineteenth century. She obviously did not embody any indigenous Africanness but referred instead to the entanglement of performative practices in a new world shaped by mass culture. Baker exposed the similarities between popular dance forms, from the Charleston to the *Schuhplattler*, and demonstrated them as related movement techniques. In response to her performances, the Austro-fascists organized church services to drive out the "brown devil" who was popularizing a globalized new obsession with surfaces that threatened the Right. Baker arrived in Europe, namely, at a time in which societal relations were undergoing a fundamental transformation, and it was by no means clear where the journey would end politically.

The shell shocks of the First World War had had a lasting impact and ensured that many desired a new beginning.[34] Siegfried Kracauer presciently described this radical shift with reference to the mass ornaments of the time.[35] For him, the ornaments appear as an indicator of a modern cult of emptiness that has the potential to call forth a different understanding of social relations based on collective actions. The living ornaments do not function as representations of group figures but rather manifest themselves as human-made artifice, as the effect of joint performative practices. They could—in Kracauer's view—no longer be traced back to ideologies of blood and soil and the phantasma of "organic" cultural roots.[36]

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33. See Anne Anlin Cheng, *Second Skin: Josephine Baker and the Modern Surface* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). On the ambiguous role of Baker's performances during the Weimar era see also Jonathan Wipplinger's exemplary reading of the Berlin club Biguine in this volume.

34. See Anton Kaes, *Shell Shock Cinema: Weimar Culture and the Wounds of War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

35. See Siegfried Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, [1927] 2009); English: *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. and ed. by Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005).

36. On the Nazi's appropriation of ornaments, whereby they were used not as a representation of the *Volksgemeinschaft* but as an ideological communalization of the bird's-eye view as a supposed Führer perspective, see Annuß, *Volksschule des Theaters: Nationalsozialistische*

Therein lies the link to Baker, who took Berlin by storm as an allegory for a creolizing world. As Édouard Glissant detailed in the 1990s, "rootless" collective practices are by no means just a result of the developments of mass culture in the twentieth century. Committed to thinking in transversal relationships instead of phantasms of origin that are haunted by the demons of purity, he refers to the practices of the enslaved. Torn from their cultural context, they had been forced to create—out of various unlocalizable, rhizomatic traces—a creolized and concurrently unpredictable language usable by *tout-monde*.[37] At the beginning of consumer capitalism's production of needs and of a new surface culture, creolized practices entered a globalizing entertainment market.

Baker's creole was dancing. The presentation of her body undercut biological racist projections despite the reference to sexualized colonial clichés, since they were presented as a form of masking in the wake of a new transcontinental movement culture that went beyond identitarian segregation. Baker borrowed from a supposedly lesser-valued subaltern performance tradition that paved the way for the entry of African American performers into a new mass culture[38] and that at the same time sought to limit them to stereotyping performances. There are photos from the early 1920s in which Baker—wearing large shoes and checked dress and with wild eyes—cites the form of the minstrel shows and concurrently testifies to the admixture of clownish popular theater traditions with creolization. In her later performances, Baker still rolls her eyes, twists her face into a grimace, and dances in artificial settings that depict an apparently preindustrial nature.[39] To read this quotation of minstrelsy, it is worth considering Paul Colin's poster for the most famous of the shows, the *Revue négre*. The musicians at the edges, who are visibly furnished with an abstract variant of the minstrel mask and who surround a dancing woman, refer to the context-specific shift in the

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Massenspiele (Munich: Fink, 2019). It later did become clear that these ornaments could be mobilized ideologically, but Kracauer's achievement is to reveal the determining aspect of the mass culture developments of his time.

37. On a creolized *tout-monde*, see Édouard Glissant, *Poétique de la relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990); English *Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

38. See Frederick Douglass's ambivalent descriptions of a minstrel show, in which Black performers appear in burnt cork: "Gavitt's Original Ethiopian Serenaders," *North Star*, June 29, 1849.

39. See Marjorie Garber, *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992). On Baker's iconography, see also Olivia Lahs-Gonzales, *Josephine Baker: Image and Icon* (St. Louis: Sheldon Art Galleries / Reedy Press, 2006).

function of the grotesquely distorted black masks with their overemphasized mouth and wide-open eyes.

Minstrel shows were, from the very beginning, not just part of a performance culture that aimed to deface Black people and that, following the abolition of slavery in the United States, were mobilized by white supremacists. What makes their analysis so complicated is that they simultaneously belonged to a potentially resistant popular theater tradition of the underclasses arriving from Europe to the United States.[40] This tradition of messiness and referential aberrations by a precaritized populace sought not just exclusion but, especially in the border theaters prior to the Civil War, a carnivalesque opening too. While later minstrel shows became corrupted as a mode of performing upward mobility, that is of becoming white, their creolized afterlife, their counterappropriations, can be seen in Baker's performances. And these practices—syncopated moves, puns, exposed impersonations—were banned from the stages of the educated classes and undercut bourgeois representationalism, origin stories, and embodiment. In the 1920s, the minstrel tradition was brought together with a new image culture with which it was related by its own disinterest in roots. Its popularity resulted, particularly in Germany, not least from its turn away from a generation that had celebrated nationalism and unleashed the First World War.[41] Baker's use of minstrelsy's afterlife seemed to address precisely this desire for another aesthetic. Accordingly, less than two years after the triumphal Berlin success of the *Revue négre*, Colin's poster was revised and reused to advertise Ernst Krenek's modern opera *Johnny spielt auf!* (*Johnny Strikes Up!*), first performed in Leipzig in 1927.[42] The depiction of an African American saxophonist also makes reference to the minstrel tradition, translating its iconography into a sign of new music.

In the 1930s, these quotations of a form of masking, which has become

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40. See, with a focus on the popular theater tradition and its transculturality in the German-language context, the theater studies research of the GDR, for example by Rudolf Münz, *Das "andere" Theater: Studien über ein deutschsprachiges teatro dell'arte der Lessingzeit* (Berlin: Henschel, 1979).

41. See, for example, Walter Benjamin's famous comments in his 1933 essay "Erfahrung und Armut," (Experience and Poverty) in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann und Hermann Schweppenhäuser, vol. 2, part 1 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1991), 213–19.

42. Regarding Krenek and the significance of the saxophone on the publicity poster, see Jonathan O. Wipplinger, *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017), 127–28. Reproduction of Colin's poster in Lahs-Gonzales, *Josephine Baker*, 2006, 13.

an absolute taboo in today's theater,[43] were a target for Nazi attacks. A propaganda campaign, according to which Black performers were legitimate only in the role of indigenous extras, mobilized racist affects. The minstrel-informed performances were, in contrast, restyled by the Nazis as a powerful symbol of an uprooted modernity in order to reach those who felt disconnected and threatened from the new mass culture and its ambiguities. In 1937, the propaganda minister Goebbels initiated an exhibition, *Degenerated Art*, that was intended to depict avant-garde aesthetics as "un-German." Up until 1941, the exhibition toured the Nazi "Reich" and attracted no small number of people who knew that the displayed works would disappear from public view for the foreseeable future. In 1938, the local Nazi politician Hans Severus Ziegler organized the successor exhibition, *Degenerate Music*, in Düsseldorf, the city where Baker later celebrated her comeback in 1953.[44]

The publicity poster for Ziegler's exhibition cited the advertisement for *Johnny spielt auf!* and invoked a link between jazz and modern opera. It replaced the face of the saxophonist with a depiction reminiscent of the grotesque minstrel mask and the flower in the buttonhole of the checked minstrel outfit with a Star of David. What the Nazis were attacking in this exhibition, in which twelve-tone music as well as jazz and minstrelsy were targeted, was a new alliance of artistic forms that put their artificiality on display and ignored the nineteenth-century ideologies of rootedness or embodiment. In the Nazi poster, they are amalgamated and linked to the phantasm of a Jewish conspiracy. Abstraction, intellectualism, reflexive citations as well as sexualization and creolization were perceived as a threat to the purity concept of an imagined *Volksgemeinschaft*. Of course, this amalgamation was itself the effect of a world that was creolizing under the conditions of consumer capitalism. The propaganda strategy, which attempted to bring referential aberrations under control by triggering resentment, that is, affect, can thus be understood as equally modern.

Because of the Nazi legacy of using affect for political ends—the turn against "lesser" nonrepresentative forms by racializing them in a specific way—we should recall the prior Weimar resignification of blackface. In the Nazi translation of the minstrel mask and its combination with anti-Semitic propaganda, the necessity of rereading nonrepresentationalist

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43. See Andrea Geier's text in this volume.

44. See Albrecht Dümling and Peter Girth, *Entartete Musik: Zur Düsseldorfer Ausstellung 1938. Eine kommentierte Rekonstruktion* (Düsseldorf: Düsseldorfer Landeshauptstadt, 1988). Goebbels attempted to stop the heavy-handed exhibition but had to cede to the increasingly forceful desires of an anti-intellectual, blood-and-soil faction in the ranks of his own party.

aesthetics and of questioning the opposition between black and white becomes clear.[45] The color line that resulted from the specific history of US slavery is not a timeless given. It differs from the Nazi categorizations as well as from the classification system under South African apartheid with its colonial heritage at the crossroads between the (Black) Atlantic and the Indian Ocean.[46] Correspondingly, the contemporary transfer of the categories of whiteness and Blackness into a German-language context needs to be contextualized and historicized too with its legacy of inner-European coloniality, anti-Semitism, and its current translation into Islamophobia. This may complicate the argument, but it may also allow us to leave the terrain of affect politics dominated by the Right. Instead of inverting essentialisms, just as empty today as they always have been, we need to initiate a debate on contemporary forms of racisms and *Darstellungen* in the sense of forms of presentation that go beyond the demand for representation.[47] In this way, a space can be opened with regard to restaging Blackness as defacement countering hegemonic representationalisms of dominant culture: a space for strategic alliances against the right-wing politics that are threatening to become hegemonic on a global scale. This would, of course, also require a consideration of those German-language theater casting policies that themselves come from a bourgeois understanding of bodily representation inherited from the eighteenth century.

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45. See Moishe Postone, "Anti-semitism and National Socialism," in *Germans and Jews since the Holocaust*, ed. Anson Rabinbach and Jack David Zipes (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986), https://libcom.org/library/anti-semitism-national-socialism-moishe-postone

46. See Mohamed Adhikari, *Burdened by Race: Coloured Identities in Southern Africa* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 2009); Zimitri Erasmus, *Coloured by History, Shaped by Place: Perspectives on Coloured Identities in the Cape* (Cape Town: Kwela, 2001).

47. See, for example, Jens Kastner and Lea Susemichel, *Identitätspolitiken: Konzepte und Kritiken in Geschichte und Gegenwart der Linken* (Münster: Unrast 2018).

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The Biguine

The African Diasporic Presence at Weimar's End

Jonathan Wipplinger

On December 26, 1932—exactly ten months to the day from its opening—the Biguine, a small entertainment venue in the Martin-Luther Straße, closed its doors.[1] Billed as "Berlin's First N**** Bar," throughout the course of its brief existence the Biguine showcased almost exclusively Black artists, while also featuring Tahitian, Japanese, and white European artists. If Black performers were hardly foreign to German stages during the Weimar Republic, the Biguine nonetheless differed from others of the period in a number of salient ways. For one, the Biguine did not simply include Black artists in its shows—most popular cabarets and revue theaters did so—it featured them as the main billing. Even more significantly, Black women were central to its program and its most important and memorable performers. These and other distinguishing qualities of the Biguine created a fleeting confluence of conditions that over the course of 1932 brought together disparate groups of Black artists to an unparalleled degree for Weimar Berlin, specifically, three Black women vocal artists that appeared in consecutive performances between June and September 1932.

The aim of this chapter is to trace how (and why) the Biguine became such an important node for Black artists in Berlin. At the same time and as a means of furthering the transnational reimagining of this era, it will also argue that the Biguine's uniqueness must be understood as having been determined as much by German history as by European colonialism, African American culture, and the African diasporic presence across Europe. Only in consideration of these multiple, interconnecting

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1. "Berlin ohne N****bar"; "Eine Bar sagt adieu."

elements can its distinctive place within Weimar culture be reconstructed and understood. The chapter begins with a brief overview of current scholarship on the Biguine and situates the location more generally within the history of Black performance in early twentieth-century Germany. Next, it discusses the immediate context for the establishment's creation, specifically the French Colonial Exhibition of 1931 in Paris. For it was at this event that mainstream white European audiences first encountered on a wide scale the namesake of the locale, namely the beguine, a form of dance and music from Martinique and Guadeloupe. The third section turns to three featured singers, all Black women: the African American singer Elisabeth Welch, the Black British singer Evelyn Dove, and the Black British and American singer and musician Dinah, stage name of Madge Boehm née Kham.

Though scattered references to the venue exist, current scholarship on Berlin's Biguine is rather limited.[2] This is due to a number of factors. The first is that for around twenty years, knowledge of its existence was almost entirely limited to the reproduction of a single advertisement.[3] This advertisement displays colonialist, racist iconography in the form of caricatured, nude Black women. Indeed, colonialist ideologies and imagery permeated not only advertisements, but also the establishment's interior, as is discussed below. At the same time, and arguably just as important to its relative nonexistence in current scholarship, is the fact that the Biguine's most noteworthy performers were Black women, rather than men. Apart from Josephine Baker, writing on Black women performers during the Weimar Republic has been lacking within German studies—the scholarship of Kira Thurman on Black classical singers is an important and notable exception to this tendency.[4] By contrast, scholars of popular musical performance by Black artists have instead focused on men, African American and otherwise. As a result, Black women like those featured at the

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2. When referring to the entertainment establishment in Berlin, I will capitalize the name ("Biguine"); when referring to the music and dance, I will use the usual lowercase English spelling ("beguine").

3. An advertisement for Biguine was reprinted in Bärbel Schrader and Jürgen Schebera, *Kunstmetropol Berlin* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1987), 115. No publication date was given, this oversight was first corrected in Tobias Nagel, *Die unheimliche Maschine: Rasse und Repräsentation im Weimarer Kino* (Munich: edition text+kritik, 2009), 733.

4. Kira Thurman, "A History of Black Musicians in Germany and Austria, 1870–1961: Race, Performance, and Reception" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 2013); Kira Thurman, "Performing Lieder, Hearing Race: Debating Blackness, Whiteness, and German Identity in Interwar Central Europe," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 72, no. 3 (2019): 825–65.

Biguine have too often received short shrift within standard histories of popular music and jazz in Germany. Added to all this, of course, is the fact that the Biguine was established around one year before the Nazi takeover, something that in all likelihood contributed to its short lifespan. In sum, due to a paucity of information, the venue's "belated" existence, as well as it not foregrounding men, the Biguine and its performers have found themselves outside of the frame of most scholarship. At the same, these very same elements make the space so important to rethinking the history, breadth, relevance, and significance of Black performance, and that of Black women in particular, to the popular musical stage in early twentieth-century Germany.

Situating Black Performers and Black Performance in Weimar Berlin

Continuing the long history of Black performance and presence in Germany, the 1920s saw a significant number of African diasporic performers on German stages. Black German, African, African American, Black European, and other performers of African descent could be found with regularity in, for example, small cafés and bars, middle-class variety theaters, concert halls, and traditional and experimental theaters.[5] The Black presence and impact on German culture has a longer history, but from around the mid-nineteenth century forward, Black performers, artists, and musicians were a constant feature of the German popular stage.[6] Indeed, though Skutezky was most likely unaware, the Sierra Leonean entrepreneur John/Johannes Glatty and his white German wife Elise/Elsa Glatty owned and operated a series of African restaurants and entertainment locales featuring Black staff and Black performers in Zurich, Vienna, Dresden, Leipzig, and Frankfurt am Main before World War I.[7] At the same time, the post–World War I era witnessed a rapid acceleration in the number African American and other Black performers in Europe. In this

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5. A selection of relevant literature on Black performers in Weimar Germany can be found in notes 8 and 10.

6. See Jeff Bowersox's contribution to this volume on Black artists on popular theatrical stages in nineteenth-century Germany.

7. Rea Brändle, "Johannes Glatty: Stationendrama einer Ehre," in *Unbekannte Biographien: Afrikaner im deutschsprachigen Raum vom 18. Jahrhundert bis zu Ende des Zweiten Weltkriegs*, ed. Ulrich van der Heyden (Berlin: Homilius, 2009), 90–102; Hans Pehl, *Afroamerikanische Unterhaltungskünstler in Frankfurt am Main: Eine Chronik von 1844 bis 1945* (Frankfurt am Main: Pehl, 2010), 57.

period, though again by no means new to the German stage, Black women (dancers, singers, instrumentalists, and actors) played an increasingly important role within Germany's popular musical and performance venues.[8] The best known of these artists in terms of the media coverage were African Americans, with Josephine Baker leading the way.[9] Other notable examples from this era include Marian Anderson, Ruth Bayton, Marion Cook, Arabella Fields, Maud de Forest, Sadie Hopkins, and Ruth Walker.[10] Of course, for most such performers Berlin was but a temporary stop on a larger, European, and even global performance circuit that crisscrossed from the Soviet Union to Spain, Paris, and London to Budapest and beyond, with most larger touring troupes and individual artists generally spending only limited time in the German capital.

In addition to such international, itinerant Berliners, there also existed a community of Black Berliners separate from and yet also connected to these artists. Berlin's Black residents in this period came largely from Germany's former colonies, especially Cameroon. The 1920s were unsurprisingly precarious (and dangerous) for this group, and the entertainment industry became for many a key means of survival for the Black community in Berlin. As Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft summarize:

> The fact of being former colonial subjects won them the patronage of state and non-state agencies, though at the cost of dependency and surveillance. The fact of being Black meant that they were sought after as performers, though often in roles that reinforced

8. Thurman, "History of Black Musicians"; Astrid Kusser, *Körper in Schieflage: Tanzen im Strudel des* Black Atlantic *um 1900* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2013), 219–25; Rainer Lotz, *Black People: Entertainers of African Descent in Europe and Germany* (Bonn: Birgit Lotz Verlag, 1997), 65–88, 225–46.

9. On Baker, see, for example, Evelyn Annuß's contribution in this volume, as well as Jules Rosette Benetta, *Josephine Baker in Art and Life: The Icon and the Image* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2007). On Baker in Berlin, see Nancy Nenno, "Femininity, the Primitive, and Modern Urban Space: Josephine Baker in Berlin," in *Women in the Metropolis: Gender and Modernity in Weimar Culture*, ed. Katharina von Ankum (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 145–61; as well as Alan Lareau, "Bitte einsteigen! Josephine Baker's 1928 Return to Berlin," in *Topography and Literature: Berlin and Modernism*, ed. Reinhard Zachau (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2009), 69–86.

10. Information on these and other performers can be found in a number of sources, including Jeffrey Green, Rainer Lotz, and Howard Rye, eds., *Black Europe: The Sounds and Images of Black People in Europe, Pre-1927* (Hambergen: Bear Family, 2013), especially 636–731; Thurman, "History of Black Musicians"; Jonathan Wipplinger, *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2017).

their liminal status. Some of them found other ways to exploit the stereotypes to their own purposes, while at the same time the performance milieu itself became a space where community could be cultivated.[11]

Forced into the popular entertainment industry due to discrimination and racism, popular performance in circuses, music groups, theaters, and elsewhere became a necessary bridge for many Black Germans to persist and survive. A byproduct of their concentration in the entertainment sector, as Aitken and Rosenhaft also suggest, was that popular entertainment spaces could also become a locus of diasporic community-building. This was true in the sense that Black Berliners could draw upon their regular interactions both with each other and with the many other African diasporic artists who visited Berlin, and insofar as Black Berliners became highly mobile themselves; departing Berlin to work both inside and outside of Germany, they traveled along the same transnational routes populated with African Americans and other performers of African descent.

Regardless of how they came to reside in Berlin and whether they remained in the capital for a brief or extended period, Black artists not only had to contend with racist stereotyping, for example, in the roles offered (and not offered) them, but often faced scrutiny on the part of city officials and police, the Berlin media, and the general populace—something that would crop up in the response to the Biguine, too.[12] At the same time, the Weimar period was one in which these barriers and stereotypes were being publicly contested by Black activists. Anti-imperialist and anticolonialist movements in Europe like the Liga zur Verteidigung der N****rasse (LzVN), Harlem Renaissance figures like Alain Locke and Langston Hughes, and Black Berliners, along with allied white Germans, all worked to resist racism and racial stereotyping inside and outside the entertainment industry.[13] Though by no means a center of antiracism in the Weimar era, the entertainment industry was not exempt from this broader trend. An important example of such political activity is the

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11. Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 119, 122.

12. For example, a protest letter by the Deutsche Hausfrauenvereine to the head of the Berlin police was subsequently published in a variety of newspapers, as part of a brief, unsuccessful campaign to close the Biguine. My thanks to Robbie Aitken for sharing this information with me (personal correspondence with author, July 22, 2016).

13. Aitken and Rosenhaft, *Black Germany*, 194–230; Wipplinger, *The Jazz Republic*, 165–96.

attempted Black theater of Bebe M'pessa, who performed under the stage name Louis Brody.[14] In 1930, M'pessa and like-minded artists and activists around the LzVN aspired to create a Black theater where an antiracist and anti-imperialist revue written by M'pessa was to have been premiered.[15] Though neither the theater nor production appears to have come to fruition, it is significant that the African American performance troupe Blackbirds was singled out as a possible collaborator in the project in one German-language report.[16] This not only speaks to the wider African diasporic performance network of Berlin's Black community, but is also significant as Rosie Poindexter and Elisabeth Welch, both later featured performers at the Biguine, were members of the Blackbirds. The fact that M'pessa's theater was ultimately unable to get off the ground, finally, speaks, of course, to the difficulty of such work.

Into the early 1930s, then, Black artists played essential roles in various types of Berlin stages, and despite constant discrimination, they also forged significant connections with a transnational community of Black artists and larger African diasporic networks active in Europe, North America, and beyond. That said, the performance landscape for Black artists in Berlin remained to a great degree fractured, as there was, for example, no clear center of Black performance. Black Berliners, Black Germans, African, African American, and Afro-European performers moved in and out of a constantly shifting performance landscape of scattered bars, cabarets, revues, and theaters. The opening of the Biguine in February 1932 significantly, if temporarily, altered this situation. For while Black performers continued to move in and out of a variety of other performance spaces, the Biguine now came to act as a centripetal force, illuminating transnational networks and connections built up over the previous decades by Black performers and communities within and beyond Germany's geographic boundaries.

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14. For further discussion of M'pessa, see Tobias Nagl, "Louis Brody and the Black Presence in German Film before 1945: A Biographical Sketch," in *Not So Plain as Black and White: Afro-German Culture and History, 1890–2000*, ed. Patricia Mazon and Reinhild Steingrover (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005), 109–35.

15. My thanks to Robbie Aitken for making me aware of this theater and M'pessa's involvement. On the theater, as well as Brody's play *Sonnenaufgang im Morgenland*, see Robbie Aitken, "Berlin's Black Communist," *Jacobin Magazine*, July 1, 2019, https://jacobinmag.com/2019/07/berlins-black-communist-joseph-bile

16. Till, "Berlin bekommt ein N****theater," *Neues Wiener Journal*, January 12, 1930.

Begin the Biguine

Though the Biguine could not have existed without the above historical contexts and histories, its centering of Black performers and Black women specifically meant that it possessed the capacity to reveal elements of these networks and communities that otherwise often remained invisible. Before looking at this process in more depth, it is first necessary to briefly consider the founder of the establishment and his immediate inspiration for the venue. To start, the Biguine was established by the white Austrian film producer Viktor Skutezky in collaboration with an unknown number of other investors.[17] The location he chose was directly across from one of the best-known popular stages of the era, the Scala Theater, and occupied the very same location as the original El Dorado.[18] Skutezky's immediate motivation for the club was the success of the beguine dance and music with Parisian audiences during and after the Paris Colonial Exhibition of 1931. Naming his club thusly was an obvious ploy to cash in on this latest cultural trend to hit Europe from the African diaspora. For example, the venue's grand opening was promoted through explicit reference to the appearance there of "award-winning attractions from the Colonial Exhibition in Paris."[19] Not only this, but Berlin's Biguine so much relied on Parisian models that it directly copied its advertising template from a Parisian one, the Cabane Bambou.[20] In other words, Skutezky was carrying not only this African diasporic music to Berlin, but its European and French framing as well.

17. On Skutezky's biography, see Kay Weniger, ed., *"Es wird im Leben dir mehr genommen als gegeben": Lexikon der aus Deutschland und Österreich emigrierten Filmschaffenden 1933 bis 1945. Eine Gesamtübersicht* (Hamburg: Acabus Verlag, 2011), 609.; Ludwig Konjetschni, owner of the El Dorado, on whose former premises the Biguine was located, is named in one source as director of the early programs ("Eifersuchts-Tragikomödie um 'Biguine'"), while Frank Arnau later claimed partial ownership as well (*Gelebt, Geliebt, Gehaßt: Ein Leben im 20. Jahrhundert* [Munich: Kurt Desch, 1973], 213–16).

18. Wolfgang Jansen, *Das Varieté: Die glanzvolle Geschichte einer unterhaltenden Kunst* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1990), 203–20. The second El Dorado location was in Motzstrasse, and for a time both it and the original in the Martin-Luther Strasse, which the Biguine would later occupy, were open at the same time. The Martin-Luther Strasse location shut its doors in 1931 (Knud Wolffram, *Tanzdielen und Vergnügungspaläste: Berliner Nachtleben in den dreißiger und vierziger Jahren* [Berlin: Hentrich, 1992], 180–82).

19. Advertisement for the Biguine in the *12 Uhr Blatt*, February 26, 1932. Unless noted otherwise, translations from German are my own.

20. Comparison of the advertisement for the Cabane Bambou with those for Skutetzky's Biguine reveals a direct correspondence (http://www.lameca.org/publications-numeriques/dossiers-et-articles/la-biguine-a-paris/3-lage-dor-de-la-biguine-1931-1939/).

As French studies scholar Eric Prieto has shown, the beguine developed in the French Antilles in the nineteenth century and was certainly known before 1931 in France. Yet it was through the Colonial Exhibition in Paris and the activities of Martinican musicians like Alexandre Stellio and Eugène Delouche that it came into the consciousness of mainstream (white) European audiences.[21] In particular, Stellio's performances at the Guadeloupian pavilion at the Colonial Exhibition incited an explosion of interest that lasted throughout the fourth decade of the twentieth century in Europe and North America, a level of popularity indexed, for example, by the fact that the white American composer Cole Porter later capitalized on its success through the 1935 jazz standard referenced in this section's subheading: "Begin the Beguine."[22] Generally, the beguine can be described as a musical style based in dance, featuring syncopated rhythms, but exhibiting less improvisation than was typical of African American jazz at the time. Its instrumentation also differed from jazz in that the clarinet and violin were the instruments most associated with its distinct musical style. The accompanying dance, meanwhile, reworked and commented on European social dances of the nineteenth century. In 1931, the Martinican writer Andrée Nadal, sister of Paulette, described the beguine's essential form as consisting of "two short gliding steps resulting in a supple swaying of the hips" and possessing the ability to exhibit "both a languorous grace and an extreme liveliness according to the changes in its tempo."[23] Nardal and others' sympathetic descriptions and defenses of beguine were, as Rachel Ann Gillett argues, an important strategy by which negative stereotypes of Black women, in particular those applied in racialized reactions to Josephine Baker and other African American women, were contested by a number of Francophone Black women writers and intellectuals. Gillett notes: "These women wrote extensively about the Antillean dance style, and their enthusiasm had a moral underpinning: they wanted to identify it as respectable in

21. Eric Prieto, "Alexandre Striello and the Beginnings of the Biguine," *Nottingham French Studies* 43, no. 1 (Spring 2004): 30–38.

22. Contemporary scholarly discussion of the beguine in Paris includes Jennifer Anne Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 48–49; Brent Hayes Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 171–77; Edwin C. Hill, *Black Soundscapes, White Stages: The Meaning of Francophone Sound in the Black Atlantic* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), 47–73.

23. Andrée Nardal, "Etude sur la Biguine Créole / Notes on the Biguine Créole (folk dance)," *La Revue du monde noir*, no. 2 (1931): 121–23.

the face of the popular images of jazz as a sensual dance practice."[24] As will be shown later, some of this critique of stereotyped images of Black female sexuality found its way into the discussion surrounding Black women performers in Berlin's Biguine.

Alongside increased interest, there also occurred a growth of venues in and around Paris where the beguine was performed and danced. One mode of presenting the beguine at the time were at so-called "*bals n*****" ("N**** balls"), where Black performers not only occupied the stage, but Black patrons could make up a significant part of the audience.[25] Potentially at least, the *bals* were unique within European popular performance spaces in that members of the African diaspora were not only present on stage, but consumers, adjudicators, and participants in their use. This was often, however, only a potentiality. Though not initially—one venue excluded patrons unaccompanied by a guest with a colonial passport likely in order to maintain these locations as spaces for communities of Color[26]—over time most of the *bals* nonetheless became sites that catered to the white consumption of a racialized fantasy of Blackness. The Black musician Ernest Léardée later recalled of the most (in)famous *bal* located on rue Blomet: "After a while the *bal* had become a curiosity, a tourist site in the capital good for an exotic change of scene, and for contemplating the pretty *mulâtresses* shaking their bodies to the rhythm of the beguine."[27] As Brent Hayes Edwards has shown, French discourse on the *bals* included lengthy descriptions of audience members, with a focus on the clothing, style, hair, and bodies of Black dancers, especially women. Male writers, again according to Edwards, thereby created fantasies of (sexual) connection between themselves and the dancers through their words, transforming in their writing Black women in the audience into "silent instruments beckoning to be used."[28] As Nardal's and Léardée's contemporary accounts and Edwards's analysis show, Black women, as performers on stage and as dancers in the audience, figured prominently, if extremely ambiguously in French writing on the beguine and the associated *bals*. Such racialized and

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24. Rachel Anne Gillett, "Jazz Women, Gender Politics, and the Francophone Atlantic," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents* 10, no. 1 (2013): 120–21.

25. Brett A. Berliner, *Ambivalent Desire: The Exotic Black Other in Jazz-Age France* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2002), 208–16.

26. Boittin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 57.

27. Ernest Léardée and Jean-Paul Meunier, *La biguine de l'oncle Ben's: Ernest Léardée raconte* (Paris: Editions caribéennes, 1989), 171. Quoted in Hill, *Black Soundscapes, White Stages*, 67.

28. Edwards, *The Practice of Diaspora*, 175.

eroticized attention to Black women will be a hallmark of the German response as well.

Given the fact that the Parisian *bals* were frequented not just by People of Color, but also by white Parisians and tourists, it is unsurprising that one finds examples of contemporaneous German writing on these spaces. Already in 1928, cultural theorist Siegfried Kracauer and the Expressionist writer Walter Hasenclever published accounts of their visits to Parisian *bals*, with Hasenclever reporting on the rue Blomet location. Tellingly, their texts display a high degree of similarity to the French model outlined above. Hasenclever, for example, opens his commentary by contrasting it with representations of Blackness he had seen on stage and screen; a revealing underestimation of the commercial, tourist, and staged elements of this, the most famous of the *bals*. Hasenclever props up this construction of authenticity through the deployment of colonialist, fantastical tropes throughout his text. "It's different here," he contends: "This wild throng of the black-brown race in all its variety has something uncanny to it and the later the hour, the wilder it acts. . . . A grotesque travesty of the act of love. An infernal intermediate state."[29] Like Hasenclever, Kracauer spills most ink not on any individual performer, but on describing the scene on the dance floor, something he apparently observed from a position above (and distant from) it. Though I've argued in a different context that Kracauer's text is important in that it indexes and deploys the racialist, primitivist tropes of texts like Hasenclever's as a means of turning the gaze back onto the white voyeur, Kracauer also wraps his text on the *bal* in stereotyped colonialist imagery.[30] He takes note of the dancers' hairstyles, the vibrant colors of their clothing, and the smells in and around the dance floor, writing, for example: "From the impenetrable darkness of the hairstyles, red, green, and yellow garments beam upward like tropical blossoms."[31] Though written more than three years prior to the opening of Berlin's own *bal*, Hasenclever, Kracauer and their French contemporaries all anticipate the racialized framing of Blackness at Skutezky's Biguine.

To begin with, "exotic" and colonialist iconography and tropes, with the intention of catering to white fantasies about Blackness, predominated in the interior of the Biguine in Berlin.[32] Straw and bamboo were

29. Walter Hasenclever, "Hier herrscht Ellbogenfreiheit . . . N****ball in Paris," *8 Uhr Abendblatt*, June 1, 1928.

30. Wipplinger, *The Jazz Republic*, 137–39.

31. Siegfried Kracauer, "N****ball in Paris," *Frankfurter Zeitung*, October 17, 1928.

32. The details below derive from following sources: "Die erste N****bar"; "Filmmann eröffnet N****bar"; L. H., "Berlins erste N****bar"; "Biguine." A reproduction of the postcard

adhered to the ceiling to mark the European stereotype of an African tropical hut, a motif repeated in advertisements. The walls meanwhile were outfitted with what to one reviewer appeared to be "indigenous weapons."[33] On each table, finally, were red tablecloths and ashtrays constructed from coconuts. These signifiers of European stereotypes related to Blackness were recruited in order to transport, à la Hasenclever, white visitors to this "other" world of their own imaginary. While the use of stereotypes was common in Berlin establishments (there were "Wild West," Austrian, Bavarian, other themed bars), the Biguine's interior design recruited and depended on colonialist and racist ideologies that dehumanized and fetishized Blackness. This included playing into and off fears of racial contact in the colonies. For example, alongside the interior aesthetic, one of the most commented-upon elements in early reports was the presence of the "Black and White" bar. This term, long-used in the German context to signal an interracial performance duo, was likely chosen to titillate white patrons with the possibility of (voyeuristic) cross-racial contact. The stage, meanwhile, was hardly a traditional stage at all. From postcards produced for the establishment, it seems that performers instead occupied an open space in the center of the tables, upon which a spotlight shone.[34] This lack of a traditional stage position, in turn, simulated the experience of white visitors to the Parisian *bals* in that they could imagine themselves as "ethnographic" observers, rather than paying customers observing an act on stage.

Guests were attended to by a staff made up of around three Black women and one white woman.[35] According to one source, the women behind the bar also occasionally entertained and danced for and with the Biguine's guests.[36] Though no definitive information exists on the identities of these individuals, photographs of the location taken across an unknown time frame consistently show three Black women, though not

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can be found in Joachim Zeller, *Weisse Blicke—Schwarze Körper: Afrikaner im Spiegel westlicher Alltagskultur. Bilder aus der Sammlung Peter Weiss* (Erfurt: Sutton Verlag, 2010), 201. In addition, the newspaper *Tempo* published an image of three of the Black women at the Biguine on February 27, 1932 ("N****innen als Bardamen"). My thanks to Jochen Hung for providing me with a copy of this image.

33. "Biguine."

34. Zeller, *Weisse Blicke—Schwarze Körper*, 231.

35. Though there is uniformity in the sources regarding there being one blond white woman, the number of Black women employed at the Biguine as part of the regular performers and staff is unclear. At the same time, photographic evidence shows four Black women with regularity. See note 37 for details on these images.

36. Adolf Stein, *Nu wenn schon!* (Berlin: Brunnen-Verlag, 1932), 232.

always together, in addition to a fourth Black woman, likely "Miss Rosie," as is discussed below.[37] The presence of these Black women was central to Skutezky's intention to recreate the fantasy of a Parisian *bal* for his white guests among whom could be counted numerous local and international white celebrities and even politicians such as Harald Lloyd, Asta Nielsen, Willi Fritsch, Conradt Veidt, Curt Bois, Willi Rosen, Joachim Ringelnatz, and the Chicago mayor, Anton Cermak.[38]

Most significantly, from the club's opening in February through August 1932, one individual, regular performer was singled out repeatedly in reviews. This was "Miss Rosie," a singer and dancer who held court, so to speak, at and around the "Black and White" bar.[39] In all likelihood, "Miss Rosie" was the African American performer Rosie Poindexter.[40] In 1929, Poindexter came to Europe as part of the aforementioned Blackbirds. Then, in 1930, she joined up with the African American artist Louis Douglas for his revue *Louisiana*. Within the history of the African American presence in Germany, Poindexter is perhaps best remembered for her role as a nightclub dancer in the 1931 German film *Der brave Sünder*, as well as for her 1932 recording with Curt Bois of the Friedrich Hollaender song "Reizend."[41] Whether facilitated through her appearance in Körtner's film, Douglas's revue, or otherwise, it now seems likely that Poindexter spent the majority of 1932 in Berlin as Miss Rosie at the Biguine. There, and along with the other regular performers and staff members, she occupied the important function of mediating between performer and audience at the Biguine. A key element of the Parisian *bals*' uniqueness was the fact that people of African descent were not only present on stage, but also were perceived to be part of the audience and active participants in the running of the venues. Through Miss Rosie and her cohort, Berlin's Biguine sought to recreate this quality as well.

Black performers like Miss Rosie were not only essential to Skutezky's ambition of recreating the atmosphere of his Parisian models, but their

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37. Images of these and other artists at the Biguine can be found in the following sources: "N****innen als Bardamen"; "Aisha"; "Ein Bummel durch Berlin," 21. Further images from the Biguine can be found in Peter Martin and Christine Alonzo, *Zwischen Charleston und Stechschritt: Schwarze im Nationalsozialismus* (Hamburg: Dölling und Galitz, 2004), 365–66.

38. "Exotische Nächte in der Biguine"; "Der August in der Biguine"; "Cermak in der Biguine."

39. "Miss Rosie" is mentioned in the following sources: "Die erste N****bar"; "Nächte in der Biguine"; "Attraktionen in der Biguine"; H. W., "August in der Biguine."

40. Biographical information on Poindexter is taken from Howard Rye and Robert Ford, "Rosie Poindexter," *Names & Numbers* 71 (October 2014): 13–19.

41. Nagl, *Die unheimliche Maschine*, 695–703; Rye and Ford, "Rosie Poindexter," 15, 19.

presence offers a unique opportunity to highlight the mobility of African diasporic performers within and beyond Berlin. In Leipzig, a *bal* existed briefly in 1932, where Harry Pouché, a Black musician who had performed at the Biguine's premiere, also appeared.[42] More significantly, Biguine alumni Rosie Poindexter, Sadie Hopkins, Pep Graham, U. S. Thompson, and Evelyn Dove all "reunited" in Budapest in late 1932, where they performed together in a *bal*-like venue similar to the Biguine.[43] The fact that these African American and Black British performers found themselves similarly constricted, yet together in another cultural and national context, highlights the performance options for many Black artists, as well as the need for a transnational approach to this topic.

Before discussing the three artists whose appearances left the greatest impression, I therefore want to briefly then consider the broader range of performers at the Biguine—their multiple identities, their interconnections, and the contexts of their arrivals in Berlin. The most important pathway to the Biguine was, predictably, Paris. As has been noted, Skutezky's inspiration was this city's *bals* and the Colonial Exhibition, and for bookings he culled from the City of Light's many theaters. Both main attractions and lesser-known Black performers like Melka,[44] Princess Vitalis,[45] the Spanish performer Tangerina,[46] and others arrived with Parisian credentials. Though hardly all were Parisian or French citizens, a number of Black performers from Paris now made their way to Berlin in a steady flow via the conduit of the Biguine. Finally, African American artists, all veterans of the European touring circuit, like Arthur Gaines, Mike Riley, and U. S. Thompson, were to be found at the Biguine as well. Significantly, and like Rosie Poindexter, many of these performers had previously toured together with Louis Douglas as part of one of his many revues. In fact, a photograph shows that Douglas personally visited the Biguine sometime during its existence, though it is unclear precisely when.[47] Alongside Paris, then, Louis Douglas and the wider network of

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42. Arkadjew, "Was von Kapellen in Leipzig zu berichten," *Der Artist* 2426 (June 17, 1932), n.p.

43. See for example, the advertisement for their performances at the Péle-Méle in the *Esti Kurir*, November 3, 1932, as well as in *Ujság*, November 3, 1932.

44. "Bei braunen Tänzerinnen."

45. "Neues 'Biguine'-Programm."

46. "Hier und dort."

47. On Douglas's career, including the *Louisiana* touring group, see Lotz, *Black People*, 297–382. The photograph of Douglas at the Biguine is reprinted in Martin and Alonzo, *Zwischen Charleston und Stechschritt*, 366.

African American performers in Europe was one of the more important nexuses by which African diasporic performers at the Biguine were interlinked.

Finally, Berlin's own entertainment industry and, though to an unknown extent, the Black German community also contributed to the Biguine's rotating cast of performers. Black performers were featured at other Berlin locales both before and after their booking at the Biguine. For example, a Black dancer who went by the name "Prince Tito" first appeared at the Palais de danse before being hired at the Biguine.[48] Due to its brief existence and the constantly rotating cast of performers, often unnamed in reviews, it is unclear to what extent the Biguine employed and/or engaged with the larger community of Black Berliners discussed above. At the same time, at least one moment of significant overlap between the Black German community in Berlin and the Biguine occurred through the venue's musical offerings. From April through June 1932, the Black Berliner and British musician Willi McAllen, born Wilhelm Panzer in 1909, was in all probability the drummer for the Sascha Dickstein Band at the Biguine.[49] Yet while Black men like McAllen, African American, and other members of the African diaspora appeared at the Biguine, it was Black women who became the headliners, the stars of the Biguine. Indeed, the location featured popular Black women vocalists to an unheard-of degree in Berlin or anywhere else in Weimar Germany, in terms not only of scale, but also of duration. To begin with, the Biguine's location directly across from the massive and massively popular Scala Theater guaranteed it high visibility, and, second, with the noted exception of Josephine Baker,[50] the Biguine's stretch of featuring three Black women vocalists back-to-back-to-back between May and September 1932 is to my knowledge unparalleled in the history of popular entertainment in Weimar Berlin.

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48. "Attraktionen in der Biguine." See further the photograph of this performer, "Der Tänzer Prinz Tito (Stone)."

49. Though contemporary reviews do not mention McAllen by name, he is known to have been the drummer for Dickstein during this period (Lotz, *Black People*, 283–96, especially 287). Sascha Dickstein was a white Jewish-Russian Berliner who had been active in the German jazz scene since around 1920 (Georg Biller, "Sascha Dickstein—Der tanzende Geiger," *Grammophon Platten*, https://grammophon-platten.de/page.php?468).

50. For a brief time in early November 1928 Baker operated her own revue and restaurant, Bei Josephine Baker, in Berlin ("Wer tanzt nach Josephine?"; Lareau, "Bitte einsteigen!").

Black Women Artists at the Biguine

As has been suggested, Black women artists were central to the broader reception of the beguine music and dance, and Berlin's Biguine was no exception. In the space remaining, the performances of the African American singer Elisabeth Welch, the Black British singer Evelyn Dove, and the Black British and African American singer Dinah will be contextualized and examined with special attention to the role played by the interweaving of gender and race at the Biguine.

Elisabeth Welch made her debut at the Biguine in June 1932, and unlike many of the artists featured there, this was her first time in Berlin. Welch had already been a member of important African American Broadway shows like *Runnin' Wild* and *Blackbirds of 1929* and would later make a name for herself as an interpreter of Cole Porter in Paris, London, and New York.[51] Securing an artist of Welch's caliber was therefore a coup for Skutezky, and anticipatory announcements foregrounded her significance as a celebrated American jazz singer.[52] The critical response to Welch's performance, moreover, was exceptionally positive, with one reviewer crowing that she is "mistress of her art" (*eine Meisterin ihrer Kunst*).[53] Like many other Black singers of the period, Welch would in part be framed for readers through comparison to white performers, in her case, to Maria Ivogün, a renowned Hungarian classical soprano.[54] Two additional, interconnected characteristics pervade reviews of Welch. The first is the focus on her physical appearance and body. She is described for example as "lithe, lissome" (*ranke, schlanke*),[55] or alternatively as "tall and slim."[56] By the same token and in contrast to the mode of description analyzed above, there are fewer overt notes of sexualization in reviews. Of course, the emphasis on her "unremarkable" body stands in unspoken contrast to the long history of the (mis)representation of Black women's bodies, a common element of the German reception of Josephine Baker.[57] Equally prevalent in the Berlin response

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51. Stephen Bourne, *Elisabeth Welch: Soft Lights and Sweet Music* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2005).

52. "Attraktionen in der Biguine"; "Gastspiel Elisabeth Welch in der Biguine."

53. "Wo man sich amüsiert."

54. Adolf Arno, "The Black Ivogun," *Berliner Tribüne*, June 28, 1932. I am indebted to Stephen Bourne for translated copies of this review as well as two others.

55. "Elisabeth Welch singt in der Biguine."

56. "Elisabeth Welch Sings at the Biguine."

57. Tracey Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Black Venus: Sexualized Savages, Primal Fears, and*

to Welch are comments about the extraordinariness of her voice, its physical and almost psychological effect on the audience. "When she . . . sings," one reviewer proclaims, "the noise subsides and all listen carefully to the melodiousness of her voice."[58] Another suggests that "her voice fascinates, transfixes the audience [*schlägt alle in Bann*]."[59] A third review elaborates using the racialized vocabulary common in descriptions of Black voices as described by Kira Thurman: "When she opens her mouth, one is electrified by this dark voice, enormously strong in expression."[60] The reviewer for the *Berliner Tribüne*, Adolf Arno, outdid them all in his use of superlatives to describe Welch's performance:

> This Madam Welch is harmony *in corpore*, a delicate dreamlike [*Erlebnis*] experience when she opens her mouth, when her marvelous teeth glisten and she captivates even the greatest snob among her audience with her songs that go to the heart. "Love for sale," she sings—and one feels that her representation of the love-slave who has to sell her love becomes startling reality through Elisabeth Welch.[61]

One notices here both the strongly racialized tones of this description as well as Arno's admiration for Welch's voice. This was true not only for her rendition of Cole Porter's "Love for Sale," but also for her German-language songs. Like other African American and Black artists of the period, both classical and popular, Welch's repertoire included songs in German as well as French and English, something reviewers were quick to reference.[62] Even so, her German-language singing did not arouse overt concern on the part of white male reviewers—instead the tenor of such references was patronizing rather than defensive.[63] At the same time, I'd like to suggest that Welch's performance can be read as provocative and destabilizing to racial ideologies in many ways. On the one hand, the reserved descriptions of Welch stand in contrast to the rampant hyper-

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Primitive Narratives in French (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

58. "Wo man sich amüsiert."

59. "Elisabeth Welch singt in der Biguine."

60. "Elisabeth Welch Sings at the Biguine": Thurman, "Performing Lieder, Hearing Race," 852–56.

61. Arno, "The Black Ivogun."

62. "Wo man sich amüsiert."

63. For discussion of the complex and varying response to Black artists singing German lieder, see Thurman, "Performing Lieder, Hearing Race."

sexualization of Black women's bodies on and off German stages, while, on the other, her performance was intended to be and indeed was received by reviewers as art in the strong sense, a term often refused to popular, let alone Black (women) artists of the era.

Building off the Berlin reaction to Welch, one can say that at a more general level, the centrality of African diasporic artists to the Biguine seemed to imbue Black performers with more power vis-à-vis the audience than was customary in a typical cabaret, bar, or variety show setting. For though still performing for majority-white audiences, the Biguine was also primarily defined as a *Black* performance space. In a word, because the venue's entire existence was based upon the presence and participation of Black artists, these performers also possessed, or at the very least were seen by white commentators to possess, a degree of leverage over their white audience. If this small and situational advantage in no way compensated for widespread and systemic political and economic repression elsewhere, it is nonetheless important to acknowledge such, albeit minor, moments of resistance. While there are subtle hints of this idea in the response to Welch, it becomes more overt in the cases of Evelyn Dove and Dinah.

The Black British singer Evelyn Dove appeared in July and August at the Biguine, and her performance followed directly upon Welch's. Dove was a longtime visitor to Berlin, having already performed in the capital in 1926 at the world-famous Wintergarten[64] and in 1927 with the African American dancer Ralph Grayson.[65] Indeed, after her appearance at Skutezky's establishment, she remained in Berlin and appeared at the Blue Boy on Wittembergerplatz in September, before moving on to Budapest, where she enjoyed a two-month stint in the Hungarian capital.[66] Though at the Biguine the African American singer Arthur Gaines was given co-billing in newspaper advertisements, reviews made clear that Dove was the star during her engagement. If, like Welch, she was overtly racialized by reviewers, Dove also offered up a performance resistant to audience expectations. As the reviewer for the *12 Uhr Blatt* wrote:

> At first the thin mulatto woman stood at the bar of the "Biguine." She wore bright white pants and was overall very unassuming [*privat*].

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64. "Der Wintergarten."

65. Advertisement for Evelyne Dove and Ralph Grayson at the Pavillon Mascotte Palais de danse, *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, April 3, 1927. See also Ivan H. Browning, "Across the Pond," *Chicago Defender*, June 18, 1927, 6.

66. "Klein aber oho!" On Dove, see Stephen Bourne, *Evelyn Dove: Britain's Black Cabaret Queen* (London: Jacaranda, 2016).

> Based on her demeanor, you would not have guessed in the least that she was about to perform. Her intelligent, black eyes looked inquisitively around the room, almost as if she were negatively judging the guests. Then in a simple and unaffected tone someone from the band announced: "Evelyn Dove." The brown woman slid leisurely with her long legs into the center of the spotlight and initially did not indicate she'd start singing at all. She must have said to herself that she should first be allowed to have a look at the people for whom she'd be singing. And then she did us all the favor.[67]

I would argue that Dove's arguably playful entrance onto the Biguine stage was calculated to cut through the initial, hierarchical gaze of the audience: she, not they would decide when and how she would perform. Only after she had judged them worthy would she deign to sing for them. Such performance practices on the part of Black women were uncommon in Weimar Berlin and likely owe as much to Dove's singularity as they do to the unique space of the Biguine.

Another series of self-assured, powerful performances followed shortly thereafter. In late August 1932, advertisements announced an even more spectacular sensation at the Biguine: Madge Boehm, performing under the stage name "Dinah." Proclamations of "Dinah's Coming!" and then "Dinah is here!" blared across the advertising sections of numerous popular newspapers of the period.[68] For patrons of the Biguine, Dinah was hailed as the queen of Montparnasse and Montmartre, a recording star and main attraction from Paris. In reality, she was (also) Madge Kham, a singer who, according to an interview with the *Chicago Tribune* in 1934, was raised in North Cheshire by American and English parents.[69] As the independent researcher Zaza Bartira has revealed, since around 1916 she had performed across Europe, primarily with her partner and husband "Harry Cofie."[70] Like "Dinah," "Harry Cofie" was a stage name, in all prob-

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67. "Evelyn Dove singt in der Biguine."

68. Advertisements for Dinah's performances can be found, for example, in *Berliner Herold*, August 28, 1932; *12 Uhr Blatt*, August 29, 1932; *Berliner Tribüne*, August 30, 1932; *Tempo*, September 2, 1932; *Das kleine Blatt*, September 2, 1932.

69. "Dinah, Lyric Spirit of Dixie."

70. Dinah also performed under the names Madge Cofie and Madge Boehm. For an overview of her career, see Zaza Bartira, "The Mysterious Dinah Cofie & Her Colored Cracks Orchestra," *Black Jazz Artists across the World*, October 22, 2017, http://blackjazzartists. blogspot.com/2017/10/the-mysterious-dinah-cofie-her-colored.html; Mark Miller, *Some Hustling This! Taking Jazz to the World, 1914–1929* (Toronto: Mercury Press, 2005), 172, 194.

ability for the Ghanaian Black British musician and actor (John) Harris Boehm.[71] Kham and Boehm married at one point and during the 1920s traveled and performed together across the continent in a variety of formations and under various names, for example, "Harry Cofie's Colored Cracks." In the early 1930s, the couple settled briefly in Paris, by which point Madge Boehm had taken on the stage name "Dinah," likely after the popular 1920s tune of the same name.[72] There Dinah and Harry Cofie ran a series of ultimately unsuccessful nightclubs, including Chez Dinah, Dinah's Shack, and the Regal.[73] As "Dinah," Madge Boehm also recorded at least two songs in London in 1931.[74] Her September performances at the Biguine were likely Boehm's first appearance in the German capital and her arrival there in no small part due to her rising prominence in the Parisian entertainment landscape, from which Skutezky took special inspiration for his bookings.

Be that as it may, the resistance to audience expectations noted by reviewers of Dove became even more extreme in the case of Dinah. To wit, the intense power Dinah is said to have wielded over the audience is a common thread running throughout accounts of her trilingual performance in French, English, and Berlin dialect.[75] Whereas Welch and Dove were said to put listeners under a spell, almost dictatorial powers were ascribed to Dinah. As one reviewer put it, Dinah "shreds every care and every concern . . . as if they were cobwebs and does so with a sound like thunder."[76] Using the same colonialist vocabulary of French and German descriptions of the beguine seen earlier, another suggests: "There is something of a restrained jungle in this voice that wails and rejoices [*klagt und jauchzt*], that compels listeners to silence and understands how to put them in an excited state [*animierte Stimmung*]."[77] Yet according to a third reviewer, Dinah and even more so her partner "Harry" (aka her husband

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71. Stób Zoltán, "2 n****: A dobos és a stepptáncos min-dent bevallanak a Színházi Élet-nek," *Színházi Élet* 17, no. 43 (October 1927): 38–39. On Harris Boehm, see further Lotz, *Black People*, 204.

72. "Dinah, Lyric Spirit of Dixie." On the history of the song "Dinah," see Ted Gioia, *The Jazz Standards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 80–81.

73. In addition to Bartira, see "Dinah Returns to Town with New Night Club" and "Dinah, with Her Canary, Opens Cabaret Tonight."

74. "Makin' Faces at the Man in the Moon / Good for You, Bad for Me," *Decca* F.2625 (ca. 1931). Available at https://youtu.be/6sEE7r5w5Zw and https://youtu.be/kAZLKN43q7Y respectively.

75. "Dinah."

76. "Dinah ist da!"

77. "Dinah und ein N****."

Harris Boehm) did not appear to be especially interested in these effects: "Dinah sings with a cultivated voice and the jolly fellow bursts with joy [*freut sich halb tot*]. He's really enjoying himself, that's clear. Whether we like it as well—he couldn't care less [*scheint ihm schnuppe zu sein*]."[78] Adolf Arno, who had reviewed Welch for the *Berliner Tribüne*, went even further and attributed an almost political quality to her performance:

> To dissect her art would be to reveal areas of the unconscious artistic technique. This woman is a volcano that cannot satisfy itself with subtle effects. As she cannot sing of fairy tales; she has to zealously [*aufpeitschend*] celebrate the plight of enslaved, black women. This suits her like few others of her race. And if she had no partner on the drums, we would have to consider this artist a passionate modern black female activist [*eine moderne schwarze Frauenrechtlerin im Pathos*].[79]

As with previous ascriptions of agency and power to women performers, racially patronizing tropes permeate Arno's and the above-cited texts. Indeed, Arno ultimately undercuts any such agency on the part of Dinah on account of the presence of her partner. At the same time, the passage also reveals how white, male German reviewers were confronted at Berlin's Biguine by powerfully confident Black women, from Rosie Poindexter to Elisabeth Welch, Evelyn Dove, and Dinah. Due to the singular nature of the Biguine and their calculated acts of agency, this site became a space in which Black vocal artists could engage with Berlin audiences in unexpected and even empowering ways.

Conclusion

In early December 1932, notices appeared in a variety of Berlin newspapers announcing the closure of the establishment. Various explanations were given at the time, from diminished audiences to the caprice of Skutezky and his partners. One cannot, however, preclude the possibility that increased political and racial repression and the threat of the impending Nazi takeover played a role in the shuttering of the location.[80] What-

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78. "Dinah und ein N****."
79. Arno, "Dinah ist da!"
80. The Nazis later used multiple photographs taken at the Biguine for anti-Black propa-

ever the reason, the Biguine largely remains a singular, if extremely ambiguous, moment in which Black women occupied the center of popular stages in Weimar Berlin. The performers, visiting stars, ensemble members, and feature artists had departed or would soon depart from Berlin. After returning to Paris, Dinah opened two more cabarets, only to eventually leave the European continent for South America in 1935. Her later life, as well as that of her husband, Harris Boehm, is currently unknown.[81] Rosie Poindexter made her way from Berlin to Budapest, where she would remain throughout late 1932 and into 1933; after numerous further stopovers, she returned to the United States in late 1935.[82] In the late 1930s, she was in a long-term relationship with the African American author Ralph Ellison, a connection for which she is all too often only remembered today, but also performed on and off in the early 1940s, passing away in New York City in 1990.[83] After leaving Berlin, Elisabeth Welch continued to ensconce herself as one of the most important cabaret artists in London in the 1930s. Indeed, she would remain in Great Britain for the rest of her life, passing away at the age of ninety-nine in 2003. As was mentioned earlier, Evelyn Dove departed Germany for Budapest in fall 1932 and, after this stop, toured the globe throughout the 1930s, including trips to New York and Bombay. Like Welch, Dove became an icon of popular song in England, in particular through her performances on the BBC during World War II.[84] Though Dove passed away in 1987, her legacy and recognition continues to grow, as evidenced by the Google doodle commemorating what would have been her 117th birthday in 2018.[85]

Though each of these performers had a very different performance history in Germany, their respective presence at the Biguine over a very short

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ganda. Examples of these images can be found in the following: *Neues Volk* 2, no. 4 (1934): 22; *Neues Volk* 6, no. 6 (1938): 8. It is also quite possible that the well-known Nazi propaganda image depicting a Black and white woman together (https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/pa1067588) originated as a publicity photograph for the Biguine's "Black and White" bar and features Rosie Poindexter. A connection between this image and the Biguine was first proposed by Robbie Aitken. My thanks to him and Konrad Nowakowski for their contributions in linking the two.

81. See Bartira, "Mysterious Dinah Cofie."

82. Rye and Ford, "Rosie Poindexter," 16–17.

83. On Ellison's relationship with Poindexter, see Arnold Rampersad, *Ralph Ellison: A Biography* (New York: Vintage Books, 2008), 109–10, 165–68. While Rampersad claims the two were married, Ford and Rye dispute this (Ford and Rye, "Rosie Poindexter," 15–19).

84. Bourne, *Evelyn Dove*.

85. Unfortunately, it was not featured in either the United States or Germany: https://www.google.com/doodles/evelyn-doves-117th-birthday

time span in 1932 is revealing and significant. Aside from Josephine Baker, Black women have for too long been marginalized and ignored within the history of popular music during the Weimar Republic generally and the reception and spread of African diasporic music cultures more specifically. The foregoing has attempted to contribute to overcoming this deficiency in the study of the popular stage and popular music by revealing these performers' biographies, by detailing the various responses to their art, and more generally by contextualizing their appearances within the significant and ambiguous site of Berlin's Biguine. This was a space that first and foremost catered to the white European racialized and colonialist fantasy of Blackness, a quality that owes as much to the determinants of German culture and society as to larger historical factors, especially European colonialism and the African diasporic presence in Europe. In many ways, however, the Biguine is also a unique space at Weimar's end. It is a space that simultaneously exhibited conflict and contact, repression, but also and even resistance. Understanding the history and wider-frame significance of this venue, its performers, especially Black women artists, is important as scholars seek to situate and understand the multiplicities and complexities of Black performance in the Weimar Republic. While this location's concentrated presentation of Poindexter, Welch, Dove, and Dinah illuminates their role more clearly than is generally the case, the rich and significant history of Black women popular performers in this period deserves much greater general recognition.

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How Education about Racism Can(not) Succeed

Blackface in Literature, Theater, and Film[1]

Andrea Geier

They show up every year during carnival season in Germany: images of white people who paint their faces black and dress up in supposedly "African" costumes. We encounter them in media coverage of carnivals, share photos of them on social media, and even occasionally spot them on billboard advertisements for events. The good news is that criticism of such costumes is now equally common and met with more understanding and acceptance. In 2020, some carnival associations where dressing up in "ethnic drag" had been part of the tradition finally abandoned such practices. The carnival club "Frechener N****köpp" (N****heads of Frechen), for example, changed its name to "Wilde Frechener" (Wild People of Frechen) in 2018. Undoubtedly, some people still argue that blackface, yellowface, and redface do not constitute colonially racist stereotypes. Moreover, certain columnists vilify the end of such practices as an alleged submission to a so-called political correctness. Nonetheless, there seems to be a gradual consensus that such costumes are discriminatory. To this end, it certainly helps that people know more about the tradition of blackface, both in the United States and in Germany specifically.[2] It is especially helpful that an increased awareness of how Black people experience such costumes can be noticed.[3]

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1. This essay was translated from German by Undraa Lhamsuren. All translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Undraa Lhamsuren.

2. In addition to the makeup, it's primarily about the stereotypes: roles "such as the Noble Savage, the humble slave, the grinning clown, the brutal negro, and the hypersexual Black man or woman." Robert Nowatzki, *Representing African Americans in Transatlantic Abolitionism and Blackface Minstrelsy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010), 168.

3. See, for example, Alice Hasters, *Was weisse Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen aber wissen sollten* (Munich: Hanser, 2019), 91.

This progress does not (yet) apply in equal measure to other forms of discriminatory representations in everyday life any more than it does to the examination of the German colonial history as a whole. This becomes apparent in arguments over words and things that are still perceived by many as innocent forms of entertainment: from nursery rhymes to confectioneries (like the so-called "N****kuss"), there is a continuous fight over the prerogative of interpretation, which words are allegedly harmless and which ones hurtful and discriminatory. When white people claim that what matters are the speaker's intentions—"I don't mean to be discriminatory"—and demand tolerance for their use of language, they not only ignore the voices of those affected, but also delegitimize their experiences. Others point out that certain words may have a discriminatory effect, but they nonetheless argue that such criticism of language use marginalizes criticisms of "real" racism, that it could even lead to a defensive reaction from those who would normally stand up to racism, and that criticism of racist language could, therefore, even be counterproductive in the fight against racism. The latter is a position, if uttered by white people, that seeks to immunize themselves against criticism of racism. However, such calls for tolerance that may sound positive are problematic as well: that is to say, they presuppose a debate on equal terms and even imagine that the minority group has the discursive power. On the one hand, the existing imbalance, when it comes to speaking out and the historic dimension of inequality, is thus obscured.[4] On the other hand, the question of belonging is repeatedly, at least indirectly, addressed: Who has a say in the debate on the meaning and validity of traditions labeled "German?" This implication has been thematized by Black German authors for decades,[5]

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4. This point of view accounts for the majority of issues in debates on racism. Alice Hasters writes in her introduction: "I argue that we are discussing racism in the wrong way. The focus seems to be only on what you are allowed to say nowadays and what you are not allowed to say." Hasters, *Was weisse Menschen nicht über Rassismus hören wollen aber wissen sollten*, 7. Reni Eddo-Lodge describes in detail the notion that it is the minority who should have the discursive power, in the section "Fear of a Black Planet." Those who criticize racism are marked as divisive and a threat to free speech. Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 117–41.

5. See May Ayim, "Das Jahr 1990: Heimat und Einheit aus afro-deutscher Perspektive," in *Entfernte Verbindungen: Rassismus, Antisemitismus, Klassenunterdrückung*, ed. Ika Hügel et al. (Berlin: Orlanda-Frauenverlag, 1993), 206–20; May Ayim, "Die Afrodeutsche Minderheit," in *Afrika Bilder: Studien zu Rassismus in Deutschland*, ed. Susan Arndt (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2006), 53; Jennifer E. Michaels, "Multi-ethnicity and Cultural Identity: Afro-German Women Writers' Struggle for Identity in Postunification Germany," in *German Memory Contests: The Quest of Identity in Literature, Film, and*

and for this reason the same catalog of normalized racism in everyday life is continually found in literature on antiracism.[6] Even when it comes to the N-word, there are, in addition to increased education, definitely some setbacks.[7] There is no social consensus that such forms of verbal and visual violence are part of a comprehensive problem of racism, and that normalization of such violence provides a basis for extremist right-wing radicalization, racist acts of violence, and terror. Germans find it considerably easier to distance themselves from neo-Nazis and open hate speech than (self)critically examine racist patterns of perception and thought in everyday life. This debate has become more difficult since Germans tend to praise their culture of remembrance. Irrespective of how successful one might think the examination and reappraisal of National Socialism was, for decades an anti-anti-Semitic consensus in the German public existed. Knowledge of German and European colonial history, and the mechanisms of racism based on skin color, have not been addressed in the same way. One of the future challenges should, thus, be to speak of more than one kind of racism and their connecting lines. All in all, it can be argued that educating Germans about racism has been an arduous process and is far from finished.

This discussion of examples from literature, theater, and film will show where the challenges lie in terms of how blackface is a part of this issue: on the one hand, I point out that there have time and again been relevant incidents in literature and theater that offer an opportunity to discuss blackface critically. One the one hand, one must ask, which arguments

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Discourse since 1990, eds. Anne Fuchs, Mary Cosgrove and Georg Grote (Rochester: Camden House, 2006), 209–26.

6. The German term *Alltagsrassismus* (everyday racism), which could be used here, is controversial because it is considered normalizing. Beyond terminology, it is crucial that everyday, normalized racism be dealt with as critically as open hate speech. Unlike racist acts of violence, this type of racism is often denied by many members of the majority society. Certain images such as the Sarotti figure or objects like the chocolate "N****kuss" ("kiss of a n****," chocolate-covered marshmallows), which came to symbolize this denial, are examples of this racism one encounters in everyday life.

7. Such as the disconcerting ruling of the state constitutional court in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany) relating to the question of whether a speaker in the parliament can use the N-word. Criticism of this ruling voiced by many, as well as the debate on this, is in turn a positive sign. An excellent analysis of the ruling has been published by Anna Katharina Mangold and Sinthiou Buszweski in *Verfassungsblog* (*Constitution Blog*): Anna Katharina Mangold and Sinthiou Buszweski, "Worüber man nichts sagen kann, darüber soll man schweigen," *Verfassungsblog*, December 23, 2019, accessed February 18, 2020, https://verfassungsblog.de/worueber-man-nichts-sagen-kann-darueber-soll-man-schweigen/

have been presented and how are they to be dealt with? On the other hand, we must consider the question of which artistic means are employed in antiracist work. Is it possible that there could even be critical work involving blackface in line with other masquerade motifs? To this end, I will introduce examples from theater and literature, and discuss conditions, possibilities, and limitations of such attempts.

Literature: How the Freedom of Art Cannot Be Defended

In January 2013, the famous literary critic Denis Scheck appeared in blackface and white gloves and gave a short speech at the end of his TV show, *Druckfrisch* (*Hot off the Press*), where he usually discusses current book releases and converses with authors on the public-service channel *Das Erste*. He protested against intervening in the language of children's books. The publishing houses Oetinger and Tienemann had resolved to remove the N-word from children's books. The N****king in *Pippi Langstrumpf* (*Pippi Longstocking*) by Astrid Lindgren was thus changed to "South Sea King," and several racist terms were removed from *Die kleine Hexe* (*The Little Witch*) by Otfried Preußler.[8] Scheck, thus, sought to protest against intervening in the use of historical language, and, in so doing, he sought to defend the freedom of art against the "assault of political correctness." Why would he use blackface of all things to make this argument? Scheck denied that he himself was being racist in the way he protested. According to Scheck, his performance does not stand in the tradition of American minstrel shows. He thus claimed that there is no such thing as a racist practice of representation of blackface in Germany, and that it is a symbol that can be used at will. This is part of a defense strategy that has, regrettably, been typical of the German debate for a long time. More precisely, two aspects are at stake: the first is reducing blackface to the tradition of minstrelsy. These shows have historically not been very successful in Germany.[9] However, this is not a reason to say that blackface in Germany per

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8. On the discussion of the N-word with regard to, among other things, interventions in children's books see, for instance, Anatol Stefanowitsch, *Eine Frage der Moral: Warum wir politisch korrekte Sprache brauchen* (Berlin: Duden, 2018).

9. See John G. Blair, "First Steps towards Globalization: Nineteenth-Century Exports of American Entertainment forms," in *Here, There and Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, ed. Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 22: "There were attempts to export minstrelsy from England to the continent of Europe, all of which failed, but for very different reasons in different coun-

se means something else than it does in the United States. Obviously, Scheck has attempted to shift the issue of racism to the United States. At the same time, it is often implied that there is no racism based on skin color in Germany. But anti-Semitism, anti-Ziganism, racism against People of Color, and Black people can by no means be played off against one another as more or less important.

Second, Scheck's argument is that performers who use blackface employ it critically and are dealing with conventionalized meanings. In order for this to be true, either there has to be a nondiscriminatory tradition known to the general public that one can refer back to, or it has to be presented in such a way that it decisively breaks from the established meaning. None of these options apply to blackface and to the case depicted here. Therefore, we have to describe Scheck's *Druckfrisch* appearance as follows: black makeup on white skin, which turns Blackness into a stereotyped masquerade, is racist. Denis Scheck employed a racist practice in order to protest against antiracism on behalf of artistic freedom.[10]

Scheck's appearance is part of an almost bizarre protest that has been rampant for years against an alleged pervasive culture of "political correctness." In the process, requests that discriminatory language and symbols should not be used or be worded as neutral and inclusive as possible are oftentimes branded as "bans" and "censorship." Maintaining racist language and symbols is by no means an agenda of only the Right and right-wing extremist parties, who want to rule over art for the purpose of a national people's ethos; rather the fact that this also occurs on behalf of freedom of art makes the public discourse so challenging. Therefore, it is essential to remember to take into account ethical implications of aesthetic means of representation instead of playing off aesthetics against ethics.

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tries. In Germany, the initial audiences expressed outrage when they learned that the 'Blacks' they were watching were only blackfaced whites. The very racial premise that originally allowed the genre to flourish in the United Stated condemned it in Germany, where ethnic authenticity was already a primary value (a factor which would help acceptance of Buffalo Bill's Wild West some years later)." The story is clearly more complex, as Jeff Bowersox explains in his contribution to this volume. Crucial to my argument, however, is that blackface minstrelsy has not developed an independent critical tradition in Germany that could be productively drawn upon in the present day.

10. His performance provoked mixed reactions. It is typical of the public discourse in Germany that the N-word is regularly spelled out in reviews. Carolin Gasteiger, "Mit dem schwarzen Gesicht für den 'N****,'" *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, January 28, 2012, https://www.sued deutsche.de/medien/denis-scheck-zur-aktuellenkinderbuch-debatte-mitschwarzem-gesicht -fuer-den-neger-1.1585084

Theater: Repetitions and (Critical) Use of Blackface

Knowledge of racism is nowadays only a few clicks away on the internet. Members of the German majority society can always learn something new, and in that sense public discourse and scandals are an indication not only of persistent problems but also of opportunities for transfer of knowledge and building new consensus. In that sense, concerning the debate on Denis Scheck's appearance, it was pointed out that criticism of blackface already existed, and that the wider public was able to learn something about the nature of blackface. One of the most important events was the debate about blackface in the production of Dea Loher's play *Innocence* (*Unschuld*) directed by Michael Thalheimer, Deutsches Theater, Berlin, in 2012.[11] Those in particular who work in art and culture must have been made aware of the debates:

> When Günter Wallraff allowed himself to be made up as an African for his documentary film *Schwarz auf Weiß* (*Black on White*), the indignation was so great that anyone who follows cultural debates in Germany must have caught wind of it—including Denis Scheck. Dieter Hallervorden had a similar experience to Günter Wallraff's, when in 2012, instead of hiring a Black actor, he had a white actor perform in blackface in the production *I Am Not Rappaport*. He justified the move by claiming that at the time of casting, he could not find a Black actor for the role.[12]

Hallervorden's position was a standard response, or rather a standard excuse by theater directors who defend the use of blackface. Another excuse is that blackface can be used onstage because unlike everyday life, it always had a denaturalizing effect in the theater space. This line of argument claims that there is a basic difference between aesthetic practice and everyday life, and this has been used for decades as a justification for various forms of exoticizing masquerades.[13] Among these masquerades,

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11. See my afterword in the Reclam edition of Dea Loher's play *Unschuld* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2022).

12. Hallervorden's statement quoted in Hannah Pilarczyk, "Die Maske des Denis Scheck," *Spiegel Online*, January 30, 2013, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/literatur/denis-scheck-rassist ischer-sketch-in-ard-sendung-druckfrisch-a-880157.html. As to the debate, see also the article in *nachtkritik*, August 27, 2020, https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_cont ent&view=article&id=6457&catid=126

13. See also the study by Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002).

which are negotiated with terms such as ethnic masquerade, ethnic drag, racial drag, or racechange, there is a new version for the debate on blackface that attempts to refer theatrical performance to Judith Butler's performativity theory: according to this new version, the denaturalizing effect occurs analogous to gender performances. Furthermore, one can supposedly learn from Butler's performativity theory that the repetition of discursive gender norms makes them visible and recognizable. Moreover, every repetition entails a denaturalizing effect, and this should also apply to race performances.[14]

This is either an uninformed or, in a particular case, possibly even a strategically employed misunderstanding: for Butler's performativity theory explains how the effect of a substance of gender difference is produced through discursive regulatory practices. We all contribute by way of repetition of gender norms to maintaining the culturally established notion of an alleged natural binary. That this can become critically legible through repetition does not mean that it necessarily becomes transparent or even subversively effective in social interactions. The simplest proof for that is the tenacity of binary gender constructions in our society. Without a doubt there are changes, namely an increasing legal recognition of nonbinary persons or trans men and trans women. Besides, "femininities" and "masculinities" can nowadays be lived in considerably more diverse ways than decades ago. But people are still discriminated against on the basis of gender norms, and it is a tedious sociopolitical task to change that. One individual alone cannot change the cultural assignment of meaning—to come back to our example of blackface in theater, when one claims that there is no intention to be discriminatory. The dominant historical dimension cannot be ignored and compensated with goodwill.[15]

Stereotypical forms of presentation originate from historical contexts and are testimonies to balances of power and violence. Verbal and visual representations have meanings that one should know about and deal with critically. The good news that change is possible should not be confused with the idea that every individual discriminatory tradition of representation has the potential for change or reinterpretation. The dis-

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14. The activists of "Bühnenwatch" (stage watch) elaborated this brilliantly. Cf. Joy Kristin Kalu, "Dein Blackface ist so langweilig! Was das deutsche Repräsentationstheater von den Nachbarkünsten lernen kann," nachtkritik, November 26, 2014, accessed February 21, 2020, https://www.nachtk ritik.de/recherche-debatte/in-sachen-blackfacing-zwischenruf-zu-einer-andauernden-debatte

15. There were alternative uses and resignifications (see Annuß's contribution in this volume about Weimar resignification of blackface). But they did not develop a critical tradition that could be productively or even positively referred to in the present.

appearance of a racist tradition of representation can also be a positive change. For this to happen there must, however, be a shared understanding that it is racist.

So, what is the best way to inform the public about racism? And who should do it and in what way? Blackface should never be used naively or its racist dimensions of meaning denied. Therefore, any repetition of blackface in public space is out of the question, for instance, during carnival as well as simple repetitions in theater or film. Rather than use in theater for the sole reason that there are allegedly no Black actors, one solution is to hire more Black actors in ensembles. In addition, it goes without saying that every actor should be given the opportunity to play every role. Why shouldn't a Black actor play Romeo? Or Faust? And even if it happens to be an all-white ensemble, theaters have other means to convey to the audience that skin color is being addressed in a play than to simply continue with a racist practice of representation.

Another issue is whether there can be any aesthetic means for theater and film of informing about its own racist traditions. As long as blackface continues to exist in theater, everyday life, and in the media, it is necessary to discuss racist material. Theater as an institution today lends itself repeatedly as a space of negotiation for sociopolitically relevant topics such as migration or racism. Theater should not direct its attention, then, outward to social problems only, but rather should deal critically with its own institutionalized racist practices. Against this backdrop, the question arises whether blackface in theater can be critically restaged and effectively used in antiracist ways.[16] Before discussing this question, I will address the differences between various forms of masquerades and show that this type of comparison can be helpful for thinking about the success or failure of criticism of racism.

When questions of representation of gender, class, and ethnicity/race are discussed in cultural studies, fine arts, and literary studies, there are topics and motifs that are particularly suitable because they thematize categories of race, class, and gender itself. Therefore, these topics and motifs can be combined with approaches of doing gender and performance. These include the motif of masquerade in drama, prose, on stage, and in film. Among the distinct histories of motifs in German-language litera-

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16. See Andrea Geier, "Blackfacing Revisited: Warum und wie das Theater mit der rassistischen Darstellungstradition des Blackfacing arbeiten könnte," *nachtkritik*, August 1, 2018, accessed February 21, 2020, https://nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15701:essay-andrea-geier-fragt-warum-und-wie-das-theater-nicht-mit-der-rassistischen-darstellungstradition-des-blackfacing-arbeiten-soll&catid=101&Itemid=84

ture are masquerades of status like Gottfried Keller's *Kleider machen Leute* (*Clothes Make the Man*), from stories of gender (role) change in Lessing's *Der Misogyn* (*The Misogynist*) to Christoph Martin Wieland's *Novelle ohne Titel* (*Novella without a Title*) to Christa Wolf's *Selbstversuch* (*Self-Experiment*). Additionally, forms of ethnic masquerades from Gotthold Ephraim Lessing's *Die Juden* (*The Jews*) to scenarios of cultural contact with situation-dependent costumes while traveling that assert, alongside surface phenomena of costumes, the opportunity of new identity formations, as in Ilija Trojanow's novel *Der Weltensammler* (*The Collector of Worlds*). Most of the time, such masquerade stories move a category, for example, gender or ethnicity or class, to the visual or narrative center and say something about the discursive production and staging of social positions. In order to be able to depict a certain group affiliation, one should know about the signs that people will need to identify such an affiliation. This can be formulated in a somewhat abstract way as conditions for success for masquerades:

1. The cultural knowledge that the gender of a person is "deducible" from appearance (symbolic quality)
2. The existence of gender-specific preconceptions of gender roles in a society that allows as well as demands clear assigning
3. The prudence and skill of a person who knows about these rules and how to use them for a stage production

The interpretation begs the question of which knowledge and which competence are needed for readers or audience members to get the impression, if possible, that a figure could occasionally become a different person and that the "Otherness," which is to be acted out, is being impersonated in a believable way. What resources and conditions are necessary for such a staging of certain forms of *cross-dressing*? Do certain texts make specific notions of natural differences within masquerades plausible, or do they offer a starting point for criticism? Which concepts of origin and belonging are designed with respect to gender perceptions? To give an example, how are conceptual horizons of socially accepted femininity within class-specific positions conveyed, for instance that of middle-class white femininity? The fact that the thematization of social positions cannot be equated with criticism of those positions has been explicitly pointed out

by the research on gender masquerades in particular.[17] In comedy, which is the most common form where one finds such masquerades, these social positions are almost never intended to be critical, neither with regard to certain gender roles nor as social criticism. Within the scope of a long history from the early modern period until today, stories of sex changes and those of gender roles changes have been staged both as misogynous and—in a historic sense in each case—as emancipatory. In the twentieth century there are motifs that firmly aim for an educational and critical potential as well as a critique of social relations. That's why we have to examine each individual text or film for what functions the portrayed masquerades have. An analytical look could guide us in discovering critical potential in works that ultimately prove to be affirmative with regard to constructions of difference, namely to read against the grain. Key questions of the analysis include these: What social problems become visible through gender masquerades? How are they dealt with in those works?

A correspondingly diverse tradition of representation can be found in ethnic masquerades as well. The focus here is again less on characters than on socially desired or criticized power relations and power dynamics that become visible through the surroundings' reactions to the change. There are instances of masquerade that are educational, but often they can be ambivalent, exoticizing, and clearly racist such as the anti-Semitic motives of a "Jewish masquerade." The latter functioned as an essential element of propaganda long before National Socialism: the notion of ethnic homogeneity was frequently propagated in the nineteenth century and in literary discourses of nations. As in gender masquerades, we do have in German-language literature a tradition of ethnic masquerades that reveal in an affirmative or a critical way how cultural differences and the respective value discourses are created. With regard to this tradition, enactments of gender and ethnicity can definitely be compared. What they have in common as well is that traditions of representation are always related to social contexts and thus go through changes of meaning and appraisal. Additionally, this comparison can highlight why blackface cannot be classified in this motive tradition of masquerades altogether. Unlike gendered or ethnic masquerades, as mentioned in the context of the first example,

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17. See Gertrud Lehnert, *Maskeraden und Metamorphosen: Als Männer verkleidete Frauen in der Literatur* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1994).

there are no critical or even partially ambivalent usages and interpretations that could have generated their own tradition that then could be tied in. Therefore, in order to show that blackface is a discriminatory practice of fabricating Blackness, repeating the practice in an alienating way is the only option. In critical reenactments it must become absolutely clear how blackface, historically as well as today, contributes to staging and stabilizing the theater as a white space, a space of power where white people are still predominantly unmarked and "Black," in contrast, is marked.

One approach would be to only use blackface with a clear citational character at all times as well as in a thematic context, which ensures that the historical implications that come with it are discussed as well. Blackface is cited in this way in the play *Die lächerliche Finsternis* (*The Ridiculous Darkness*) based on the radio play by Wolfram Lotz (premiered in 2015 at the Burgtheater, Vienna). The director, Dušan David Pařízek, not only uses blackface at the end of the play as a citation, but also combines it with other means of distancing: all male characters are portrayed by women. The question of referentiality of symbols can thus be thematized in a relatively straightforward way, and, plausible in this context, blackface becomes visible as a problematic tradition of representation. A similar effect could emerge if blackface were used in a performance where, aside from white actors, Black actors also take on non-Black parts. Blackface would thus be embedded in a fundamentally critical work on audience's viewing habits and expectations in German theaters. The focus is directed less, as in critical restaging of other masquerades, on what Blackness or "Otherness" looks like, than on how and for what purpose a white society fabricates meanings of Blackness. Without a doubt, it is a balancing act. In such an enactment, blackface could additionally be embedded in a critical reminder of colonial racism so that affirmative effects could be avoided.

Film: Failing to Educate about Racism in Wallraff's *Schwarz auf Weiß*

At the core of antiracist work is critical self-reflection about the white dominant culture. The question is, who can contribute and by what means? The film *Schwarz auf Weiß* came out in 2009, using blackface without thematizing it in the context of the tradition.[18] There is a need for explanation precisely because the renowned journalist and author Günter Wallraff

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18. Susanne Jäger and Pagonis Pagonakis, directors, *Schwarz auf Weiß* (X-Verleih, 2009).

states that his intention with the film was to direct our attention to a discriminatory society: "Every society can be measured based on how it responds to foreigners." "Foreigners" must be put in quotation marks here, in order to demonstrate the racist construction. In this way it already addresses a central point of discussion: those who wish to criticize racists for perceiving Black Germans and People of Color as "foreigners" should at all costs avoid the racist equation of Germanness with whiteness from being evoked in their own description.

Wallraff traveled through Germany for more than a year, for the most part portraying a Black Somali called Kwami Ogonno who had studied German at the Goethe Institute. In addition, Wallraff also portrayed a Black German in his film. The underlying idea of the filmmakers was to showcase a particular realm of experience to which the white German dominant culture does not have access. Wallraff himself repeatedly emphasized his antiracist intention. He insisted that this be crucial to the film's reception and stressed that the reactions to the film showed him that it worked as desired.[19] As his main argument, Wallraff pointed to the fact that the Kwami Ogonno masquerade should be seen as a sequel to earlier undercover investigations, for which he became famous in the late 1960s. Following this tradition, he apparently did not see any reason to reconsider the masquerade as a means of representation and to address criticism of his representation since his very first experiment. According to Wallraff, this time he is not transforming into a Turk as in his most famous coverage *Ganz unten* (*Lowest of the Low*) (1985), but into a Black person on the premise that Blackness in Germany is frequently seen as "foreign."

The reference to the continuity of his masquerades is only logical upon a cursory glance. The use of a Turkish masquerade was met with occasional criticism back then and largely accepted because the majority of the audience and the critics were under the impression that Wallraff gave voice to people who themselves do not have a speaking position in public, namely Turkish so-called *Gastarbeiter* (guest workers). This type of ventriloquist position, however, is no longer accepted without question in the second decade of the twenty-first century. The public image of Germany has changed. Admittedly, we haven't come far enough as far as public rep-

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19. "The way I created the character, it is a total misjudgment of my intention and the effect that I achieved." "This is not about Black people. This is about white people." "Streitgespräch" (a debate) with Günter Wallraff, Carol Campbell, and Yojas Endrias, *ZeitMagazin*, December 17, 2009, 52.

resentation is concerned, but Black people and People of Color have been reporting on their experiences with racism for a long time, and filmmakers could have utilized this accordingly. Certain means of representation can lose their plausibility over time if the sociopolitical space, in which they are being utilized, changes. And this is precisely what applies to Günter Wallraff's exoticizing masquerades.

Wallraff is filmed on his tour through Germany with a hidden camera attached to his body as well as accompanied by a second team of cameramen that replicate, from a white point of view, Wallraff's individual actions as a Black person. The perspective from the body camera shows the audience Wallraff's experiences with everyday encounters in the public sphere when purchasing a watch, trying to find a parking space on a campground, finding a job, obtaining a hunting license, finding an apartment, and riding on a train after a soccer match. Black people are present in a few scenes, for example when Wallraff needs Black people to act as his family at the campground. But they barely have any speaking parts. The film relies, thus, mostly on audience's empathy for Wallraff in the role of a Black person.

I have discussed the film in various seminars with students, most of whom do not have any experience with racism. The openly racist insults and physical threats that Wallraff experiences as Kwami Ogonno are perceived in part as distressing and shocking, but still seen as phenomena that are well known. Positive feedback from students is usually given to the scene where Kwami Ogonno tries to sign up his young German shepherd for dog training. He explicitly says that he feels threatened, and that his dog offers him protection. Kwami Ogonno gets rejected. He is told that they are no longer accepting new dogs. Besides, a membership, he is told, is expensive and time-consuming. This conversation is devoid of racist remarks. However, the way the experiment is set up, it's easy to see why the incident is racist: there is another scene involving a young, white woman who attempts to sign up for the same training. The fee that she is asked to pay is a lot lower, and she is commended for her decision, and she and her dog get accepted. It is undeniable that Kwami Ogonno was rejected for racist reasons.

Such a repetition of the same situation in differing roles can be found in several parts of the film, for instance during the viewing of an apartment. People don't feel comfortable using racist language when Ogonno is present, but they do in the subsequent conversation with the white test person being filmed, referring for example to Kwami Ogonno as "one of those," that is, a Black person, and saying he is not a good fit "here," and

so on. This allows students without any experience of discrimination a follow-up discussion on how discrimination and racism work. These scenes illustrate above all how difficult it actually is to prove experiences of discrimination: Who else has a camera team and recordings that prove in a direct comparison that it was in fact racism? Here the film gives rise to discussions on the effectiveness of antidiscrimination directives. The film intends to be educational and seems to confirm Wallraff's own perception of racism in Germany. At the same time, the few scenes in which Wallraff, disguised as a Black person, carries out the same action in masquerades that signal different social status through clothing offer an opportunity to discuss the connection between ascribed Otherness, economy, and racism. As a seemingly well-off person, Wallraff gets treated in a clearly courteous manner as a customer who plans to buy expensive watches.

Yet, are these insights enough grounds to justify choosing a racist tradition of representation for the film? The answer is no. Black actors could have been employed to reconstruct the same situations and to highlight the discriminatory treatments. This does not require a masquerade that involuntarily and clearly replicates racism against its own educational intentions. Although the film takes care at the beginning to ensure that the masquerade, which includes the wig and the black skin coloring, was created after consulting with the Black activist, Mouctar Bah, the film does not provide any space for the experiences of Black people.[20] And yet it's the rare scenes where they share their experiences that leave a great impression. This includes the account of a Black kid on racism and exclusion. One could simply say that anyone who wants to know anything about Black Germans' lives should listen to them and collaborate with them. This change would possibly have led some scenes to be shot differently.[21] The overall conception of the film makes use of a knowledge of racism that is yet made invisible

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20. Whether the masquerade (wig and clothing) is convincing at all is a point of contention. On these aspects as well as the reactions of Black people to the film, see Julia Stegmann, *Denn die Geschichten der Opfer sind das Wichtigste: Rassismus-kritische Analysen zu rechter Gewalt im deutschen Spiel- und Dokumentarfilm 1992–2012* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2019).

21. This includes the train ride after a soccer match that, in the discussion on the film, begged the question of what Black person would expose themselves voluntarily to such a dangerous situation. In addition, the overly flashy clothing worn by "Kwami Ogonno" with the aim of eliciting foreseeable reactions in an attempt to get in touch with strangers was often viewed critically.

because it seems as if Wallraff discovers it anew. As Noah Sow notes, "He presents his curiosity about his research results, feelings, knowledge production, and the representational rights of Black people. Thus, he takes advantage of his white privilege: he imitates oppressed minorities and by doing so earns money, attention, and even respect."[22]

The fact that Wallraff didn't perceive his masquerade to be "aping" does not mean that he took an interest in the racist tradition of his masquerade or thought about the question of how he could make use of his celebrity status differently to call attention to racism instead of placing himself at the center. One might object and argue that the film wouldn't have been shot this way or achieved a largely white mainstream audience without the prominent name Günter Wallraff. His name is an asset in the film market. Even if you agree with this objection, it can still be argued that there would have been alternative ways and simpler means of making a systemically nonracist film than using blackface. For instance, Wallraff could have cast himself in a different role in the film without necessarily slipping into a masquerade. Blackface could have even been used once to address the issue of racist repetitions, addressing the question of why something that is meant to be educational is not antiracist in this case. Not only could the focus thus have been on the experiences of Black Germans but also the function of such masquerades and their traditions of representation could have been discussed selectively and purposefully in the best educational sense. This could have indeed created a momentum for a social-critical discussion at the time of the film's release. Since the film does have some scenes where Wallraff reports on how he feels, such as when he was scared, and so on, such reflective passages could have fit well into the narrative form of the documentary film without signaling a break with its concept. Alternatively, instead of appearing in a scene himself, Wallraff could have watched and commented on a carnival scene where blackface occurs, together with a Black person to reflect on what this feels like and what stereotypes are being invoked here, and so forth.

The fact that the name Wallraff is needed to reach a wide audience could have been implemented without using blackface. Most importantly, a reflection on racist traditions of representation in the film could have had another educational function. I am talking about the correlation

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22. Noah Sow, "Ein angemalter Weißer ist kein Schwarzer: Interview on the Film 'Schwarz auf Weiß,'" *tagesschau*, October 20, 2009, https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/rassismusinterview-ts-100.html

between racism, empathy, and emotions in *Schwarz auf Weiß*. Before I watch excerpts from the film with students in a session, I ask the white students in particular to think about the effect the masquerade has on them. Does it mean anything to them to know that Wallraff is a white person? Some say that this does not make a difference. Others describe a specific function: it is easy to see that the problem of racism lies in the racist views of people. It is not the behavior of people, who are declared "foreigners," that causes racist reactions, but racist attitudes are based on group-related prejudices against and hostility toward those marked as "foreigners." As Etienne Balibar states, racism "organizes affects . . . by conferring upon them a stereotyped form, as regards both their 'objects' and their 'subjects.'"[23]

To be able to see that the problem of racism is in the mind of racists and not with the racialized person is an important insight. Racism is a projection and not a reaction to a behavior. The question is how high the costs are for such an insight in this case. For it is indeed a racist mechanism to really understand racism only when you know that the person who experiences it is "actually" white. It is definitely shocking to find out that empathy works for a lot of people through similarity, that it even needs similarity as a vehicle. It is immensely important for antiracist work to deal with such mechanisms. If people feel confident in saying that they detected this mechanism in the masquerade or even felt it themselves, then they have realized something essential about racism. This is when we start speaking about who we are as a society, who belongs to this "us" that we should strive to be.

Against this backdrop, working with such problematic material as *Schwarz auf Weiß* for the purpose of university teaching is justified. It remains crucial, however, that the few productive effects are integrated into the overall problematic concept. The fact that taking blackface as an example we can learn something about how racism functions in a white majority society like Germany does not mean that the concept of the film should be justified. Nevertheless, it is a meaningful example to reflect on the fact that traditions of representation do have a history that can change when viewed through a modern lens. The fact that art as a reflective and communicative space follows different rules than the public space should not be mistaken for a license for racism (any longer).

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23. Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. Chris Turner (New York: Verso, 1991), 18.

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III

Black Artists

Race, Theater, Institutions

Coloniality and Decolonial Practices in Contemporary German Theater

Azadeh Sharifi

Introduction

German theater and its artists have traditionally considered themselves left wing and antiracist. Since leftist artists like Bertolt Brecht and Heiner Müller are seen as kind of godfathers of modern German theater, antiracism seems to be an essential and intrinsic part of theater productions. This self-perception of antiracism props up the claim that German theater can stimulate feelings that might be violent and hurtful but are necessary in order to dismantle social and political injustice and transform the society. At least, this is the line of argumentation that has been brought forward by white German male theater directors throughout the past decades when different minorities and racialized groups have protested against racist and discriminatory representation on German stages.

For example, this was the defense brought forward in 2003 when the play *Black Battles with Dogs* by Bernard-Marie Koltès was staged at the Volksbühne Berlin, one of the famous German theaters that has a long history of being an antiracist theater *of the people*. The play *Black Battles with Dogs* has been classified by the theater critics and theater practitioners as an antiracist and anticolonial play. While the author intended to dismantle the European racism in the original French text, he intentionally uses the N-word when describing Nigerian/African characters. While in the English version the N-word was translated into *Black*, the German translation of the title—*Kampf des N****s und der Hunde*—kept the racial slur. For the premiere of the play, *Volksbühne Berlin* wrote out the N-word in big capital letters on a flag used as a billboard in front of the theater building. The advertisement of the production caused a protest, largely led

by Black activists and artists who pointed out the history of the N-word and its derogatory meaning. At that time, the artistic director Frank Castorf dismissed the protest by insisting, "Being attacked is a part of artistic work,"[1] by which he seemed to suggest that drastic measures are needed in order to draw attention to the topic, even though the "attack" was only against the Black German community. The protesters argued that the production was simply reproducing and perpetuating a colonial narrative rather than uncovering it and that the theater failed to acknowledge the violence they produced against Black Germans. At that time, the tenor of the German theater scene was that the freedom of art had to be held higher over some "hurt feelings" of a minority group.[2] But this has since then changed drastically due to the movement of postmigrant theater, fierce and resilient Black artists of color, and as activists groups such as Bühnenwatch who pushed for a more critical (and postcolonial) approach in the German theater landscape. They revealed not only that the German theater praxis, its narrative, language and aesthetics, and cultural policy has an intrinsic racist structure that traces back to Germany's colonial past, but also challenged these structures through diverse strategies and practices that intend to decolonize the German theater.

In this contribution, I will give an overview of some of the traces of Germany's colonial past in German theater, namely the use of blackface and colonial language on stage. By subsequently looking into the systemic exclusion of artists of color, I will focus on artists of color who have nevertheless claimed stages and spaces within German theater and its institutions. Theater practicioners[3] of color have changed colonial narratives and implemented decolonial practices, and the recent work of Anta Helena Recke and Simone Dede Ayivi is decisive for this slow transformation. While there seems to be a long path and many slippery slopes to cope with the coloniality of the structures, the critical discourses and decolonial practices that artists of color are bringing in right now can give an insight to the prospect of the futures of German theater.

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1. "Provocation is part of art making." Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own. Abini Zöllner, "Don't Call Me N****," *Berliner Zeitung*, December 12, 2003, http://www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/ein-wort-hat-seine-unschuld-verloren--das-erfuhr-jetzt-auch-die-volksbuehne-don-t-call-me-neger,10810590,10136124.html

2. Zöllner, "Don't Call Me N****."

3. The term "theater practitioners" serves here as a more lose than adequate translation for the German *Theatermacher*innen*. *Theatermacher*innen* is more than a performer or a practitioner; it reflects and includes all the different fields and areas of theater making and theater practicing, from research and writing a script to building a set or a multimedia installation.

Traces of Germany's Colonial Past

The building of a German nation and ideas of nationhood have long been interconnected with imperial ambitions. In the nineteenth century, German colonial policy formed an integral part of *Weltpolitik*[4] (world politics), and the term—or more accurately the euphemism—"place in the sun"[5] embodies a colonial fantasy that can be still observed in the current social understanding of Germany's past: colonialism is framed as not being about violence, bloodshed, and destruction, but about desires and aspirations. Germany annexed overseas colonies during the period of massive European imperial expansion in the late nineteenth century, and went on to lose most of them following the First World War. The historian's common position on German colonialism is that, compared to the other colonial powers, Germany's colonial history was short in duration, and colonies were small and economically unprofitable.[6] While much of the historiography of the German empire remains tied to the national history paradigm, recent developments have begun to move beyond a framework that treats Germany and its colonies as separate entities.[7] There is further recognition that the German overseas empire had historical importance. In fact, the German colonial expansion of the 1880 helped to catalyze the partitioning of the African continent among the European powers at the Berlin Conference (1884–1885). The partition created a map of the colonized African continent, through arbitrarily drawing lines, that expressed the colonizers' anxiety to control conquered land. Bill Ashcroft points out that "the map itself in which names . . . inscribe a pattern of knowing by representation of the act of seeing . . . establishes the authority of European consciousness and European desire to enter the 'unknown.'"[8] The act of mapping verifies the power of representation.

In addition to its crucial role in the European domination of Africa, Germany executed more than three hundred thousand colonized people

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4. Winfried Baumgart, "German Imperialism in Historical Perspective," in *Germans in the Tropics*, ed. Arthur J. Knoll (New York: Greenwood, 1987), 151.

5. The German foreign secretary Bernhard von Bülow used this infamous phrase in his speech on Germany's part in 1887: "Mit einem Worte: wir wollen niemand in den Schatten stellen, aber wir verlangen auch unseren Platz an der Sonne." ("In a word: We wish to throw no one into the shade, but we also want our own place in the sun").

6. Woodruff D. Smith, *German Colonial Empire* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press Enduring Editions 1978), ix.

7. Sebastian Conrad, "Rethinking German Colonialism in a Global Age," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 4 (2013): 543.

8. Bill Ashcroft, *Postcolonial Transformations* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 131.

in the colonies, mostly during the Herero and Nama genocide from 1904 to 1907. In the 1980s, the Whitaker Report confirmed that the German war against Herero and Nama was in fact the first genocide of the twentieth century.[9] Henning Melber argues that this colonial genocide laid the roots for the Holocaust: "Colonial racism was a fertile breeding ground for further radicalizing anti-Semitism."[10] Following a century of denial, in July 2015 the German government officially acknowledged the Herero and Nama genocide, but as representatives of the German negotiation officials frame it: "The German government considers that the use of the term 'genocide' does not entail any legal obligation to reparations, but rather political and moral obligations to heal the wounds. We're sticking to that position."[11] Meanwhile, current mainstream discourses on colonialism like the debates around the Humboldt Forum align with the official statement.[12] Noa Ha argues that these debates are inscribed in certain (power) spaces that (re)produce colonial power dynamics and are only willing to question them *peu à peu*.[13] These political strategies not only are rooted in political agendas but are deeply entrenched in Germany's national and cultural identity. And they can be observed in the way the majority of the white society defends the colonial past. In Berlin, the district Afrikanisches Viertel (African Quarters) features several street names dedicated to important colonizers and colonial officers. And initiatives led by Black Germans who demand the streets be renamed are met with dismissal and controversial media debates that only dismiss the historical significances but also go to great length to ridicule and devalue the arguments of the protesters.[14] Similar

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9. Benjamin C. G. Whitaker, "Revised and Updated Report on the Question of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide," *U.N. Special Rapporteur on Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1985), https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/108352?ln=en#record-files-collapse-header

10. Henning Melber, "How to Come to Terms with the Past: Re-visiting the German Colonial Genocide in Namibia," *Africa Spectrum* 40, no. 1 (2005): 145.

11. Daniel Pelz, "Aufarbeitung Ja, Entschädigung Nein," *Deutsche Welle*, July 31, 2018, https://www.dw.com/de/aufarbeitung-ja-entschädigungen-nein/a-44877236

12. The Humboldt Forum is an ongoing museum project in Berlin that is part of the reconstruction of the Berlin Palace, located next to the Museum Island. The Humboldt Forum will incorporate two of the art chamber's successor institutions: the Ethnological Museum of Berlin and the Museum of Asian Art.

13. Noa Ha, "Perspektiven urbaner Dekolonisierung: Die europäische Stadt als 'Contact Zone,'" *sub\urban: Zeitschrift für kritische Stadtforschung* 3 (2014): 40.

14. Manfred Götzke, "Wie in Berlin um einen Straßennamen gestritten wird," *Deutsch-*

lines of argument are brought forward when it comes to discussions around race and colonialism in German theater.

One of the most prominent discussions concerning race in German theater is on the use of blackface on German stages. At the end of 2011, the play *I Am Not Rappaport* by the American playwright Herb Gardener, which premiered at Schloßparktheater Berlin in early 2012, was advertised with a white German actor in blackface who played the role of the African American character. The posters were plastered all over Berlin set off widespread protests, to the surprise of the theater. The protest, which started on social media, in particular on Facebook, hit the page of Schloßparktheater Berlin with a shitstorm. There, protesters pointed out to the long history of blackface used as theatrical makeup in nineteenth-century US minstrel shows, in which performers created a stereotyped caricature of Black people.

Schlosssparktheater Berlin, but also other white theaters, directors, and reviewers/critics who support the artists of Schlossparktheater, tried to brush off the criticism by claiming that above all, they perceive themselves as antiracists and therefore their artistic work can't be racist.[15] Second, they dismissed the history of blackface by stating that there is no blackface tradition in Germany, because finally the reason for "blackening" the face of white actors has been used as a neutral theatrical technique that was historically necessary due to the lack of Black actors in Germany.[16] While I will come back to the issue of the lack of Black artists in German theater in a later part of this essay, I want to highlight that several scholars and activists have looked into the practices of art and depiction of Black people and traced blackface back into the nineteenth century. David Ciarlo trailed the first minstrel shows that came to Germany back to the 1870s: "Just as with white American audiences, minstrelsy's celebration of racial hierarchy and unrestrained ribaldry flattered and titillated white Euro-

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landfunk Kultur, August 7, 2019, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/widerstand-gegen-manga-bell-platz-wie-in-berlin-um-einen.976.de.html?dram:article_id=455728

15. Dieter Hallervorden posted on Facebook (no longer available): "In my world of thought, there is absolutely no place for racism," cited after dpa, "Umstrittene Inszenierung Hallervorden weist Rassismusvorwürfe zurück," *Der Spiegel*, January 10, 2012, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/umstrittene-inszenierung-hallervorden-weist-rassismus-vor-wuerfe-zurueck-a-808280.html

16. Julia Lemmle, "Weißsein, Theater & die Normalität rassistischer Darstellung," accessed June 18, 2020, https://heimatkunde.boell.de/de/2012/07/18/weisssein-theater-die-normalitaet-rassistischer-darstellung

pean audience."[17] And he points out that American minstrel shows toured Europe from the mid-nineteenth century onward and, in the process, familiarized European and German audiences with the racial stereotypes that were common in the slaveholding and postslavery segregated United States.[18] Sandrine Micossé-Aikins points out that minstrel shows were not the only "representation" of Black people in Germany. Alongside the minstrel shows, "human zoos" were touring in Europe that constituted in themselves a powerful practice of creating and propagating a derogatory image of "the African" and other People of Color.[19]

At the same time the protests started to rise up against the use of blackface, the play *Unschuld* (*Innocence*), by Dea Loher, premiered in September 2011 at Deutsches Theater Berlin. *Unschuld* tells the story of a seemingly random group of people in an unnamed seaport in Europe: the central figures are Elisio and Fadoul, two Black African immigrants without legal papers. They witness a young woman drowning herself in the sea and become consumed with guilt. One is not able to sleep; the other finds a bag full of money. And then there are figures whose names are aptronyms, like Frau Zucker (sugar) who has diabetes. These people are part of the city, and their lives intersect throughout the nineteen scenes. The play's intention is to show how guilt and innocence are entangled in the frenzy of everyday life. Theater reviewers have called Elisio and Fadoul "two unfortunate humans"[20] and the play Dea Loher's best piece. Loher, perhaps wary of how German theaters might cast these two characters, gave specific instructions in the script how to cast and represent these characters on stage: "Do not use black makeup, but rather emphasize the artificiality of the theatrical devices using masks or something similar."[21] But she failed to be aware of her own racist and victimizing depiction of the two characters. For example, in the list of characters the group of people with seemingly German names are described through their professions and or their position in society, while Elisio and Fadoul, are described only as "illegale schwarze Immigranten" ("illegal Black immigrants").

In the production at Deutsches Theater Berlin, the director, Michael

17. David Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire: Race and Visual Culture in Imperial Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2011), 218.

18. Ciarlo, *Advertising Empire*, 219.

19. Sandrine Mikossé-Aikins, "Not Just a Blackened Face," accessed June 18, 2020, http://www.textures-platform.com/?author_name=sandrine

20. Christine Dössel for *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, cited after Goethe Institut online, accessed June 18, 2020, the Goethe Institute has since deleted this page online.

21. Dea Loher, *Unschuld* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag der Autoren, 2013).

Thalheimer, disregarded Loher's instructions in the script. At DT Berlin, the two white actors who played Elisio and Fadoul wore blackface. The black makeup was unevenly smeared on their faces, and by the end of the play, the paint had been spread all over the stage and left only "black spots" on the faces of the actors. Sharon Dodua Otoo, who attended the show and participated in the postperformance discussion, witnessed: "It has been argued that this effect was apparently intended to demonstrate that as the audience and other characters in the play get to know Elisio and Fadoul better, the friends become increasingly 'human.'"[22] The blackface marks Otherness and even a nonhuman state of being. Blackness becomes one single theatrical token that easily taps into a colonial depiction of Black people. Or as Sandrine Mikossé-Aikins summarizes it: "One particular image though that enjoyed a special popularity nicely links up with the idea of Blackness involuntarily evoked in the Deutsches Theater's staging of *Unschuld*: the idea that Black people are after all not really Black but just painted or, worse, dirty."[23] Joy Kristin Kalu, who has postulated that the use and repetition of blackface could produce aesthetic friction and maybe enable a new and entirely different meaning, argued in the case of this production that in combination with other offensive processes of representation, it had nothing but a racist connotation. She comments: "If only otherness would not be shown on German stages as more foreign than it is in the daily lives of most of the audience members, the self and the other could actually be painted in more subtle shades than in Black and white."[24]

The coloniality of German theater structures is not only inherent in the aesthetics and representation of Black people, but also an integral part of the language on stage. Natasha Kelly has analyzed the specific German context of the N-word, framing its historical moment of emergence interwoven with slavery and colonialism. Kelly states that Black academics identify the N-word as part of a white (supremacist) concept that inscribes Black people in a colonial order.[25] And Patricia Schultz goes on further,

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22. Sharon Dodua Otoo, "(Ab)using Fadoul and Elisio: Unmasking Representations of Whiteness in German Theater," accessed June 2020, http://www.textures-platform.com/?p=3216

23. Mikossé-Aikins, "Not Just a Blackened Face."

24. Joy Kristin Kalu, "On the Myth of Authentic Representation: Blackface as Reenactment," accessed June 18, 2020, http://www.textures-platform.com/?p=2616

25. Natasha Kelly, "Das N-Wort," in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*, ed. Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Antje Lann Hornscheidt (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes/Apsel), 165.

saying that it is a manifestation of power through language that has been proclaimed through the perspective of a white majority as "natural" (*natürlich*) and "neutral" (*neutral*).[26]

The debates around the use of the N-word have been fought since at least the 1980s but in recent years have become more urgent. As I have already mentioned, along with the protests around the Volksbühne Berlin and its advertisement of the play *Black Battles with Dogs* in the early 2000s, a major shift came in recent years with another production—*Les Nègres* (*The Blacks*) by Jean Genet, directed by Johan Simons, which premiered first at the Schauspielhaus Hamburg in October 2014 as a coproduction with Wiener Festwochen. *The Blacks* was published in 1958 and in the author's own words was "written, I repeat, by a white man, [and] intended for a white audience."[27] *The Blacks* is a play within a play that exposes racism and racial stereotypes while exploring Black identity. A white woman has been murdered by a Black man out of lust, which then is reenacted in front of a courtroom while the queen and her entourage look on and comment. Afterward they go on an expedition into the jungle to be confronted with "real" Blacks. Genet insisted in the script that it must be an all-Black ensemble who wear white makeup or a mask that leaves an outline of their faces and their hair visible to the audience.[28] His intention was to mirror and mock the French society for it colonial gaze and voyeurism, and ultimately point out the ongoing legacies of colonialism that, for example, were present through the Algerian War, which lasted until 1962, and the anticolonial struggle of former French colonies in Africa.

In the announcement of the production directed by Simons, which consisted of an entirely white cast,[29] the N-word was written out. Many

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26. Patricia Schultz, "'Negrid/Negroid'—Gibt es ein Leben nach den N-Wort?," in *Rassismus auf gut Deutsch: Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk zu rassistischen Sprachhandlungen*, ed. Adibeli Nduka-Agwu and Antje Lann Hornscheidt (Frankfurt am Main: Brandes/Apsel), 167.

27. Jean Genet, *The Blacks: A Clown Show*, trans. Bernard Frechtman (New York: Grove Press 1960), 2.

28. Genet, *The Blacks*, 3.

29. Nike Thurn analyzes the German reception of Jean Genet and why the German theater has historically ignored Genet's instruction on the Black cast. The first German production in 1964 was an all-white cast, and Genet was furious. Two decades later, he allowed his friend Peter Stein to produce the play with an all-white cast that afterward became a German "tradition" of reception. Nike Thurn, "Dieses Stück Genets wird jede deutsche Bühne überfordern: Zur Rezeption von Jean Genets Les Nègres in Deutschland," in *Jean Genet und Deutschland*, ed. Matthias N. Lorenz and Oliver Lubrich (Hamburg: Merlin Verlag, 2014).

Black activist groups like Pamoja—The Movement of the Young African Diaspora in Austria, Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland (Initiative of Black People in Germany), and other European antiracist NGOs released a statement calling for a critical engagement with the history and the narrative of the word. They stated: "The N-word, both in English and in German, stands for centuries of oppression, enslavement, and killing of Black people. The use of this word trivialized these realities."[30] They demanded the removal of the N-word and the colonial and violent depiction of Black people. This opened another heated and controversial debate where most of the German theater directors and theater reviewers argued for the freedom of art. In fact, the historical contextualization by the Black activists was seen as an attempt at censorship and not an important insight into the debate. Simons, who released a statement to explain himself, went a step further: "I can understand that the title is hurtful, especially when you don't know the play by Genet and don't want to know it through our production. But because it is provocative, it will bring forth the important debates on past and present racism."[31]

In his statement, Johan Simons uses arguments that are implemented by white supremacy and the colonial legacy to delegitimize and invalidate Black voices. He claims not only that the protest stems from a lack of knowledge (he even goes further and claims that there is willing ignorance among the protesters) but also that he has knowledge of the truth and that he is able to solve (or help solve) the issue of racism, that is, to both enlighten and free Black protesters.

Nike Thurn has pointed out that the failure to fully grasp *The Blacks* is connected to its German reception since the 1960s. Thurn stresses that neither the artists, nor the reviewers, nor the audience understood the notion of race and racism in these adaptations.[32] In fact, as I have already indicated by citing Genet's directions on casting, the play was never intended to *trigger* a Black audience but rather to provoke the white theater establishment and the white audience and its gaze in order to unmask structural racism. In *Ethnic Drag* Katrin Sieg argues, through her analysis

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30. Pamoja: Die Bewegung der jungen Afrikanischen Diaspora in Österreich, "Schwarze Menschen in Europa gegen Aufführung des Theaterstücks 'Die N****' von Johan Simons," open letter, accessed June 18, 2020, http://isdonline.de/schwarze-menschen-in-europa-gegen-auffuehrung-des-theaterstuecks-die-n-von-johan-simons/

31. "Regisseur Johan Simons zum Stück," accessed June 18, 2020, https://dshgenet.wordpress.com

32. Thurn, "Dieses Stück Genets."

of the representation of different ethnicities in Germany, that race has historically been performed in German theater as a masquerade.[33]

In the end, Simons's adaptation of *The Blacks*, presented at Wiener Festwochen 2014, was dismissed by theater reviewers for neither understanding Genet's intentions nor disclosing contemporary discourses on race.[34] And interestingly enough, not the play itself but the public debates and interventions by Black protesters have essentially changed the discourse on colonial, racist, and violent language.

Claiming the Stage

About the same time, Julia Wissert, then working on her master's thesis[35] for the drama school Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria, interviewed fifteen Black artists (actors, directors, and playwrights) about their experiences in German-speaking theaters—including Austria and Switzerland. In these interviews, the artists talk about the rejection they experienced at the hands of art and drama schools, artistic directors, and agencies. They are told that they would not fit into German ensembles because they wouldn't be able to play all the required roles—that is, they are not able to play all the white roles. When, for example, Schlossparktheater Berlin justified the decision to use a white actor for a Black role in *I Am Not Rappaport*, it argued,

> Our decision to cast the role of the Black American with a white actor follows a long tradition in the German-speaking scene that is not racist. There is almost no ensemble in German, Austrian, and Swiss theater with Black actors. The simple reason is that the reper-

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33. Katrin Sieg, *Ethnic Drag: Performing Race, Nation, Sexuality in West Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002). Interestingly, she refers in her introduction to the intervention of Bernard-Marie Koltès in 1988 at the Thalia Theater Hamburg because he objected to the cast of white actors for his African and Arab characters in his play *Le Retour au Desért*.

34. Matthias Dell, "Irgendwas mit Rassismus: Blackface-Masken und Weiße, die Schwarze spielen: Die Inszenierung von Genets 'Die N****' auf den Wiener Festwochen versprach einen Skandal: Zu Recht?," accessed June 18, 2020, http://www.zeit.de/kultur/2014-06/neger-genet-simons-festwochen

35. Julia Wissert, "Schwarz—Macht–Weiß: Eine künstlerische Recherche zur Frage nach strukturellem Rassismus auf deutschsprachigen Bühnen," Master's thesis, Universität Mozarteum, Salzburg, 2014.

toire of the theater does not have enough roles [for Black actors] in a season to justify a permanent position.[36]

This acknowledgment of the long tradition of German-speaking theaters not having enough roles for Black actors in fact reveals that race has played, and still plays, a major role in the German theater. While there might be a request for actors who are able to play every role onstage regardless of age, gender, and race, in reality this exclusively refers to white actors being able to play every role. Race is used here as a gatekeeper. On the one hand, race and racism is not acknowledged as a structural factor in German theaters, while on the other hand actors of Color have been excluded for not being able to play all the roles of the German repertoire.

This double standard has been pointed out especially by artists and scholars of Color for quite some time now,[37] and while the institutions like drama schools and big theater venues are changing very slowly, artists of Color have founded their own spaces and venues to produce and place art within the German theater scene. Ballhaus Naunynstrasse is since 2008 a dedicated space for postmigrant theater. Shermin Langhoff, who was the artistic director from 2008 to 2012, stated in the beginning years that "postmigrant [theater] includes stories and perspectives of those who have not migrated themselves, but whose personal background includes personal histories and collective memories of migration."[38]

When Shermin Langhoff became the artistic director of the state-supported Maxim Gorki Theater in 2013, Brazilian-German curator Wagner Carvalho took over the leadership at Ballhaus Naunynstraße. He focuses on Black and Pan-African perspectives as a trajectory within postmigrant theater. Black artists like Atif Hussein, Tuks Körner, Julien Enzana, Jair Luna, and many others are producing theater about Black bodies, sexuality, gender, and positions, and using Ballhaus Naunynstrasse as a space to think about Black aesthetics. Embedding theater work as part of the political interaction with the society, they are closely collaborating with initiatives like Each One Teach One e.V., Initiative Schwarze Menschen in Deutschland, and ADEFRA. This, for example, led to the festival

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36. Wissert, "Schwarz—Macht–Weiß," 7–8.

37. Azadeh Sharifi, "Theater and Migration—Documentation, Influences and Perspectives in European Theatre," in *Independent Theatre in Contemporary Europe: Structures—Aesthetics—Cultural Policy*, ed. Manfred Brauneck (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 321–416.

38. Shermin Langhoff, "Theater kann eine Identitätsmaschine sein," interview by Kristina Ohr, *Nah & Fern* 43 (2009): 21.

We Are Tomorrow—Visions and Retrospection on Occasion of the 1884 Berlin Conference. The Berlin Conference, which I have already mentioned, was led by German chancellor Otto von Bismarck to allow European colonizers to partition Africa. The theater festival *We Are Tomorrow* was a mix of theater, performance, discussion, and gathering where the Berlin Conference as a symbol of German colonial history was examined in order to take a look at "identity constructions from multiple perspectives and to rethink them in a visionary way."[39]

Other theater venues like Sophiensaele Berlin, a production house for the independent theater scene, have slowly transformed their approach to an intersectional space. Here the theater scholar and dramaturg Joy Kristin Kalu has played a major role by bringing in an academic, aesthetic, and community-based discourse. Nadine Jessen and Johannes Mailes, who were curators for Wiener Festwochen 2017, tried to turn the conservative festival inside out by adopting Gayatri Spivak's notion of "unlearning," inviting artists, academics, and communities to rethink the Eurocentric festival. The concept wasn't welcomed by the administration of the festival or the mainly white audience, and the curators responsible for the change were thrown out after one season. Nadine Jessen, who had previously worked as a dramaturge and curator for Kampnagel Hamburg, returned to Hamburg, where this process of unlearning has been adopted, at least in certain areas of the production house Kampnagel.

Mousonturm Frankfurt, another production house for the independent theater scene, has set its path along a postcolonial discourse. One of the projects that set it in motion was the project Afropean Mimicry & Mockery in Theater, Performance & Visual Arts from 2014 until 2016. In 2018, the dramaturges Julian Warner and Elisa Liepsch and the artistic director Matthias Pees published an edited volume on white institutions and the attempts to intervene and ultimately transform them.[40] They define white institutions as symbolizing a "complex dominance consisting of structures, practices, unquestioned privileges, aesthetic concepts and variously positioned subjects."[41] Beside the pivotal contribution to the current state of German theater (and art) institutions that the edited

39. "We Are Tomorrow—Visions and Retrospection on Occasion of the 1884 Berlin Conference," Ballhaus Naunynstrasse, accessed June 18, 2020, http://www.ballhausnaunynstrasse.de/pdf/BN_B-Konferenz_32s_235-315_ffin.pdf

40. Julian Warner and Elisa Liepsch, "Einleitung/Introduction," in *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen*, ed. Elisa Liepsch, Julian Warner, and Matthias Pees (Bielefeld: transcript 2018).

41. Warner and Liepsch, "Einleitung/Introduction," 21.

volume renders, one of the crucial moments of the book seems to be the self-reflection of the editors. In the introduction, the editors reflect on the number of people who showed interest in contributing and collaborating but over time withdrew. One of the main reasons the editors identify was distrust: "Many colleagues wondered: how can anyone express criticism when they remain part of a hegemonic system."[42] This moment of self-reflection maybe the most crucial because it acknowledges that the coloniality of the German theater cannot be fully dismantled as long as the institution itself remains unquestioned. Nevertheless, the gradual changes that artists of Color are slowly but steadily evoking have to be acknowledged.

Changing the Narrative

The gradual change, the change of narrative and aesthetics, we are experiencing right now in the German theater has been affected by the work of artists of color, especially those fierce Black young female artists who have been in the crosshairs of theaters, theater critics, and the audience. Two of these leading theater practitioners are Simone Dede Ayivi and Anta Helena Recke.

Simone Dede Ayivi is a Black German performer and activist who is highly active in the project of remapping of German colonial history. She combines art and activism and brings the theatricalization of protests onto German stages. In her show *Performing Back*, which premiered in Autumn 2014 at Sophiensaele Berlin, she created a multimedia-based travel report and an *expedition* from a Black perspective through the German colonial (hi)story to the postcolonial present. Through different layers and multiple strings of storyline, she intertwines the silence and denial of German colonialism and creates a remapping of German (post)colonial history. The stage is organized into different sections that are tied to these different storylines. One of them is a platform onto which she steps several times during the performance to narrate the history of Black people in Germany and the beginning of Germany's involvement in colonialism and the slave trade, tracing back to the seventeenth century. Another element is huge blocks of Styrofoam that serve several purposes—one of which is to project videos on stage. The first video shows street names of colonial officers and war leaders that she pastes over with self-designed signs commemo-

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42. Warner and Liepsch, "Einleitung/Introduction," 27–28.

rating Black people who either resisted colonial powers or who were crucial Black figures throughout German history. The video connects the performance to the protests and interventions by Black activists in the public sphere. And this is not the only moment where Ayivi ties the performance into the bigger ongoing project of remapping German colonial history. In the second video, the audience can see her walking through Treptower Park in East Berlin, trying to identify places where, in 1896, the Deutsche Colonial-Ausstellung (German Colonial Exhibition) of a village of 103 African people took place. There are no signs or statues commemorating the traces of the colonial human zoo, so she begins to wrap a statue of Bismarck with crime scene tape. Soon she is interrupted by a security guard, who prohibits her intervention in the public space. While the video stops, she starts to organize the Styrofoam blocks on stage into a kind of statue formation, which she then continues to wrap in yellow investigation tape. Here the theater stage serves as the extended public space where the postcolonial intervention can be staged and prolonged. At the end of the performance, toy replicas of German colonial statues are destroyed with explosives, with Ayivi literally blowing them away. At the same time, voices of the Black community and of Black activists can be heard answering the question of what the future could look like when Germany faces its colonial past. The public intervention of destroying the symbols of the colonial past can only take place in the virtual space of the theater. But by doing so, Ayivi claims authority of Germany's history.

While Ayivi mainly works in the independent theater scene, Anta Helena Recke has tackled the German theater at its core, namely the German *Stadttheater* (city and state theater). In autumn 2017, together with Julian Warner as her dramaturge, Anta Helena Recke directed a *Black copy* of the production *Mittelreich* (*Middle Rich*), which was already being performed at the Kammerspiele München, first directed by Anna-Sophie Mahler and premiering in 2015. *Mittelreich* is a novel by the Bavarian actor and author Joseph Bierbichler published in 2011 that tells the story of a Bavarian family over the course of hundred years and three generations, beginning with the First World War. The family is neither rich nor poor and is therefore middle rich (*Mittelreich*); they own a restaurant next to a lake that is passed on from generation to generation. With this heritage also comes trauma and other unspoken matters from experiencing two world wars and sexual, physical, and psychological violence.

Anta Helena Recke, after working for several years as an assistant director at Kammerspiele München and in general as a Black German theater performer, was confronted with a perspective on theater and the

world where the experience of white artists was staged as universal while she was clearly excluded.[43] For her adaptation of *Mittelreich* that premiered in October 2017 at Kammerspiele München, she took a great risk by daring to tell German history from the perspective of a Black family with an all-Black cast. Her proposition was to create a "Black copy," that reenacts the production of Anna-Sophie Mahler in the literal sense with an all-Black cast. The term "Black copy," or *Schwarz-Kopie*, used by Julian Warner in his introduction before the premiere, refers to illegal copying or plagiarism, as well as "Black" as a political term and self-description. It is inspired by appropriation art, like the Jeff Jank's famous *Jazzcats Crossing the Hudson* painting, which copies *Washington Crossing the Delaware* but substitutes Black jazz musicians, making them visible as a crucial part of American history.[44] Appropriation refers here to the act of borrowing or reusing existing elements of popular culture, advertising, and the mass media by other artists within a new framework. It is a potentially powerful strategy for intervening in mediated representation of reality.[45] In the case of *Mittelreich*, the appropriation was translated into the one-to-one adaptation of movements, gestures, rhythms, and voices. The cast of Anta Helena Recke's appropriation had to learn the roles by watching the video documentation of Anna-Sophie Mahler's production and reenacting the interpretation of the previous actors. This approach meant that on the narrative level there was no visible change, but on the aesthetic level the switch to Black bodies onstage set off another story.

The decision to switch from white actors to an all-Black cast soon divided the German theater scene; some theater artists and theater reviewers were dismissive without having seen the production. Anta Helena Recke, who reflects in the edited volume *Allianzen* about the process of staging *Mittelreich*, describes how colleagues who worked with her at Münchner Kammerspiele said, "Hey, I heard that you want to re-cast *Mittelreich* with refugees. That is so funny!"[46] This reaction reflects how the stereotype and the narrative in Germany that Black people are not really German has been perpetuated. Especially after the wave of migration in 2015 to Germany by people from African countries seeking refuge, Black people in Germany have been associated with refugees and migrants. Ger-

43. Recke, "Uh Baby It's a White World," in *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen*, ed. Elisa Liepsch, Julian Warner, and Matthias Pees (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 55.

44. Julian Warner, Introduction before the Premiere, Münchner Kammerspiele 2017.

45. Kembrew McLeod and Rudolf Kuenzli, *Cutting across Media* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 2.

46. Recke, "Uh Baby," 56.

man theaters, as a way to show solidarity, have been producing plays and theater productions where migrants and refugees speak onstage about their struggle, though most of the time they have been exploited. Additionally, in the novel, it is apparent how Bierbichler addresses migration and the struggle of refugees after the Second World War and parallels this past with the current situation and the way the government and the society have been dealing with it. So when colleagues at Münchner Kammerspiele thought that an all-Black cast would mean refugees and not Black German citizens (and that this casting would be funny), it actually exposes the whiteness of the German stage that Recke describes: "Here, the incapability of *white* colleagues and their white imagination becomes visible that is not able to envision a Black body beyond precarity, poverty, distress, exotic or escape (flight)."[47]

It is not only the all-Black cast but also the idea of telling a German-Bavarian family history from a Black perspective that seems to be unthinkable. The theater critic Bernd Noack wrote: "It does not make sense that the old farmer no longer has an alpine-fresh and rosy skin color, and the fact that the choir of refugees looks like a group of migrants from the present does not help for a better and deeper understanding of a pure German story."[48]

By implying that a "pure German story" consists of white actors, Noack (un)intentionally denies the existence of Black Germans as part of Germany. What the critic doesn't understand (or maybe doesn't want to understand) is that changing the cast doesn't change the plot, but Black Germans become visible as part of German history. Black copy of Mahler's production is an attempt to show not only that Black actors can play every role but also that the history of Germany is more diverse than is told on German stages. And the adaptation creates a story that explores race, racism, and colonialism, but also exposes complicity and patriarchal violence. It is in fact true that Black actors and Black bodes on stage incorporate a distinct narrative, as Recke herself has stated.[49] In fact the Black copy tells the story of Black Germany or a Black Bavarian family history in Germany throughout the twentieth century. And that vision or idea is indeed not far away from reality, as Recke herself grew up in Bavaria and both her grandfathers participated in Second World War; her German

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47. Recke, "Uh Baby," 57.

48. Bernd Noack, "Aus weiß mach schwarz," *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, accessed June 18, 2020, https://www.nzz.ch/feuilleton/aus-weiss-mach-schwarz-ld.1321753

49. Recke, "Uh Baby," 58.

grandfather fought for the Nazis, her Senegalese grandfather fought for the French. She herself has wondered in what her German grandparents could have been implicated.[50]

While the production first received negative reviews from the press,[51] the audience was truly interested and the shows were sold out. By the following year, 2018, Anta Helena Recke and her adaptation of *Mittelreich* were invited to the top German theater festival, the Berliner Theatertreffen. The importance of Recke's contribution is now becoming clearer, since the discourse on German colonialism and its traces has dramatically shifted toward more acknowledgment of entanglement and toward thinking through decolonial strategies.

Futures of German Theater

The contribution of artists of color, and especially Black theater performers, scholars, and activists has a huge impact on the way German theater is now dealing with Germany's colonialism and its traces in the German theater. This also affects the programs that, for example, are set up to strengthen the network and collaborations with dramatists from the African continent. These partnerships, which in fact are highly problematic since money and power are still largely in the hands of (mainly white) German artists, can no longer be continued without questioning the hegemonic structures that lie beneath them. White theater artists who are truly interested in overcoming colonial structures are allying themselves with artists of Color, creating spaces for their colleagues in order to actively transform the German theater. On the level of cultural policy, the relatively new organization Diversity Arts Culture, which was created by the Berlin City Council and run by women of Color and white women, is

50. Kathrin Bettina Müller, "Die Kopie und ihr Mehrwert," *taz*, May 22, 2018, https://taz.de/Berliner-Theatertreffen/!5503421/

51. I have already mentioned the highly problematic review in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* by Bernd Noack. Another one was written by Eva-Elisabeth Fischer, who reduced race and racism to skin color and the slogans of US civil rights movements that have been overcome already. Eva-Elisabeth Fischer, "Schwarz allein reicht nicht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, accessed June 18, 2020, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/schauspiel-nach-sepp-bierbichler-schwarz-allein-reicht-nicht-1.3707139; *Nachtkritik* has an overview on the media responses of the play: https://www.nachtkritik.de/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=14506:mittelreich-an-den-muenchner-kammerspielen-kopiert-anta-helena-recke-anna-sophie-mahlers-inszenierung-von-josef-bierbichlers-roman-mit-rein-schwarzer-besetzung&catid=99&Itemid=100190

creating a sustained structure for decolonial practices. It offers workshops and meetings on discourse and empowerment, is creating a network for artists and art practitioners, and is building up a community. And there have never been so many people of Color present in the German theater scene as there are today. In 2020, Julia Wissert will be the first Black female artistic director of a state and city theater, in Dortmund. This view of the future of German theater might be a very optimistic one on a small bubble that is albeit growing from the big cities to all parts of the German-speaking theater landscape. But the futures of German theaters—as there might be many, with different trajectories—are still unwritten, and one can hope for a decolonized one.

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Black Bismarck and the Circum-Mediterranean Performance of Black German Theater

Olivia Landry

What does it mean to "recolonize" history as a postcolonial project? What does it mean to call Otto von Bismarck, that German chancellor of iron, that so-called "white man from Sachsenwald," "black?" These provocative questions form the intervention of the performance group and-company&Co.'s 2013 *Black Bismarck*, a politically charged theatrical mediation that reveals a history of geodesic interconnectivity, what I call circum-Mediterranean performance. This theater piece leads us back to Stuart Hall's much-cited credo, "We are here because you were there," and resonates not simply with the politics of location but also with the circularity of history, perhaps of colonial history in particular. An important example of Black German theater, *Black Bismarck* brings forth the profound convergence of African and European histories. Black history scholars and postcolonial theorists remind us that "the history and identity of black people in the West" is "the history and identity of the modern West itself."[1] This approach of interconnectedness and multidirectionality of the histories of Africa and Europe is critical to postcolonial discourse, one that insists on the multiplicity of histories. In both name and method, *Black Bismarck* resonates with Paul Gilroy's influential study *Black Atlantic* and its accent on the nexus of identity and movement. This essay explores *Black Bismarck* as a theatrical project of postcolonialism that does not so much tell a story as expose unchartered waters and thus

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1. Fatima El-Tayeb, *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Postnational Europe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 45. Other thinkers, such as Stuart Hall, Achille Mbembe, Alexander Weheliye, and Michelle Wright, have made similar arguments.

unchartered histories in order to challenge the prevailing archive of colonial history in Germany, which continues to inform discourses of race and racism in the theater and beyond.

Andcompany&Co. is a performance collective founded in Frankfurt am Main in 2003 by Alexander Karschnia, Nicola Nord, and Sascha Sulimma. Influenced by postdramatic forms (two members are in fact former students of Hans-Thies Lehmann), the group's work problematizes the dramatic narrative's glorification of a single author as a dominant form of universalizing and didacticizing.[2] For this production, Nord and Sulimma from andcompany&Co. are joined by German actors Dela Dabulamanzi and Simone Dede Ayivi, and Belgian actors Gorges Ocloo and Joachim Robbrecht. In an interview, members of the collective explain that the blackface debate in German theater, which came to a head in 2011, was an incitement for this performance, as it brought into relief both the tenacity of racist and colonial attitudes in the theater, as well as the utter failure on the part of so many to understand why such acts are racist and injurious in the first place.[3] The performance piece premiered in the fall of 2013 at the Hebbel am Ufer, an experimental fringe theater in Berlin-Kreuzberg. It is an expansion of a performance/lecture piece called *Black Bismarck Previsited*, which had previously opened as part of the Berliner Festspiele 2012 "Foreign Affairs" event, an international theater and performance festival intended to present novel global approaches and positions through performance art. *Black Bismarck* is a direct confrontation with Germany's colonial past, a carnivalesque yet effectively lambasting intervention of history through a gamut of performance acts.

Black Bismarck opens with the declaration: "A specter is haunting Europe—the specter of colonialism" ("Ein Gespenst geht um in Europa—das Gespenst des Kolonialismus"). But this is not the specter of that which has been violently expelled and returns in ghostly form to claim justice (as with Marx and Engels's specter of communism); this is the specter of that

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2. Hans-Thies Lehmann, *Postdramatic Theatre*, trans. Karen Jürs-Munby (London: Routledge, [1999] 2006), 33.

3. The use of blackface in German theaters has been fairly common practice. Theater practitioners have often defended its use with one of two positions: (1) there is an apparent lack of actors of color available to play the roles; (2) artists should have license to use the forms they choose because what is onstage is not real but art. Several incidents of blackface on Berlin stages during the early 2010s were met with severe criticism and a long-called-for public discussion about the harm of blackface developed. For an informative discussion of the blackface debate see Katrin Sieg, "Race, Guilt and Innocence: Facing Blackfacing in Contemporary German Theater," *German Studies Review* 38, no. 1 (2015): 117–34. Both Azadeh Sharifi and Hanna Voss address this topic in their contributions to this volume.

which has never left. This reference evokes instead the residues of a history that has yet to be fully scrutinized. The putative conceit of the performance is to metaphorically exorcise the ghost of Otto von Bismarck and in this way uncover the rife and residual evidence of colonialism in Germany. *Black Bismarck* takes found colonial objects and historical events and exposes them through a reenactment that subversively scrambles their meaning. For the members of andcompany&Co. and their collaborators, the performance of this process did not require a trip to Africa to examine the deleterious effects of colonialism, but rather an examination of Germany sufficed, specifically Berlin and its surrounding area, for evidence of colonial Africa. The production, which unravels in four languages (German, English, Dutch, and French), elaborately and somewhat chaotically interweaves lecture-style monologue, episodic skits, dance, videos, slide projections, and installation into a performance of clamorous revelation and critique for the contemporary spectator.

Circum-Mediterranean Performance

Black Bismarck exposes histories of colonialism in a manner that resonates with Joseph Roach's concept of circum-Atlantic performance, one that gets at the geodesic interconnectivity and "insists on the centrality of the diasporic and genocidal histories of Africa and the Americas, North and South, in the creation of the culture of modernity."[4] With a particular focus on Africa and Europe, *Black Bismarck* sets up a conceptually similar approach, wherein the "circum" (in circum-Atlantic), as opposed to the "trans" (in transatlantic), does not merely represent an oceanic interculture but also has the power to remind us that the Atlantic was (and still is) a space of constant movement and flow of people and goods. Thus, what I refer to as "circum-Mediterranean" performance not only evokes the central place of the diasporic, colonial, and genocidal histories of Africa and Europe carried out by way of and across the Mediterranean, but also offers an even more recent reminder of the economic, political, and cultural imperialism of Fortress Europe. If, according to Roach, the circum-Atlantic provided an expansive frame to move away from the limited structures of "Mediterranean-centered consciousness of European

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4. Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (Cambridge: Columbia University Press, 1996), 4.

memory,"[5] a return to the Mediterranean through the circum-Mediterranean approach instead permits a scrutiny of the colonial history and structures that have not been thoroughly probed and worked through. Indeed, the circum-Mediterranean continues to apply to the movement of people and goods from and to Africa and Europe. This movement has been both of an official and unofficial capacity.

Contemporary geopolitics of the Mediterranean have (once again) positioned the sea as a vortex of neocolonial power. In 1995, during the Barcelona Process, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EUROMED) was initiated. An intergovernmental organization of forty-three member states from Europe and countries geographically positioned on the Mediterranean Basin, the purported goals of EUROMED have been to promote stability and integration across the Mediterranean region. However, as Randall Halle asserts, instead of building and fostering collaboration among nations around the Mediterranean, EUROMED actually reinforced a neocolonial relationship between Europe and the nations "on the other side of the Mediterranean."[6] Further, many of the states in this negotiating body north of the Mediterranean do not even share a geographical border with this sea. These include, of course, economically powerful nations, such as Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands. An incumbent issue has been the drastic increase of labor migration and asylum flows from south to north across the Mediterranean, as more and more people attempt to flee war, dictatorships, and devastating poverty.[7] Trying to reach safety in Europe, between 1993 and 2017 over thirty-three thousand migrants lost their lives, many to the depths of the Mediterranean—Europe's largest migrant graveyard.[8] Here the Mediterranean rim, the ports lining the coasts, as a direct area of contact have come into focus.

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5. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 45.

6. Randall Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema: Interzones and Imaginative Communities* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 130.

7. Halle, *The Europeanization of Cinema*, 130.

8. In 2017, the artist Banu Cennetoğlu constructed a list to identify the otherwise anonymous victims who have died trying to reach to safety and a better life in Europe. Between 1993 and 2017 33,293 people died. This list was first displayed throughout Berlin as part of the Maxim Gorki Theater's Third Fall Salon and then in other cities throughout Europe. For further details, see Stephan Andreas-Casdroff and Lorenz Maroldt, "Künstlerin dokumentiert das Sterben von 33.293 Geflüchteten," *Der Tagesspiegel*, November 9, 2017, https://www.tagesspiegel.de/politik/die-liste-von-banu-cennetoglu-kuenstlerin-dokumentiert-das-sterben-von-33-293-gefluechteten/20558658.html. See, for example: "Pope Francis Attacks EU over Treatment of Immigrants," *The Guardian*, November 25, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/nov/25/pope-francis-elderly-eu-lost-bearings

With the Arab Spring's attendant political unrest, civil war in Syria, and structural instability in Libya and Egypt, Mediterranean ports have become rife with the business of treacherous human transport. European policy has largely been to turn a blind eye to the fatalities. At the height of migrant deaths in the Mediterranean in 2014, Matt Carr of the Inter Press News Agency grimly observed, "The Mediterranean has become an instrument in a policy of deterrence, in which migrant deaths are tacitly accepted as a form of 'collateral damage' in a militarised response to twenty-first-century migration whose overriding objective is to stop people coming."[9]

Informed by this loaded history and present, the concept of the "circum-Mediterranean" offers a charged and relevant approach and methodology to examine the resonances of the embodied practices and performances adapted by contemporary Black German theater. These performances at once shape the present and attend to, in Roach's words, "'counter-memories,' or the disparities between history as it is discursively transmitted and memory as it is publicly enacted by the bodies that bear its consequences."[10] Although Roach's concept of "surrogation" proposes that culture reproduces itself through embodied memory and performance, these acts also witness the emergence of alternative narratives of history and perspectives of contemporary discourse. "Performances," Roach writes, "so often carry within them the memory of otherwise forgotten substitutions."[11] As an embodied medium of performance, liveness, community, and contingency, theater is irruptive and thus has the capacity to intervene in the "official" forms of remembering and memorializing. *Black Bismarck* offers this alternative living archive.

Bismarck and Colonialism

Bismarck, whose rise to power as Germany's first chancellor in 1871 and who remained in power for nearly two decades (until 1890), is revered and memorialized as one of Germany's most important leaders. What is seldom mentioned in this grand hero discourse is Bismarck's pivotal role in

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9. Matt Carr, "ANALYSIS: Europe's Migrant Graveyard," *Inter Press Service: News Agency, 2014*, http://www.ipsnews.net/2014/10/analysis-europes-migrant-graveyard/. See also Fatima El-Tayeb, *Undeutsch: Die Konstruktion des Anderen in der postmigrantischen Gesellschaft* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2016), 55.

10. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 26.

11. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 5.

spearheading Germany's sudden emergence as a colonial power. While not a vehement supporter of colonialism, and more concerned with the expansion and solidification of Germany within Europe, in the late nineteenth century Bismarck was convinced by powerful industrialists that the path of colonialism was imperative for the economic strength and sovereignty of Germany.[12] Thus a latecomer to colonialism, Germany became particularly aggressive during the so-called Scramble for Africa beginning in the early 1880s. In the country's endeavor to assert itself as an active participant and dominant power in colonial politics during this period, Bismarck even hosted the Berlin Conference, also known as the Congo Conference or the West Africa Conference, between 1884 and 1885 in the Reich Chancellery. In attendance were twelve European nations and empires, as well as the Ottoman Empire and the United States. This conference not only ushered in an aggressive new phase of colonial rule in Africa, but also witnessed the arbitrary partitioning of much of the continent in the creation of new borders and nation-states, which in many cases still exist today. Between 1884 and 1885, Germany seized colonial power over Togo (formerly called Togoland), Cameroon, Namibia (formerly called German Southwest Africa), Tanzania (formerly called German East Africa), the northeastern part of Papua New Guinea (and nearby island groups), and later Kiautschou in China, all of which remained under German power as colonies or protectorates until the end of the First World War or shortly thereafter. During Germany's colonial period, Berlin, not unlike London, Paris, and Brussels, developed into a colonial metropolis that propagated enthusiasm for Africa through venues such as the Colonial Union and the Society for German Colonization, formed in 1882 and 1884, respectively. Many also welcomed the influx of plundered natural resources, looted art treasures, and people. Of the people who came to Germany from Africa some were students, tradesmen, and diplomats, but many others were enslaved, zoo attractions in the infamous human zoos (*Völkerschauen*). As Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft indicate, the largest group of colonial Africans present in Germany during its colonial period, which officially came to a close with the end of the First World War, hailed from Cameroon. This was due to the size of the territory, its western coastline, and its cosmopolitan elite.[13]

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12. Lynn Abrams, *Bismarck and the German Empire, 1871–1918* (London: Routledge, [1995] 2006), 42.

13. Robbie Aitken and Eve Rosenhaft, *Black Germany: The Making and Unmaking of a Diaspora Community, 1884–1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 8.

Through the work of scholars and activists, Germany's long-overlooked colonial history is slowly entering collective awareness. For over a century, German colonial history has been what sociologist Joshua Kwesi Aikins formulates as "entinnert." The verb *entinnern* means not only "to forget," but also in this case to actively "cover up" and "deny" the colonial past through processes of revisionism and relativism.[14] Few Germans recognize that the first genocide of the twentieth century was perpetrated between 1904 and 1908 under the German colonial government in what is present-day Namibia, during which roughly sixty thousand Ovaherero and ten thousand Nama were systematically killed. Only a century later in 2004 did Germany finally publicly admit guilt for the atrocities committed in Namibia, when the Social Democratic Party member Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zaul applied the term genocide during a visit to Waterberg, Namibia. Yet the German government was swift to insist that this was a personal opinion of Wieczorek-Zaul and did not reflect the official views of Germany. Only in 2021 did Germany officially recognize these crimes as genocide.[15] This is the past that *Black Bismarck* seeks to both bring to light and connect to the present by localizing its ubiquity in contemporary Germany, and especially in Berlin.

Staging *Black Bismarck*

Black Bismarck begins with a sonic immersion of industrial electronic music. A mood of playfulness is promptly struck. The sole performer on stage digitally controls the music. Dressed as a shaggy German birch tree (something the audience learns later), the identity of this performer is not immediately evident. The house lights remain on. From the beginning the barrier of the fourth wall between stage and house of this proscenium-style theater is a mere spatial suggestion. Other performers appear. Dramatically reminiscent of explorers emerging from the hull of a ship to

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14. Joshua Kwesi Aikins, "Die alltägliche Gegenwart der kolonialen Vergangenheit—Entinnerung, Erinnerung und Verantwortung in der Kolonialmetropole Berlin," in *Afrika: Europas verkannter Nachbar*, vol. 2, ed. Herta Däubler-Gmelin et al. (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 49.

15. Heike Buchter, "'Nicht länger ohne uns!,'" *Die Zeit*, January 10, 2018, https://www.zeit.de/2018/03/namibia-deutschland-kolonialverbrechen-ovaherero-nama-klage; "Namibia: Deutschland erkennt Kolonialverbrechen als Völkermord an," *Die Zeit*, May 28, 2021, https://www.zeit.de/politik/deutschland/2021-05/kolonialismus-deutschland-namibia-voelkermord-herero-nama-anerkennung

visually investigate the landscape upon arrival, Ayivi and Dabulamanzi surface from a trapdoor opening in the star-shaped platform center stage. Once onstage, Dabulamanzi welcomes the audience: "Welcome to *Black Bismarck*. We have brought this subway station from Berlin" ("Willkommen zu *Black Bismarck*. Wir haben aus Berlin diese U-Bahn-Station mitgebracht").[16] She proceeds with a commentary on the semiotics of theater: "On stage everything's a sign" ("Auf der Bühne ist alles ein Zeichen"). But this performance is not interested in maintaining traditional theater aesthetics and practices, which have exonerated racism in the theater: blackface, for instance, is not merely a sign. Not everything is a sign onstage—a mere figuration of reality. Evoking Bertolt Brecht and his "literalization of theater," which invites the audience to think about the subject outside of the discursive confines of that subject, Dabulamanzi follows up with the critique: "This blank screen is not a sign. And it is not blank at all; it is white" (Diese leere Leinwand ist kein Zeichen. Und die ist gar nicht leer; die ist weiß").[17] The placement of a white screen center stage is significant. The screen is meant to mark Germany's colonial past. It is symbolically representative of both the carte blanche approach of the Berlin Conference, which arbitrarily zoned and divided Africa among colonial powers, as well as the subsequent whitewashing of Germany's colonialism in dominant narratives of history. The screen is also a critique of whiteness, that frequently unmarked quality—a blank screen—recurs in various ways throughout the performance. Evoked is Toni Morrison's notable taxonomy of whiteness: "Whiteness, alone, is mute, meaningless, unfathomable, pointless, frozen, veiled, curtained, dreaded, senseless, implacable."[18] The white screen is literally a surface for projection, not unlike the flexible white body in theater. Anta Helena Recke discusses not only the flexibility but also the invisibility of the white body in theater in her contribution to this volume.

Offering a resonant means of marking "whiteness" and "blackness," Ayivi, who seats herself at a makeshift digital controller's booth stage right,

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16. There is no playbook. I attended a performance of *Black Bismarck* at the Hebbel am Ufer in the fall of 2013. However, all citations from the play are from a recorded performance at the arts center deSingel in Antwerp, Belgium, on November 23, 2013, and translated into English by the author. I am grateful to Monica Ferrari at andcompany&Co for providing me with a digital link to the performance.

17. Bertolt Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of An Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Methuen, 1964), 44.

18. Toni Morrison, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imaginary* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 59.

where she remains for much of the performance, sounds a beep each time the word "white" or "black" is uttered. This offers a sonic accompaniment that prompts attunement and awareness. On her booth is a portrait of Bismarck. According to Ayivi, he was the political popstar of his time. Although she does not elaborate, one could surmise that this was not only due to the longevity of his powerful rule but also his impressive appearance: six foot four, slender, and by all accounts apparently handsome and charming.[19] Bismarck's legacy continues to haunt Germany through both the relics of the past and the products of the present. She projects images onto the screen of Bismarck spires in Germany, of which there are still a whopping 142 in operation. The phallic structure of these monuments is evocative of Bismarck's perceived strongman legacy. The images speed up and Ayivi's alphabetical enumeration of their urban locations, from Aachen and beyond, hastens—a seemingly never-ending list.[20] Bismarck's popularity is also manifested in consumable products, such as Bismarck herring and Bismarck schnapps, glasses of which Nord distributes to the audience members in the first row.

At other points during the performance, the screen is used to project video footage of the performers' investigation of Berlin and its surrounding area for signs and vestiges of Germany's colonial past. In one video series, we see the Belgian actors Ocloo and Robbrecht romping through rural Brandenburg in search of the holiday settlement "Neu Afrika," established in 1925 near Ahrensdorf by Africa enthusiast Robert Preußer. These rather comical videos show the two actors dressed in whimsical guerrilla-style gear as they make their way through villages and ask unsuspecting passersby for directions to "New Africa." The "New Afrika" holiday settlement and the still-operational "Cameroon Lodge" ("Kamerun Lodge"), a hotel in Waren (Müritz) in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, represent on a minor scale the colonialist effervescence that took Germany by storm in the late nineteenth century and persisted into the Nazi period.

In another video clip, andcompany&Co. member Sulimma guides us through an accelerated nocturnal tour of contemporary colonial Berlin. Street signs and memorials honoring German colonizers are still scattered

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19. Jonathan Steinburg, *Bismarck: A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 47.

20. It bears mentioning that Simone Dede Ayivi returned to this motif for a performance at Berlin's theater Sophiensaalen called *Performing Black* in September 2014. In this later performance, Ayivi also goes on a voyage of discovery in search of evidence of Germany's colonial past. She does this by examining her own roots. Ayivi herself recalls her performance in conversation with Priscilla Layne in the published roundtable discussion. Azadeh Sharifi also discusses this performance in greater detail in her contribution to this volume.

throughout the capital. Beginning at the M*****straße subway station in central Berlin, which was renamed after unification from Thälmannplatz (named after the Communist leader Ernst Thälmann). The present name is both a racist insult and an unapologetic reminder of the "enslaved m***" who were forced to serve in the Prussian army or as servants in the imperial palace. Running further, the footage shows Sulimma pause briefly and gaze upward at the street sign Petersallee, named by the Nazis after Carl Peters, an extremely violent colonial leader in Africa in what is now modern-day Tanzania. The street runs through the "African Quarter" ("Afrikanisches Viertel") in Wedding in northwest Berlin, where one can find sundry streets named after African countries seized under German colonial rule. The quarter was originally named for a planned exotic park and zoo of animals from the colonies in the early part of the twentieth century (similar to the zoological garden in Hamburg-Stellingen), but because of the outbreak of the First World War the Berlin version never came to fruition. Sulimma then takes us to the Schlossplatz in central Berlin where the GDR Palace of the Republic once stood and before that the imperial Berlin City Palace (Berliner Stadtschloss). Here the city is presently rebuilding that same palace, destroyed during the Second World War. In this palace in the heart of Berlin, enslaved Africans were brought to serve and colonial plunder was collected and displayed. Finally, this digital tour takes us to the so-called Africa Stone (Afrikastein), which was laid in 1907 shortly after the colonial war in Namibia and the genocide of the Ovahereros and Namas to commemorate the "German" soldiers who fell in the so-called "conflict." The commemorative stone lies in the Garison Cemetery at the Columbia Damn in Berlin-Neukölln. It was not until 2009 that another stone was erected close by to also commemorate the victims of colonial rule in Namibia.

This urban digital tour through Germany's colonial past later transpired into a walking tour by Joshua Kwesi Aikins, called the "Dauerkolonie Berlin" ("Permanent Colony Berlin") tour, initiated in 2015 and coordinated by the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater in Berlin-Kreuzberg, in which he invites community members and visitors to join him in revisiting and critically engaging with historical sites of colonial nostalgia.[21]

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21. As part of the 2015 theater and performance festival about Black German identity, entitled "We Are Tomorrow," the Ballhaus Naunynstraße theater organized a "postcolonial" tour of Berlin that physically guided spectators around Berlin's numerous sites where evidence of German colonialism is still present. A similar kind of tour was organized already in 2004 through Haus der Kulturen der Welt called "Black Berlin City Bus Tour." This tour was by bus and was guided and narrated by Berlin-based Brazilian choreographer Ismael Ivo and others.

Aikins's own writings on the topic offer historical pith and permanence to theatrical experience. As he describes it, the so-called African Quarter became (and remains) a nominal looking glass for and glorification of German colonial expansion right in the middle of Berlin.

> In the *African Quarter* in Berlin Wedding (central district), one can find the largest ensemble of colonial commemorations. A network of streets reminds us of those who were active in the German colonial expansion, as well as cities and countries relating to colonial aspirations of the German Empire and its former states. The practice of naming began in 1899 with the Togo and the Cameroon Streets. At that time, both regions were part of the German colonial empire. In the following years, the assignment of street names with colonial reference in the district documented the imperial expansion of the empire in Africa (Guinea Street, named in 1903) and in Asia (Samoa Street, named in 1905; Kiautschou Street, named in 1905).

> [Im *Afrikanischen Viertel* in Berliner Wedding (Bezirk Mitte) befindet sich das größte Ensemble kolonialen Gedenkens. Ein Netz von Straßen erinnert sowohl an Personen, die für die deutsche Kolonialexpansion tätig waren, als auch an Städte und Länder mit Bezug zu kolonialen Bestrebungen des Deutschen Reiches und seiner Vorläuferstaaten. Die Benennungspraxis begann 1899 mit der Togo und der Kameruner Straße. Zu dieser Zeit waren beide Gebiete Teil des deutschen Kolonialreiches. In den folgenden Jahren wurde im Viertel durch die Vergabe von Straßennamen mit kolonialen Bezügen die imperiale Expansion des Reiches in Afrika (Guineastraße, Namensgebung 1903) und Asien (Samoastraße, Namensgebung 1905; Kiautschoustraße, Namensgebung 1905) dokumentiert.][22]

Black Bismarck not only ushers in contemplation of colonial symbols, relics, and objects. Theater and performance also let loose the possibilities of exploring contemporary colonial and neocolonial politics. A modern-day G8 summit meeting is set up to resemble the Congo Conference—referred to as the "G14 summit" in the performance—where fourteen colonial superpowers gathered to divide up the "pie" that was Africa. Projected onto the screen is a flag that combines the European Union's circle

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22. Aikins, "Die alltägliche Gegenwart," 51.

of twelve stars and the singular large yellow star and the diagonal red stripe of the flag of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The intent of pairing the two motifs on one flag, which is referred to as that of "Afropa," is clear: the politics of the contemporary G8 summit—or even European Union meetings—evoke the circularity of history and the tarrying of colonial politics, as well as the development of its new forms. This flag alternates with the black, white, and red stripes of the German colonial flag. The performance of historical convergence is further underscored when Nord later parodically assumes the role of Angela Merkel and delivers a long-winded Eurocentric and elitist speech about foreign aid to Africa, in which she declares: "We need to have a heart for Africa" ("Wir müssen ein Herz für Afrika haben"). Here mimicry assumes the power to subvert and expose the myopic and mythical approach of the "civilizing mission" Germany continues to adopt in its geopolitics with Africa.

Theater performance transmits insight into the haunting past of colonial Germany and its subtle (and not so subtle) embeddedness in contemporary German architecture, culture, society, and politics—indeed, apparently deeply embedded in Germany's national unconscious. Colonialism is the ghost that continues to haunt Europe in the form of the "white man from Sachsenwald" ("der weiße Mann von Sachsenwald"), as Ayivi refers to him. The ghost of this "white man" takes its most zany, even obscene, form onstage, as the main antagonist from the franchise *Ghostbusters*, the "Stay Puft Marshmallow Man," a gigantic, lumbering, paranormal demon. Near the close of the performance, the "ghost" appears onstage and the performers arm themselves with proton guns like those used in *Ghostbusters*. In a wildly playful and frenetic scene, set to lively classical music, the performers shoot in all directions as a means to eradicate this ghost and all the ghosts of colonialism. The Marshmallow Man eventually deflates and Dabulamanzi emerges from the costume, which she then holds up and declares: "This white stain. It should remind us of something" ("Dieser weiße Fleck. Der soll uns an irgend etwas erinnern"). This white stain is the blind spot, the unscrutinized legacy of colonialism. That the Marshmallow Man also resembles the Michelin Man, the official mascot of the Michelin Tire Company, introduced in 1894, also possibly symbolizes the colonial wares violently and exploitatively procured by European nations.[23] The mass extraction of rubber in territories such as the Congo under the colonial regime of King Leopold II might be referenced here. In particular, the desire for wealth and a competitive edge in the world market is what effectively drove German colonialism.

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23. I am indebted to Katrin Sieg for pointing out this compelling connection.

"Recolonizing" History

Conceptually, *Black Bismarck* is reminiscent of Kanak Attak's "Recolonize Cologne," a Kanak TV performance project from 2005. A political art and performance network established in 1997, Kanak Attak was a loosely knit Germany-wide activist network consisting of mostly second-generation "migrants," including Manuela Bojadžijev, Imran Ayata, Mark Terkessidis, Nicola Duric, Micho Willenbrücher, and many others. Their principal aim was to engage in antiracist performance and artistic acts in order to raise awareness. Tom Cheesman describes Kanak Attak as the linkage of cultural action and political consciousness, which broke with identity politics.[24] In other words, the group did not simply seek recognition; rather, it pursued redistribution and change. Their "Recolonize Cologne" project was not only a reeducation of colonial history, hitherto absent from public discourse, through the analysis of historical documents and images, as well as interviews with Black Germans, but was also a live cultural performance of intervention. The video frequently cuts to footage of a ceremonial stroll through downtown Cologne, in which the purported emperor of Cameroon flanked by his entourage is regally carried on a sedan and greets the passersby. Finally, the group arrives in the central plaza and the emperor of Cameroon descends from his sedan to a small cordoned-off area, which he claims—"colonizes"—for Cameroon. The spontaneous audience of afternoon shoppers and strollers appear confused by the performance, but watch and listen with apparent credulity, or at least curiosity. This performance intervention functions both as a political protest and as a transmission of knowledge and memory.

While the notion of "recolonizing" is intended as tongue in cheek in the Kanak TV video, it speaks to the broader project of postcolonialism, which insists that there are multiple narratives and multiple perspectives forming our past and our present. If, as Stuart Hall contends, "Colonialism condensed the diversity of global complexities and temporalities into a single narrative,"[25] then postcolonialism restores the legitimacy of multiple narratives. This single narrative is chaotically and energetically subverted in *Black Bismarck*. The renaming of the "white man from Sachsenwald" as "Black Bismarck" is itself a verbal performance of postcolonial sundering of history that "recolonizes" a historical figure whose history and legacy are firmly entangled in German colonialism as a means of

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24. Tom Cheesman, "Talking 'Kanak': Zaimoğlu contra Leitkultur," *New German Critique* 92 (2004): 90.
25. Stuart Hall, *Familiar Stranger* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 20.

bringing forth this history. The portrait of Bismarck hanging from Ayivi's DJ booth is flipped over to reveal a portrait of W. E. B. Du Bois. A great admirer of the chancellor, Du Bois even mimicked the chancellor's appearance in beard and dress. But the postcolonial performance of *Black Bismarck* is not simply about replacing one history with another, substituting Bismarck with Du Bois. It is much more complex. This performance signals the double consciousness at the heart of diasporic experience. Simply put, Du Bois's concept of double consciousness is the sense of belonging to more than one world, being in more than one place a once. Similarly, Paul Gilroy explains his use of the term "Black Atlantic" as the need to "face (at least) two ways at once."[26] In the contemporary German context, Natasha Kelly analyzes "double consciousness" as the key to thinking about Afro German identity, which is irrevocably shaped both by African (what she refers to as "afroistisch") and by German elements of knowledge.[27] Only by acknowledging this dual perspective can we begin to understand the complex web of diasporic culture and identity and the global entanglement of all histories. The circum-Mediterranean emphasizes this bi- or even multilateral performance approach to examine the histories and contemporary typologies of Black German identity and culture. *Black Bismarck* stages these complexities.

The accent on the Mediterranean Sea in this circum-Mediterranean approach as a point of convergence speaks to ideologies of the so-called sea of darkness—a place of the great unknown, a place of death. The Mediterranean Sea at once connects and separates Europe and Africa, north and south, and by way of which travel to and from Europe and Africa began and continues. A postcolonial and postdramatic staging of colonial history opens up the possibility of addressing other narratives in a manner that is immediate and interactive. Euro-American theater has traditionally been a culturally specific institution built by white artists and organizational leaders for white audiences. As Meropi S. Peponides maintains, theaters have long "trade[d] in white culture (which is actually often the absence of culture—a flattening and neutralizing of traditions), and therefore, by default, [have been] socially and politically engaged in upholding the values of white supremacy."[28] In other words, a tradition of white the-

26. W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, ed. Brent Hayes Edwards (Oxford: Oxford University Press, [1903] 2007), 8; Paul Gilroy, *Modernity and Double-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 3.

27. Natasha Kelly, *Afrokultur: Der Raum Zwischen Gestern und Morgen* (Münster: Unrast, 2016), 198.

28. Meropi S. Peponides, "What's Holding Us Back? A Forum on Nationalism, Xenophobia, and American Theater Now," *Theater* 48, no. 3 (2018): 42.

ater production has normalized itself to such an extent that it has come to be perceived as "culturally neutral." This still needs to be undone, and *Black Bismarck* is part of this project of challenging white supremacy vis-à-vis both colonial history and persisting exclusive theater traditions.

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From Drama School to Stage

Young Actors of Color in German-Speaking *Sprechtheater*[1]

Hanna Voss

According to Simone Dede Ayivi, the now slightly more than decade-long debate about racism in the German-speaking theater has, since the beginning, centered on "highlighting structural hurdles and exclusions Black people are confronted with in the so-called *white* majority society." This debate, as Ayivi emphasizes, had put pressure on theaters to take action, and not only with regard to their overwhelmingly white and homogenous, permanent casts, known as ensembles.[2] This article seeks to portray these developments discursively as well as empirically, thus questioning how *Blackness* and especially the logics and mechanisms of exclusion linked to it are daily reproduced and institutionally consolidated in this specific artistic context; but simultaneously starting points of opposing processes also become visible. Therefore, a broadening of the analytical focus is necessary in two respects: opening up the perspective from the theaters to all organizations and individuals that participate at the different levels in the "production" of professional artists (that means training, placing, hiring, casting, etc.) and opening up the perspective from Black actors to actors of Color in general.

In 2018, the magazine *Die deutsche Bühne* dedicated the cover story of

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1. This essay was translated from German by Joshua Shelly. Translations of quotations from German to English were also done by Joshua Shelly, unless otherwise marked as "HV" by Hanna Voss.

2. Simone Dede Ayivi, "Internationalität ≠ Interkultur: Eine Schwarze deutsche Kritik," in *Allianzen: Kritische Praxis an weißen Institutionen*, ed. Elisa Liepsch, Julian Warner, and Matthias Pees (Bielefeld: transcript, 2018), 76–78 (Engl. translation, HV).

its February edition to the career entry of young, professional actors, sing-
ers, and dancers. Together with *Theater der Zeit* and *Theater heute*, it cur-
rently is among the three most important German-language trade publi-
cations in the field of theater and especially *Sprechtheater*. As part of the
issue's emphasis on young artists, included in the magazine was a short
interview with the actor Caner Sunar. Born in 1993 in Antakya (Turkey)
and raised both there and later in Innsbruck (Austria), between 2013 and
2017 Sunar completed his theatrical education at the Thomas Bernhard
Institut at the University Mozarteum in Salzburg. And this training insti-
tute belongs to the twenty-one—due to specific, historical developments—
very prestigious state drama schools in the German-speaking world,
which includes Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Every year, these
schools, which are overwhelmingly housed at universities or art colleges,
collectively put around 220 graduates onto the "market" for theater, film,
and television.[3] Directly after graduation, Sunar began his stage career
with a permanent position at the Deutsches Theater in Berlin during the
2017–2018 repertory season. This Berlin theater is one of the (at that time)
120 public municipal, national, and regional theaters (*Stadt-*, *Staats-*, and
Landestheater) in Germany with their own acting ensemble. With its
ensemble of more than forty actors, the Deutsches Theater belongs to the
largest and most prestigious theaters in Germany.[4] The headline of the

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3. The schools that belong to this "exclusive" circle are Alanus Hochschule für Kunst und
Gesellschaft in Alfter bei Bonn, Hochschule für Schauspielkunst "Ernst Busch" Berlin, Uni-
versität der Künste Berlin, Folkwang Universität der Künste, Studiengang Schauspiel Essen/
Bochum, Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Frankfurt, Theaterakademie Ham-
burg, Hochschule für Musik, Theater und Medien Hannover, Schauspielinstitut "Hans Otto"
der Hochschule für Musik und Theater "Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy" Leipzig, Akademie
für Darstellende Kunst Baden-Württemberg in Ludwigsburg, Bayrische Theaterakademie
"August Everding" München, Otto Falckenberg Schule München, Filmuniversität Babelsberg
"Konrad Wolf" in Potsdam, Hochschule für Musik und Theater Rostock, Staatliche Hoch-
schule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst Stuttgart, Anton Bruckner Privatuniversität Linz,
"Thomas Bernhard Institut" der Universität Mozarteum in Salzburg, Universität für Musik
und darstellende Kunst "Max Reinhardt Seminar" in Vienna, Musik und Kunst Privatuniver-
sität der Stadt Wien ("Konservatorium"), Universität für Musik und darstellende Kunst Graz,
Hochschule der Künste Bern, and Zürcher Hochschule der Künste. In addition, there are a
vast number of private, more or less professionally led and well-established, training insti-
tutes, whose educational offers—in contrast to those of state drama schools—are predomi-
nately fee-based.

4. In the 2016–2017 repertory season, the average ensemble contained between seventeen
and eighteen actors, see Deutscher Bühnenverein, *Theaterstatistik 2016/2017: Die wichtigsten
Wirtschaftsdaten der Theater, Orchester und Festspiele 52* (Bonn: Köllen Druck und Verlag,
2018), 116–35, 256. In this context, the terms "public" and "nonpublic" initially refer solely to
the bureaucratic dimension of a theater's ownership and not to its financing. But while public

interview reads: "The Theater World Presents Itself Increasingly Political," followed by the subline question: "Do young actors with a migration background (*Migrationshintergrund*) have it harder than their colleagues?"[5] The subsequent questions and answers excerpted from the written interview are highly instructive as we cast a first look "behind the scenes" of the German-speaking *Sprechtheater* and thus help us gain a symptomatic impression of the current situation:

> *Have you ever found that your country of origin played a role during your applications?*
>
> It would be naive to believe that it plays no role. On the other hand, one's origin is not the only factor at work. It is more complex than you would assume. The size of an ensemble and the theater's location can be just as decisive for securing a permanent position as one's origin. It is certainly a positive development that ensemble spots are being filled by actors with a migration background. But what roles are intended for them? How much should actors use their looks and acting to perpetuate a cliché? Or in contrast: How much should he or she adapt to the white *Leitkultur*? Are they only looking to meet a quota, or are they truly interested in diversity? So, yes, one's origin plays a role in an audition, but much more is at work.
>
> *How did you experience the start of your career in the German-speaking theater?*
>
> The world of German-speaking theater is changing. Already at the time I was studying in drama school, I was able to witness the [Munich] Kammerspiele under Johan Simons and the birth of

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theaters' box office receipts cover (only) around 18 percent of costs (in the 2016–2017 repertory season, for example, the average was 17.8 percent, which equals an average subsidy of €132.65 per ticket), "nonpublic" theaters and initiatives need to cover a much larger portion of their costs with their own revenues. This means that the amount of public funding is generally much less. Thus, in fiscal year 2016, the 140 municipal, national, and regional theaters received a total of €2.6 billion in allocations and subsidies. By contrast, the 210 so-called private theaters received allocations of only €111 million during the 2016–2017 repertory season. See Deutscher Bühnenverein, *Theaterstatistik 2016/2017*, 257, 259, 262.

5. Bettina Weber, "Die Theaterwelt gibt sich immer politischer," *Die deutsche Bühne* 2 (2018): 56 (Engl. translation, HV). For a critical examination of the term "migration background," see Deniz Utlu, "Migrationshintergrund: Ein metaphernkritischer Kommentar," in *Wie Rassismus aus Wörtern spricht: (K)Erben des Kolonialismus im Wissensarchiv deutsche Sprache. Ein kritisches Nachschlagewerk*, ed. Susan Arndt and Nadja Ofuatey-Alazard (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 2019), 445–48.

Shermin Langhoff's Gorki Theater [in Berlin]. In recent years, I have witnessed the theater world present itself as increasingly political. People are cultivating diversity, stubborn traditions are slowly fading. This is something new. It feels like I'm in the right place at the right time.

Did you feel at a disadvantage at the beginning of your career in comparison to actors without a migration background?

More so compared to other graduates with a migration background, I knew that it was in vogue to pepper ensembles with actors with a migration background. Yet I also had the feeling that these actors should be as German as possible. Many of my colleagues with migration background were born in Germany. I am a first-generation immigrant, and you hear it when I speak. Sometimes I thought that I was too much of a good thing for a lot of theaters.[6]

From an academic perspective, this interview is quite remarkable for two reasons. On the one hand, it exhibits a strong awareness within the theatrical field of changes both in the discourse about "theater and migration" and in the corresponding personnel and thematic changes—the former at least in a few (public) theaters. Or put another way: there appears to be a real trend toward embracing "migration" in the field at the moment. This trend is also reflected by the plays theaters put on their schedules and the theater-related accompanying program. Not least, it provides public (like private) theaters with a form of societal legitimization given the backdrop of general political and discursive changes (think here of the "refugee crisis," or of "Germany as a country of immigrants [*Einwanderungsland*]").[7] The following are just some of the important key points propelling these developments forward, which on the whole can be understood as positive and necessary: Schauspiel Cologne's "migrant quota," under the artistic leadership (*Intendanz*) of Karin Beier (2007–2013); the newly opened "postmigrant" Ballhaus Naunynstraße (2008) in Berlin-Kreuzberg—once under the artistic leadership of Shermin Langhoff and now under Black German Wagner Carvalho's leadership; the so-called blackfacing debate that began in 2012; and—also mentioned by Sunar—the "new German"

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6. Weber, "Die Theaterwelt," 57–58 (Engl. translation, HV).

7. Here and in the following I use the term "field" always in the sense of the organizational field of German *Sprechtheater*. See Paul J. DiMaggio and Walter W. Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review* 48, no. 2 (1983): 147–60.

Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin under the artistic leadership of Shermin Langhoff and Jens Hillje.[8] Together they began in the 2013–2014 repertory season and created a markedly diverse or colorful ensemble; and in 2014, the Gorki was selected by *Theater heute* as "Theater of the Year." Closely related to this is the discourse, as already outlined above, of ethnically or "racially" discriminatory practices in the areas of hiring, casting, and representation in the German-speaking *Sprechtheater* (remember Sunar's questions concerning "cliché" and "white *Leitkultur*") that has continued and grown correspondingly. Especially since the "takeover" of the Gorki, this discourse has increasingly reached the center of the field. A clear expression of this is, for example, Anta Helena Recke's invitation to stage her *Mittelreich* production—the "Black copy" (*Schwarzkopie*) of an already existent production at the Munich Kammerspiele—at the 2018 Theatertreffen, a very renowned yearly theater festival in Berlin. Her artistic concept memorably exposed the ever-present white (aesthetic) "norm" to audience members: by exchanging all white participants with Black ones, namely actors, pit orchestra members, and the members of the stage crew.[9] Such a professional, all-Black—or all-Asian and (probably) all-Turkish—cast simply has not existed in public theaters in Germany up until this point.[10]

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8. For more about the "blackfacing" debate, see Christopher B. Balme, *The Theatrical Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 168–73; and Hanna Voss, *Reflexion von ethnischer Identität(szuweisung) im deutschen Gegenwartstheater* (Marburg: Tectum Verlag, 2014), 85–130.

9. Every year since 1964, the ten most outstanding productions of the season in the German-speaking world have been invited to this festival. Receiving an invitation to Berlin Theatertreffen is currently considered one of the most important and prestigious awards in this artistic field. *Mittelreich* is based on a novel of the same name by Josef Bierbichler, published in 2013 and dedicated to German history and society in the twentieth century, using the (autobiographically inspired) example of three generations of Bavarian lakeside innkeepers. For more on Recke's "Black copy," see—as a report on the occasion of the Theatertreffen—Eva Behrendt and Franz Wille, "Eine Frage des Anspruchs," *Theater heute* 5 (2018): 4–9, and the essays by Anta Helene Recke and Azadeh Sharifi in this volume; the latter is also very informative concerning the outlined developments in the last two decades, especially the "blackfacing" debate.

10. For in the German-speaking world, developments and changes comparable to those that have taken place in the United States since the 1960s are only just beginning and subject of my research: originating with the civil rights movement and, among other things, promoted by national organizations—such as the Non-Traditional Casting Project (NTCP, founded in 1986)—these developments and changes are also reflected in a telling decades-long change in labeling practices ranging from color-blind to nontraditional to multicultural casting; for more, see Angela C. Pao, *No Safe Spaces: Re-casting Race, Ethnicity and National-*

In the following, however, I would like to use the terms "ethnicity" and "race" in place of the rather unspecific and partially euphemistic term "migration," in order to discuss and describe these phenomena. In the field (and in German society as a whole), the term "migration" is quite common and popular. Yet, for instance, the oft-used specification "actors with *visible* migration background" reveals, when compared to everyday linguistic customs, that the concern here is not national belonging, but something else entirely.[11] According to the sociologist Stefan Hirschauer, "ethnicity" (*Ethnizität*) can be understood as an "imagined affiliation to a community," which is based on "a belief in shared culture and shared descent."[12] Backed up by "cultural practices, myths of origin, or physical similarities," membership in an ethnic group is mostly imagined "as [something] ascriptive, primordial, and inescapable."[13] In contrast to this, Hirschauer describes "race" (*Rasse*) as a certainly related, yet rougher classification that more "directly focuses on bodies" that has been "imagined as a biologically anchored marker" since the late nineteenth century.[14] Moreover, the process of "downgrading" rather than "community building" is the main emphasis here; thus, not just "unfree labor (as in the case of slaves in the United States), but also religious communities (such as the Jews in Europe)" are "racialized."[15] When understood from this perspective, Sunar's "problem" is that he is not simply an "actor with a *visible* migration background," but—due to his accent (which one cannot even hear on stage)—he is ethnically different as well.

On the other hand, the publication context of the interview with Sunar, dedicated to the question whether "young actors with a migration

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ity in American Theater (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2010), especially 1–22, 222–27.

11. According to the German Federal Statistical Office's definition, those belonging to the "population with migration background" (*Migrationshintergrund*)—independent of physical features and indifferent to individual, probably different, convictions and self-categorizations—include "all people who do not possess the German citizenship by birth or have at least one parent for whom this is the case." See Statistisches Bundesamt, *Migration und Integration: Personen mit Migrationshintergrund*, accessed April 29, 2019, https://www.destatis.de/DE/Themen/Gesellschaft-Umwelt/Bevoelkerung/Migration-Integration/Methoden/migrationshintergrund.html (Engl. translation, HV).

12. Stefan Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences: Die Kontingenz sozialer Zugehörigkeiten," *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 43, no. 3 (2014): 171 (All of the following translations from this excerpt: Engl. translation, HV).

13. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 171.

14. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 171.

15. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 171.

background have it harder than their colleagues," seems—to put it mildly—a bit paradoxical. For *Die deutsche Bühne* (founded in 1909) is published by the Deutsche Bühnenverein, the association of German theaters and orchestra employers and thus by the very individuals who are responsible for selecting actors and putting together ensembles each repertory season. Should not they of all people know the answer to this question?

In order to better understand and explain these dynamics and the (possibly) still present, stubborn "hurdles" for young actors of Color in German-speaking *Sprechtheater*, it seems helpful to take a closer look at the whole complex of organizations and individuals who participate in the production and reception of art and artists, with the given focus on professional actors. Concretely, among other things this complex consists, at the different levels, primarily of state drama schools, the state-run process of placing artists, public theaters, and professional as well as nonprofessional audiences; moreover, it is remarkable that not only the latter, but also and especially the gatekeepers in this field (trainers, agents, artistic leaders, directors, etc.) are still predominately white.[16] For this purpose, *first* I will present Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell's theoretical concept of "organizational fields" and on this basis outline the formal and informal structures that underlie the placement of young, professional actors in the organizational field I am dealing with. *Second*, I will illustrate and analyze the journey of young actors of Color from drama school to stage with the help of selected empirical materials—concerning the artist placement by the federal Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung (Federal Office of International Employment), by Zentrale Vorsprechen (Central Auditions), and first permanent positions—that I have been gathering and "producing" since 2014 in the course of my ethnographic fieldwork. In doing this, I follow the research approach of "human differentiations" (*Humandifferenzierungen*) by the aforementioned sociologist Stefan Hirschauer, with which he means those contingent, meaningful differences "through which the makers of distinctions distinguish themselves from one another"; the human being is thus both subject as well as object of this specific practice of differentiation.[17] The central question of this approach, which attempts to integrate the intersectionality of race, class,

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16. For more about the structure of this specific complex, see Friedemann Kreuder, "Theater zwischen Reproduktion und Transgression körperbasierter Humandifferenzierungen," in *Un/doing Differences: Praktiken der Humandifferenzierung*, ed. Stefan Hirschauer (Weilerswist: Velbrück Wissenschaft, 2017), 233–37.

17. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 170.

and gender within a wider and more complex theoretical framework, is the following: "*Which* difference is (ir)relevant *when*?" That is, "*Which* difference is in force *where* and *when*?"[18] This is all based on the foundational assumption that human differentiations—like gender, religion, disability, age, ethnicity, and race—are not only socially produced and constructed (*doing differences*), but can also be used, ignored, and dismantled (*undoing differences*) and thereby not only compete, but, among other things, also reinforce and overlap with each other.[19] The subject area of this approach is broad and includes both situational phenomena as well as long-term biographical and historical processes.[20] In my *final* section, against this backdrop I would like to formulate a hypothesis about the observed changes that have every appearance of multiplying the future professional, and thus biographical, possibilities of young actors of Color.

The Organizational Field and Placement Structures

At the end of the 1970s, US sociologists initiated a realignment of organizational theory: that which is commonly called "new institutionalism." Two of these academics were Paul DiMaggio and Walter Powell, whom I mentioned previously. The starting point of their influential article "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields" (1983) poses a deceptively simple question: "What makes organizations so similar?"[21] This is based on the following observation: "Once a set of organizations emerges as a field, a paradox arises: rational actors make their organizations increasingly similar as they try to change them."[22] To explain this phenomenon, DiMaggio and Powell present their concept of the organizational field:

> By organizational field, we mean those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce similar services or products. The

18. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 173, 181.
19. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 170, 182–86.
20. Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences," 183. For more about this research approach, see Stefan Hirschauer, "Humandifferenzierung: Modi und Grade sozialer Zugehörigkeit," in Hirschauer, *Un/doing Differences*, 29–54.
21. DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 147.
22. DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 147.

virtue of this unit of analysis is that it directs our attention not sim-
ply to competing firms . . . or to networks of organizations that
actually interact . . . but to the totality of relevant actors. . . . The pro-
cess of institutional definition, or "structuration" consists of four
parts: an increase in the extent of interaction among organizations
in the field; the emergence of sharply defined interorganizational
structures of domination and patterns of coalition; an increase in
the information load with which organizations in a field must con-
tend; and the development of a mutual awareness among partici-
pants in a set of organizations that they are involved in a common
enterprise.[23]

In addition, they also assume that the "structure" of such an organiza-
tional field creates a specific "institutional environment" that, in a second
step, limits the ability of individual organizations to change: "In the initial
stages of their life cycle, organizational fields display considerable diver-
sity in approach and form. Once a field becomes well established, how-
ever, there is an inexorable push toward homogenization."[24] And this pro-
cess of homogenization and its result are called (mimetic, coercive, or
normative) "isomorphism"; however, their focus lies not only on struc-
tures, but also, for example, on practices.[25] Consistent with neoinstitution-
alists' initial considerable interest in public and nonprofit organizations
like schools or hospitals, DiMaggio also examined US nonprofit resident
theaters as an organizational field that had been structured since the
1960s.[26] Building on this, I therefore propose that the organizations and
individuals who daily re/produce the "institution" of the German-speaking
Sprechtheater should be understood as an organizational field, too. A good
example of a very important isomorphism, or isomorphic structure, is the
ensemble system, which means (as party explained before) that almost all
actors in public theaters are hired for at least one or, more often, multiple
repertory seasons rather than being cast in individual productions. Dur-

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23. DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 148.

24. DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 148.

25. See DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 149–54.

26. Paul J. DiMaggio, "State Expansion and Organizational Fields," in *Organizational The-
ory and Public Policy*, ed. Richard H. Hall and Robert E. Quinn (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage
Publishing, 1983), 147–61; and Paul J. DiMaggio, "Structural Analysis of Organizational
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Analytical Essays and Critical Reviews*, ed. Barry M. Staw and L. L. Cummings (Greenwich/
London: JAI Press Inc., 1986), 335–70.

ing the change of artistic leadership (*Intendanz*) every five or ten years, there is generally a large turnover in a theater's artistic personnel in all departments (acting, singing, dancing), and thus also and especially in the permanently employed ensemble(s). It is important that in this context DiMaggio attributes a central role to the "regulatory agencies"—in the sense of government agencies or trade associations—"that . . . influence or constrain the goods- or service-producing organizations within [a field]."[27] For these regulatory agencies also play an important role in the organizational field of German-speaking *Sprechtheater*: At the level of drama schools, this is a professional association, the so-called SKS (Ständige Konferenz der Schauspielschulen, Drama School Association, founded 1973) and at the level of artist placement, this is the federal Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung (ZAV), founded in 1960, for artistic placement based on a precursor founded in 1930.[28] Furthermore, at the level of theaters, apart from the aforementioned DBV (Deutsche Bühnenverein, German Theater Association, founded 1846) this is the Genossenschaft deutscher Bühnenangehöriger (Association of German Theater Workers, founded 1871), which represents employees to their employers.

Looking at the placement structures within this organizational field, it is important to emphasize that a large number of the *formal* paths from drama school to stage—besides the various, undoubtedly very important *informal* paths such as unsolicited applications, drama school performances during the several years of training, and personal relationships between drama schools and theaters—are sharply defined through precisely these regulatory agencies. And due to this circumstance, the outer borders of this field are simultaneously reinforced and cemented. There are, to be sure, individual cooperative agreements between drama schools and theaters in some cases, as well as the classic auditions (*Intendantenvorsprechen*, IVO) on the premises of the individual drama schools that take place every fall for students in their (mostly) fourth and final year. And in principle, both of these formal paths are also accessible to the

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27. See DiMaggio, "State Expansion," 148–49; and Paul J. DiMaggio, "Constructing an Organizational Field as a Professional Project: U. S. Art Museums, 1920–1940," in *The New Institutionalism in Organizational Analysis*, ed. Walter W. Powell and Paul J. DiMaggio (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 267.

28. The ZAV as Central Foreign and Professional Placement Agency belongs to the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and is primarily responsible for immigration of skilled workers and placement in specialized occupations such as artistic ones. In addition, as in the case of drama schools or training institutes, there is also a vast number of private agencies.

whole range of private drama schools. However, the two following highly significant *formal* paths are exclusively reserved for the state drama schools and their students: on the one hand, before the classic auditions every year, the ZAV publishes a central catalog of the graduates of the twenty-one state drama schools; this is done in addition to their general placement activities. This catalog is accessible online, but a print version is also sent to the public theaters by mail (as of autumn 2018). In this way, all of the approximately 220 graduates of these training institutes are presented with priority to the gatekeepers in theaters; with the exception of the state drama schools in Bonn and Linz, they are all members of the SKS. On the other hand, as the standing conference of drama schools, this professional association—together with the federal ZAV and the also professionally guided DBV—hosts the annual Central Auditions for its nineteen members, which simultaneously take place in Berlin, Neuss, and Munich. In November 2005 after and additional to the classic auditions, these specific auditions were first held in Neuss on a trial basis but quickly became established; since at least 2012, they have taken root as an important interorganizational structural element in this field. As a result, (nearly) all state drama school graduates have since crisscrossed the country in the space of a week in order to present themselves en masse to an audience of specialists from the worlds of theater, film, and television. So they can simply wait for the graduates in one of the three cities mentioned above. Without going into too much detail, it is important to note that all of these *formal* as well as *informal* paths only rarely lead directly to a permanent position. Instead, they are the basis for an invitation to so-called working auditions (*Arbeitsvorsprechen*) at the individual theaters. Here the gatekeepers responsible for hiring and casting work together with the actors on their prepared roles or scenes.[29]

The following tripartite analysis of the journey of young actors of Color from drama school to stage consists, *first*, of two explorative interviews that I conducted with long-term agents from the ZAV at the end of

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29. For a more detailed explanation of the field concept as well as the structuration of this field since the 1920s and 1930s, especially concerning the developing of centralized structures of placement, see Hanna Voss, "Autonome Kunst?—Legitimität und institutioneller Wandel im deutschen Sprechtheater," *Forum Modernes Theater* 28, no. 2 (2018): 143–59; and Hanna Voss, "Schauspieler/innen zwischen Institution und Profession: Zur Relevanz ethnischer Kategorisierungen im deutschen Sprechtheater am Beispiel des Künstlervermittlungswesens," in *Re/produktionsmaschine Kunst: Kategorisierungen des Körpers in den Darstellenden Künsten*, ed. Friedemann Kreuder, Ellen Koban, and Hanna Voss (Bielefeld: transcript, 2017), 117–32.

2014 and the beginning of 2015 (in one case, supplemented by a team leader); *second*, of participatory observations of the Central Auditions in 2016, 2017, and 2018 in each of the three cities; *third*, of an analysis of current hiring and casting practices of selected public theaters. The latter is done by examining the distribution of first permanent positions for those from the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019 graduating years and by examining the artistic approaches to staging Ayad Akhtar's play *Disgraced*, which public theaters in Germany produced until the repertory season 2017–2018. Especially in regard to the ZAV interviews it is noteworthy that I am—and thus my "ethnographic instrument" is—white. To sharpen my awareness as a theater researcher, in the sense of a *methodological* alienation from one's subject of study, I chose to initially consider actors to be fundamentally "employees" for whom *ideally* only meritocratic evaluation criteria should apply—that means without taking physical human differentiations into account as it is also reflected in the US idea of color-blind casting.[30]

Ethnographic Perspectives: ZAV Artist Placement, Central Auditions, and First Permanent Positions

ZAV Artist Placement

In the general placement card index of the ZAV Department for Drama and Stage there are currently profiles of approximately nine thousand actors, to which around fifteen agents in six locations (Berlin, Hamburg, Cologne, Leipzig, Munich, and Stuttgart) have access. Anyone who has completed at least a three-year training program at a state or state-recognized private drama school is able to apply for admission. The graduates of the twenty-one state drama schools, however, are at first "automatically" added to this index because those schools provide more objectivity (due to the high number of applications they are not dependent on single persons, and here the education is not fee-based) and study spots are

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30. Hereby, I refer to the following definition of "color-blind casting": "Actors are cast without regard to their race or ethnicity; the best actor is cast in the role" (Pao, *No Safe Spaces*, 4). For the underlying understanding of ethnography, see Klaus Amann and Stefan Hirschauer, "Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur: Ein Programm," in *Die Befremdung der eigenen Kultur: Zur ethnographischen Herausforderung soziologischer Empirie*, ed. Stefan Hirschauer and Klaus Amann (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 7–52.

awarded by means of a strict three-step entrance examination.[31] The catalog of the 2015–2016 graduating year, which was published in 2015 and is used here as an example, includes, in addition to photographed portraits, the following information: first and last name, birth year, birthplace, height, figure, hair color, eye color, nationality, voice/instruments, languages (with the subcategories: basic knowledge, advanced knowledge and business fluency), dialects, dance, and "other skills." So in this first step the objectified actors' bodies are not only categorized according to meritocratic aspects, but—and this stands in stark contrast to the outlined alienation perspective—also according to individual physical features. As explained by one of the agents, this form of presentation, which has been practiced years and even decades, "speaks to the needs of theaters": "These are simply the things that are asked for."[32] It is therefore interesting in this context that, during a 2016 revision of the graduate catalog, the feature "raised in" was added and that instead of spoken (foreign) languages all languages spoken are now recorded more generally with the subcategories: mother tongue, good knowledge, and basic knowledge. The basis for this presentation that is "in keeping with the market," as I learned in the interview, is the so-called contact sheet or placement form that the applicants must fill out. Concerning the question whether ethnicity or skin color was also *internally* recorded during this process, since—like gender—it was not explicitly listed in the graduate catalog, both agents indicated that this "feature" was saved together with the others in the ZAV database. This is quite astonishing and disconcerting, given that the ZAV belongs to the German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) and is therefore a state organization. As such, it ought to reject and

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31. My analysis of the formal entrance prerequisites and examination conditions of the twenty-one state drama schools, conducted in winter 2016–2017, has identified numerous isomorphic structures also at this level of the field. So, in the three-step entrance examination the requirements are quite similar, for instance, applicants or prospective students usually have to prepare three monologues/scenes/selections from a role as well as mostly a song, poem and/or scene they have created themselves. With regard to the entrance prerequisites, I would like to highlight—besides age when starting the training, formal education, and state of health—the necessary knowledge of the German language. For non-native speakers, this is usually regulated by means of language certificates or formulations such as "sufficient command of the German language"; only on one school's home page, however, it says unambiguously: "Mother tongue [is] German." See Hanna Voss, "Leistungskörper/Körperleistung? Die Aufnahmeprüfung an Schauspiel(hoch)schulen aus ethnographischer Perspektive," *Forum Modernes Theater* 33, nos. 1–2 (2022): 120–34.

32. These, as all the following direct or indirect quotations, are taken from the empirical materials I gathered in the context of my ethnographic fieldwork and translated.

not participate in such practices—at least according to current conviction and common practices in force in Germany as a consequence of, or in distinction to, the bureaucratic frenzy and machinery of extermination of the National Socialists in the 1930s and 1940s. And this is also the reason why officially only the "migration background" has been indirectly recorded since 2005, based on a person's citizenship or nationality at time of birth or that of the person's parents.

Yet, when one takes a look at the two most frequently used casting portals for film and television—which are privately run and possibly influenced by US models—such ethnic or racial categorizations appear to be considered "normal" and generally accepted in this special professional context. In the search form of the first portal, for instance, next to the fields "man/woman," "age," and "height" there is also the field "ethnicity." Here users can choose between eleven categories: "African / African American," "Arab/Oriental," "Asian," "Indian," "Celtic," "Latin or South American," "Central European," "Northern European," "Eastern European," "Southern European," and "Other." In contrast to this portal, the second explicitly distinguishes in its search form between "appearance" and "skills." It is noteworthy that the selection field "ethnic types," among those search criteria subsumed under "appearance," is most widely differentiated, with forty subcategories, ranging from "Aboriginal," "American Indian," "Asian/Far East," and "Germanic" to "Mediterranean (dark)," "Mediterranean (light)," "Mongolian," "red haired with freckles," "Black African," "Turkish/Kurdish," and "White."[33] The subsumption under "appearance" and a closer examination of the single subcategories, however, make clear that this is not about ethnicity, but rather, much like the emic term "migration," actually about something else entirely, namely race (*Rasse*).

Fundamentally, anyone searching for appropriate actors can turn to the ZAV. Although public theaters in the German-speaking world—like the state drama schools—are each intensively supervised by one agent, it is, according to the interviews, primarily the smaller and medium-sized theaters that make use of the placement services. One of the agents I talked to named "colored actors" (*farbige Schauspieler*) as a "classic area" for which the larger theaters also turn to the ZAV.

Thus, in this specific case, the theaters cannot cover their personnel needs by using their professional networks and human "resources,"

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33. This description is based on an October 19, 2016, review of these two non-publicly accessible internet casting portals.

because (up until this point) the latter are overwhelmingly oriented toward the classical, that is, white, literary canon and corresponding aesthetic "norms." When asked, however, whether the feature "skin color" generally played a role in inquiries—whether, for example, anyone specifically requested "white skin"—both agents strongly replied in the negative. "Something like that" would only be added by the theaters if it was "an exception" and otherwise "required." Consequently, the agents might *interpret* the actually ethnically neutral "standard inquiry"—"We're looking for two young men, two young women. Just beginners."—according to prevailing expectations as "white." And this ultimately results in nonwhite actors often not even being offered at all, in spite of the real, possibly more open-minded hiring and casting practices of individual theaters. In accordance with the aesthetic norms and corresponding artistic logics of the field, a selection based on ethnic or racial principles is here thus made in advance. This is explicable at least insofar as the ZAV agents "all [come] from the areas in which they place artists; that is the prerequisite"; they have, for example, previously worked as directors, dramaturges, or actors and, in principle, dispose of a shared field knowledge. This circumstance corresponds to the following agents' self-image as documented in a 2015 report: "We are the extended eye of the theaters. We know the demands to the letter, and based on this we decide whom we can place."[34]

During follow-up conversations with ZAV representatives in April 2017, however, it became evident that—in keeping with the trend toward embracing "migration" outlined earlier—the "market" had changed in relation to the relevance of ethnic or racial categorizations over the past two to two and a half years and consequently the agents' practices, too. Due to new themes and plays, there was on the part of the theaters an increasing demand for actors of Color—for guest, but also for permanent positions—and correspondingly changed requirements. These developments are also reflected in the two categories that were either newly added or modified in the 2016 ZAV catalog. Even though one could now specify a mother tongue other than, or in addition to, German, German fluency was still required, however, no longer necessarily *accent-free* "stage German" (*Bühnendeutsch*), as you would put it in the field language. But when looking at the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019 graduating years from

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34. Oliver Jensen, "Die Vermittler," *castmag: Das Schauspieler-Magazin* 4 (2014): 39 (Engl. translation, HV). For a more detailed depiction of the placement activities of the ZAV in the Department of Drama and Stage and relevant continuities since the 1930s, see Voss, "Schauspieler/innen."

state drama schools, for instance, there were only 9 among the 660 graduates who could be categorized as "Afro-German" or "Black," which is equivalent to about 1 percent.

Central Auditions

In the following, I would like to focus on the graduates of the 2016–2017 year, whose Central Auditions I observed in November 2016 in Neuss at the public regional theater. The state drama schools attended these auditions with almost all of their 221 graduates. And on the part of the theaters, there were specialists from at least twenty-seven organizations on-site—ranging from small regional theaters to municipal theaters up to large national theaters. The performance time frames of the individual schools were determined by the respective number of graduates; ten minutes were available per person. So, on the basis of thirty-six hours of auditions, one was able to get a "picture" of the current graduating year. And almost without exception, the presentations were based on roles created by others: the graduates appeared on stage in the form of two or three figures of the classical, modern, or contemporary repertoire. An evaluation of the printed overviews of the presented scenes, available for everyone, shows that the most popular authors in 2016 were Shakespeare, Chekov, Schiller, Kleist, and Ibsen. Nearly 25 percent of all monologues and dialogues came from these five authors. In places six to ten followed Brecht, Jelinek, H. Müller, T. Williams (the last three with the same number of scenes), and Koltès; nearly another 10 percent of scenes came from these authors. Thus—if one takes the other chosen scenes also into account—, not only the theaters' repertory programs, but also the graduates' (re)presentations, are decisively determined by the current canon. The latter is therefore another good example of an isomorphism or isomorphic structure that is significant and has far-reaching consequences at all levels of the field. Equally isomorphic was the graduates' physical appearance: due to age alone—nearly all of them in their twenties—this graduating year (like the two following) was rather homogenous. So the overwhelming majority could be described as white, able-bodied, slim, and attractive.

Surprisingly enough, besides gender and other "deviations" from this physical "norm" (for instance, a bald head in the case of a woman) the graduates—as it seemed—*deliberately* presented ethnicity or race as part of their self-image, based on their individual bodies and (partly) influenced by their trainers and experiences in drama school. The spectrum ranged from the enhancement of "ethnically neutral" roles with a sprinkling of one's mother tongue, to the selection of "ethnic" roles, up to self-

authored, seemingly autobiographical scenes. For example, during the auditions one could see the servant Ossip from Gogol's *The Government Inspector* polishing shoes while singing Turkish songs. A female graduate of Asian descent appeared on stage as Shen Te from Brecht's *The Good Person of Szechwan* complete with an appropriate costume and singing in Chinese. A Black graduate performed Abulkasem in Khemeri's *Invasion*, and another appeared as the deformed Franz Moor from Schiller's *The Robbers*, marking the figure's outsider status (according to the original, late eighteenth-century version of this play) with his "m***'s mouth" and "Hottentot eyes." Yet such examples of *doing* ethnicity or race could also be observed without recourse to roles from canonized repertoire. Caner Sunar, for example, who was part of this graduating year, presented himself with a self-authored monologue in which he philosophized about questions of identity and playfully thematized his own place as a "Turk" in society and the theater. However, these variations of *doing* ethnicity or race were (with one exception) each combined with at least one non-ethnically readable performance. In view of the pattern of representation described here and also observable in the two subsequent years—which also appears to confirm the trend toward embracing "migration"—it would be worth discussing whether one could already describe it as *undoing* ethnicity or race when someone chooses not to activate ethnic or racial patterns of interpretation within a scene. One example that must be highlighted is the consistent (re)presentation of a Black, female graduate by means of "ethnically neutral" roles like that of Nina from Chekhov's *The Seagull*—especially since she was the only one among the graduates whose mother tongue was noticeably not German.

Now, in the context of my research, the Central Auditions are particularly revealing inasmuch as they do not focus on the plays that will be staged according to the theater's repertory program and cast with the permanent ensemble, on individual directors' signatures, or on a theater's artistic orientation. But of primary importance here is the "image" that the graduates want to convey of themselves, or at least what they believe they need to convey, in order to be successful on the "market"—in view of the physical "norms" and corresponding discourses outlined above, possibly also in the sense of a strategy of diversification. This format thus presents, so to speak, a point of crystallization for the institutionalized rules and correlated expectations for the institutional environment of this organizational field, which currently, however, is in a process of changing.[35]

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35. For a more detailed depiction of the Twelfth Central Auditions of North Rhine Westphalia in Neuss, see Hanna Voss, "Theater zwischen Reproduktion und Transgression kör-

First Permanent Positions

At the level of the theaters, the trend toward embracing "migration" can be concretely seen in the large number of theaters that have taken the US author Ayad Akhtar's play *Disgraced* (2012) into their repertory program—a play about race, religion, class affiliation, and related mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in our modern world. So in the 2015–2016, 2016–2017, and 2017–2018 repertory seasons there were almost thirty different productions of this play in the German-speaking world. But a look at the cast listings reveals a paradoxical discrepancy between the theaters' publicly "displayed" sociocritical aspiration and their own internal organizational practices: of the seventeen public theaters in Germany I concentrate on in the following, only eight cast a Black actress in the role of the African American Jory; at the other nine, a white actress from the permanent ensemble performed the role, sometimes with light borrowings of blackface.[36] And only in two of the eight cases—namely at the two medium-sized municipal or national theaters in Ingolstadt and Oldenburg—did the Black actress portraying Jory belong to their own

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perbasierter Humandifferenzierungen," *Dramaturgie: Zeitschrift der Dramaturgischen Gesellschaft* 2 (2017): 47–52.

36. For this paradox between transgression and reproduction, see also Kreuder, "Theater zwischen Reproduktion und Transgression," 234–35. Images from scenes and trailers that were still publicly available on the theaters' home pages in December 2020 showed, for instance, that in two productions (Landestheater Tübingen and Schlosstheater Celle) the actress portraying Jory wore a dark brown, curly wig, tied up with a colorful, patterned headscarf, and in one of these two cases (Celle), much darker makeup than her fellow actors. At the Theater Baden-Baden, in contrast, the actress performed only occasionally wearing a black Afro wig and a dark brown half mask, while all actors in this dance scene sported (animal) masks and wigs; the very hairy monkey mask appeared at various points during the production. A special "solution" to this "casting problem" could be observed in the surreal, rather than realistic-illusionistic, production by Kay Voges at the Schauspiel Dortmund. All five characters appeared onstage with faces and wigs colored chalk-white, made up with bright red lips and eyes outlined in black with red contact lenses. The theater's home page quotes one press review that read the production as a deliberate leveling of all "traces of ethnic classification": "People's origins are not visible; thus ethnic belonging is no longer innate, but learned. The Dortmund albinos might actually find it very easy to set aside religious and ethnic differences, but they don't. Their differences are not inscribed in their genetic code, but in their psychology. The production thus not only avoids the much-discussed ethnically correct casting in postmigrant theater, but grants the play a good deal more depth. The question of the construction of ethnic and religious identity takes center stage"—completely overlooking the Jory actress's unambiguous Afro-like wig. see Theater Dortmund, *Geächtet (Disgraced) von Ayad Akhtar*, accessed November 30, 2019, https://www.theaterdo.de/detail/event/16842/ (Engl. translation, HV).

ensemble. In the six remaining theaters, by contrast, the Black actresses portraying Jory were only guest performers, for instance, at the Deutsches Schauspielhaus in Hamburg, which staged the premiere production of the play in German, at the Munich Residenztheater, and at the Schauspiel Cologne, all of which are large and very prestigious municipal or national theaters. Of the public theaters, Oldenburg also sticks out insofar as it was the only one that took into account the author's ethnic ascriptions when casting *all* five roles—independent of whether this was fundamentally necessary or "correct." So, in its production, the role of the protagonist of South Asian origin, Amir Kapoor, was performed by Fabian Felix Dott, who is also of South Asian descent. Like his colleague portraying Jory, Helen Wendt, who graduated from the state drama school in Rostock in 2010, he was also one of the nineteen members of the Oldenburg ensemble during this time. To wit, in the course of its reorganization, the Oldenburgisches Staatstheater had prematurely offered him a permanent position in its ensemble beginning with the 2017–2018 repertory season—prematurely, in this context, means following his third year of the four-year training program; just like Alexander Prince Osei, who is also part of the 2017–2018 graduating class from Salzburg's Thomas Bernhard Institut and belongs to the approximately 1 percent of Afro-German or Black actors mentioned above. The basis for this was—in addition to the desire to be able to stage *Disgraced* with its own ensemble and to make this fundamentally more "diverse" on this occasion—above all the close personal relationship between Salzburg's drama school and the theater in Oldenburg and thus *informal* paths, according to an interview conducted with the artistic director (*Schauspieldirektor*) jointly responsible for hiring and casting in April 2018.

However, prematurely offering actors of Color a spot in an ensemble a year before their graduation—and thus before they even present themselves to the "market" within the formats of IVO and Central Auditions—is not an isolated case. Instead there is, so to speak, a system to this. During my third observation of the Central Auditions in Munich in November 2018, this became especially clear. So some of the actors of Color, about a dozen, did not even attend the auditions and/or were marked as already "taken" in the advertising materials, available together with the scene overviews. This was particularly true of the Berlin Universität der Künste, with its strikingly "diverse" graduating class. In the three participatorily observed graduating years (the cutoff date was October 1 of the year just following their Central Auditions), although only 55 (2016–2017), 58 (2017–2018), and 57 (2018–2019) percent of all 660 graduates had a perma-

nent position "in the bag" in a (public) theater after this period of time, the graduates of Color were more successful than the average and to a large extent hired at very prestigious theaters: in the case of the four male Black graduates from the 2018–2019 year, for instance, at the Schauspiel Hannover, the Düsseldorfer Schauspielhaus, the Schauspielhaus Zürich, and the Volksbühne Berlin. This is a circumstance that cannot be explained by performance or merit only—which is difficult to objectify within this artistic field anyway—but may also have something to do with, as Sunar put it, being "in the right place at the right time."

Processes of Deinstitutionalization, or the Next Hurdle(s)

In summary, the above findings show the following: in German-speaking *Sprechtheater*, individual physical features like ethnicity or race, but also gender, age, disability, and attractiveness, are emphatically *not* overlooked with regard to professional actors. Instead, they represent central features of a *functional* requirement that is or could be the basis for specific logics of in- or exclusion. Thus, such physically based human differentiations are obviously a self-evident, largely unquestioned part of the institutional environment of this organizational field and therefore institutionalized. Nonetheless, in relation to ethnicity or race, initial signs of a deinstitutionalization could be observed in recent years, especially at the beginning of the everyday processes of production and reception of art and artists, that is, young actors' entry into the profession: at issue is ultimately the significance and thus the *functionality* of this feature, its status as a relevant criterion, its *legitimacy*.

Now, in this context, it is, however, necessary to take up the difference drawn above for analytical purposes between a more culturalizing (ethnicity/*Ethnizität*) and a more naturalizing (race/*Rasse*) frame for both of these deeply related human differentiations. For when Caner Sunar expresses the feeling that actors today are allowed to have a (visible) migration background, but should nevertheless be "as German as possible," he touches on a sore spot: the changes outlined in this chapter, which at first glance are quite welcome, concern mainly (if not solely) the ascriptions based on outwardly manifested physical features, but not the ethnocultural dimension— something that appears problematic with regard to Germany as a, in many respects, heterogeneous "immigration society." In addition, "deinstitutionalization"—following corresponding developments in sociological neoinstitutionalism of the 1990s—cannot simply be equated with the

dissolution of respective institutions or institutional structures, practices, et cetera, but instead primarily refers to a change in their mechanisms of reproduction: from unaware to aware and from direct to indirect.[37] And part of this institutional change that one could, according to Stefan Hirschauer, describe as a long-term process of *undoing difference* is the (at least) temporary "raising" of this human differentiation and—tightly interrelated—its popularization and economization.

Even though some smaller "hurdles" that young actors of Color face on their journey from drama school to stage are currently being deconstructed or even changed to the opposite (in the sense of People of Color being preferred), we are still far from a fundamental insignificance and thus irrelevance in this field. The slow diversification of the ensembles, as Ayivi had already noticed in 2018, however, could be seen as an important step in this direction.[38] Due to this diversification, traditional views and interpretive patterns on the part of professional and nonprofessional audiences can and will change in the long term; it is highly instructive that the latter appear to have fewer problems with these changes than the former always initially allege. The role of state drama schools, which set up the first "hurdle," however, should also be questioned in view of the preselection of candidates and the potential mutual influence of "supply" and "demand"—especially since the production and reception of art and artists in German-speaking *Sprechtheater* overwhelmingly take place within the narrow borders of this organizational field.[39]

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37. See Bettina Heintz, "Ohne Ansehen der Person? De-Institutionalisierungsprozesse und geschlechtliche Differenzierung," in *Geschlechterdifferenzen—Geschlechterdifferenzierungen: Ein Überblick über gesellschaftliche Entwicklungen und theoretische Positionen*, ed. Sylvia Marlene Wilz (Wiesbaden: Verlag für Sozialwissenschaft, 2008), 231–52, 187.

38. See Ayivi, "Internationalität ≠ Interkultur," 76.

39. For a comparative analysis of the entrance examination at two state drama schools from an ethnographic perspective, see Voss, "Leistungskörper/Körperleistung." On the one hand, this article came about in the context of my work as a research assistant in the project Practices of Ethnic De-/Differentiation in Contemporary German-speaking *Sprechtheater*" (2014–2017, directed by Friedemann Kreuder) at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG). The association of the project with the Mainz DFG research group 1939 "Un/doing Differences. Practices in Human Differentiations" (2013–2019, spokesperson: Stefan Hirschauer), which is strongly influenced by the social sciences and the consistent integration within its interdisciplinary working context, provided important impetus and support for my research project's theoretical and methodical approach and its practical implementation. On the other hand, this article is the result of my work as a research assistant in the project "Theater between Reproduction and Transgression of Physically-Based Human Differentiations" (2016–2021, a theater studies subproject of the DFG-FOR 1939, directed by Friedemann Kreuder).

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"We Need Structural Change"

Roundtable Discussion[1]

Interviewer: Priscilla Layne

Participants: Simone Dede Ayivi, writer and performer; Rahel Jankowski, actress; Michael Klammer, actor, Philipp Khabo Köpsell, writer and dramatic adviser; Olivia Wenzel, writer

PRISCILLA LAYNE: How did you get started in the theater? What is it about the theater that fascinates you as a medium or space that motivated you to want to work there?

RAHEL JANKOWSKI: I actually came to acting through music. . . . I always made a lot of music and was fascinated by music and by language, and for me theater is simply a combination of both. And that's why, when I was finishing high school, I founded a theater group and realized that I could bring all media together—music, language, and movement, etc. More than anything, what fascinates me about the theater is actually that you tell stories, whatever they may be, and that you maintain direct contact with the audience, with the people in the room. And that is different from a film or something. . . . It also always varies—every evening is different, every event, performance . . . and I am also fascinated by the fact that there is always something uncertain about it. You are always jumping into something new.

SIMONE DEDE AYIVI: I think it was very similar for me. It quickly became clear to me that I didn't want to become an actress for various reasons, and then I studied cultural studies and aesthetic prac-

tice at the university in Hildesheim. For me that actually had a lot to do with having encounters and experiencing something live, in the moment. I know that as a child in the theater I was totally fascinated by seeing people onstage and knowing, theoretically, I could jump in at any time. In theory, I could interrupt anytime, but I didn't and all the other people around me didn't either. And this kind of mutual agreement [between the actors and the audience], as much as I like to see it broken now or as much as I question it, I just value that basis, the encounter between [the audience and] those who have prepared something for others.

MICHAEL KLAMMER: Yes, it was the same for me. The only thing that really interests me about the theater at the moment is exactly this [agreed upon] date, when you say I'm doing something, and we have an agreement that you just watch for a moment or, in the best case, even listen. At first it was always about learning a role and acting it out. And now it's the case that I'm more interested in the interference, the interruption, the disturbance, the togetherness and paying attention to the others. It's no longer the case that I go onstage and intend to perform a specific role. Rather, I simply appear as myself in a completely strange situation. And because we have this common understanding, this mutual agreement, you come to me, to my happening, and the combination of my actions and the texts I've written amount to a character in the minds of the audience.

OLIVIA WENZEL: I came to the theater in the traditional way. When I was at the university in Hildesheim, I didn't really know what I should do. For a while I thought I should study German literature, and luckily I didn't do that. Instead I studied cultural sciences in theory and practice in Hildesheim. Back then it was permitted to take part in the classes that taught creative writing, so I did that. When I was there and got a lot of good feedback, I started taking my writing seriously, realizing it was a serious option for a career. Then people suggested I could actually do something creative for my thesis, and I was allowed to write a play, [resulting in a] half academic, half creative [thesis]. The academic part was a bust, but I got through it and won a prize for the play, and then I continued writing. So that's how I got into the theater, and then I actually got into the independent [theater] scene much later.

PHILIPP KHABO KÖPSELL: My very first or maybe second visit to the theater was a reading of Olivia's [Olivia Wenzel's] text, and it was a

very magical moment for me because I knew the text and then saw the effect of it. And at some point, the new artistic director came to us and said, "Don't you feel like working on this one piece by Wemmel?" And when I agreed to it and slipped into it, then I thought, oh . . . this isn't completely out of my wheelhouse. I can do this. But I don't know the vocabulary. I don't come from these schools, and I'm probably in the wrong place somehow. So over time I realized that I didn't need this vocabulary and that I actually didn't have to come from this school to understand what was happening. Sometimes that's a very important thing too. I know about how Black identity has changed over time. I studied African studies and was very occupied with negotiating identity, and that was helpful for all of these plays. In the meantime, I work both in the area of literature and culture and at a library [at Each One Teach One] located in the center of Berlin, in Wedding in an African community, for kids from the African community in Wedding. And I'm happy to have found it, because I have to say, for me, I had to stop working in the theater because at some point you have to earn money.

LAYNE: What experiences have you had with representations of race? If you are an actor, have you had the opportunity to play different roles, or are you pegged to one type? If you are a curator or playwright, have you encountered resistance when you have tried to stage certain forms of representation?

WENZEL: Well, I think, as a writer, it's the case that at first I'm invisible in a way and therefore not as exposed to casting politics as, for example, an actress or an actor. . . . A lot of people still think that if you cast a Black German as Gretchen, then it would immediately be a political statement that distracts the audience from "the pure art." And due do that, theater makers or film producers often reject actresses of Color. When I look back, a few years ago, I was sitting at my therapist's, and she said it's astonishing that I often dream of myself as a white person. Back then I was completely shocked and went home quite confused. Since then, a lot has changed in my dreams, and that can also be applied to my writing. For a very long time, I wrote texts where I imagined the characters as white automatically, without noticing it. And these are good pieces, I think, they work, but I never questioned the representations I came up with. So I asked myself, what kind of casting policy do I have in mind in my writing. I think my play *Mais in Deutschland & anderen*

Galaxien (*Corn in Germany and Other Galaxies*) was the first one where it was different, because it was the first one where a Black character was explicitly in there.[2] So regarding my process, I started to write closer to myself and no longer just made up characters who experience things and tragedies that I haven't experienced myself. And I have the feeling that I can no longer automatically write plays where I imagine that all the characters are white. That wouldn't happen to me now without me being aware of it. Of course, it is also legitimate, and, great, if I write a piece for a strictly white cast, but then I have to consciously do that. But since I started working in the *Freie Szene* [independent theater scene], where often the performers speak words they themselves scripted, I don't feel like I want to "make up" characters anymore at all. I'm more drawn to interviewing people and condensing their content into text material for the theater that I then use with my own body, performing it.

AYIVI: I've always wanted to do political theater, because I always did theater in my training, I've always been an activist as well. For me it was never separable, and there was such a big change. That was kind of the point at which I also realized that although I'm Black, I've always made theater for a white audience. I never learned to take myself seriously as a spectator, even during my studies because, even when I went into topics that were close to me, even if not about my experience with racism, [I realized] it's not just about explaining something to white people or thinking through the work for them during my studies in Hildesheim. I realized what actually moves me and from what positionality my knowledge stems, whose prior knowledge and whose experience. And sometimes I have the feeling that I have to explain myself or explain something. And when I do I just take things for granted . . . I have noticed that I no longer write from a perspective of what I know, but from what I think. And I can now consciously say that I've been doing work from a Black perspective for about ten years. I can only have the audience that I am able to imagine, and as long as I still imagine a white audience, I will base my work on that, and then I will have fewer viewers from the community. It doesn't matter whether the pieces are called *First Black Women in Space* or [*Performing Back*] *A Memory Performance from an Afro-German Per-*

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2. Olivia Wenzel's play *Mais in Deutschland & in anderen Galaxien* premiered at the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse Theater in Berlin on February 19, 2015.

spective or whatever, because you can only establish the connection if you make it.[3]

KÖPSELL: I'd like Black actors to be able to perform classical roles and still be Black, and for it not to be noticeable. My most important play was *Jung, giftig und schwarz* (*Young, Poisonous and Black*), because it was so completely different somehow.[4] They dealt with all the stereotypes that they as Black women face in their everyday lives and in their nightlife, in the club or on the street. They were wonderfully staged on this bed, on this small stage in Ballhaus Naunynstraße [Theater]. And they brought in such a fresh approach. It wasn't about somehow whitewashing their Blackness in such a way that we just say we're capable of doing everything.

WENZEL: I didn't see the play and I don't know what it does in terms of content. But what I've heard and what I hear from you, is . . . that for this work, this fucking three thousand euros is all they got, and that Thandi [Sebe] and her colleague [Amina Eisner] completely exploited themselves for it. They did everything, set design, acting, text. And it's all depicted as if it was done in the frame of this family-like community of the Naunynstraße and meant to be about the arts. But I think that's a very, very big problem—how they so heavily exploited themselves. That is why my plea is always that on the stage, but also behind it, the structures have to be right too. And it just wasn't the case for that production. People rave about it right now. But then I think, yes, but at what price did the two of them do it? Because, of course, they did it because they love it and because they wanted to show it, because they wanted to do the work, but they also had to bend themselves to a kind of hierarchy and injustice. So that's problematic for me.

KÖPSELL: Those are two different things. I'm talking about what's the best way to present being Black onstage so far.

AYIVI: There is only self-exploitation that everyone somehow does because they think something better will come afterward. But there it [self-exploitation] also arises out of solidarity, to say, man, that it's a very important topic, and all these underrepresented perspectives

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3. Simone Dede Ayivi's Performance *First Black Women in Space* premiered on October 20, 2016, in Sophiensaele in Berlin. *Performing Back: A Memory Performance from an Afro-German Perspective* premiered April 14, 2016, at Sophiensaele.

4. *Jung, giftig und schwarz* was written and performed by Amina Eisner und Thandi Sebe. The dramatic adviser was Philipp Khabo Koepsell. The performance premiered May 23, 2015, at Ballhaus Naunynstrasse.

[are important], and we just don't have that much, so go ahead and do it. What I think is a shame is that a lot of work from a POC perspective get stuck in depicting everyday racism, which usually revolves around the intention of showing people what it's really like. But show whom? So there is this one moment when someone realizes, ah, others also experience racism, and then I can empower them for a moment, but as someone who is affected by racism, to always see other POCs focus on this topic onstage just feels a little bit like one is just doing it to explain something to white people: look at this, this is what our daily life looks like. And then I would, for example, very, very much wish that for the future we can somehow manage to realize what things may have been said enough and move forward.

KLAMMER: This is a point where I am actually ashamed to contribute to the conversation with what I have done, because I am just realizing that, regardless of whether it is a transgression or an omission or something, I've always acted in theaters where the question of community or certain issues never came up. I have to admit, I have never encountered that problem. But that doesn't mean that it doesn't exist or that colleagues never experience it in the theater. To say you can't imagine someone playing Gretchen just because they're Black or something, what does that even mean? No one in the theater would ever get the idea of talking to me like that, considering that I've played Woyzeck—everything. Everything. It only happened to me once. And I just looked at the guy and asked him, tell me, what's going on in your head, and that was resolved with six apologies and a discussion with the dramaturge. It was never an issue again. I can't comment on that, it just doesn't concern me. I can only speak from my own experience. What is a Black audience from an author's perspective? When I hear everything that has been said today, that's something new for me, a new input and such a new point of view where I wonder, have I been asleep this whole time? Because I just kind of do my own thing.

WENZEL: That's an example of what can also be possible in Germany, and that's actually fantastic. And I don't think that every Black person is obligated to always deal with these issues. It has to be a decision. Racism is an issue that I just can't avoid speaking about in my work. But if it's different for someone else, that's fine, too. Because I don't think it's the sole task of Black people to just speak about racism.

AYIVI: The brashness is that you are asked certain things, simply because you are Black.

KLAMMER: I grew up in a white-majority society with a white mother in a village with white relatives, and I met my father when I was twenty-four, who said, by the way, you are my son. I don't wake up in the morning and think to myself, oh, you poor, Black boy, you have to see how you get through the day. It was never like that. It was worse in the country, I experienced a bit of hostility there, but in the city and in life, wherever I've been allowed to work, it didn't play a role. I was really lucky—it didn't matter. And that's why of course I had a different view of it the whole time. The most important thing is that you handle yourself in such a way that you can talk to people.

WENZEL: But it's no longer just the question of who do we let onto the stage or into films, but rather: Who decides these things and when will they be replaced? Who decides which of the seven hundred thousand very similar TV scripts that float around get funded? With the people "in charge now," something airing on Wednesday at 8:15 p.m. is a film with white people like we've seen it a thousand times before—super boring, nothing happens, and yet other films just aren't subsidized. For a long time, these issues didn't affect me, and I didn't consider myself belonging to any community or representing anything, but when I turn on the TV I get so sad, because the things depicted there, just don't have anything to do with the realities of my life or the lives of the people around me. Way too many social realities are missing in the cultural landscapes

JANKOWSKI: I started out in the theater. I was lucky and ended up at Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. We had a piece, *Verrücktes Blut* (*Crazy Blood*), which turned out to be a gold mine for me.[5] It was also really empowering vis-à-vis all sorts of questions of identity when I came to drama school afterward. There were a lot of traumatic things that happened, but afterward, when I finished drama school, that's where I found it just messed up. The kinds of roles I was offered were the muse, the cleaning lady, and things like that. I was asked to play roles as the woman from Tahiti, the Brazilian, or the one who speaks Spanish. The first thing you're asked when you come to casting is, can you dance? You know, like Josephine Baker. And that was in the beginning, directly after acting school, but I was lucky to always be the backup at Ballhaus and the Gorki [The-

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5. *Verrücktes Blut* premiered September 9, 2010, at Ballhaus Naunynstrasse Theater. This play was written by Nurkan Erpulat and Jens Hilje.

ater], and there's always the possibility to say, I won't take these kinds of roles anymore or I just don't feel like it or to try to organize with others and try to bring our own stories to the stage, but I also see myself as a kind of door opener, because I can get people talking. I don't immediately say no, so I can get a foot in the door of intuitions and effect change.

AYIVI: I think it's really interesting that all four of us have had such different paths here and such different experiences. And that's exactly my point. We should keep doing whatever we want. I've always understood my work in the theater to be political and wanted to work with the community.

WENZEL: It wouldn't be so reprehensible if it weren't for these dumb roles. The problem is that a lot of other roles are left out. You won't be offered the role of the doctor or the lawyer etc. That's the real problem.[6]

KLAMMER: I was once at a casting call. The guy said "I have a funny question, but, do you speak African?" What am I supposed to say to that? "No." And I meant an African language. I don't speak any African languages. His response was, "Oh well, it wasn't that important." I responded, "Yes, it is important, because you would have liked to have things more colorful." Later he asked, "Do you get darker in the summer?" Everyone gets darker in the summer if you go out in the sun. He wanted someone really "Black."

AYIVI: And wondered, how do I get him to look really Black?

KLAMMER: How do I make him look darker? . . . For example, at a casting call for *Tatort* the person in charge told me, "I would've liked to hire you for this role. But the higher-ups didn't allow it, because the drug dealer is Black. And I just wanted you to know that." And I said, great, now I feel like shit. Because before I didn't know that you wanted to hire me and that's the reason why you chose not to. What nonsense. If you just hadn't said anything . . . I realize that when I run through the park, it's usually Sub-Saharan Africans who are selling drugs. But that's because they otherwise wouldn't be able to survive. Often, it's a logical consequence of certain things. And that's why I wouldn't have had a problem playing a role like that.

WENZEL: I have the feeling that a lot of people in this room have at least

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6. Wenzel notes that some things have changed in the last four years. Some examples of BIPOC in mainstream roles are Lorna Ishema from the television series *Breaking Even*; Banfashe Hourmazdi starred in the film *Futur Drei* (*No Hard Feelings*, 2020) and is in the ZDF television series *Loving Her*.

a hundred stories like that. But for me the real question is, how can I deal with it? Artistically, but also privately. And, how do I overcome it and simultaneously address it without addressing it too explicitly. And—well, when it comes to other topics, I also ask myself what happens when I talk about violence. A lot of racism has to do with violence—structural, physical, and so on. How can I talk about this violence without reproducing this violence? And sometimes I have no idea. And sometimes I get some nice ideas, too. And I would love to talk about them if you have some too. So I'm designing a completely different space, a completely different fantasy world. I am now creating my own story that has never existed before. I think that's a strategy that I find very appealing. At the moment, I often watch myself like this. I read an article today, in the *New Yorker* about some photographs. [A female photographer] goes out, photographs a lot of people, a lot of Black people, in their apartments, so to speak, in everyday life, but in such a very dignified, aesthetic way. I saw these people around me in these photos. I know what the 'hood looks like there. I think. I know what that broken sofa looks like. And yet the people are just portrayed in a way that totally impresses me. And somehow, I see power and a certain strength. Right now, I'm trying to give examples of what kind of strategies artistically one actually has. How do we get out of it? Or how can we deal with it more productively than, so to speak, continuously lamenting about all the shit that we experience over and over again, even if it is sometimes hilarious and absurd, and also very cruel? Again and again. I think that, yes, that concerns me at the moment. And maybe you have ideas too?

AYIVI: I would say that my work is actually continuous research anyway. And I do a piece, and then it has this theme. And while doing so, I read and discuss and try things out. And then there is always this one point that I haven't been able to really pursue because everything is so well organized. I want to do stringent, good art. And then there's always something that doesn't quite fit. And I always use that for my next work. Not on purpose—it just depends on what I happen to be working on. And I think I'm actually at a point where I just trust that my work will continue to develop, just as the discourse will continue to develop for me. For me, dealing with futurism was a really important point. And I notice how I'm actually really optimistic about that. So for me it's all kind of in flux. And I also find the work essential to read the audience, empower

people, make a strong statement, and be unapologetic about it. I now take the stage with my own perspective. And I'm developing a greater self-understanding, a certain matter-of-factness and a self-confidence about the work. And I think that many of my colleagues notice that too.

KLAMMER: The more self-confidence one has about one's work, the more self-evident it becomes onstage, and for everyone more generally. Then it doesn't matter the color, etc. And that's not just about self-confidence, it's also about courage. It's almost more important that you are brave than that you have self-confidence. And the moment you just do things, people will just accept it, as long as you stand behind it. And that's why I would totally support the fact that people say, first and foremost, just push things forward, push forward courageously. Enter the space of the theater with self-confidence and then people can't say, "Uh oh, watch out, here's a Black filmmaker, a Black playwright."

AYIVI: I still have something to add. I think what has changed a lot for me in recent years is that I feel less pressure to represent everyone. And that has to do with the fact there are more Black colleagues in the theater, and I consider that to be a great asset. There are still people who will say, "But you're speaking for the community," and you as a Black performance artist and so on. And the more people just do their stuff, the more "mistakes" are made, the more I dare to make. I believe that I am now freer onstage with my own opinion and perspective because I somehow think to myself, it can't be the case that people come and say, "But you as a Black woman should do this or that." Then I say, "No, Olivia is doing something like that." And I think that's another very important point, for me at least to be able to get away from the idea that somehow everything has to be done right now, because then there are often boring, cautious, deliberately cautious expressions. I also think it's an important issue. I don't want to downplay that, yes, just to say, Okay, I'll just do what I do. And there are enough other examples that I can refer to.

KLAMMER: Yes, you shouldn't get stuck in politics. It still has to be about art.

KÖPSELL: Exactly, there's a lot of self-censorship when it comes to creativity. I think the important step is not to stop and say, we'll work on this until it's somehow ripe or finished, or something. Just say, "I really want to do it and I can do it." And that's why we often have to support ourselves, too.

JANKOWSKI: Somehow, I would like to do things in such a way that I can just say what I think is okay and what I don't think is okay, and that we then just sit down in the ensemble and that my needs can find an outlet and that we can somehow find a fusion in the staging and the play or the plays. I hope that we can just talk about all of this. I do think that there is a conversation happening more and more, even if it's not self-evident—you still get dumb comments from theater directors. I think we have to talk about that. Instead of having to call a friend to ask, "Should I say something or not?" we have to be more open about these conversations.

KLAMMER: I was just thinking that it's probably very different if you are a writer as opposed to a director or an actor or something else. There's a difference between what I write and what I do onstage, because when you're up on stage, you're kind of creating a "happening." We're different. That's why I sometimes need all those modern, classical roles, where people think to themselves: Hmm that's something different. But you still have to make sure that it's accessible.

WENZEL: And we need structural change. We need different people on the juries [at theater festivals]. We also have to make sure that different kinds of plays are invited to perform.

Judgment, Power, and Participation in Theater

Based on the Ascending Career of a Black Female Artist in Germany[1]

Anta Helena Recke

I am Anta Helena Recke and I work in performance arts.

Provoked by the experiences around my staging of *Mittelreich* (Münchner Kammerspiele, 2017), I have given some thought to the conceptual triangle of judgment, power, and participation of Black artists in the realm of theater.

The concept of my project can be summed up quickly: I produced a Black copy of an award-winning performance by a renowned German municipal theater. That means that I faithfully adopted Anna-Sophie Mahler's production of *Mittelreich* and copied all of its parameters, like stage design, the version of the text, costumes, timing, and light. However, I substituted the exclusively white cast with an exclusively Black cast.

The production of *Mittelreich* is an adaption of the eponymous novel by Josef Bierbichler, which tells a story from postwar Germany, focusing on a Bavarian village at Lake Starnberg. The portrait of a dysfunctional family is intertwined with motifs from Brahm's *Requiem*, and among the topics discussed are the return from war, inner-German flight and expulsion, the abandonment of personal dreams in order to preserve and maintain the parental farm, as well as the cultural changes that led to modernity. The protagonist Semi takes off on a foray through one hundred years

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Figure 15.1a. *Mittelreich* in the production of Anna-Sophie Mahler (2015), photographer Judith Buss, Münchner Kammerspiele

Figure 15.1b. *Mittelreich* in the production of Anta Helena Recke (2017), photographer Judith Buss, Münchner Kammerspiele

of German history. He uses the opportunity of his father's funeral to question his ancestors and his own origins: "His generation seeks confrontation and dissociation, but nonetheless remains tied to the traumata of the century up until their contemporary existence."[2]

Mittelreich artistically reflects upon the *dispositif* of heritage in a complex manner. For this reason, the play appears to work extraordinarily well as a medium, in which one can intensify the questions already present by overwriting it. Through the strategy of divergent repetition—which is a well-known, not exclusively artistic, strategy of subversion—the play has inscribed itself in the canon of German theater. It thus problematizes the conditions under which this canon is being reproduced over and over again. Almost all the people who work on and off the stage in German

2. From the bill for *Mittelreich*, published by the Munich Kammerspiele.

municipal or state theaters are white. The concept of the ensemble-based theater, which is common in German-speaking countries yet unique compared to other parts of the world, is that by having an ensemble, companies can mirror contemporary society. The people one can see on the streets are also represented in the theater company. The structural racism that—even indirectly—shapes all social levels becomes particularly visible in the casting habits of municipal theaters. Nowadays, the image of society drawn by theater companies contrasts strongly with the image of the people living in Germany. The fact is that Black bodies and bodies of POCs do exist, and they are anything but an exception.

So why is it unimaginable that one of the characters in a Bavarian story like *Mittelreich* is nonwhite? For many Germans, their common sense of self and the construction of their identity is particularly shaped by being white. This self-image has nothing to do with reality, but nonetheless continues to inscribe itself into theater, film, and television through, among other things, constant repetition of an exclusively white self-perception. Let us imagine instead a Black actor who in Mahler's production asks: "What did the soldier, who was my father, do in Russia and France?" Could such an arrangement, for example, succeed in throwing light onto the blind spot of the millions of Black bodies who had to fight in Europe in the First and Second World Wars and died there?[3] One might, at first, find it difficult to situate Black bodies within the European world wars, within the German past, present, and German identity, and let go of associations between Blackness and displacement and foreignness. Considering, however, those passages of Mahler's play that revolve around the resentment the German population felt against German refugees during the war, where discussions in the family's inner circle suddenly turn members of the community into marginalized persons or where family members discuss how to defend the family's wealth from "parasites" in order to squeeze it securely through the "bottleneck of history," the idea of channeling these speech acts through Black bodies opens up many additional associations. The fascinating aspect of working on the Black copy of this play was the multilayered projection into the future, the past, and the uncharted space all at once.

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3. "Afrika im Zweiten Weltkrieg: Vergessene Opfer, fehlende Anerkennung," *DW*, accessed November 6, 2020, https://www.dw.com/de/afrika-im-zweiten-weltkrieg-vergessene-opfer-fehlende-anerkennung/a-18437124

Judgment/Power/Participation

The reviews of my Black copy were scathing. We had turned the tables and invited the world of established theater critics to watch "life" embodied by "the Others." But this invitation to expose oneself to one's own perception has been rejected vehemently. Instead, one devastatingly bad judgment of the play's quality followed another. Besides the assumption that I might not have found enough Congolese actors and thus had to cast actors "who were not that Black after all," I was also accused of being the only one in theater who discriminates against Black persons by "staging bad amateur theater across the board."[4]

You may ask why such responses did not come as a surprise. Whenever power structures are exposed in a central place, one of the first weapons used against this exposition is devaluation for reasons of quality. This pattern of reaction could be observed in the form of the criticism aimed at German international soccer player Mesut Özil. The media controversy surrounding a picture that the international soccer player with Turkish origins took with Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan led to Özil's resignation from the men's national soccer team. I do not know much about soccer. But I had the following impression: the further Mesut Özil's utterances and actions were removed from an alleged mainstream society, the more intensely the hitherto unquestioned quality of his game has been relativized.

The social response that arises from the production of *Mittelreich* can be grasped quite well within the conceptual triangle of judgment/power/participation. Unsolicited, someone claimed a right to participate in the politics of images and, for a brief moment, to stage the current power relations. The common realization of power structures always entails the possibility that their shift is just around the corner. Those whose interests lie in the preservation of the status quo—be it for no specific reason at all or out of self-interest—smell trouble. The first available defense is also a tried-and-tested one: qualitative judgment.

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4. Eva-Elisabeth Fischer, "Schwarz allein reicht nicht," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 13, 2017, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/schauspiel-nach-sepp-bierbichler-schwarz-allein -reicht-nicht1.3707139. See also Egbert Tholl, "Armer alter weißer Alpha-Mann," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 27, 2019, https://www.sueddeutsche.de/kultur/theater-armer-alter -weisser-alphamann-1.4618648; Teresa Grenzmann, "Plagiatskunst," *FAZ*, October 14, 2017, https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/kurioser-theaterabend-plagiatskunst-15244993.html; Bernd Noack, "Aus Weiss mach Schwarz," *NZZ*, October 14, 2017, https://www.nzz.ch/feuill eton/aus-weiss-mach-schwarz-ld.1321753

Figure 15.2. Scooby-Doo: Objectivity as subjectivity all along (https://knowyourmeme.com/photos/1347333-scooby-doo)

But since the revelation described above slowly but steadily drips into our common consciousness, judgment ceases to be solely an indicator of quality, but also, and sometimes first and foremost, becomes a self-revelation, a self-disclosure of the judges themselves.

Differences between Independent and Institutionalized Theaters in Regard to Power

I am often asked how I perceive the different working contexts of the "municipal theater" and the "independent scene" in regard to questions of power.[5] I have noticed that many collaborators active in the independent

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5. German municipal and communal theater companies are funded by public money from city or state governments. Generally speaking, they have a fixed budget, regular employees, and a fixed ensemble of actors. Independent theaters are theaters besides the established companies that have either a small or no fixed ensemble and have to get by on a much smaller budget. Independent theaters have to raise their funds by themselves and occasionally receive public funding. The public sector in Germany spends two billion euros each year on its 150 public

performing arts associate me with the myth of the municipal theater and use more or less subtle knocks to let me know that for this very reason, I have a reputation of displaying a Marie Antoinette–like sense of entitlement. That is a paradox considering that I spent most of my time at the municipal theater in the role of the servant. I was assistant director. But it is true enough that I do not consider it romantic or desirable if, a week before the premiere, the creative team has to move the stage decoration from a truck into the theater, if performers have to bother about the cost of printing flyers or where to buy the cheapest adhesive tape for the designer.

Sometimes I have to do my work during rehearsal. That is, I describe what I think works and what doesn't; I make suggestions and test different approaches. If I am more persistent than my counterpart in trying to improve a scene, a sequence, a technical detail, or other elements of the production, I frequently receive the answer: "Well, if you want that, then you should go to a municipal theater." Such a situation reveals the efficacy of projections and the resulting complexes that the dispositive of the municipal theater tends to spawn in the working subjects of the so-called independent scene. Buried somewhere in this utterance is an idea of why the municipal theater is much more associated with power and the problems related to it. The simple facts are that the budgets of municipal theaters are much higher, that there is a technique of onstage work that is perceived as streamlined, and that major newspapers and TV culture programs discuss the productions from this sphere to a much greater extent. All these factors—abstractly speaking, money, standardization, and visibility—we justifiably associate with power.

As somebody who operates in both contexts and rooms, I had the experience that in each room I am always perceived as a representative of the other work context and often have to face the respective prejudices. Artistic directors of municipal theaters almost unexceptionally approach me with the question whether I principally despise text as the foundation of a production and professionally educated actors. It's as if this were a common self-conception shared by all those who do not necessarily work independently of institutions, but who are at least institutionally flexible. In the independent scene, by contrast, it is indeed often conveyed in a roundabout, yet somehow annoying, way that working here is certainly

theater companies and on another 150 theaters that do not have fixed ensembles. See https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liste_der_%C3%B6ffentlich_getragenen_Repertoiretheater_Deutschlands

much more pleasant than I am used to, but that I have to relinquish the golden sofa from which I normally direct. Here I should clarify once more that I have not yet as an artist staged a production at a municipal theater.

On paper, *Mittelreich* was an independent production with a restricted budget. The assertion that *Mittelreich* was the in-house production of a renowned German municipal theater was merely a means of my staging of *Mittelreich*. The effectiveness of this assertion reaches places that I probably would never had been able to enter if it were not for this assertion; for example, it reached the Berliner Festspiele in May. I received an invitation to the Berliner Theatertreffen. This assertion attracted the attention of people who otherwise would have overlooked me for the time being. The efficacy of this assertion is the reason why I was invited to give the opening remarks at the convention of the independent performing arts. It is the reason why I was part of a jury at FAVORITEN-Festival in Dortmund last September that gave out four separate awards of ten thousand euros among a dozen artists, most of whom have been producing professional theater for much longer than I have. It is the reason why I can say things on Deutschlandfunk, the German public radio channel. The title in the browser tab of the Deutschlandfunk home page reads "Deutschlandfunk. Everything of Relevance."

This is what I think: power is power. It is not good, it is not bad, it is, above all, everywhere. Independent theater is as tangled up in power structures as institutionalized theater. In my experience, hierarchical and divided labor are disclosed much more openly in municipal theaters. Everyone knows from the outset who stands above whom, who has to do what, who is allowed to claim authorship of a huge group of people, depending on how the play is received. Everyone knows who in the team is paid fairly, who is not paid fairly, who is not paid at all, and who is paid far more than would be fair.

In independent forms of production, I often find myself in a work situation in which the hierarchy within a work group remains opaque; it is not readily assessable or readable. That leads to a diffuse imagination of a workspace free of hierarchies.

We often find this illusion of a space free of hierarchy in arguments against the mandatory/obligatory participation of non-cis-male queer and nonwhite agents in institutions. One example is the idea that without a female quota—if you let things play out as they are—they will take their alleged natural course into the future and ultimately level off. However, what is actually the case is that there is a quota without a quota, and that consists 97 percent of white males between forty and one hundred—just

as the absence of and the renunciation of identity politics is nothing but white heterosexual and male identity politics. I often experience that, until the end, hierarchy structures are not addressed at all or only within a certain comfort zone. Wherever hierarchy, meaning power, is not actively organized, automatisms kick in. Such an automatism is never gratifying, because it is always conventional. We would find most of these conventions, which are secured under the protective coat of a friendly atmosphere, troubling once they were laid bare before our eyes. We would certainly not sign off on them. Not without renegotiating.

But since I have been asked this or similar questions so often, I want to stress yet again what we all know: that power is no individual thing, but much more like water. It can become frozen in form of departments, institutions, laws, and so forth and thus sometimes, in its ice cube form, appears to be a thing. But much more correct is to say that, as soon as we grab it, the warmth of our palms makes it malleable. For me, the question is not about the status of power in different institutions and workspaces, but rather, in how many situations, no matter where, we are actually aware of the fact that we can shape it. By saying this, I by no means intend to downplay the mechanism of exclusion in capitalism, patriarchy, and racism, or claim that one could simply rely on a positive, proactive attitude to gain access to those privileges that until now have been reserved for men contained in the quota that has not yet been marked a quota. What I want to say instead is that it is one of the most effective strategies of self-preservation for these repressive systems to make us believe that we are powerless.

If I use this simple definition, namely that power means the opportunity to affect the given, then staging a play for me is all about power. The aspiration to organize a performance means to make and implement the decisions while always asking the question, how do we organize a gathering of people at a certain point in time, and shape it according to a particular idea? All this constitutes a great claim to power.

Besides the performance of a temporary powershift on stage, in the context of *Mittelreich* there was also a power struggle regarding the framing of the production and my persona, which hopefully becomes perceivable. What do I mean by this? An example is the perception of my staging in relationship to my person by the artistic director of the Munich Kammerspiele, Matthias Lilienthal. On the occasion of an honorary event at the Deutsches Theater Berlin, which was part of the Theatertreffen 2018, he recollected in a somewhat patronizing fashion: "And Anta together with a dramaturge came to me and said, as assistant director I am always

sitting in the audience and there is no one on the team who looks like me. I watch a stage, no one looks like me, and when I am on duty for the evening, I peek into the audience and no one looks like me, and I just wish this could change for one day." The last time I looked into the mirror, I did not strikingly resemble anyone of the actors of *Mittelreich*. But that is in the eye of the beholder. How did the meeting go according to my recollection? When I entered Matthias Lilienthal's office on the said day, I said: "I want to do a play about whiteness and its invisibility to white people. For this reason, I want to copy a big repertoire production of a well-known municipal theater and substitute for the white cast a Black one."

A similar struggle about what it means for me to publicly articulate my position also occurred in the media. I invested two and a half hours of my time to tutor, in the form of an interview, the journalists of the culture program *Kulturpalast* on structural racism, and the only material that ended up in the broadcast is the part where they asked me: "What are your personal experiences with racism?" Despite the frustration of this half-time defeat, I was able to use the visibility of the broadcast for myself to spread the radical autofiction that I am working on a Black copy of an episode of the show *Tatort*.[6] This claim is now attracting increasing attention, and who knows onto which stage it is going to wash me up.

There is a strategy behind the strong tendency to frame my work as something personal and thus frame my person more as someone affected and not so much as an artist. The more the discussion about the meaning of *Mittelreich* revolves around allegedly personal consternation and experience, the less time we have to address whiteness. The fight about framing is always also a dispute about how much and especially with which consistency our play can call institutions and people into question and leave them there.

The positive reviews of *Mittelreich* still arrived a little later. The word "theater history" has been used a lot, and one critique compared the play to Warhol, Beuys, and Duchamp and, for artistic and not personal reasons, called *Mittelreich* "the most stimulating, innovative, and political production of the year."[7] As I already mentioned above, the production

6. *Tatort* is a nationwide crime series that since the 1970s is being broadcast every Sunday night via German public television. It is an important part of German mainstream culture.

7. Matthias Dell, "Finde den Unterschied," October 23, 2017, https://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/mittelreich-an-den-muenchner-kammerspielen-diesmal-nur-mit-schwarzen-a-1174264.html. See also Azadeh Sharifi, "Anta Helena Reckes 'Mittelreich,'" *Missy Magazine*, October 24, 2017, https://missy-magazine.de/blog/2017/10/24/anta-helena-reckes-mittelreich/, https://taz.de/Berliner-Theatertreffen/!5503421/

was invited to the most important theater convention in the German-speaking world (Berliner Theatertreffen) the following year; on this occasion, the leading online theater magazine *nachtkritik.de* again sent someone to review our performance. Under the headline "Wakanda ForEver," John Alfons Cof Amoateng-Kantara describes how he experienced the evening, like so many other critics, not as overly intellectual or strained, but much more like a community event and as an interesting evening full of joyful encounters that usually would not occur in a theater.[8] Reading it, I am happy not only about the fantastic title, but also because this text further underscores that the production of *Mittelreich* succeeded once again in cracking the white matrix—because, up until then, I had never seen a review written with a nonwhite pen posted on *nachtkritik.de*.

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Contributors

Evelyn Annuß is Professor of Gender Studies at the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, with a focus in cultural studies, theater, film, and literature. She received her *venia docendi* from the Ruhr University of Bochum and her PhD from the University of Erfurt. Her work targets global perspectives in critical theory and postcolonial critique, questions of inequality and subjectivation, as well as aesthetics and rhetorics. She has also worked as a curator on postcolonial photography and the "afterlife" of German colonialism. Her latest book publications are *Volksschule des Theaters: Nationalsozialistische Massenspiele* (on Nazi mass stagings) and a commented facsimile edition of Max Reinhardt's *Everyman* in collaboration with H. Gschwandtner, E. Fuhrich, N. C. Wolf, and the Salzburg Festival, in which she addresses a Black version of the famous play. Currently, she is working on a book project on transoceanic perspectives titled *Nomadic Dragging*.

Simone Dede Ayivi's performances explore issues of representation, resistance, and community. Her works are biographically motivated, mostly interview-based research projects. With her colleagues she has developed performances in cooperation with the Sophiensaele Berlin, the Künstlerhaus Mousonturm Frankfurt, and the Theaterformen festival, among others. She worked as a director at the Graz theater and the Oberhausen theater. In 2022 she received a Tabori Award from the Performing Arts Fund. Ayivi studied cultural studies and aesthetic practice in Hildesheim. She is one of the authors of *Deine Heimat ist unser Albtraum* and has published in various anthologies. She continues to write for *Zeitonline*, *Tagesspiegel*, *Missy Magazin*, and the *taz*.

Franziska Bergmann is Chair of German and Comparative Literature at Friedrich-Alexander-University of Erlangen-Nuremberg, Germany. Her

main areas of research and teaching include comparative literature, interculturality, world literature, and gender studies. Her dissertation dealt with gender transgressions in German-language and Anglophone theater texts around the turn of the millennium. Her habilitation thesis examined the relationship between exoticism and sensory perception in Western European literature from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century.

Jeff Bowersox is Associate Professor of German history at University College London. His research focuses on the connections that tied Germans and Europeans into the globalizing world of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which he has explored in most detail in his book *Raising Germans in the Age of Empire: Youth and Colonial Culture, 1871–1914* (Oxford University Press, 2013). He is also the managing editor of blackcentraleurope.com, an online resource that offers historical documents on the histories and experiences of Blackness in the German lands since the Middle Ages.

Norbert Otto Eke is Chair of German Literature and Literary Theory at the University of Paderborn, Germany. His research and teaching draws on literary theory and aesthetics at the interface of philology, theater, cultural, and media studies. He focuses on literature and theater from the eighteenth to the twenty-first century, in particular pre-March and contemporary literature and German-Jewish Literature. Eke is editor of the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* and the *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur neueren Germanistik* as well as member of the Editorial Board of the series German Monitor and Entstehung und Kodierung von Massengewalt. He has published several books on Heiner Müller and Herta Müller, on German contemporaneity and German drama on the French Revolution, on space-forming processes in the theater, on theory and practice of aesthetic de-automation, literature and Shoah, etc. His current book project is on Herta Müller as well.

Andrea Geier is Professor of Modern German Literature and Gender Studies at the University of Trier, Germany. She completed her PhD at the University of Tübingen on violence and gender in German literature of the 1980s and 1990s ("Gewalt und Geschlecht: Diskurse in deutschsprachiger Prosa der 1980er und 1990er Jahre," 2005). Her main research and teaching interests are contemporary German literature, gender, postcolonial and interculturality studies, memory culture, and

science communication. She is a board member of the Gender Studies Association (Fachgesellschaft Geschlechterstudien) and the Trier Center for Postcolonial and Gender Studies.

Irmtraud Hnilica is Associate Professor at the institute for German literature and media studies at the FernUniversität Hagen, Germany. She received her PhD from the University of Cologne. She is currently working on a research project that examines abduction and captivity in eighteenth-century literature. Her research interests include eighteenth-century to contemporary literature, literary theory, and cultural, gender, and intersectional studies. She has edited books on "Fernweh" and pirates and published essays ranging on writers from Annette von Droste-Hülshoff to Bertolt Brecht to Elfriede Jelinek.

Rachel Jankowski was born in Leipzig. She completed her Abitur in Berlin and then studied acting at the Hochschule der Künste Bern where she received her BA in 2014, after completing a thesis about postmigrant theater. She's been acting in theater since 2004 and she has played numerous roles at theaters throughout Europe, so I am just going to highlight a few. She played Sheherzad in a production of *Gilgamesh* at the Ruhrfestspiele Recklinghausen. She played Latifah in the 2010/2011 production of *Verrücktes Blut*, which was performed at the Ruhtrienale, the Theatertreffen and Gastspiele in München, Hamburg, and Mühlhausen. From 2014 until 2017 she has performed in several plays at the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin. In 2016 she collaborated with Olivia Wenzel, Hieu Hoang, and Banafshe Hourmazdi on the performance *We are the Universe* at the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. Last year she played the role of Ronja in *Ronja Räubertochter* at the Burg der Burgfestspiele in Mayen. And this year she performed in the play *Remake68* in the Schlachthaus Tehater Bern.

Michael Klammer grew up in Südtirol but currently lives in Berlin. From 2001 to 2004, he studied at the Schauspielhaus Salzburg. Following his training, he became a member of the ensemble. In the 2005–2006 season, he was member of the Wiener Volkstheater, playing Franz in *Die Räuber*. From 2006 to 2012 he belonged to the ensemble of the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin, where he performed in canonical plays like *Hamlet*, *Urfaust*, *Woyzeck*, and *Die Räuber* again, this time as Karl von Moor. Following his time at the Gorki, Klammer performed at the Residenz Theater in Munich, the Schauspielhaus in Stuttgart, the Burgtheater in

Vienna, and the Basler Company and directed such theater productions as *Im Westen nichts Neues*, *Hamlet*, and *Sein oder Nichtsein*.

Philipp Khabo Koepsell is a Berlin-based poet, and interdisciplinary artist. His work largely deals with negotiations with black identity, Afrofuturism, colonialism, and empowerment. He is the editor of a book series about afro-diasporic cultural production in Germany. He has performed as a poet and spoken word artist on national and international stages, having toured from 2010–2015 in Europe, the United States and South Africa. As a dramaturge his work has primarily been staging plays at the Ballhaus Naunynstraße Theater and with free theater groups. He has also curated symposia and different events including the poetry and performance series Arriving in the Future and the networking meeting Erste Indaba Schwarzer Kulturschaffender in Deutschland.

Sigrid G. Köhler is Chair of Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century German Literature at the University of Tübingen, Germany. Her research areas include law and literature, postcolonial and gender studies, critical race theory, mediality and aesthetics, and popular literature. She has published on the representation of slavery and the abolition debate in popular German literature around 1800, on contract and promise as cultural techniques in law and literature around 1800, on law, human rights, and emotion, and on contemporary German and contemporary African literature. A volume on the mediality of human rights and a monograph on the regime of contract and romanticism are forthcoming. Currently, she is working on a research project funded by the German Research Foundation entitled *Ziméo and Oroonoko in the Transatlantic World: Literary Translations and Adaptions in the Context of Colonialism and Enslavement (1688–1809)*.

Olivia Landry is Assistant Professor of German and Director of Film and Documentary Studies at Lehigh University in the United States. Her research and teaching interests focus on film, theater, affect, and social movement studies. She has published essays on a range of topics, including social justice, protest, and minoritized and immigrant communities in particular as they are represented and performed in film and theater. She is author of *Movement and Performance in Berlin School Cinema* (Indiana University Press, 2019) and *Theatre of Anger: Radical Transnational Performance in Contemporary Berlin* (University of Toronto Press, 2020).

Priscilla Layne is Professor of German and Adjunct Associate Professor of African, African American and Diaspora Studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, United States. She received her PhD from the University of California at Berkeley. Her research and teaching draws on postcolonial studies, gender studies, and critical race theory to address topics like representations of Blackness in literature and film, rebellion, and the concept of the Other in science fiction / fantasy. In addition to her work on representations of Blackness in German culture, she has also published essays on Turkish German culture, translation, punk, and film. She is the author of *White Rebels in Black: German Appropriation of African American Culture*, and her current book project is on Afro-German Afrofuturism.

Anta Helena Recke is a German-Senegalese director, dramaturge, conceptual artist, and author of discursive as well as fictional texts. She studied scenic arts at the University of Hildesheim and was assistant director at the Munich Kammerspiele from 2015 to 2017. In the critics' survey of *Theater heute* magazine she was voted Upcoming Artist of the Year in 2018. In 2019 she received a prize from the International Theatre Institute and took part in the residency program Vila Sul of the Goethe Institute in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. Her directorial works *Mittelreich* and *Die Kränkungen der Menschheit*, which deal with colonial amnesia and whiteness in Germany under various aspects, were invited to Berliner Theatertreffen both in 2018 and in 2020. In 2020 she was awarded the Tabori Award by the Fonds Darstellende Künste. In 2021, together with Hieu Hoang, she developed the stage adaptation of *1000 Coils of Fear* by Olivia Wenzel and also directed the premiere at Maxim Gorki Theater Berlin. She is the cofounder of the German Museum of Black Entertainment and Black Music.

Azadeh Sharifi is a Visiting Assistant Professor (*DAAD-Gastprofessur*) in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures, University of Toronto. Her work engages with (post)colonial and (post)migrant theater history, performances by artists of Color, and the intersections of race, class, and gender in contemporary European performances. She is currently working on the history of migrant and minority artists in Germany since 1955 (*Postmigrant German Theater History*). Previously, she was a visiting professor (*Gastprofessur*) at the University of Fine Arts Berlin, postdoc at the Department of Theatre Studies at LMU Munich,

and fellow of the International Research Center's Interweaving Performance Cultures at FU Berlin. She is a board member of Performance Studies international. She coedited *Theaterwissenschaft postkolonial/ dekolonial* with Lisa Skwirblies (transcript, 2022).

Wendy-Lou Hilary Sutherland is Professor of German, Black European and Diaspora Studies at New College of Florida, United States. She received her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. Her research, focusing on the depiction of Blacks in German bourgeois drama, culminated in the publication of *Staging Blackness and Performing Whiteness in Eighteenth-Century German Drama*. In addition to bourgeois drama, she has taught courses on fairy tales and on Afro-Germans and German identity, but is shifting to include more courses on Black Europe. She is currently working on two research projects that intersect: *Mapping Slavery in Germany/Europe* which connects sites in Germany/Europe to the transatlantic slave trade, and *Mapping the Self*, which links personal Caribbean family history to broader British colonial history.

Lily Tonger-Erk is Associate Professor at the German Studies Department and Research Associate at the Rhetoric Department of the University of Tübingen. From 2020 to 2021 she was a visiting professor at the University of Trier. She received her PhD from the University of Münster. Her main areas of research are the history of drama and theater in the eighteenth century, drama theory, intermediality, fictions of space, postcolonial and gender studies, and the history of rhetoric, especially the rhetoric of the body. She is author of books on rhetorics and on intertextuality and editor of volumes on stage directions in drama texts and on the semantics of stage exits. Her current book project is on the poetics of space in drama around 1800.

Hanna Voss is Research Assistant at the Institute of Film, Theater, Media and Culture Studies at the University of Mainz, Germany. From 2014 to 2021 she worked as part of the local interdisciplinary DFG research group Un/doing Differences. Her PhD focuses on the interface of sociology, economics, and theater studies and deals historically as well as empirically with the public German theater, including training and placement structures. Her current focus is the (de)institutionalization of ethnicity/ race, and her second monograph, *Theater als Institution. Ethno- und historiografische Perspektiven auf die Produktion von Schauspielenden*, is forthcoming. Her research and teaching interests are theoretical and

methodical perspectives, especially on institutional and organizational theories and the connection between ethnographic and performance analyses approaches.

Olivia Wenzel was born in 1985 in Weimar (Germany), and lives in Berlin. She is an author, musician, and dramaturge. Her dramatic texts have been staged at theaters such as the Münchner Kammerspiele, the Thalia Theater in Hamburg, the Deutsches Theater in Berlin, and the Ballhaus Naunynstrasse. Olivia has a degree in cultural studies and also works as a performer, collaborating with multidisciplinary theater collectives such as vorschlag:hammer or Henrike Iglesias. In early 2020, her Romandébut 1000 *Serpentinen Angst* was published by S. Fischer Verlag in Germany, won several prizes and was celebrated by the press. It has been translated into different languages and was adapted for the stage by different German theaters. Over the course of 2022 Olivia led a series of multidisciplinary workshops for young adults of color at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt in Berlin.

Jonathan Wipplinger is Associate Professor of German at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, United States. He received his PhD from the University of Michigan. His research focuses on the interplay between music and culture in the German-speaking world from the nineteenth century through the present, with particular emphasis on the African American and African diasporic presence in early twentieth-century Germany. His first monograph, *The Jazz Republic: Music, Race, and American Culture in Weimar Germany* (2017), traces the impact and influence of jazz in Germany during the 1920s. Currently, he is working on a project investigating music technologies within twentieth-century German culture.

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